VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY

Seventh Annual Convocation

Address by

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Your Excellency the Chancellor, Esteemed Vice-Chancellor, Members of the Court and the Executive Council, Professor A.P. Mitra, Prof. C.N.R. Rao, Khaled Chaudhury, Sri Soumitra Chattopadhyay, my dear students, and distinguished guests

1.00 I feel deeply honoured to have been called upon to deliver the Seventh Convocation address of the Vidyasagar University. Medinipur holds a special place in our history. It is the birth place of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a great scholar and social reformer. During our freedom struggle, Medinipur played a glorious role. The names of Khudiram Bose and Matangini Hazra shall be always remembered. In recent times, the achievements of the District in literacy and rural sanitation did us proud. It is my good fortune that I stand on the sacred soil of Medinipur to speak before this august gathering.

I am not an academic or intellectual and except for a three year stint of instructional appointment as Senior Directing Staff at the National Defence College, New Delhi, the country's premier military training institution, I held assignments under the State and Central Governments.

1.01 My last appointment as Director General, Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) under the Ministry of Rural Development gave me an opportunity to participate in efforts to support the "Third Sector" meaning thereby the Community Based Organisations of all types, involved in social and economic development and development and dissemination of appropriate rural technology through a project support mode. Just to give an idea of the work being done by CAPART : since its inception 9000 voluntary organisations received support for implementing about 20000 projects involving sanction of Rs 603 crores in wide ranging fields -- combating natural calamities like earthquake in Gujarat and Uttaranchal, super cyclone in Orissa, fighting poverty by mobilising the rural poor in implementing various income generating schemes, developing watersheds with people's participation, improving water quality, rain water harvesting and drought proofing, preserving environment

by taking up social forestry, organic farming and experimenting with traditional and innovative technologies for improvement in farm yields and helping the physically and mentally challenged to get rehabilitated within the community.

1.02 Currently about 3500 projects are on going spread over the entire country. These projects reflect the commitment and varying degrees of success and the effort of the third sector to deal with the leading issues of economic and social development in rural areas and include a scheme to set up Technology Resource Centres - which are S&T oriented VOs to serve as a link between the users of technology and the developers of technology and must have the capacity to adapt the technology developed by the scientific system to the specific needs of the rural community. This may be of some interest to the scholars and scientists present here as this sector brings CAPART into contact with DST, DBT, ICAR, Planning Commission and CSIR institutions. The recent Policy Guidelines allow CAPART support only to innovative and integrated projects. Our Vision Statement envisages establishment of 100 Technology Resource Centres over the next 10 years. Therefore, CAPART is now in the process of forging links with the Universities to involve the expertise of the Faculty and the students in expanding not only the TRC network but also the range of collaborative programmes because I feel that without participation of the Higher Educational Institutions, it will not be possible to create a S&T system capable of developing and disseminating appropriate rural technology and to achieve the projected expansion of the TRC network given the slow growth of the capable S&T oriented voluntary organisations in the country.

1.03 It is in the context that I have had the privilege of an interaction with Dr Mukhopadhyay, the esteemed Vice-Chancellor, at Delhi regarding a possible role of Vidyasagar University in rural technology with CAPART support and he referred to the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty First Century made at the UNESCO Conference at Paris in October 1998 and I quote :

"Higher education should reinforce its role of service to society, especially its activities aimed at eliminating poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger, environmental degradation and disease, mainly through an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach in the analysis of problems and issues.

In establishing priorities in their programme and structures, higher education institutions should use their autonomy and high academic standards to contribute to the sustainable development of the society and to the resolution of the issues facing the society of the future ...."

2.00 I have been asked basically to examine the aforesaid concept and how we could make it happen by an appropriate action programme. Since the concept covers the entire gamut of societal development and my experience has been largely in areas of agriculture and rural development, I would concentrate on the role of the higher education particularly S&T streams in rural development. This has relevance to Vidyasagar University as it is located in a rural setting. I will first project an overview of the rural development scenario and the existing arrangements for transfer of technology and thereafter proceed to suggest an Action Plan for ensuring active involvement of the University system as envisaged in the resolutions passed in the UNESCO conference.

2.01 Where do we stand in absolute and relative terms in our efforts to eradicate rural poverty, illiteracy, insanitary environment, infrastructural bottlenecks, grossly inadequate health care, and safe drinking water and host of other facilities and conditions essential for a higher quality of life? A detailed treatment of these aspects is not possible here, and I could therefore only highlight the major achievements, failures and challenges.

