

Gateway to Knowledge

Second Inter-University Panel Discussion Competition for 'Governor–Chancellor's Cup' at M. S. Swaminathan Conference Hall, OUAT, Bhubaneswar on 17.3.2010

I feel extremely happy to be at the Second Inter University Panel Discussion Competition for Governor – Chancellor's Cup and listened to our enthusiastic participants. With their participation, they all have elevated the spirit behind the competition and more so made the event a great success. Let me at the outset, extend my good wishes to all the participating teams from different universities in the State and congratulate them for their participation in true spirit. It is indeed very heartening to see the interest of the students to this competition which has certainly increased from that during last occasion. I was enquiring from the Vice-Chancellors who were making final selection of their respective Universities and their reply on the response of the students has not only given me lot of satisfaction but also encouraged me to go ahead in conceptualizing initiatives like this panel discussion for the good of our young men and women. Every society or nation, if it has to grow and prosper, has to have a vision. This vision is to be shaped by the younger generation of which constitutes 65 per cent of our population.

I would also like to congratulate Prof. D. P. Ray, Vice-Chancellor, OUAT and his team for successfully holding the event. Their effort has added new dimensions to this competition which is only in its second year. I was there in the first edition of the competition and I am happy that the very purpose behind the competition is making inroads into the minds of the students and in the process making them come out freely with their views and concerns. Let me share with you why I conceived such an event. It is because to make our youth aware of their duty and responsibility in the wake of developments and challenges around them and prepare them accordingly. Our youth should be sensitized towards vital issues and discuss freely and become a part of a larger national campaign. The whole process is designed to put to test the leader in our students. Voice of our students does count a great deal as it shows the

resolve to turn the dream into reality. I am greatly impressed the way our participants have presented themselves and expressed freely their views which are no doubt very promising. I am sure, the competition will go a long way in days to come inspiring and encouraging our young men and women to give wings to their imagination.

The youths have always fascinated me with their youthful spirit and vigour. When they are convinced they are sure to achieve it with determination and dedication. They have been the harbingers of change right from the days of Independence. The youth bring freshness required in addressing an issue with exuberant energy and passion. Today, I feel very happy to be amongst our students who are full of enthusiasm and zeal.

My dear students, all of you will be taking different professions. But always remember the basic values in life. Adhering to noble thoughts and fundamental principles like honesty, truthfulness, and compassion will lead you successfully in whatever walk of life you may be in. The teachings of our great persons like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and others who always placed the nation and the people before self are of universal and eternal relevance and should be followed in letter and spirit.

When we look around us today, we find to our utter dismay that violence, conflict and exploitation spread everywhere and one gets frightened thinking the gloomy future. Serious threats like terrorism, violence from sheer intolerance threaten to dismantle our social fabric and also our unity and integrity. Our youth should be the messengers of love and compassion and build a peaceful society setting the disorderliness into order.

My dear students, you have to rise up to the occasion and contribute your lot in the building of a better and stronger nation. While striving for individual excellence and well being in your respective profession you cannot afford to remain indifferent to the challenges confronting us even today, 62 years after independence, like poverty, illiteracy, inadequate health care, malnutrition, ignorance, and social discrimination. A sizeable section of our population continues to lead a life of marginal existence. We cannot leave it all to the

Government to solve all problems. After all, it is doing its best and as a result of this, there have been significant changes. But it is each one of us who has to contribute in addressing various problems. Here I am reminded of what Netaji had said and I quote, "Whenever the older generation of leaders have failed, youth have become self-conscious and have taken upon themselves the responsibility of re-constructing society and of guiding it on towards a better and noble state of existence". I want our youth to rise up to the occasion and build a better and stronger India.

I am happy to learn that two subjects, "Role of the Education in Nation Building" and "Women Empowerment" have been selected for final discussion. These are considered the burning issues for the development of our State and the country in general. Education is the key factor determining the nation's progress. It is a dynamic process which helps us mould the personality, the character and behaviour of a person in a positive and constructive way. Today we are living in a knowledge society or a 'Gyana Yug'. The key to knowledge is education and education is gateway to knowledge. As is said, only knowledge is power; it gives freedom and leads to permanent happiness. Education is the most important element for growth.

The state of Orissa does not appear to be performing well in terms of literacy particularly among STs and SCs. We must concentrate particularly on tribals as they have poorest literacy rate of 25% among girls and 50% literacy among boys. The challenge has to be taken and the battle against illiteracy has to be won. Poverty and illiteracy are two sides of a coin. One breeds another. As I say, "Poverty leads to illiteracy but literacy drives away poverty." I appeal to you to take forward the movement of 'Gyanaloka' and remove black spots of illiteracy and poverty from the beautiful face of Orissa.

Women empowerment is not just a mere slogan, it is the need of the hour to make our women aware of their rights and able to lead a life of dignity. The recent Women Reservation Bill passed in Rajya Sabha is a great step in enabling the women play a larger role in our politics. In spite of legislations and effort of women activists it is very unfortunate that our

sisters and daughters are victims of discrimination, degradation and exploitation. We have to stop this unhealthy practice.

Role of women in a healthy society is indispensable. However, illiteracy among them is the biggest hurdle in their progress and awareness. So our priority should be to encourage women towards education and in doing so they will become conscious of their roles. It will lead to development in the society. The discussion on the role of education in nation building and in empowering the women is very relevant and useful. I am sure our youth must have been benefited a lot from the discussion and also the views of our participants have been extraordinary. It shows the purpose and they will surely achieve success with their determination and commitment.

With these words, I congratulate the participants who have been successful in today's competition and wish them very best in life. I also tell to those who are not successful this time not to feel dishearten and make every effort so that you will be successful next time. It has been a very wonderful time with the participants and I enjoy every moment and look forward to the next year with great hope.

Jai Hind.