

UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়



CONVOCATION

2009

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Address by

Professor Suranjan Das

Vice-Chancellor

উপাচার্য অধ্যাপক সুরঞ্জন দাসের

অভিভাষণ

Friday, 11th September 2009

শুক্রবার, ১১ই সেপ্টেম্বর ২০০৯

**HON'BLE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY,
RESPECTED PROFESSOR TAPAN RAYCHAUDHURI,
RESPECTED MRINAL SEN, RESPECTED SANTI
PADA GON CHAUDHURI, RESPECTED SUNITA
NARAIN, RECIPIENTS OF HONOURS, AWARDS AND
DEGREES, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AND
COLLEAGUES, AND MY DEAR STUDENTS :**

It is indeed my personal and University's privilege to cordially welcome you to the Convocation of the University for the year 2009. To our Hon'ble Chancellor Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, we are grateful for kindly consenting to preside over the Convocation. Hon'ble Chancellor Sir, I wish to put on record our sincere thanks to you for your constant support and guidance in upgrading the profile of the University, and we do look forward to receiving the same in future.

I express my University's sincere gratitude to Professor Tapan Raychaudhuri for kindly consenting to be the Guest Speaker today. A doyen of Indian historians, Professor Raychaudhuri has been constantly enriching our understanding of Indian history. His recent memoir *Bangalnama*, a testimony to the changing social profile of our age, has particularly caught the attention of Bengalis across generations. A product of our University, he also had a brief stint as a member of Faculty. Subsequently, he taught at Delhi and Oxford Universities to produce a generation of scholars in Indian history. I consider myself to have been fortunate for having had the opportunity to be trained in historian's craft among the dreaming spires of Oxford. Upon his retirement from the Professorship of Indian History and Culture of the University of Oxford, Professor Raychaudhuri became an Emeritus Fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford University. He has held visiting assignments in institutes of higher learning world wide. This University had the opportunity to confer upon him the honorary D. Litt. Degree in 2003. Professor Raychaudhuri was awarded the Padmabhusan by the Government of India in 2007. Sir, we heartily welcome you amongst us.

The University will confer in this Convocation the degree of the Doctor of Literature (Honoris Causa) on Shri Mrinal Sen, and the degree of the Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) on Shri Santi Pada Gon Chaudhuri and Smt. Sunita Narain. I am sure Mrinal da, as he is popularly known, requires no introduction before this house. What I would, however, like to emphasize is that Shri Sen is not only today's foremost film director, but he symbolizes the best of Indian cultural values. He is a living embodiment of what may be called the traditional modernizer, seeking to strike a balance between the best traits in Indian culture. Mrinal da, it is indeed the University's privilege and my personal pleasure to accord a warm welcome to you today.

I also welcome amongst us Shri Santi Pada Gon Chaudhuri, who has pioneered the use of alternative and renewable energy in the country, especially in West Bengal. The University community is indeed happy to have this opportunity to recognize his contribution to meet the challenge of today's energy crisis. We do hope to receive his help in strengthening the study of energy security in our University.

I shall not be perhaps overstressing the point in contending that the major developmental challenge today is how to achieve a harmony between the demands of economic growth and the necessity of maintaining ecological balance. Global warming is adversely affecting human civilization in multiple ways. It gives us immense pleasure to welcome amongst us Smt. Sunita Narain, the distinguished environmentalist, who is promoting the cause of environmental security and good governance through her scholastic interventions and constructive activism. The Government of India conferred upon her the Padma Shri in 2005.

As in previous years, Hon'ble Chancellor Sir, we propose to honour in this Convocation, the attainments of some of our distinguished colleagues through Eminent Teacher Awards. Today we propose to make these Awards to

Sl. No.	Name of the Awardees	Department
1	Sri Premamoy Ghosh	Applied Chemistry
2.	Sri Jugal Kishor Mukherjee	Physics
3.	Sri Jawharlal Sen	History
4.	Sri Sunil Thakur	Medical Science
5.	Sri Bireswar Banerjee	Geography
6.	Smt. Jyoti Das	Pure Mathematics

Following the earlier tradition, this Convocation will also award special medals and prizes to scholars and public figures to recognize their achievements in their respective fields. Eight eminent personalities will receive such awards today.

