

VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY



THIRD CONVOCATION

ADDRESS

BY

SRI K. V. RAGHUNATHA REDDY
CHANCELLOR

ADDRESS

BY

PROFESSOR AMIYA KUMAR DEV
VICE-CHANCELLOR

27 APRIL 1998

MIDNAPORE 721 102

WEST BENGAL

Address

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PROFESSOR AMIYA KUMAR DEV
VICE-CHANCELLOR

Honourable Chancellor, respected Chief Guest, respected Vice-Chancellors my predecessors, Deans of Faculties my colleagues, Members of the Court, Members of the Executive Council, Members of the Finance Committee, Faculty Councils for Postgraduate Studies and Council for Undergraduate Studies, Members of the Press and Representatives of the Media, Colleagues—teaching, non-teaching and administrative, Students, Research Scholars, Ladies and Gentlemen :

And Graduates convoked for conferment :

I accord you a most hearty welcome. The conferment of degrees has taken place, doctoral till date, master's and bachelor's of the 1996 examinations except in Anthropology where the master's was of the 1995 examination. Soon will follow the handing out of the degree scrolls, to the PhDs and masters alone including the postgraduate bachelors of Library and Information Science. The bachelor degree holders at large could not be convoked for reasons of logistics. We shall make their scrolls available to them through their colleges. However, we have convoked all rank-holders and merit-earners of 1996, bachelors as well as masters, and medals and prizes will be given away to them. I beg your indulgence for the rest of the ceremony.

When I stood here last year I was looking forward to a number of things not all of which have come to pass. True we have not lagged behind in our everyday responsibilities, in fact in a few of them we have decidedly improved. But we have not been able to fully resuscitate our calendar—only a part of our examination results has been on time and I cannot but sympathise with the plight of our vocational students and re-examination-seekers. We hope for better, especially in view of the further rationalisation we have planned in the result processing. What often blocks the way is the human factor and

we can only make appeals. Lamenting the dearth of 'work-culture' and clamouring for 'accountability' alone may not help, one may have to go on persuading. At the same time our undergraduate students' reliance on outside help in their examination preparations is still quite scandalous. Some immediate reform in our examination system has become imminent. Let us hope that our new Three-Year curriculum will initiate that reform. The new curriculum comprising a Three-Year General Degree along with the Three-Year Honours Degree, with a compulsory language unit and a compulsory environment unit added in both cases and for the General Degree an extra offering of elective subject, is going to be introduced from the 1998-99 session. The language unit will contain an MIL and English as tools of communication. The preparations have begun.

Our first engineering college, the Haldia Institute of Technology, is completing its second year and is largely past teething. A second engineering college is in the offing, the Kolaghat College of Engineering and Management. A medical college is also in the offing in the district and we hope to affiliate it after incorporating a Medical Faculty in our Act. As to the vocational subjects begun by our colleges—and more are hoped to be begun next year—they are beginning to take roots after the first spell of unfamiliarity. And in a way commensurate with that and as announced last year, our Extension Centre has enrolled its first batch of students in the postgraduate Diploma of Computer Application, Laboratory Technology and Seed Technology. And there is a possibility of a similar Diploma in Fishery. Maybe we should record here our rise in distance enrollment this year and offering of an M.Sc., in Botany and Forestry, by the distance mode. The masters that we have just given their conferment include distance masters, our first batch by that mode. And although we are not conferring them their degree this year, our first batch of Geography and Environment

Management masters have come out this year, of the class of 1995-97.