2.02 Rural poverty has come down from 35% about a decade ago to 26% of the rural population according to the new method of calculating consumption expenditure. However, in absolute terms, 26-27 crores of Indians are still facing extreme forms of deprivation including malnutrition and semi-starvation. Several schemes to provide safe drinking water from public sources have covered about 84% of the population. The Adult literacy levels in rural areas have reached 50% in many States and remarkable progress has taken place in the nineties in several tradition bound Northern societies particularly in UP, MP and Rajasthan. Rural connectivity is improving and will get a big boost with the

launching of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and power supply, through erratic in most rural areas with a generous dose of load shedding, had reached 85% of 5,87,288 villages of the country by March 1996. As many as 13 States in the country have achieved 100% rural electrification. However, little progress could be achieved in rural sanitation as 84% of the people have no access to sanitation and the status of rural health care is not only poor but getting poorer due to higher cost of delivery system and lack of awareness about linkages between health care, sanitation and drainage and safe drinking water. Several studies carried out by the World Bank in the developing countries confirmed that in the absence of sanitation the benefits of health care system would be "hugely reduced". Over half of India's 593 districts is facing water quality problem and in places, as in southern part of Bengal, it has taken the shape of arsenic poisoning and in parts of UP and Rajasthan, excessive fluoride causing wide-spread incidence of flurosis. Across the country soil and water resources have deteriorated due to unsustainable and unscientific use of chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides, deforestation and inefficient water use and lack of systematic conservation of water particularly rain water harvesting which have exposed rural people to recurring drought or drought like situation with acute moisture stress, shortage of drinking water. Drought proofing therefore has emerged as a major challenge before the Government and the communities in many parts of Western Orissa, MP, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Telangana region of A.P. Water security therefore must be treated as a major action point and there is need for a pro-poor water policy. Prevalence of malnutrition on a massive scale and reported cases of death on account of starvation when the FCI is currently holding a staggering food stock of 58 Million MT, indicate the need for a micro level strategy and action for food and nutritional security.

2.03 Looking at the structure of the rural economy one notices some disquieting trends. Absence of land reforms and continuing pressure of population have rendered many small holdings particularly in Dry zones totally unviable. A recent study by Action Aid, a voluntary organisation, has revealed that in parts of KBK Districts, area under crops has actually fallen leading to migration of farmers to neighbouring States where they could get work as daily wage earner. The livelihood and income security issues have been further compounded by the near stagnation of the rural industries and the Rural Non-Farm Sector.

2.04 A major factor contributing to perpetuation of massive rural poverty is the extreme slow growth and near stagnation of the Rural Non Farm Sector, NSS data of 1999-2000 indicate that 71.52 millions of rural workers are engaged in Rural Non-Farm Employment which is 23.8% of the total rural employment. The compound growth rate of Rural on Non-Farm Employment during 1993-2000 was 2.14% as against 3.28% in 1983-93. The share of the manufacturing and repair services in the aforesaid employment growth was only 27% which indicates sluggish growth of manufacturing and value-added activities. Though Rural Non-Farm Sector contributes about 40% to the total rural income, its potential for generating larger output, employment and income has remained unrealised due to various physical and institutional constraints despite the fact that there has been an impressive growth of the rural infrastructure such as power, roads and market access since independence. According to an analysis made in the World Bank Report No.19471-IN-India Policies to reduce poverty and accelerate sustainable development, "off farm employment is an important means of escaping poverty in rural India."

2.05 The main feature of the Rural Non-Farm Sector is the predominance of "own account enterprises" that do not engage hired labour. It has been estimated that roughly about 77% of the rural enterprises fall in this category and this proportion has remained the same in the 1980s and 1990s. Since these O.A.Es are family based and tiny enterprises they cannot attract capital, absorb technology for production on a higher and improved scale and market demand. Due to lack of organisation, the cost of reaching market for such enterprises is high and consequently most of the enterprises are run at subsistence level or at best provide a subsidiary source of income. It is also seen that manufacturing constitutes about 10% of the activities taken up by the rural enterprises and the major segment is personal services trading and small business. The reasons for such low level of value addition activities and manufacturing are many and complex but chiefly the poor and low level of technology inputs that go into the production function resulting in shoddy products incapable of reaching urban markets. There is empirical evidence to suggest that process technology has not improved in many manufacturing activities in the rural areas notably in pottery, food processing, leather work,

woodcraft and other utility items. These constraints are operating in a manner that each strengthens the other. For example, low level of process technology raises the cost and poor design, and packaging of the products render rural products unable to gain access to urban and richer markets where there is stiff competition from organised sector. In fact the organised sector has been able to successfully penetrate the rural markets currently @ 11% per annum throwing out many rural products even from the rural markets.

