

FULL TEXT OF THE CONVOCATION ADDRESS DELIVERED BY
HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA SHRI JUSTICE N V RAMANA
AT THE 82ND CONVOCATION OF OSMANIA UNIVERSITY
TAGORE AUDITORIUM, OSMANIA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, HYDERABAD
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My heartiest congratulations to all those who received their degrees and honours today, in this 82nd Annual Convocation. It is a joyous occasion for everyone involved. Your parents and your family must be proud of your achievements. They have been your constant supporters. The history and legacy of this great institution places a heavy obligation upon your young shoulders. I wish all of you the very best in all your future endeavours.

It is great vision along with impeccable character and conviction which makes any ordinary person, extraordinary. The Osmania University is a crucible which produced many such visionaries and extraordinaries.

Osmania University is the third oldest university in southern India and the first in the former State of Hyderabad. The establishment of Osmania University by the Nizam of Hyderabad marked a new era in higher education. During its inception, the idea of imparting higher education through the local languages of India was a counter to the dominance of the English language in India under British colonial rule.

All this while, Osmania University has stood the test of time. From the British Raj to Independent India, it has continued to remain as the beacon of excellence. The notable alumni of this university have contributed greatly in their respective fields and have become household names.

Osmania is one of those universities where political participation and scholarly pursuits went hand in hand. This university has produced one of the most remarkable prime ministers and statesmen of modern India in the form of Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao. It has also majorly contributed to the fine governance of this State as many chief ministers and cabinet ministers, including the incumbent Chief minister himself, are products of the education given here. This university has undoubtedly contributed to building modern India.

I am afraid, I may not fit in the league of the luminaries such as Rabindranath Tagore, C. Raj Gopala Chary, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and 42 others, who are recipients of the prestigious Honoris Causa from this historic university.

I am deeply grateful for the honour bestowed on me today. While a new connection is being forged, many old memories keep flooding back.

Initially in my student years, I aspired to join Osmania University. Although I could not join formally, on many occasions I have stayed with my friends here in their hostel rooms. I have attended several classes in law and linguistics. I used to spend time in the canteens and library. I have a lot of warm memories of this university.

Especially, considering the significance of Osmania University, I view the honorary degree I have been awarded today, to be more than a symbolic honour. For me, it is a personal obligation to do my best for the community.

India is home to some of the oldest centers of knowledge. These centers shaped the minds and careers of many eminent men and women who in turn energized the freedom movement. The formation of modern Independent India was significantly propelled by the ideas that emanated from the grounds of its universities. They are not just a place for meeting of ideas but also confluence of identities.

My generation and subsequent generations have witnessed the power of level playing field. It was the progressive and welfarist policies pioneered in South in general and undivided Andhra Pradesh in particular, which provided much needed opportunities for the students from oppressed backgrounds. These opportunities in turn led to the very first-generation literates among the oppressed sections of the society to emerge as path breakers. These places of learning have in fact accelerated the social transformation, leading to the overall upliftment of society. There cannot be a holier place than institutions of learning which lead to social emancipation.

Osmania is one such place of social emancipation. It has been a global centre of learning and enlightenment, acting as a mirror for social consciousness and reality. The university continues to be the most significant institution for several first-generation students coming from diverse backgrounds. Through the course of its existence, it has served as a place where progressive ideals were inculcated in students who fought for social change and a more equal society. Situated in the historic city of Hyderabad, it reflects the State's diversity and rich traditions.

The universities, particularly in nascent democracies such as India, play a very significant role in nation building. They have acted as a cradle for novel ideas and have built characters.

Rabindranath Tagore, in his collection of essays, was critical of the education imparted by the colonisers. He states that education should be nothing like "Parrot's Training" where students are taught just to mimic. Tagore said, and I quote:

*"And for that they must be trained,
not to be soldiers,
not to be clerks in a bank,
not to be merchants,
but to be the makers of their own world and
their own destiny.
And for that they must have all their faculties
fully developed in the atmosphere of freedom"*

This brings me to the question of the ultimate purpose of education. Education, unlike vocational training, should not stop with providing skills for employability. It is expected to combine perception and patience, emotion and intellect, substance and morals.

Critical thinking is essential for the growth of every individual, society, and the nation. True education is what nurtures true impulses and independent thinking. Instead of being prisoners of status quo, we need youth to dive deep and bring transformation from within. You cannot change the world with mere high principles and morals. You need to act. On any given day, any action towards a positive change is better than inaction.

You must cultivate a critical mind which is well-informed. Education cannot be alienated from one's roots. It must mirror our social reality and the journey of progress through time. Our students must be equipped with the knowledge of history, language, philosophy, politics and economy.

This brings me to the transformative power of education. In today's knowledge based economy, education and information are the key assets for an individual. Through quality education and sheer hard-work and dedication, one can break the barriers of social strata. Education is a tool of social mobility and is the foundation of social development.