Recently our colleges have got their IXth Plan proposals presented and sanctioned. The quantum has risen a little from the VIIIth Plan. We too, the university, have a higher quantum though a lot of rationalisation has to be done from that. Besides 2 crores is not much money for our development needs and in our IXth Plan headwise allocation meeting with the Grants Commission we could only ask for nine faculty positions, some 12000 square feet of space, books and journals worth 30 lakhs, equipment worth 25 lakhs and a meagre amount for automation. But we have been advised to ask for schemes outside the development plans quite a few of which are actively relevant to us. At the same time the Grants Commission has revised its Visiting Professor scheme and we may make use of that to our immediate benefit. As to the so-called Unassigned Grant, we are using it as enthusiastically as in the last year. The minor research grant has been fully allotted, the travel grant too to a large extent, and though we are still a little behind in the publication head, in the seminar/symposia/conference head we have been most active. The Departments of Commerce with Farm Management, Economics with Rural Development, History, Human Physiology with Community Health, Library and Information Science have held or are about to hold national and/or regional seminars. In addition we have had collaborative events : a two-day seminar held last week in association with the West Bengal Political Science Association by the Department of Political Science with Rural Administration on 'Socialism : The Challenges' and a three-day workshop a few weeks ago on 'Oral/Tribal Literature' sponsored by the Sahitya Akademi and hosted by the Departments of Anthropology, Bengali, English and History. Mahasweta Devi inaugurated it. We also had a three-day national seminar at the Department of Philosophy and the Life-World on 'Perspectives of the

Life-World' sponsored by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research. And sponsored by the Centre for Women's Development Studies did we have a 'Face to Face Dialogue' with a batch of rural women leaders of the Bankura, Purulia and Midnapore districts. This was a follow-up of last year's workshop on rural development and looks forward to action research in which we are contemplating a collaboration with Monomanian Sundarar University of Tamil Nadu and the CWDS. Our research scholars too held a one-day seminar on the 'Recent Trends in Research & Development at the Universities'. And as it were in justification of our growing interest in biotechnology we had a day-long workshop conducted by the IIT-BREF Biotek, a project located at the Indian Institute of Technology, for the benefit in particular of the Botany-Forestry, Physiology-Community Health and Zoology students and research scholars. But that our students are not merely at the receiving end but can also give has been proved when a batch of undergraduate health science students from Mankato University, USA visited us for a week at the Department of Human Physiology with Community Health.

Our faculty research this year has been embodied in our own journals—nine by now—as well as in the papers published elsewhere in the country and overseas, and at the same time by the participation in regional/national/international seminars and conferences. Funding agencies are considering our faculty-written projects and already the All India Council for Technical Education has granted one. My congratulations to Dr Bidhan Chandra Patra of Zoology. My congratulations also to Dr Sudipta Bhattacharya of Economics with Rural Development for the post-doctoral fellowship at Oxford from which he has just returned and to Sri Malabendu Jana, researcher cum laboratory assistant for physiology, whose work in biochemistry has won him a two-year assignment in Kansas, USA—work for which a patent is being tried. Congratulations to Dr Sajal Roy as well, lecturer

in Zoology and on study leave now, for his post-doctoral fellowship in New Jersey, USA, and last but not least, to Sri Sarat Chandra Jana, research scholar in chemical technology who has discovered the value of an indigenous plant in polymer research.

Our library has begun work for its participation in the Inflibnet. Its holdings have further increased in the last one year though for want of adequate staff the continuous cataloguing is posing a problem. Anyway, we are trying to clear up the backlog by taking on some extra hands on contract. We have been fortunate to receive a gift of a good many back numbers of some prestigious science journals from some faculty members of Indiana University, USA. Our gratitude to them, especially to Professors Henry H.H. Remak and Abhijit Basu who have collected the gift. We are expecting a similar gift from Late Derek Gupta's library in London. I am glad to record here our debt to Prof Biswapati Mukherjee of the University of Calcutta for his gift of important reading material in Chemistry and Professor Amitabha Basu of the Indian Statistical Institute for giving away a part of his journal library in Anthropology. Two years ago we received a book gift from a writer and painter, Sri Samir Dasgupta. In fact for occasional book gifts our roll of gratitude is longer. Recently we have been offered a part of Late Prof Dinesh Chandra Biswas's library who taught two decades at Jadavpur University and among whose students were two of our present English faculty. Our gratitude to Sm Sephali Biswas. Our gratitude also goes out to all recent endowment-creators and prize-givers. They are helping us build up. Late Prof Bhupesh Chandra Mukherjee's daughter Prof Chitra Adhikary has just proposed an endowment to be created by her and her brother Prof Badal Mukherjee in the name of their father, our founder Vice-Chancellor who died a few months ago. On our part we have decided to perpetuate his memory by naming our old conference hall Bhupesh Mukherjee Memorial Hall.

