

A Nation of Young People

Speech on the Occasion of the 68th Foundation Day of Utkal University, Bhubaneswar on 27.11.2010

I deem it a great pleasure to be here on the 68th Foundation Day of Utkal University. As the Chancellor of the University, I extend my hearty greetings and good wishes to you all. I take this opportunity to pay my respectful tribute to those great souls who were instrumental in establishment of this premier centre of higher learning. As we are all aware, during its sixty-eight years of glorious existence, the University has made an immense contribution to the shaping of modern Orissa and of modern India. Its alumni have distinguished themselves in many fields of excellence in India and abroad and brought glory to their alma mater. However, as times change, new challenges are being faced by institutions like old universities and their survival as centres of excellence depends on their willingness to redefine their roles in a changing world. Universities will be able continue to provide leadership only when they treat a challenge as an opportunity. I am confident that Utkal University having such long experience will be able to prepare itself ideally to measure up to the challenges thrown up by the new millennium.

Let me at the outset focus on what sets the twenty first century apart from the one preceding it. More than ever before, knowledge has been recognized as the driving force of development. Nations now rise or fall, prosper or decline depending on whether they are able to create and disseminate knowledge, not on whether they are materially prosperous or militarily superior. In fact, prosperity is now increasingly seen to be flowing from the way societies organize themselves around acquiring and managing knowledge. We are, therefore, not only talking about knowledge societies but about knowledge economies, economies where innovations based on application of new knowledge strengthen the economic foundation of societies, where solutions to problems of societies are looked for in universities, libraries, laboratories, research institutes and in the inputs from think-tanks.

In this context, it is not surprising therefore that the National Knowledge Commission has been set up by the Government of India to address the problems facing the country today and to lead it towards a prosperous and vibrant future. Educational

institutions are now seen as key players in the process of human development. The emphasis is increasingly on developing the rich human capital available in the country in abundance. The goals the Commission has set out to achieve include expansion, inclusion and excellence in the field of education. Universities are now finding themselves at the very centre of things and are entrusted with the task of training and developing vital human resources essential for giving India a pride of place among the comity of nations.

I may mention here that, unlike many other countries in the world today India is uniquely placed to reap rich benefits of a knowledge society and knowledge economy. Highly developed countries find themselves saddled with a large aging population. By contrast, India is a young nation, I mean a nation of young people as we have more than 55 percent of the population whose age is around 25 years or below. It is these young men and women who make the future of our country appear so bright. The energy and optimism of the young, their willingness to take risks and accept change and their ability to innovate are an invaluable asset any country should cherish and be proud of. It is true that, as a developing nation, India faces the task of overcoming poverty, illiteracy and hunger as formidable, but I have no doubt that the immense potential of India's youth is equal to this daunting task. Actualizing this potential and translating it into concrete skills that would offer solutions to these problems is the responsibility of our institutions of higher learning.

It gives me great satisfaction to state here that Utkal University has geared itself to perform this historic task. Let me take this opportunity to warmly welcome new members of faculty, many of whom are young and have joined this University recently. They have brought new vigour and vitality to the premier University of the state. It is heartening to note that the University has taken steps to enter into a dialogue with institutions of higher learning in India and abroad, a dialogue which promises to be intellectually enriching and academically productive. MOUs have been signed with several leading research Organizations such as CIPET and Ayush in Orissa and outside and sincerely hope that such collaborations will promote and nurture the research culture within the university. I had emphasized on this occasion last year that in present time research is the key to advancement and I am happy to note that this university is giving all importance to

research and undertaking many more research activities. The upcoming courses in M. Tech (IT) and Retail Management and Integrated M.Sc (Tech) in Material Sciences on Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode have paved the way towards reaching people through new courses and fresh ideas. The academic foundations of the University will be strengthened through faculty and student exchange, sharing of the expertise and know how, and upgrading of research infrastructure. The recent visit of a team from Washington underlines their commitment of Utkal University to the pursuit of excellence in the field of teaching and research.

I am pleased to learn from the Vice-Chancellor that there was a recent visit to Utkal University by a team from Washington, USA which reciprocated the visit of the delegation of Higher Education from Orissa in June-July to Seattle, Washington State, USA. The members of the team expressed their admiration for the faculty of Utkal University and its academic culture. They showed a keenness to take part in collaborative projects in various fields of study involving faculty and student exchange. The presence in the team of the leader of the community college in Washington is significant, for the concept of community college needs to be experimented in our own context. In addition, I am informed that Utkal University is proposing to develop a Knowledge City in a PPP mode and to nurture an Innovation University to create an environment conducive to teaching and research in the University. The proposed Knowledge City will, no doubt constitute a hub of knowledge for Eastern India in general and Orissa, in particular.

Amidst all these great goings and development, the University should always protect the interest of students, I mean holding examinations and declaration of results directly under its control and also those who got affiliation of the University regularly and in time so that our students are not deprived of bright chances in building their career. I have been repeatedly raising this issue at different forums like Vice-Chancellor's Conference and I hope, Utkal University will set a high tradition in this regard.

Today, I have great pleasure to present Gold Medals, Cash Prizes and Certificates to successful students for their achievement. I congratulate all the recipients and wish this success will ignite the passion in them to achieve more and more success in future

glorifying individual life, institution and the motherland. Today, I feel very happy to felicitate employees of the University who have retired from service. They have contributed in upholding the reputation of the university and I am sure they will be inspiration for others to take university to further height of glory. I wish all of them very happy retiring life.

On this auspicious occasion, let us solemnly reaffirm the ideals espoused by the founders of the University and dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to the task of building a resurgent India of high idealism and noble endeavours on the foundation of knowledge and moral values.

Jai Hind.