Sl. No.	Name of the Awardees	Medal/Prizes
1	Sri Chittaranjan Bandyopadhyay	Sarojini Basu Medal for 2008
2	Dr. Shah Alam	Suprabha Deb Memorial Medal for 2008
3	Smt. Chitra Sen	Bengali Stage Centenary Star Theatre Award for 2008
4	CUO Soma Show	Satish Kumar Ghosh Memorial Medal for 2008
5	JUO Swarnali Ganguly	Dr. D. N. Chakraborti Silver Medal (C.O) for 2008
6	CUO Rajashree Das	Pulin Behari Das Smriti Padak (C.O) for 2008
7	Saurav Chakraborti	Gosha Pal Medal for 2008
8	Sri Anandaraj Saha	The President of India Medal for General Proficiency for 2007

On behalf of the University I sincerely congratulate the recipients of the Eminent Teachers' Awards and Special Medals and Prizes.

In this Convocation the D.Sc. degree will be conferred on Susanta Kumar Lahiri, and 256 candidates will be awarded Ph.D. degrees. M. Phil, M. Tech, MD, MS, MDS and DM degrees will also be conferred. The University conveys heartiest congratulations to the recipients of these degrees.

1. Teaching-Learning Process :

Hon'ble Chancellor Sir, and distinguished guests, our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had reminded us as early as 28th November 1957:

The process of education ... must help to build men and women suited to the age and the tasks they have to perform... I do not mean by this that they should be conditioned only in one particular way, but rather that they should develop, apart from the essential of character, a trained, receptive and tolerant mind which is capable of considering problems in their entirety and trying to arrive at solutions.

I do claim with a certain degree of certainty that our University has been able to follow this maxim. I now take this opportunity to briefly submit how since the last Convocation on 23rd September, the University has attained new heights in its quest for knowledge, of course in tune with principles of equity and justice.

1.1 Advancement of Learning :

We have been able to continue with our tradition of promoting teaching-learning process through an equal emphasis on literature, social sciences, basic sciences, and emerging areas of biological and applied sciences. Since our last Convocation, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has extended Departmental Research Support Programme to the Departments of Physics, Applied Physics, Applied Psychology and Computer Science. Currently 5 Departments enjoy CAS status, 5 Departments have DSA status, 15 Departments have DRS status and 4 departments have COSIST/ASIST/ASIHSS status. Twenty new Major Research Programmes to the tune of One Crore Fifty One Lakhs Thirty Three Thousand and Nine Hundred Rupees have been sanctioned by the UGC. As many as Forty-Five major academic projects have been also sanctioned by the UGC under the University with Potential Excellence Scheme. The University is also initiating two other UGC schemes: 'Encouragement to Young Faculty' to support the research activities of

our younger colleagues, and 'Earn While You Learn' project for the benefit of the student community. Our students continue to receive the UGC's Research Fellowships in Science For Meritorious Students and Rajiv Gandhi Fellowships. Research funding from DOD, DRDO, DST, DBT, NTRF, CSIR and ICMR have been forthcoming. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Finance is also formulating a blueprint to provide incentives to young faculty members out of our own resources. I express sincere thanks to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Finance for his efforts.

I am also happy to put on record the establishment of two new research centres. The UGC supported Rabindra Nath Tagore Centre For Human Development has been established in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata. The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, has sponsored the creation of an Institute of Foreign Policy Studies, which will be the first of its kind within the nation's University system. From the present academic session we are also offering a Post-Graduate Diploma Course in Sports Science, a Post-Graduate course in Buddhist Studies, Undergraduate General courses in Women Studies and Biochemistry, a composite undergraduate course in Fashion and Apparel Design, and a B. Ed. course with a Method Paper in Home Science. In tune with the UGC suggestion, a compulsory course in Environmental Studies of 100 marks has also been introduced at the undergraduate level. The M.Sc. course in Genetics, initiated in 2002, has been upgraded to the Department of Genetics. The AICTE-INAE Distinguished Visiting Professor Scheme is now available for the Department of Chemical Engineering.