2.06 In this background, growth of jobs in the rural areas is becoming extremely difficult, as agriculture is unable to absorb the growing population. The oft-quoted remark of Gandhiji that "Rural India is poor because there is no work in Rural India" emphasizes the need to create employment by technology and market intervention in a sustainable manner. While the reasons of sluggishness of the Rural Non-Farm Sector as a whole require a separate study, lack of an effective system to develop and disseminate appropriate technology to rural production function is one of the main contributing factors.

2.07 The rural technology is currently handled by various State and Central Agencies. Technically, the responsibility to introduce modern technologies in appropriate form rests with the Nodal Departments of the State Government by adapting the technologies to local situations. Thus all development departments, Research Institutions such as CSIR labs, State Agriculture and Technical Universities, Institutions like KVIC, State Khadi Board, DRDAs, DIC, ICAR stations etc. constitute the agencies responsible for technology transfer. However, despite the presence of these bodies and a large team of extension workers, a systemic deficiency is noticed, as the efforts to develop and disseminate technology are (a) diffused, (b) lack focus and are (c) unable to provide inputs including packaging and (d) marketing services. These may be due to inadequate appreciation of the felt technological needs and problems seen from the point of view of users of technologies. To add to it, the policy of subsidization of rural industries has perpetuated the low level of production function. The major weakness of the existing Rural Technology system is therefore lack of a well organised agency on the ground to perform the aforesaid functions as a management system and prevalence of multiplicity of agencies often working at cross purposes.

3.00 Notwithstanding these institutional inadequacies, CAPART has been able to set up 18 TRCs and funded about 500 S&T projects and trying to transfer about 74 technologies in the rural areas. Important initiatives have also been taken by the DST through its core support programme and Department of Bio-technology has also assisted a number of Voluntary Organisations to propagate tissue-culture and various Bio-technologies. Recently, UNDP has funded under its Country Cooperation Framework - I (CCF-I), a Technology Management Package (TMP) for Science and Technology applied to Rural Transformation (START). Under this activity two Rural Technology Development Application Centres have been set up at Regional Research Laboratory, Bhopal for the State of Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh and at Society for Rural Industrialisation, Ranchi for the State of Jharkhand, which is also a CAPART TRC. Each Centre would have about 10 Technology Resource Centres at the Block level to impart training to villagers on application of technical inputs for raising their economic status by value addition and upgradation of production function. KVIC has about 29 institutions for imparting training to rural producers in various technologies and similar facilities exist in States such as Andhra Pradesh where at the district level Rural Technology Training Centres have been set up. An important aspect of these efforts is that these are directed to specific sub-sectors but at the Dsitrict/ Sub-District level, there is no common ground for all actors in rural technology field to meet and evolve a coordinated approach. One of the objects of TRCs of CAPART has been to develop net-working of Voluntary Organisations operating within a region to identify the problem faced by the rural producers and to provide technical solution by adapting the technologies already developed by the scientific system to the local situations. However, this has not been entirely successful as the TRCs came up as specialised voluntary organsiations concentrating largely on crop related activities and have limited outreach capacities. In this context, decision of CAPART to expand the TRC net-work to about 100 TRCs eventually to cover the entire country calls for not only adequate empowerment of the TRCs but also extending the TRC network to the Universities engaged in scientific research so that TRCs emerging from the voluntary and higher education streams operate in a mutually supportive manner. In fact, such a

coordinated approach to the capacity building of Peoples Action in Rural Technology is needed which has not been attempted so far and without which the present efforts are unlikely to succeed.

3.01 In recent years a new dimension to the S&T scenario has emerged with the deteriorating ecology and environment as evident from the growing problem of water and air quality, pollution, insanitary conditions in rural areas and massive degradation of land and water resources. The TRCs have to address to these issues of ecological security and to create strong constituencies in the rural areas particularly among the rural poor for protection of environment and ecology as the poor will always suffer more for environmental degradation than others. Therefore the poor have to be made stake holders in the schemes to protect environment by a conscious process.