Our second Vidyasagar Memorial Lecture was given last week by Sri Sisir Kumar Das, Tagore Professor of Bengali at the University of Delhi. He spoke on the woman and language questions in Vidyasagar. He wanted to speak on the religion question too, but didn't have the time. It will be included in the book which will be published before long. We have not yet been able to hold the Quit India Memorial Lecture this year. We hope to do better in the future. As to invited lectures we have had many including a series organised by the Department of Political Science with Rural Administration on the occasion of the Fifty Years of our Independence. Besides the Vidyasagar University Teachers' Association has been active in its lecture forum. And the Vidyasagar University Officers' Association too came forward and held a seminar on 'Education in India and the Policy of the Government of West Bengal'. Our students too have been active. They held their campus competitions as in the last years and are planning bigger events involving affiliated colleges in celebration of the Fifty Years of Independence. And here on this ground they had their annual freshers' welcome and cultural function the past two days. In inter-university sports our students have done well as before. In football they came out victorious in the eastern region and went up to the national semifinal. In inter-university youth festival as well our students did very well. The quiz team was adjudged second at the east zone level and went up to the national level. All this does not mean that they have been ignoring their studies. As before their performance in the national tests like NET and GATE and the state-level lectureship eligibility test SLET has been praiseworthy. My congratulations.

We have been able to fill up our administrative posts except one. In faculty we have not yet been able to fill up all, one reason being the relative dearth of candidates for the higher positions. Reservation too is a reason. In one case even after two advertisements

we did not find a single eligible candidate. Also occasionally vacancies are created by resignation or by an upward movement from within by open selection. There is also the problem of bureaucracy which frustrates speedy action. My apologies. As to our construction, the incomplete third phase which had so to speak been a blight for so long and even after reassessment last year was not getting resumed seems to be rolling now. The State Construction Board has given us a fresh set of target dates depending of course on an even fund flow, and if everything goes well we should be able to commission the Teachers' Hostel in six months, the Postgraduate Boys' Hostel in nine months and the Non-Teaching Staff Hostel in a year. The annexe to the Postgraduate Girls' Hostel that we have been building is nearly complete and we shall be able to provide accommodation to another forty girl students from the next academic session. We have also built a small vertical extension to our academic block which is being furnished now for library and administrative extension. I am glad to report that more construction is in the offing, a Distance Education building with provision for a full-fledged Guest House and a good-size auditorium. In a year or so our campus will begin to look less bare and let us hope that if not the next Convocation, the one after will be held indoors unswayed by weather threats. Most of our construction funds are coming from the State Government. A small part also came from the UGC and we too are making our own contribution. The last two projects have been taken up by our Directorate of Distance Education.

A Vice-Chancellor looks for a lot of generosity and I am grateful to all—my colleagues and my students, members of the various bodies and committees who have been framing policies and helping in the framing of policies, the administration that has been ever mindful of the rules, authorities of affiliated colleges who have been helping in implementing our merit-based admission policy and in carrying out

whatever examination reforms that we are introducing in consultation with them and their faculty, the State Government for continuous support, the University Grants Commission for its attempt to understand the problems of a small and late-started university in the realm of an endless fund crunch, the neighbour Indian Institute of Technology and the other universities of the state who have been helping us in so many ways, the State Council of Higher Education for occasional guidance, our prospective collaborators, and fund-giving agencies who are listening to us with patience and beginning to recognise us in terms of the contribution we hope make to the processes of development, and last but not least, our friends who take a university as a serious proposition and our name as an occasion for encouragement. I am grateful to Professor Irfan Habib for his kind acceptance of our invitation to be our Chief Guest today. His presence is a rare honour to us. He is not only an eminent historian but a scholar with a rare sense of history. And his intellectual integrity will always be an exemplum. We are eagerly looking forward to his words. As to our Chancellor, he never says no to us. He holds the highest office in the state, yet his simplicity is exemplary. No words can express our gratitude to him.

May I congratulate you all, graduates whose degrees have been conferred upon you today and who are going to receive your scrolls from us. Congratulations, you rank-holders and merit-earners! And in absentia may I also congratulate those graduates who could not personally appear and who could not be convoked here by us. May I wish that you use your education not only as a tool but also as a weapon to fight injustice and bigotry. My very best wishes to you all.