Along with the introduction of new courses, the process of updating the existing syllabi and reforming the examination pattern continues. While in Business Management Faculty, Bengali Department, and almost all Science and Technology Departments the semester system has been introduced, in most of the Departments of the Faculty of Arts semester based teaching has been introduced from the current academic session. These teaching and examination changes will provide the students with

the dual advantage of greater access to optional papers, and a balanced distribution of the teaching load. Short-term courses that have already been introduced to address immediate social concerns, have received wide acclaim. As a part of its Diamond Jubilee celebration, The Institute of Radio Physics and Electronics is undertaking new initiatives in its teaching and research programmes, particularly in the realms of Space Science, Microwaves and Millimeter waves, Teleinfrastructure, and Physical Sciences. A Reference Centre of the Inter University Centre For Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune, now exists in the Statistics Department. This year the Department of Law is celebrating the hundred years of its existence. On this occasion my colleagues are formulating plans for new academic programmes. Both the Union and State Governments have promised financial help for this purpose. Besides, engaging itself with 40 research projects, the Centre For Nanotechnology is concerned with the understanding of social and environmental impact on Nanotechnology, and the development of a regulatory framework for Nanotechnology.

I am happy to share with you the news that an Education Times-Gfk Mode Study has awarded the University's Institute of Agricultural Science the 10th position amongst the Indian Universities in the field of Agricultural Science. The University Farm at Baruipur was the site of at least 45 field experiments for the Institute of Agricultural Science and the Departments of Zoology and Environmental Science. For the first time the Farm could market its own produced quality paddy seed, which yielded more than Six Lakhs of Rupees. The Horticulture Department has established the Leaf Tissue Analysis Laboratory under the auspices of National Horticultural Mission. The Department of Archaeology has successfully carried out its excavation programme in Dihar of Bankura district.

1.2 Recognition of Faculty Excellence

Scholastic expertise of my colleagues has been recognized both

nationally and internationally. At the end of the last Plan period 135 of our faculty members received national and international honours, while more than 15 international and national patents have been registered in the names of my colleagues in science and technology, especially in Chemical Engineering, Polymer Science, Radio Physics and Electronics, Applied Physics, Physiology, Zoology, Biotechnology and Biochemistry. Such honours as the Fellowship of National Academy of Sciences and Fellowship of the Linnaean Society of London, and membership of Royal Netherland Academy of Arts and Sciences, Swedish South Asian Network, Bruno Kresky Forum (Vienna), Psychological Society of America, International Morphological Society, International Association of Environmental Psychology Census, International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, American Accounting Association, American Society of Gene Therapy, International Society of Hematology and Stem Cells, International Society for Bayesian Applications, International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, Society of Biological Chemists, Indian Chemical Society, and Editorial Boards of *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* and *Studies in Logic (China)* have been extended to my colleagues.

Our Faculty members have received Young Scientist Award, Fulbright Fellowship, Endeavour Executive Award of the Australian Government and grants from Charles Wallace India Trust, Nehru Trust, and Royal Numismatic Society. Professor Shyamal Chakrabarti has been awarded the West Bengal Government's Rabindra Puraskar this year. It is a matter of University's pride that Professor S. M. S. Alquadri of the Arabic and Persian Department has been appointed our country's Ambassador to the Republic of Uzbekistan. At present 11 UGC Emeritus Fellows are attached with the University.

The University faculty members have published extensively in national and international journals, and remain prominent in international, national and regional conferences. A recent survey shows that about 500 research papers are published annually by teachers of the University,

of which 60% are cited regularly. The impact factor of papers published by my colleagues in science and technology has increased from 126.139 in 1997 to 510.67 in 2007. Under the World Bank funded scheme of Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme, the first phase of which ended in 2009, 410 research papers have been published and 10 patents have been registered. Unfortunately, these scholastic achievements have not been duly recognized in a survey of the National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies. I am, however, happy to report that the University has been requested to host the prestigious National Academy of Science Conference in December, which itself is an acknowledgement of our contribution to the development of Indian Science.

Our faculty members are closely associated with the Santi Swarup Bhatnagar Prize Advisory Committee, the Indian Council of Historical Research, the West Bengal Urdu Academy, the West Bengal Higher Education Council, the West Bengal State Archives, the Indian Museum, the Indian Science News Association, and the Asiatic Society. My colleagues have been elected office-bearers of the Indian History Congress and the President of the Archaeology section of this year's Indian History Congress. I congratulate them on the University's behalf.

