

Convocation Address

by

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Honourable President of India

at the

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of

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Dear Fellow Citizens

Universities are citadels of learning and of dissemination of knowledge. Apart from this a University has the onerous responsibility of grooming a holistic individual and social development of the youth who enter its portals. MANUU has been named after a great man whose excellence as a litterateur, linguist, educationist, humanist and a secular nationalist is legendary. It is difficult to find men of his stature in the contemporary world, leave alone India.

The decision of creating an Urdu University and then to name it after Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a befitting tribute to the great son of soil.

Today's generation of administrators, teachers and students have to model themselves after the great leader who was a truly self-made scholar and a humanist par excellence. He was a natural leader and yet he was averse to personal aggrandizement. When I spoke earlier of the onerous responsibility of the University I meant the cultivation of the personalities of the young scholars of MANUU on the line-model of Maulana Azad. I advise the young men and women sitting here to aspire to rise to that stature. I pray that you achieve great satisfaction in your careers; but I also pray that your satisfaction comes out of noble thinking and ethical living. I would like to quote here the words of the Maulana himself:

"Be more dedicated to making solid achievements rather than in running after swift and synthetic happiness"

In today's world, greatness of the kind that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad exemplified, is becoming glaringly rare. The sincere and overriding spirit of secularism and nationalism is more and more marked by its absence. We are finding it easy to find fault with each other's sincerity, each other's patriotism and each other's nationalism. Actually these habits of self-righteousness and this denigration of the others' sensibilities are succeeding in devaluing the very concepts of patriotism, secularism and honesty. In such a somber landscape, in such an atmosphere of trust deficit, our trust surplus should come out of our educational Institutions. Education is always seen as the most significant humanizing institution in India, right from ancient times. To be educated has been associated with noble thinking, deep modesty, compassion and respect for all, irrespective of differences. The Gurukuls of ancient India, the Khankhahs of Sufi saints, the scriptures and holy texts of various religions have all been training grounds for lessons in humility, truthfulness and moral integrity. The modern Indian universities like AMU, BHU and Vishwabharati were founded on the same principles and ground objectives of molding our youth as well rounded figures of culture, knowledge and goodness as were the ancient places of learning like the Nalanda and Takshasila. For great thinkers like Tagore, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Zakir Hussain, and Madan Mohan Malaviya the

institutions they set up were citadels for nation-building and for schooling the youth of the country into good citizenship and clean, fearless habits of mind.

Having spoken of this ideal picture, one must of course admit that there have been mistakes. One mistake, and we have continued with this mistake for the last seven decades, has been to think of Education as a means to an end. Sadly, the end in sight is translated as money earned. 'The higher the degree, the greater the salary, the greater the success, has been the way we are looking at our education. We tend to evaluate a person's worth by the number of degrees he possesses. Thus, young persons with different skills and individual potentials are bound to feel frustrated.

Higher Education in our country is yet to move out of the grooves and offer different and multiple choices for aspiring students. Unless a university or a special purpose institution thinks differently and opens programs of innovative and creative order, the students will continue to be dissatisfied. The cafeteria system and the Choice Based Credit System were intended to fill this gap between high aspiration and the training platforms. It is laudable that in the recent years many Higher Education Institutions have started new programs of study which break the set paths and allow young men and women to foray into fresh untrodden grounds. Higher Education then becomes more of an adventure and discovery of new knowledge and skills, rather than the studying out of yellowing notes of

many generations old.

There is another glaring reality which besets the stakeholders in the field of Higher Education. In order to make learning outcomes meaningful, there has to be a commonality of perspective between the Higher Education Institutions and the employment market. Universities and Higher Education Institutions should undertake extension work, and understand the 'employability' and 'market value' of their academic degrees. On the other hand, the employers should re-invent their employment policies, and look for ethical and social responsibility factors in their future employees' profiles. The other obsession with employers is the knowledge of and proficiency in English. The veneer of Englishness is attractive no doubt; and the value of English for overseas jobs and international movement is undeniable. But, the obsession with English should not be at the cost of mother tongue and regional languages.

The most healthy language formula would be a happy combination of the mother and the 'other' tongues. This is a combination which is sure to pay dividends. MANUU appears to be a good model of this formula. It appears that while the University is a language University as per the medium of teaching and learning, the students are kept abreast of the best trends in library skills, research and other advanced skills of reading and writing in English. These students do have an edge over their counterparts who study a single language.

As per the Act of Parliament, MANUU has two mandates that it enjoins on all. Those mandates are promotion of Urdu and empowerment of women through education. Urdu is a language about whose inner beauty and grace, tomes have been written. In the recent years the revival of Urdu is a very heartening phenomenon. But the fact files indicate that even among Urdu speaking families, especially among the upper middle and the elite classes, the study of Urdu is taking a backseat. It is not uncommon to see highly educated children from elite families having no knowledge of Urdu. The responsibility for the promotion of Urdu lies with Institutions like MANUU no doubt. How is it to be done? Sincere following of the mandate, serious work of translations of the world's best texts into Urdu; quality development in language use are some of the challenges that should be taken up.

The second mandate appears to be attended to quite well. The number of young women who are receiving their degrees this year appears to be a proof of the fact that in MANUU women are welcomed and that women are taking their rightful places under the same sun as their counterparts. As a societal model, this Institution deserves to be lauded for the respect that it accords to women.

Universities in India are thriving and the number of universities, both Central and state, are increasing. Hyderabad, this beautiful city with a rich history of learning, boasts of three well known central universities. The question one would like to ask to each of these

universities is: what is the contribution of the university in the development of humanistic ideals, in imparting the values of tolerance, inclusiveness, morality, high thinking and ennoblement of minds? How many universities are moving beyond pure humanities and pure sciences? How many courses are being offered to students which inculcate the habits of mind which cleanse the human character of pettiness?

One is happy when one sees the youth speak on issues and clamor for answers to their questions. But when one hears voices raised in undue anger, speaking a language of violence and bitterness, I feel that the institutions where they studied, the teachers who guided them, and the parents who nurtured them have failed in their roles. We live in volatile times. The world lies vast and mysterious before us. At the same time social media brings the world to us at the click of a finger. We are "master(s) of all we survey", yet, when we look around us, we are only a miniscule part of the universe around us.

Modern education must draw the best from scientific learning and humane literacy. Universities have to create an agenda where the learner emerges as a thinker and a doer, simultaneously. The present day educators must strive to provide for the stakeholders an intensive educational policy framework. This in turn should be translated into meaningful curricula. Courses must be designed to suit the learners' needs. Our youth are ambitious, adventurous and curious. The model pedagogy

which will work for them has to be adopted out so that their thirst for the new is satiated, and their natural intelligence is respected. Give them state of the art laboratories and libraries. Let the pedagogy and the source books be such that the boundless energies of the learners are channeled well. Let them step across boundaries and look out on other stars.

What I see before me today, friends, is promise indeed. I see the grace and culture of a great language and literature, in happy partnership with modern scientific knowhow. My sincere wish is that this partnership shall grow and flourish each day bringing new experiences into the lives of the seekers. Like Ulysses in that famous eponymous poem by Tennyson our youth shall realize that

".... all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move."

Your University has been around for a little short of two decades. It has steadily gone ahead, and today it has a national presence and a very imposing local presence. MANUU is flourishing well, as the accreditations prove. Today it holds its sixth convocation. Convocations are important events in the lives of the graduates. For the Institution itself, a convocation is a milestone of its continued growth and achievements. I congratulate the students, the faculty and the administration on this occasion.

JAI HIND.