# UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

## 118th CONVOCATION

Convocation Address

by

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*Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu*

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Saturday

MR. CHANCELLOR of the Madras University,
Mr. Pro-Chancellor,
Mr. Vice-Chancellor,
Professors and Lecturers and
Student-brethren !

It gives me great pride to have this opportunity to convey my greetings and felicitations to a senior University at a point of time when it is preparing to function with the vigour and briskness of youthfulness ; and I am immensely pleased to meet the new Graduates who are the rays of knowledge emanating from this Centre of Learning.

The entire world knows that the Madras University is the place where the priceless treasures that are the thoughts and ideas of intellectual stalwarts took shape and grew up in splendour. There is a history for this University and that history has a greatness. All good hearts are enormously gladdened to view the grandeur of the march of the University, laden with garlands of renown proffered by regions many. Marking a turning point in the pages of this history, the Convocation Address today is being delivered in Tamil.

Oh, do see the distress on account of the degree of astonishment in which the announcement has to be made that the mother-tongue it is which is the language of the Convocation Address ! It is not as if I can read out the Convocation Address only in Tamil. I could read it out in English too, although I might not be able to speak extemporaneously in that language. What is required

now, however, is not personal explanation. *The point I am seeking to stress is that if we ourselves hesitate to enthrone Tamil, which is a rich and fertile language native to our soil, then would not our attitude be the equivalent of disregarding and heaping humiliation on one's own mother?* That is why I pay obeisance to my Tamil and proceed to inaugurate this turning-point festival.

## First Place For Tamil

It is said that even more than 2000 or 3000 years ago—in that ancient age when the people in many regions of the globe were conversing with one another only through gestures and wordless howlings—our sweet Tamil was a language that could boast of a highly-evolved Grammar. Any number of examples could be cited in support of this contention. Such is the extent of perfection of our sweet language ; and the yearning of all those who have Tamil at heart is that Tamil should be accorded pride of place everywhere on the Tamil soil. We are striving to fulfil that desire speedily ; and I invite you, the new Graduates, to participate in that exciting endeavour.

Hapless time was when to speak and write in Tamil was considered *infra dig*. In those days it was thought to be an honour only to display proficiency in an alien language. It would not be wrong to interpret that what that Poet of Resurgence, Bharatidasan said :

> *" The jack-fruit that has ripened*
> *on the root itself*
> *is left in the agony*
> *of callous neglect, alas !,"*

was in reference not merely to the misery of young widows but could be taken to apply with equal force to the lot

of Tamil too. To argue that Tamil lacks the means to relay and relate the wonders of Science in a world where the frontiers of knowledge are ever-expanding, could only be characterised as a ruse to slip out of the duty to work for the development of the Tamil people and the Tamil language !

## Regard For Mother

When Subramania Bharati thundered,

*" Spread out to the directions eight*
*and return*
*with all the treasures of Art !,"*

what indeed was the category of treasures he referred to ? Was it solid gold or diamonds or rubies or pearls ? No, what that Poet with the defiant turban had in mind was the effort to impart in Tamil the everlasting treasure of the light of knowledge which could put to instant flight all the silver and gold and gems precious !

Only because there happen to be those who climb on the mother's shoulders so as to fetch fruit from the branches of the tree for the sweetheart, the atrocity occurs here, of Tamil being trampled upon for the purpose of reaching up to an alien language. A second language is no doubt necessary as a means or medium to communicate with the outside world ; and there is certainly no harm in English playing that role. For that, however, to forget even thinking in the mother-tongue—is it not a monstrous injustice ?

What should be pondered is that if a Grammar could be evolved more than 3000 years ago, how rich and fertile indeed the language should have become, even prior to

that stage in time ? Tamil was born and it grew up during the preceding many centuries ; and is it not from this that we are able to glean the glory of the Tamils ?

## Importance Of Learning

The Classics proclaim that the monarchs of the *Sangam* Age did not merely patronise outstanding Educationists and Poets but actually administered the affairs of the State on the sage advice of those intellectuals. The anthology *Puranaanooru* describes how a certain ruler looked after his subjects, just as a tiger would tend its cub. Another King of the same era, Pandya Nedunchezhian, wrote a poem—which is also to be found in *Puranaanooru*—by way of impressing on the minds of his people the importance of acquiring knowledge through Education :

*" The good that flows from Learning*
*is of such merit indeed*
*that one should extend any aid*
*or even part with much wealth*
*and unmindful of the expense,*
*pursue the path of knowledge.*
*A mother to whom the children*
*are equal in all aspects*
*would herself be charmed more*
*by the offspring accomplished ;*
*and even the monarch of the land*
*would overlook seniority*
*when he seeks the guidance*
*of one who is bright and learned . . . "*

This would go to show the devotion which the Tamil community of those times had towards learning.