1.3: International Linkage

An index to any University's international standing is its record of collaboration and networking with leading institutes of higher learning. I am happy to put on record that at the present moment our University is successfully implementing MOUs with 39 world-class universities and institutes across the continents. Our University is the only University in eastern India which has been included in the recently established India-UK Leadership Programme in Higher Education, an initiative sponsored by the Indian and British Governments. The Centre For Nanotechnology has signed a MOU with the Tokyo University of Agriculture and

Technology to work on 'Manipulation of Nano Particles by Optical Technology'. The academic excellence of the University has been recognized by a recent survey which has placed our University in the third rank in social sciences, fifth rank in life science and biomedicine, and fourth rank in natural sciences amongst the Indian Universities within the Top Asian Universities.

1.4: Controller of Examinations, Post-Graduate and Undergraduate Councils

The introduction of new courses and effective continuation of the existing ones would not have been possible without the sustained and unqualified support from my colleagues in the offices of the Controller of Examinations, Post-Graduate Councils, and Undergraduate Council. During the last year, the Controller of Examinations conducted as many as 435 Post-Graduate examinations, besides the Undergraduate examinations under the 1+1+1 system. The number of examinees for Undergraduate and Post-Graduate courses is roughly three lakhs and twenty thousands. I also complement the Post-Graduate and Undergraduate Councils for streamlining the admission procedure. The Undergraduate Council deserves special thanks for taking the initiative for organizing seminars and workshops to improve teaching programmes in tune with modifications of the syllabi and examination system.

It is, however, a matter of deep regret that due to certain unavoidable reasons our earlier plan of having a separate building in the Viharilal College Campus will perhaps have to be postponed. The feasibility of an alternative site for the said building is now being examined. We do feel that without a centralized infrastructure timely publication of undergraduate results will not be possible in future.

1.5 Strengthening of University Infrastructure

I am acutely conscious of the unfavourable teacher-student ratio in the University. This imposes additional teaching burden on my colleagues, which impinges on their research activities. I feel concerned that we still have to continue with the anachronistic system of having multiple sections in some Departments. But within our limited resources we are trying to improve the infrastructure of teaching-learning process. Since May 2008, a record number of 54 Selection Committee meetings have been held, resulting in the recruitment of 96 new teachers, and promotion of 82 teachers under the UGC Career Advancement Scheme. We hope to complete the process of new recruitment of teachers as per the last advertisement of 2007 in the coming two months, and once the new UGC Regulations concerning the revised pay scales are finalized and accepted, we propose to make fresh advertisement for the remaining vacant posts. The Engineering section is constantly trying to upgrade the infrastructure facilities in the University.

1.6 College Inspection

The progress of an affiliating university depends not merely on standards of post-graduate teaching and research, but also on quality of undergraduate teaching. The performance of the office of Inspector of Colleges in maintaining links between the University and colleges, and in monitoring the functioning of the colleges continues to be commendable. Between April and August alone 240 colleges were inspected. Today there are 155 colleges affiliated to the University. Since 2008, four new colleges, all sponsored by the State Government, have been established within the jurisdiction of the University.

1.7 Endowment Lectures/ Scholarships:

The University continues to utilize its Endowment Fund, built over

the years, to organize lectures and award scholarships and prizes. During the past one-year sixteen eminent figures delivered lectures under this scheme.

Sl. No.	Date of Lecture	Speaker	Name of Endowment Lectureship
1	21.11.08	Dr. Jiling Cao	Rani & Asutosh Ganguly Visiting Professorship
2	21.11.08	Prof. Sukla Das	Swami Nirlepananda Lecture
3	13.01.09	Prof. Kanury V. S. Rao	Diptish Sengupta Memorial Lecture
4	13.01.09	Prof. Ram Kumar Mukhopadhyay	Sarat Chandra Chatterjee Memorial Lecture
5	19.01.09	Prof. Mool Chand Sharma	Nelson Mandela Lecture
6	03.02.09	Prof. Chitrarekha Gupta	Swami Nirlepananda Lecture
7	11.02.09	Prof. Debabar Banerjee	Hasi Majumder Memorial Lecture
8	27.02.09	Dr. Rudrangshu Mukherjee	Abinash Dutta Memorial Lecture
9	06.03.09	Prof. Asok Das	Raghunath Prasad Nopany Memorial Lecture
10	09.03.09	Prof. Muntasir Mamoon	Dinesh Chandra Sen Memorial Lecture
11	17.03.09	Prof. Elleke Boehmer	Mohini Mohan Bhattacharyya Memorial Lecture

