



**SANT GADGE BABA
AMRAVATI UNIVERSITY**

26TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION

Convocation Address

by

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President of India**

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SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, H.E. SHRIMATI PRATIBHA DEVISINGH PATIL AT THE 26TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION OF THE SANT GADGE BABA AMRAVATI UNIVERSITY AT AMRAVATI ON JANUARY 8, 2010

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be attending and addressing the Annual Convocation of the Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University. On this occasion, I would like to congratulate the Vice Chancellor, Faculty Members, staff and students of the University and especially those who are graduating today. I also extend my greetings for the New Year to all of you.

Maharashtra has had a long tradition of saints and social reformers. Educational institutions of Amravati have drawn inspiration from such prominent personalities of this area like Vinoba Bhave, Sant Gadge Baba, Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj and Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, among others. All of them had a deep commitment to the cause of education. They understood that just as a field, however fertile, cannot yield fruits without seeds so also human beings cannot achieve progress without education. Education is a seed that enriches our personality. On account of their efforts there has been an increased focus on education and Amravati is the location of reputed institutions of higher learning.

This University was established on May 1st 1983. It can pride itself for having provided, for the last more than 25 years, facilities of higher education in the districts of Amravati, Akola, Yavatmal,

Buldhana and Washim. It is named after Sant Gadge Baba, a saint social reformer committed to the service of humanity. He not only carried forward the great traditions of Saint Tukaram and Eknath but was perhaps like Jyotiba Phule, the doyen of the social reform movement in Maharashtra. Gadge Baba's sphere of activity was extensive and his ability of successfully communicating with the masses was in no small measure due to his charismatic personality. In one of his kirtans he said:

“शिक्षणाने मुले शहाने होऊन सुधरतात. खरं पुन्य
कर्म हेच होय. ज्ञानाची शिदोरी अमर हाये.”

Which means:-

Education makes children wise and develops their personality;

Performing one's duty is the best deed and knowledge is immortal.

Though he did not go to any University for education, he was a University in his own self – a mobile, walking, talking University spreading knowledge and awareness amongst the masses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current challenge for our nation is to improve the quality of our education at all levels and also to enhance its reach so that it becomes more inclusive. The 11th Five Year Plan has given larger focus and financial allocation to higher education. Its triple objective is expansion, inclusion and excellence. These are important measures which must be implemented with a sense of

urgency. The education system as a whole and every constituent unit – that is every school, every college and every university must focus on how these three objectives can be achieved.

While our literacy rate is 64.8 percent, the gross enrollment ratio at the school level is 73 percent and is only 11 percent in higher education as compared to 54 percent in developed countries. We need to increase all these percentages and also ensure that all sections of society are a part of a knowledge thrust. Development in the country will be sustainable when it does not leave behind any section of society and in which the benefits of education are reflected in all spheres. Experts in rural development, urban planning and management, teachers, skilled workers, scientists involved in cutting edge technologies are all required in large numbers. To meet these vast requirements, so necessary for a nation, the education system must be broad-based and multi-dimensional. Also every educational institution has an obligation to strive for excellence as it will be quality education that can help the nation to maintain its leadership in the 21st Century. Skilled populations, with a sound knowledge base, would provide the critical inputs for setting up systems and using techniques that promote the performance of tasks efficiently, within the shortest time and in the most cost-effective manner.

Universities are centres of learning and there should be a congenial environment for learning and preparing the youth to face

the challenges and responsibilities of the future. It is equally important for education to be relevant. Students when they complete their education should be able to pursue careers and earn either through a vocation or a job. The effort on the part of the University should be to have courses which orient students' development in a manner that makes them employable and gives them the confidence to be enterprising enough to undertake income-generating activities or be self-employed. Moreover, a University has a role to develop the students as compassionate human beings and to inculcate in them values that will make them responsible citizens of the country. Our universities, therefore, should make them aware about our rich civilisational legacy of truth, tolerance, compassion, family values, harmonious living and respect for elders. Education must develop the qualities of the head and the heart and a sense of discipline – of both the body and the mind. Vinobha Bhave, emphasizing the importance of discipline used to say only when life proceeds in a disciplined way, can the mind be free. Discipline demands proper time management as well. You must study when you have to study and you should enjoy your hobbies as well. If you do not follow organized schedules, much time and energy is spent in structuring the day. Our minds remain pre-occupied with finding time for activities rather than engaging in learning and doing innovative or creative work. I, therefore, would urge all Universities to have

schedules which optimize time utilization of students during their university life.

Universities, being institutions for public good and public welfare, have a role in fulfilling social responsibilities. They should have outreach programmes which encourage students to interact with local communities and understand their problems. This has dual benefits. Students can undertake social welfare work and, thus, local communities will be benefited. At the same time by interacting with communities, students get a better appreciation of the reality and challenges of life. This will also help them to participate as productive individuals of society. Universities shape the future of the students and, thus, contribute to determining social mores. It is a matter of deep concern that a number of social malpractices continue to exist in society. It is by taking concerted action and creating awareness that these can be eradicated. I will specifically mention that discrimination against women requires a change in social attitudes. As students in Universities, you should take a pledge that throughout your life you will uphold the dignity of women and you will firmly oppose the practice of female foeticide, child marriage and dowry. Also as educated youth, you will be aware of the debilitating effects of the use of drugs and alcohol. Many lives have been destroyed on account of these vices. Their consumption diverts resources from productive purposes and, as these become a habit, it creates desperate individuals who seek their addictive dose at the cost of

family peace and unity. I am mentioning all these because many young people fall victim to addiction during their college days often beginning as an experiment. I would urge you, therefore, to refrain from such temptations.

The reputation of a University depends both on its students as well as on its teachers. The Faculty of the University is its life blood and, therefore, there must be a constant effort on the part of its lecturers and professors to update their knowledge and to transfer this knowledge to their students with a full sense of commitment. Teaching is a noble profession which plays the important role of transmitting knowledge from one generation to the next, which is one of the highest duties in our tradition. I want to wish them the very best.

For students, graduation should not be looked upon as the end of a journey or arrival at the final destination. Rather the spirit and attitude should be that this is the beginning of a mission, where the knowledge and skills acquired will be put to test. I am sure there shall be many moments when you will find success too easily and, other times, when you shall be puzzled and wish that the hard times would end. Challenges are a daily occurrence, we should not get intimidated by them but rather learn to surmount them. Both success and failure should be looked at with the same sense of maturity – that these moments can also be moments to strengthen the will and also as opportunities to move higher in life.

Hardwork, discipline, commitment and determination will be the tools with which one can navigate through the tough terrains and currents of life and reach the destination. I would like to suggest to all the students of this University, to prepare well for meeting life's challenges and be ready so that there are no missed opportunities.

I wish the graduating students the best of luck in whatever they wish to achieve in their careers and I hope that you shall take abiding memories from this institution with you, wherever you go. Your good work and achievements shall in a way be a repayment of debt to this institution that has helped you to reach this stage in your life. I am also sure that the life and work of Sant Gadge Baba shall always remain an inspiration for you. My best wishes also to the Scientist Lady Vice Chancellor and other staff of the Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University. May all of you have a very prosperous, happy and fulfilling New Year.

Thank you,

Jai Hind