Are we not amazed when we go through the details in our classics as to how the Government should conduct itself ! The code for Government was drafted, not a mere 200 or 300 years back, but more than 2000 or 3000 years ago, as we could see for ourselves in the literary works belonging to the *Sangam* Age. However powerful a monarch might be, in terms of Armed Forces, his rule was based only on *aram* or dharma. The ruler of those times took care not to show any favouritism ; on the other hand, he was scrupulously impartial, treating even his own relatives on a par with other citizens.

Let us now listen to the actual lines in *Puranaanooru* portraying in robust music the character of the Tamils :

*" O Pandya Monarch*
*towering over*
*all other kings*
*of the land !*
*Your Defence Forces*
*are composed of*
*angry elephants*
*that are trained killers ;*
*frisking horses*
*that are fleet of foot ;*
*chariots myriad*
*with challenging flags*
*and fearless warriors*
*thirsting for action.*
*And these do speak*
*of your greatness ;*
*but the strength of governance*
*is rectitude first.*

*Hence,*
*Your sceptre should not bend*
*in favour of your kin*
*nor should it strike down*
*those other than kin,*
*in arrogant disregard*
*of their virtuous qualities . . . !"*

The object of my listing a few instances to illustrate the greatness of the Tamil race in the ancient world is not to place a history-book in your hands but only because I happen to know that you have the capability in you to rewrite the history which the passage of time has dimmed. I am only reminding you of this.

*If you learn Tamil, you would be able to understand the ancient history ; and if you learn in Tamil, you would be enabled to write the modern history of competition with the new world.*

## Tamil Is Capable

Even ten years back, the determination arose that "Tamil is capable" ; and the effort also blossomed. And seven years back we took the pledge to carry to completion the matter of making Tamil the medium of instruction. But what was the result ? The "language of the stomach" was kindled in order to counter the fervour for the language of instruction.

Would not Tamil provide food ? Would it be sunk in lethargy ? Tamil would bring not merely food but self-respect too, we said and proceeded to marshal evidence for that ; but all that went to waste—like water flowing in

the direction of weeds, like moonlight squandered on the jungle-top. Because Strike-activities and agitations, worked up by kindling the emotions of students, resulted in drawing a curtain over a peaceful background in which alone could proper explanation have been received, the plan for the medium of instruction paused somewhat. Students who are to create the future and their preceptors should strive to dispel this hesitation totally and to accord first place to thought of the mother-tongue.

I would not accept the general argument that they who are proficient in English would be opposed to the principle of making Tamil the medium of instruction. Have we not seen for ourselves that even vegetarians could cook and serve meat to others ? Therefore I do believe that English-learned intellectuals would accord concrete shape to our feelings in expanding the scope of Tamil as the medium of instruction and taking the scheme to success. And in that faith I would like to make an announcement and may it be the first stage for total success :

In the present system of University curriculum, Tamil is available as the medium of instruction for only the Pre-University Class and the initial Degree Courses (like B.A., and B. Sc.,). Tamil is not the medium of instruction for the post-graduate courses ; and as a result, they who have graduated in the Tamil medium do not have the opportunity to continue their post-graduate studies in the same medium. *Therefore, if the University authorities would evolve and implement a scheme to make Tamil the medium of instruction for post-graduate studies also, then the Government would welcome that with immeasurable pleasure and extend all necessary aid in this regard.*

## What To Learn

So many explanations and ideas have had to be given out for the question itself as to which language should be the medium of instruction. Next, is it not an important question to be answered, as to *what* is to be studied ?