Sl. No.	Date of Lecture	Speaker	Name of Endowment Lectureship
12	20.03.09	Prof. Viswanath Tripathi	G. D. Birla Hindi Extension Lecture
13	29.05.09	Prof. Asis Datta	Adhar Mookerjee Lecture
14	28.07.09	Prof. Biswanath Bandyopadhyay	Biplabi Surya Sen Memorial Lecture
15	05.08.09	Prof. Upen Baxi	Tagore Law Lecture
16	07.08.09	Prof. Amarnath Bhattacharyya	Jnanendranath Pal Lecture

Since the last Convocation, the Establishment and Trust Office has also been able to mobilize new donations. Some of them are:

Sl. No.	Donor	Endowment	Amount (Rs.) in Lakh
1	Sri Sudhir Chandra Mali	Sudhir Chandra Mali Research Scholarship	3.0
2	Sri Pradeep Chakraborti	Nripendra Chandra Chakraborti Memorial Research Fellowship	12.0
3	Sri Somnath Chattopadhyay	N. C. Chatterjee Birth Centenary Students' Welfare Fund (existing)	5.0

The University's a tradition of awarding Gold Medals to the holders of First Class First positions in Post-Graduate examinations was unfortunately discontinued some years back. We have, however, now revived the tradition. The Hon'ble Chancellor has kindly agreed to be

present in a function on the 16th September 2009 where Medals will be distributed to the recipients of the year 2007 and of the years between 1984 and 1991. The University is also trying to overcome the final legal hurdles to take possession of the Mullick Estate in Wellington Square. I take this opportunity to record sincere appreciation of the working of the Establishment and Trust Office.

1.8 The University Library:

The University Library, certainly one of the country's richest University repositories, is being continually strengthened. Besides the Central Library we have four campus libraries, thirty-nine departmental libraries and two libraries of the Centre of Advanced Studies. During the period under review 30,285 books have been added to the stacks, taking the Central Library's total collection to more than 14 Lakhs, which include books, bound journals, dissertations, conference reports, newspapers and manuscripts. The Library subscribes to 264 periodicals, of which 99 are foreign. The digitization of rare books and manuscripts has attained considerable progress. The Central Library is now fully computerized and networked under the UGC INFLIBNET programme. It has an Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) of the database of books, journals, dissertations, CD-ROMS and Microfilms. The Library also provides access to about 6,000 full-text electronic journals, books and abstracts from all campuses. It has posted an online catalogue of its holdings in the University website. The University Library has established a Digital Repository in the first floor of the Library building. A 'New Arrival Section' for display of newly purchased books has been set up. A special wing has been added to respond to the needs of competitive examinations.

Hon'ble Chancellor Sir, you will be happy to know that the Central Library is being regularly used by 1200 readers, which questions a general myth about the academic community's growing disinterest in the Library reading habit. A Braille section has also been added within the Central

Library, which is scheduled to be inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chancellor on the 16th September. Acting under the advice of the Hon'ble Chancellor, the Librarian has prepared a volume containing a list of Chancellors and Guest-Speakers at Convocations, along with available photographs, since 1858. This work is now available in the University's website. I sincerely thank the Librarian and his colleagues for their constant endeavours in improving the University's Library and its allied system.

1.9 Asutosh Museum:

Named after the illustrious Vice-Chancellor of the University Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the Museum is considered the first public University museum of the country. Today it has 25,000 items of sculptures, paintings, textiles and terracottas, which provide us with a rare glimpse of the cultural heritage of the eastern part of the country. Documentation of antiquities available in the Museum has made considerable progress. One Thousand One Hundred and Twenty Three objects, mostly consisting of excavated objects from Chandraketugarh (North Twenty Four Parganas), have been registered with individual index cards. As many as 299 foreign visitors from 30 countries visited the Museum during the period under review.