3.02 The rural technology package may therefore include not only inputs for existing products but also new elements that can strengthen the rural production function particularly of the poor such as introduction of cultivation of medicinal plants and selected species of bamboos, efficient management, rural energy, environmental sanitation. Thus activities could be mounted to deal with issues connected with water, energy and food security, and ecological security for sustainable development within the overall objective of generation of employment and income in the rural areas.

3.03 The reasons for outlining the aforesaid issues is mainly to highlight the scope of intervention by the Higher Education system. I have not included land reforms and rural credit deliberately as these involve the Government and financial institutions rather deeply and therefore the academic institutions have limited scope for intervention except carrying out some studies. Having projected the scenario, I will now venture to suggest a road map for intervention. It may be pertinent to recall that based on the ideals of Tagore and Gandhi various efforts have been made since independence to create an alternative system of education for rural areas and in fact in 1949, the University Grants Commission constituted under the chairmanship of Dr S. Radhakrishnan strongly emphasized the need for starting rural institutes and rural colleges to improve the higher education system in rural areas.

Subsequently, in 1954 a Committee on Higher Education for rural areas chaired by Dr K.L. Shrimali was appointed. The Committee recommended that "Rural Institutes should help in breaking down economic and geographic barriers between rural and urban population. They will also help to bridge the gulf between culture and work, between humanities and technology and between practical and the ideal." On the basis of the recommendations of the Shrimali Committee about 14 institutes which were pioneers in the field of education in rural areas were recognized as Rural Institutes in 1956. These included Sriniketan Rural Institute, Shantiniketan in West Bengal, Rural Institute, Wardha and the Gandhigram Rural Institute of Higher Education, Madras. These Institutes were administered by the National Council for Rural Higher Education with 75% financial assistance from the Centre and balance from the State Governments. In 1964, a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr Mahonjani appointed by UGC considered the scope and standard of education in the Rural Institutes and suggested that they should be affiliated to the existing institutes in the respective areas. In 1967 a Committee of Rural Higher Education headed by Shri G. Ramachandran went into the functioning of these rural institutes and following recommendations of these Committees, the aforesaid National Council recommended that rural institutes may seek affiliation to the neighbouring Universities. Consequently all except Gandhigram Rural Institute got affiliated to neighbouring Universities. An important aspect of the philosophy of Rural Institutes is that they don't impose their ideas on the villages but encourage villages to evolve their own strategies for development and growth and the institutes are to strike a balance between pure and applied research. Scientific research under the rural institute therefore has been focusing on sustainable development, ecological and environmental preservation coupled with increased prosperity in rural areas. At present, there are two Institutes functioning in India : one at Gandhigram Deemed University and Swami Ramananda Tirtha Rural Institute inaugurated in 1995 at Pochampally in Andhra Pradesh.

3.04 I had opportunity to study the working of these two Institutes which have special strengths in imparting training as well as developing technologies. The Gandhigram Rural Institute offers

Diploma courses in five elective groups, viz., public administration, cooperation, village industries, fine arts (music) and home science. Emphasis has been laid on training in the village industries course that was considered as training cum production unit viz., hand-pounding of rice, ghani-oil pressing, hand-made paper, soap making and allied carpentry and minor industries of poultry and apiary were also offered. At present seven faculties of GRI and several specialised centres such as Rural Energy Centre, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Centre for Enterpreneurship Development, Rural Technology Centre, Rural Extension and Evaluation Cell, Information Development and Resource Agency and faculty of rural health and sanitation, computer education and applications, faculty of rural development - provide wide-ranging training facilities for the rural youth and have enabled the University to develop project management and implementation capability. The University has been awarded many projects funded by various Ministries of Government of India, Govt. of Tamil Nadu and organisations like CAPART, NABARD, UGC, ICAR, HUDCO, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and also by World Bank, Ford Foundation and DANIDA. These projects have given the University an outreach capacity and bring about transformation in the surrounding rural areas.

3.05 Swami Ramananda Tirtha Rural Institute has developed and created a strong capacity to develop, adapt, assimilate and test technologies including indigenous and smaller technologies so as to ensure their relevance to the rural requirements and has established an information technology network through rural infonet. An interesting feature of SRTRI is their experiment on providing four tired approach of education viz., (i) Skilled Workers, (ii) Technician, (iii) Engineer, and (iv) Specialist who help students to choose from any one offered according to their capabilities and needs.