Thiruvalluvar who said, " Learn thoroughly," proceeded to emphasise, " thereafter, may your conduct be worthy of the learning". A first reading of the emphasis would not yield the correct meaning. One should be clear in one's mind at the outset itself as to what should be learnt. That one should learn thoroughly is in the nature of general advice. Specialised counsel would be to the effect that one should, in the first instance, decide what all is to be learnt and then commence the task of learning. On that basis, it is my view that if those studying Arts subjects alone were to compulsorily learn one of the Science subjects in addition and if, similarly, those studying Science subjects were to compulsorily learn an Arts subject, then it would go to afford fuller and comprehensive capacity. Combined knowledge of Science and Arts is indispensable for the Students ; and I would like to point out that it would be appropriate to discuss and decide on necessary changes in the present curricula. When a crawling child cuts its teeth, the practice is still prevalent in rural areas to set two plates in front of the baby, one plate laden with dress-materials and baubles and the other containing sweetmeat ; and elders watch eagerly as to which of the two receptacles the child selects first. Such being the case even in regard to children, is it not necessary that a similar choice is made available to the students who are to bring the blue-print of a new era into being.

If all were to become Professors, from where would come the Engineers to construct the buildings to serve as

venues for the conducting of classes? It would be a happy development no doubt if Historians were to emerge in strength and bestow on us the valuable findings of their research into the past, but on that account, could we afford to brush aside the growth of experts conversant with the wonders taking shape in the realms of Science. Therefore the Student-fraternity should shine as Korkai pearls in all the fields of knowledge. It was for this reason that Thiruvalluvar said : "Select with care what you have to learn ; and thereafter conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of that Learning".

## Spread Rationalism

*They who graduate from the Centres of Learning should strive to spread the rays of Rationalism and engage themselves in the task of educating the people of our country to walk in step with the advancing world. To give room even now to fasten the chains of the caste-system and to allow superstitions to rule the roast in the name of traditions would mean that we are deliberately out to mar the younger generation too.*

In order to help the world of knowledge to come to blossom, new changes would have to be brought about at the level of the Elementary Education itself. Having forgotten the maxim that it is Effort that leads one to success, he who surrenders the responsibility for everything to some super-human agency and counts his days in futile resignation becomes nothing short of a walking corpse—one who neither himself lives nor works for others to live. It is to prevent the tragedy of such a lowly state that you have taken the weapon of knowledge in your hand. This is something you should not forget. An idealist is one who stands firm in his principles, even if troubles were to assault him as a gale. It is my fervent

desire that the names of those who obtain their University Degrees today should find a place in that scroll of honour.

## Dr. Anna On Ideals

The moment I mention about ideals what comes to my mind is the Convocation Address delivered by the-then Chief Minister Dr. Anna at the Graduation Ceremony of the Madurai University in the year 1967. I am quoting a few lines from that address as they are eminently relevant to the present occasion :

" The ideals before us are those that we could realise through hard work alone. But in the same row are placed attractively made-up and intoxicating speeches, which are also labelled ' objectives '. The position should be analysed and assessed in a clear manner. We want unity in the country—this is an objective, acceptable to all ; and it is the duty of the student-fraternity to strive towards this goal. No-one with intelligence would acquiesce in the theory that, for the sake of the country's unity, he should consent to the destruction of his language and traditions and accept the domination of an alien language. Everyone with self-respect has got to oppose this. To describe such perverse thinking as ideal or plan is calculated to bring discredit to the very structure of the term ' ideal '.

" 'The common wealth of the country should grow ; and we should work for that '—this is an ideal that deserves to be accepted by all. On the contrary to say, ' Let the wealth of the country grow ; and do not bother even if it were to be concentrated in the hands of five or six individuals '—this would not be an ideal but making a mockery of the same.

" ' To come together and live in cooperation would yield innumerable benefits '—this is a sweet and simple ideal. To evolve a scheme for cooperation on the basis that each one would keep what he has to himself, would certainly not come under the tenets of real cooperation.

" We have to tell the seekers after ' unity ' that they should not conduct themselves in the manner of the wolf which devoured the lamb and proceeded to claim, ' The lamb has now merged in me and from now onwards we two shall be as two brothers ! ' "

If only we have a clear grasp of the precious pronouncement made by Dr. Anna, would there be the slightest room for any confusion in regard to ideals ?

In case those outside come forward to extend appropriate help to the students receiving education and training in College, the anxiety of many of the youths regarding job-opportunity would vanish. Arrangements are in vogue in many countries, under which big Industrial Houses, in proportion to their own requirements, provide for education and training to students and also undertake to bear the expenses of apprenticeship. In our country, however, the Industrial Houses spend very little on this account. Apart from sharing the responsibility for providing to the students technical education and Science education and the training programmes associated with the same, the Industrial Houses should also come forward to bear a part of the expenditure involved. Such a method would afford a definite opportunity for students to go through their period of learning with hope and confidence in the future.