Our students must be aware about the basic laws and principles that govern the land. The citizens must connect with our constitution because it is our ultimate safeguard. That is why I insist on propagation of constitutional culture. It is high time for all institutions, to introduce a subject on the basic ideas about constitution and governance, irrespective of the stream of learning. The ideas of the constitution need to be simplified for everyone's understanding and empowerment. A participatory democracy thrives when its citizens are able to make informed choices. The ultimate goal of our education should be to enable us to make informed choices.

Another aspect that is key to the sustenance of our democracy is honouring our plurality. Instead of fostering the feeling of "othering", our education should lead us where we can nurture diversity. Speaking of diversity, we should not lose sight of the big picture in the globalised world.

Today's youth is facing several unique challenges. Our way of living has undergone massive transformation with the passage of time. Our food, language, clothes, games, festivals and so on are deeply rooted expressions of our identity and values. These expressions of our identity are tools of social cohesion but also are links with our past.

The memories and stories of our great grandparents, grandparents and parents; tell us about the world as it was. But, most importantly, we derive our sense of continuity. These identities help us find our roots.

With rapid globalization and massive developments in science and technology, several cultures and identities are interacting with each other, with increased frequency. Driven by the winds of globalization, we are moving towards a global culture. As this global culture engulfs the world, the need for sustaining diversity assumes great significance. The global culture is emerging as a threat to local cultural symbols and identities. The social-media, television and pop-culture glamourize a particular way of life and sadly we are blindly aping the same. Instead of celebrating our distinct heritage and culture, we are allowing our rich identities to be blurred. The present generation is in flux. It is gradually losing link to the past and thereby losing the sight of the purpose and path to future.

While I acknowledge the necessity and the positive changes ushered in by globalization and development of science and technology, I urge you to think its micro impact in our daily lives.

According to the 2021 UNESCO World Report of Languages, half of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken in the world today could disappear by the end of the century. With loss of each language, we are not only losing considerable literature and folklore, but also losing wisdom inherited through generations.

Similarly, the march of globalisation has significant impact on genetic diversity as well. We are witnessing the rapid loss of crop varieties, wild species and indigenous livestock. Additionally the market is driven by demands of the global economy. As a result more and more farmers are moving beyond indigenous crops for short term gains. This change in cropping pattern is altering the character of soil thereby reducing its capacity to support bio diversity. Similarly, climate change and environmental pollution are also affecting the wild varieties. Put together, a huge ecological imbalance is staring at us.

Another, aspect of globalization is its impact on local handicrafts and artisans. With global brands flooding the markets, with mass produced designs and products, the local artisans are pushed to the corner.

They are facing tough competition and are struggling to survive. With near zero patronage now, the art forms which have evolved over centuries are vanishing in front of us.

I hope my observations are not taken as criticism of globalization per se. But the above issues definitely prove to us that we have somewhere gone wrong with the present model of globalization. Although, we have made significant achievements, yet our societies are becoming increasingly divided over access to wealth and resources.

That is why, the present generation is faced with unique challenge of finding solutions to these pressing concerns. The rising inequities between classes need urgent attention. We need to find a model of globalization which is sustainable, equitable and just for all.

Such a model of globalisation demands harmony, respect and coexistence of differing identities. Peace and prosperity can only prevail in a society built on consensus and a sense of fraternity. Beyond the ideas of tolerance, we need acceptance. We should not seek uniformity, rather we should seek unity.

The university is a space intended to foster the spirit of such thinking. It allows us to spend our formative years in an environment that promotes thinking, questioning and debating. The space for dialogue is very sacred in an educational institution, not just with the teachers but also among the peers.

As you graduate today, your learning has not come to an end, on the contrary the learning has just started. There is so much to learn from the experience of life. Be humble. Remember your duty towards your family and community.

Before I end, I want to quote Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, who once stated:

“Men are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Otherwise both will wither and die.”

Let the ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice keep reverberating upon these grounds. My best wishes to the new graduates for a remarkable future.

Before I conclude, I would like to sincerely thank to the Executive Counsel, Vice-Chancellor and the Chancellor of the Osmania University for their decision to confer this honorary doctorate.

This university is fortunate to have a very proactive governor as its chancellor. A doctor by profession, madam Governor will be able to appreciate every difficulty of the academic community. I am sure, with her as the chancellor you will find solutions to all your problems.

I congratulate the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. D. Ravinder, for successfully organising this convocation. I know how difficult his job is. I am told he is doing a very fine job in managing the affairs of this University. I wish him all the best. I hope that the student community and the faculty bring more laurels to this university under his leadership.

I thank the Chief Justice of Telangana High Court, Shri. Ujjal Bhuyan and all brother and sister judges of Telangana High Court for sparing their time to join me in receiving this honour today.

Thank You.