3.06 Under the first tier - Skilled Worker, the main emphasis is either on skill acquisition or upgradation. The courses are offered to students for this purpose. In the second tier -Technician is based on the grade points fixed by the Institute. The third tier - Engineer - entry is grade based. High level technical education is the aim. A full fledged engineer in his chosen speciality is being aimed at. He should be able to enrich rural technologies and productivity. He should go back to rural area to improve rural economy.

3.07 In the fourth tier students are exposed to advanced training and research to become specialists in chosen field. The entry point is highly flexible. No time scale or duration of the course is fixed; candidates can upgrade their knowledge through distance education.

3.08 There are 12 schools in SRTRI in the main campus which are responsible for providing the four tier programme. These are Schools of (1) Materials Production and Audio Visual Research Centre, (2) Rural Engineering, (3) Agricultural Engineering, (4) Societal Studies, (5) Rural Marketing and Management, (6) Training and Extension Services, (7) Rural Non-Conventional Energy, (8) Primary Health Care, Nutrition, Sanitation and Indian Medicines, (9) Bio-Medical Engineering, (10) Women's Studies, (11) Continuing Education and Human and Legal Rights.

3.09 The aforesaid programmes have been conceived as per the National Policy and Education of 1986 and the National Council of Rural Institute at Hyderabad is the nodal organisation to promote rural higher education on the lines of Gandhiji's concept of Nai Talim.

3.10 It may be seen that the objectives of START under UNDP and TRCs of CAPART and the SRTRI & GRI have been broadly the same but with all their efforts and expertise, they could only touch upon a small area while we need massive efforts to cover the country. Though GRI and SRTRI are specialised Institutions, some of their key activities in areas of upgradation of rural skills, rural infotech, rural technology, natural resource management, participatory rural appraisal could be perhaps taken up by any University with a bit of financial support in phases to start with. The challenge is basically to work out the modalities of intervention. In my view, it would be practical to examine first what the University could do "to contribute to the development of the community."

3.11 As the first step, the University concerned may carry out a comprehensive assessment of the dynamics of rural economy of its catchment area, and here this would mean Medinipur and its surrounding districts and identify constraints both physical and institutional on development. In other words the development

experience over the last five decades, which has thrown up technological, social and economic problems need to be studied for the purpose of preparing a list of priorities for intervention. Though this will vary from place to place, certain broad features are found in areas where conditions similar to southern Bengal exist. These are:

(a) a sharp deterioration in the soil and water resources ;
(b) lack of people's capacity at the farm level for efficient water use and management ;
(c) a serious water quality problem ;
(d) Lack of energy security and hence the need for a rural energy system with a mix of available non-conventional and conventional energy sources ;
(e) Need for an appropriate environmental friendly afforestation programme which will enrich the soil and water retentive capacity in all areas where degradation of land resources has been taking place unchecked ;
(f) Environmental sanitation and drainage as a measure to improve the health and hygiene cover of the rural people by adoption of technologies to deal with problems arising out of drainage and water logging and solid waste etc. ;
(g) Creation of a people's science movement by encouraging of growth of science clubs and NGOs for taking up S&T projects with the objective of demystifying science and to use technology for product development and improvement along with the effort to create a scientific temper for inculcating values conducive to development of women and children and eradication of social evils and superstitions ;
(h) Creation of awareness about preventive health care, safe drinking water and nutritional needs of expected and nursing mothers as well as children.

3.12 These activities are perhaps best taken up under the umbrella of the micro-planning which we have been talking for quite some time but have not quite succeeded in any significant measure. The basic objective of micro-planning may be to change and upgrade the production function of a village by induction of capital and technology and to deal with the problem of rural poverty with focus on socially downtrodden sections of the population by taking up projects, which will help the poor, for example, to convert their

unviable agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises into viable units by appropriate technology marketing and financial support. Micro-planning exercise may also look into the level of skills and initiate measures for raising the levels of existing skills especially for creation of marketable skills among the rural youth for employment outside agriculture. In this regard significant achievements made by Deen Dayal Research Institute, a Chitrakoot based voluntary organisation in imparting to rural artisans and farmers and helping them to develop enterprises by application of technology and use of local resources are worth serious notice and emulation.

3.13 It may be emphasized that since creation of people's science movement will require continuous growth of facilities for teaching of science and mathematics, the Centre may examine various innovations available for improvement in teaching of science subjects and mathematics in Rural Schools and for this purpose, selective adoption of some schools at the primary, middle level and High School level may be necessary to create some successful models for replication by State agencies.