With the initiative of the Hon'ble Chancellor a Committee has been constituted, which is considering proposals for further upgrading of the Museum. The galleries of the Museum have been already renovated; new pedestals have been installed to improve the display of sculptures. I am happy to inform you that the Kolkata Museum of Modern Art has offered to restore Chintamani Kar's painting of Gandhiji free of cost. We express our deep gratitude to Ms. Rakhi Sarkar and the Kolkata Museum of Modern Art for this gesture. Meanwhile, the Syndicate has constituted a Committee with the chairpersonship of Professor Narayani Gupta for the preservation and renovation of our two Heritage Buildings: Darbhanga and Asutosh Buildings. I may mention in this connection that we propose to commemorate the 100 years of the Darbhanga Building in 2012.

1.10 Calcutta University Manuscript Resource Centre and Conservation

The Calcutta University Manuscript Resource Centre and Conservation Centre has been accorded the status of West Bengal's nodal centre by the National Manuscript Mission. The Centre's dedicated team has already recorded and documented about 10,000 manuscripts. Eighty percent of the manuscripts documented is in care of the Centre's 'Preventive Conservation'. In collaboration with the National Manuscript Mission and Indira Gandhi National Centre For The Arts, the Centre organized a number of well-attended workshops, seminars and lectures on manuscriptology, storage keeping, research methodology and textual critics.

1.11 The Academic Staff College/ Administrative Training Programme:

It is indeed a matter of pride that the Academic Staff College has been ranked second by the UGC within the parameter of 'cost effectiveness', and third in terms of the quality of programs and level of participation. Since April 2008, 72 Orientation Programmes, 33 Refresher Courses and One Principals' Workshop were organized by the Academic Staff College. 987 teachers joined these courses. The Academic Staff College has been able to develop reasonable infrastructure facilities to cater to the needs of our participant colleagues for the courses. I particularly mention the Man-Machine Interface Laboratory that has been recently developed. The Academic Staff College's publication programme continues with great success.

Our University suffers from an acute shortage of officers and employees, who work under trying circumstances. Despite this, we have been able to initiate some significant administrative reforms. The computerization of the Accounts Office is almost complete. The Management Information System in the Registrar's office is being

strengthened through introduction of online exchange of data between various administrative sections. What is, however, of particular significance is the successful implementation of the Administrative Training Programme for our employees, a programme which is unique of its kind. Under the auspices of the Administrative Staff College three training courses have so far been conducted, each of 21 days duration. We are also in the midst of finalizing the process of recruitment to vacant posts of employees and officers.

1.12 Sports:

The University Sports Board continues to successfully organize inter-College and inter-University Sports events. Our University is within the first ten Universities of the country in terms of overall performance in East zone. Our students have won individual gold and silver medals in All India Competitions. Two of our players were selected for the East Zone Combined University Team to play in the Vizzy Trophy Cricket Tournament, and another two have joined the Indian Combined University Team for the NCA camp in Bangalore. After considerable efforts we have been able to put a boundary wall for the additional strip of land at the Rowing Club, and we propose to use the additional space to develop a new sports infrastructure. The Sports Board operates within financial constraints, and we are often unable to provide basic amenities to our players. But thanks to the dedication and cooperative spirit of the Sports Board officials and members, the University employees, and our students, the University continues to win new laurels in sports and games. I record our deep appreciation of the working of the Sports Board.

1.13. University Press:

The University Press is almost a century old. Supported by a dedicated manpower and improved infrastructure, the University Press

is not only efficiently discharging its responsibility in meeting regular demands of the University, but is also helping the University in augmenting its resources by undertaking external assignments. The sale proceeds from University publications are expected to cross Two Crores and Twenty Lakhs in the current financial year.