## Remodel System

Discarding old methods, the system of Education should not only be remodelled to suit scientific knowledge and the requirements of the human society, but also an environment would have to be brought about in which there is a positive link between that Education and day-to-day life. I would like to point out here what the Kothari Commission has said in regard to the importance of Science :

"Science has radically transformed man's material environment. In the technologically advanced countries the average span of human life has increased by more than a third over the last hundred years. Science *is* universal and so *can* be its benefits. Its material benefits are immense and far-reaching—industrialisation of agriculture and release of nuclear energy, to mention two examples—but even more profound is its contribution to culture. Science is liberating and enriching of the mind and enlarging of the human spirit. Its fundamental characteristic has turned out to be the possibility of unlimited growth. Every advance in Science deepens our understanding of Nature. But it also heightens the sense of ignorance. *Nature is inexhaustibly knowable*. Nothing comparable to the scientific revolution in its impact on man's development and outlook has happened since the Neolithic times.

During recent years, the number of Colleges has gone up, as also the number of students ; and it is necessary that the standard of Education too is rendered appropriate to this quantitative increase. Not only that, a perspective Educational plan would have to be drawn up now itself, keeping in view the expanding population. The scheme to confer Autonomy on Colleges with a view to improving the quality of Education has also been accepted in principle. It would help to step up the potentialities of Colleges, if they were to function autonomously

under the supervisory control of the Universities. Colleges that have the requisite qualification for this are to receive the benefit of Autonomy in the near future.

For reasons of administrative facility in view of the increase in the number of Colleges and so as to bestow special attention on the Colleges, we are earnestly attempting to establish two more Universities, one in Tiruchirappalli and the other in Madurai, and also to set up in Madras a separate University for Science and Technical Education.

## Towards The Future

You are seeing how, in the assurance that steady and sustained support of Graduates such as yourselves would be available in ample measure, the Government, the Universities and those in the field of Education are formulating schemes so as to ensure that the students of the present are able to pursue their studies in security and self-confidence and so that their future may be filled with radiance.

Just as Shivaji's mother Jija Bai made her son a redoubtable warrior, the teaching fraternity should concentrate attention in order to enable students to grow up into citizens of prowess. In tune with the maxim that it is the duty of the father to equip the son to become a man of grace and nobility, the preceptors should take the place of the father and train the students accordingly.

There is country-wide talk of discipline today. That order and discipline are very, very necessary for the younger generation and that duty-consciousness and dignity should

be safeguarded from erosion have been continuously emphasised by men of light and leading. Rather than cultivate the feeling that law alone could keep them in check, the youths should, of their own accord, come into a self-discipline which would have as much sanction as the law outside. I am aware that youth is that stage in life which throbs which energy. I would also not deny that it is that stage in life when the mind is lured by song and dance. I do not have the slightest intention of stopping all that. But is it not also a sober fact that it is during this stage in life that one should establish—and also initiate plans for the subsequent expansion of —a Knowledge Savings Bank which should contain assets to last a period of 40 to 50 years ? If this stage is let go, then how much of strain and suffering has one to undergo for the purpose of seeking that wealth? This is something that could be forgotten only at one's peril.

A large volume of concessions is being offered to provide education to, quench the thirst for knowledge of and accord upliftment to those who, for want of the ladder of Education, could not raise themselves in society but remained depressed and thrust behind. The system of communal representation and the policy to provide concessions are purely for the purpose of extending a helping hand to those who are flung in the abyss ; and they are certainly not for enthusing those who seek to nurture controversies on the basis of caste-divisions. Educational institutions should serve to make us men and citizens of this country and they should certainly not be allowed to deteriorate into arenas of caste-warfare.

I call upon you all obtaining your University-Degrees today, to combat the atrocity of caste-divisions and the evil of casteism, to bring about Equality in the social set-up and an economic order free from disparities, to spread the rays of rationalism everywhere and to enable the country to evolve into an abode for warriors and a home for intellectuals and thereby help to pave the way for unprecedented prosperity. And as I take leave after felicitating you on the honour being conferred on you here, what more could I say than that you alone could establish the truth of the maxim of Thiruvalluvar that they who set their hearts on effort, without fear and without fainting, would be able to put even Fate to flight ?

தி.மு.க. அறக்கட்டளை
பேராசிரியர்
ஆய்வுக நூல்
நிலையம்
சென்னை-18
அண்ணா அறிவாலயம்