3.14 It is not difficult to set tasks but it is really difficult to make a beginning to accomplish these tasks. For this I suggest the Universities may on the basis of their analysis of these priorities, decide their "core competence" in terms of the ability to regionalise the relevant disciplines to cater to the requirements of the project area as this will constitute the main strength and foundation of its outreach capacity. It may be good idea to set up a Centre for Rural Development within an University with a well defined area of operation as an arm of the University to spread its social and technology inputs.

3.15 I would like to emphasize that the basic expertise for taking up the initiatives is to come from concerned faculty, researchers and students of the University. To create such a Centre, the existing physical facilities can be utilised and with re-deployment of the existing faculty and staff, the work could begin. The Centre should make special effort to bring the IT to the people by developing an appropriate software package to meet the information needs of the rural people by drawing on outstanding work done by several

institutions like M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and others in Pondicherry area which have been mentioned in a special feature on "Technology and Development" published in the November 10, 2001 issue of the *Economist*, London. The Centre should serve as a clearing house for all matters which have bearing of rural development and may maintain links with institutions like TRCs of CAPART, National Innovation Foundation, Ahmedabad, as a part of its efforts to use technology for upgradation and development of rural products.

3.16 The social science faculties may be involved in drawing up a micro- level Human Development Index for the area of operation. The Sociology Department in particular may study various aspects of interface between the Panchayati Raj Institutions, social organisations and examine the space that may be available for voluntary action even where PRIs are strong and emphasise the accountability of these Institutions to the stake holders. These activities indicate a future training role for the Centre covering training of panchayati raj functionaries, voluntary organisations particularly the VOs oriented to science and technology and for popularising various innovations and technologies.

4.00 Now I ask a question to myself : Is the proposed Centre likely to operate and succeed given the rigidities and departmental hierarchy inherent in our existing system of governance? No doubt, there will be difficulties, as Universities will get into the areas earmarked for Government departments. Experience of many CSIR and ICAR Scientists suggest that there is a cultural problem of adjustment between the scientists, academics and the officials. There is a mindset among the officials which sees Universities primarily as educational institutions and sources of endemic student unrest and the Departments generally feel that they are best equipped to deal with technical problems. It is almost like the case of "Two cultures" that Lord C.P. Snow analysed in his classic essay defining how the culture of science and humanities are not having a meeting ground. Nevertheless this gap has to be bridged and one way to do it is to involve the higher educational institutions in the development

process directly through the aforesaid mechanism of creating a Centre to act as a development think-tank in the region and to support the work of the development departments by a suitable coordination mechanism. If this idea is accepted and operationalised, a system and strategy may emerge. To quote Carl Von Clausewitz, "strategy was not a lengthy action plan. It was the evolution of a Central idea through continually changing circumstances." To take first step is therefore the most important.

4.01 When we became free in 1947 there were only 18 Universities and today there are 214 Universities and equivalent institutions including six Open Universities, 550 Engineering and Technical Colleges, 655 Medical Colleges and nearly 600 Management Institutions, 700 Teacher Education and Colleges and 1100 Polytechnics. If only some of these institutions could develop the outreach capacities on the lines suggested above and mobilise project funds from the available sources, the Higher Educational Institutions could contribute significantly to achieve the objectives of the UNESCO declaration. It is my earnest request to the learned and distinguished faculty and students present here to consider these proposals and to initiate action for establishment of a Centre to reach your knowledge to the people for all - round progress of the society.

5.0 Before I conclude, I wish to congratulate all who will be receiving their degrees in the Convocation and offer my very best wishes to them. Today is an important milestone in your life and the education that you have received will be the foundation on which your future will be built. Irrespective of whatever career you may pursue, my appeal to you is to regard your work and career as a process of self-development and not merely a source of livelihood and to strive for excellence. If you do so you will get due recognition and satisfaction in trying to become a better human being.

5.01 I express my gratitude and thanks to His Excellency the Chancellor and the esteemed Vice-Chancellor, Members of the Court and

Executive Council and distinguished guests for giving me this opportunity to be with you today and share some of my ideas. I conclude with a quotation from "Thoughts and Aphorisms' by Sri Aurobindo:

I am not a Bhakta,
I am not a Jnani,
I am not a worker for the Lord,
What am I then?

A tool in the hands of my Master,
A flute blown upon by the divine Herd-Boy
A leaf driven by the breath of the Lord.

NAMASHKAR - VANDE MATARAM