1.14. University-Industry Partnership Programme and Placement Cell

I do admit that unlike other Universities of comparable size and stature our University has not yet been able to develop a state of the art Placement Cell for our students. We have, however, now created a new space in the Centenary Building where a Placement Cell office with modern facilities will be located and operated by a professional agency. I would, however, re-emphasize the point I made last year, that unlike other institutions we do not envisage University-Industry linkage merely in terms of campus recruitment. Instead, this linkage is being effectively utilized to develop relevant R&D programmes and teaching courses. Encouraged by the success of these programmes different Chambers of Commerce are submitting proposals for increased collaboration with the University. In collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industries the University's Centre For Nanotechnology is trying to develop a Business Incubation Centre. It is also developing a research project on Nano Solar Cell in collaboration with the West Bengal Green Energy Development Corporation Limited, the West Bengal State Council of Science and Technology and the Catholic University of America, Washington D. C., USA. Some industries, like M/s Engineers India Ltd, have also come forward to award scholarships to SC/ST students in B. Tech course.

1.15. Community and Social Welfare Activities:

The University community has remained involved with a range of community activities: organization of blood donation and literacy camps,

work and health education programme, rural reconstruction and relief work for people affected by natural disasters. These activities are primarily organized through the National Service Scheme which has 128 units located within the University and its affiliated colleges. We remain committed to the cause of inclusive education, and the Backward Classes Welfare Cell acts as a watchdog to ensure the strict implementation of the Reservation Policy of the Government of India and protection of backward social groups from any form of discrimination. Although the UGC initially helped the setting up of the Cell, the entire financial burden for the Cell is now borne by the State Government. The UGC is, however, offering financial assistance for the organization of remedial coaching for students from SC/ST and OBC social groups. The Cell is now planning to have a Cyber Café to be operated by the unemployed SC/ST students, introduce Hindi and Spoken English courses, develop a dedicated library for Dalit Literature, offer more endowment Scholarships, and establish a hostel for SC/ST students in the name of Meghnad Saha.

1.16. University Finance:

The efforts by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Finance and Business Affairs and his staff in streamlining the financial administration of the University have started yielding fruits. Unfortunately, the UGC's contribution to our annual budget of Rs. 183.77 crores remains only 9.4%, while the State Government's share is 75%. Approximately, 8.10% of the budget comes from our additional mobilization of resources, and 7.5% is accounted for by income from other funding agencies. I take this opportunity to acknowledge with deep gratitude the State Government's continuing financial support to the University.

2. Emerging Issues in India's Higher Education and their Implications for the University

The University does not exist in isolation. We operate within a structure, which in recent years is undergoing rapid transformation. I

wish to underline some aspects of this process which poses serious implications for a University like ours.

In my last year's address I had mentioned some of the challenges before the higher education system of the country: the dialectics between inclusive growth and commercialization of higher education; the prospect of uneven foreign competition; an inherent bias in favour of central universities in the pattern of UGC funding; an insufficient utilization of the fruits of scientific and technological progress for social uplift; the threat of a digital divide in the wake of the Information Revolution. We tend to remain afflicted by these issues, although some corrective measures have been adopted by central and state governments. For instance, the commercialization of higher education will be hopefully checked following the recent Government of India's move to monitor and evaluate the functioning of the private Deemed to be Universities. I sincerely thank the Ministry of Human Resource Development for undertaking this step. I understand that a regulatory mechanism for the entry of foreign universities is also being discussed. New guidelines for the use of ICT are being introduced to make it more accessible to broader sections of the society.

However, we feel deeply disturbed not only by the continuing but increasing dichotomies between the central and state universities in terms of infrastructure, service conditions of teachers and employees, and facilities for students. While a state university like ours is forced to burden our students with self-financing courses and increased fees, their friends in central universities not only pay far lower fees, but also enjoy better class room and hostel conditions. Teachers and researchers in central universities work in much advantageous conditions compared to my colleagues. Such cleavages need to be addressed urgently. Although I thank the UGC for enhancing our XI Plan allocation to the tune of almost three times, in actual terms it has come to only Rupees Twenty One Crores and Thirty One Lakhs, despite the fact that the Visiting Team in recognition of our attainments, had recommended an allocation of Rupees Fifty Nine Crores, Fifteen Lakhs and Fifty Three Thousand.

I would like to stress the fact that despite lagging behind their central counterparts in terms of infrastructure, the State Universities cater to the needs of an overwhelming section of the country's student community. At the same time out of the nine Universities recognized by the UGC as Universities with Potential For Excellence, six are state universities. I feel the time has come for a comparative study of central and state universities in terms of input-output ratio. It is heartening to note that the recent Yash Pal Committee Report on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education has stressed:

Ideally all benefits, which are thought to be essential for a central university, should be made available to the state universities.

Only when this is achieved will the idea of a balanced development of education in the country — the argument advanced while bringing education to the Concurrent List of the Constitution — may bear the fruits that were expected.

Fundamental reforms in teaching-learning process, as well as the structure of higher education, are now being deliberated. The spirit of change is surely the sine qua non of progress. I am personally excited by some of the suggested reforms. But the question that I would like to pose is if change has to be necessarily completely divorced from tradition, or can we think of an alternative paradigm of traditional modernity. In a pluralistic society as ours, with a history of uneven development, any transformed structure in higher education should provide adequate space for multiple voices, and autonomy for the institutions of higher learning.

Excellence is today's benchmark for progress in higher education. Faced with intense competition at regional, national and international levels, and confronted with the compulsions of globalization, no university can sustain its place in the education map without a relentless search for excellence. But for a developing country like India when the National Assessment and Accreditation Council could award 'A' grade to only 9% of the 20,000 odd colleges, and 31% of the

approximately 450 universities, when the Gross Enrolment Ratio, itself affected by strong caste, class and gender bias, is yet to touch 11%, and where the problem of regional variations in the spread of higher education remains acute, the question that I would like to raise for your consideration is: can islands of excellence sustain themselves without a corresponding overall growth of higher education in terms of quality and quantity? The Government of India certainly needs to be complemented for initiating some measures for bringing the backward social groups and regions within the ambit of higher education. But this process needs to be accelerated, without which the pursuit of excellence will not have a multiplier effect. Besides, can the university concern itself with excellence alone, or does it also have an obligation to those who fall behind the race for excellence. As Swami Vivekananda observed:

I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated
pays no heed to the deprived.

The other issue, which I believe, needs to be discussed is the subject of the fragmented nature of knowledge being imparted to the students. Interactions across faculties and interdisciplinary teaching and research need to be promoted. The Yash Pal Committee Report has also stressed the treatment of 'knowledge in a holistic manner'. In fact, Indian thinkers over the years emphasized the pursuit of knowledge in its totality both in content and form. Mahatma Gandhi reminded us:

Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body,
nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious
combination of all the three is required for the making
of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of
education.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, likewise, stated:

The purpose of education is not merely the acquiring of
skill or information but the initiation into a higher life,
initiation into a world which transcends the world of

Space and Time, though the latter informs and animates the former. That has been the main purpose of education.

Gurudev Rabindranath also wanted:

বর্তমান শিক্ষাপ্রণালীটিই যে আমাদের বার্ষিকতার কারণ, অভ্যাসগত অন্ধ মমতায় মোহে সেটা আমরা কিছুতেই মনে ভাবিতে পারি না। যুরিয়া ফিরিয়া নূতন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় গড়িবার বেলাতেও প্রণালী বদল করিবার কথা মনেই আসে না, তাই, নূতনের ঢালই করিতেছি সেই পুরাতনের ছাঁচে।.....অনেককাল এমনি করিয়া আঁটল, আর সময় নষ্ট করা চলিবে না। এখন মনুষ্যের দিকে তাকাইয়া লক্ষ্যেরও পরিবর্তন করিতে হইবে। সাহস করিয়া বলিতে হইবে, যে শিক্ষা বাহিরের উপকরণ তাহা বোকাই করিয়া আমরা বাঁচিব না, যে শিক্ষা অন্তরের অমৃত তাহার সাহায্যেই আমরা মৃত্যুর হাত এড়াইব।

Unfortunately, in developing our university curricula we have tended to ignore such thoughts to provide 'education for citizenship', although the developed countries of the West, upon which we always fall back to develop anything new, are becoming increasingly alive to such ideas. I am confident that our University community will give due importance to this holistic notion of education, while engaging themselves in reforming the curricula and examination system. Let this Convocation be the starting point of such an exercise.

On behalf of the University I once again extend sincere and heartfelt congratulation to my dear students, who will be receiving their well deserved degrees. I am sure you will keep alive the motto and credentials of your University. At the same time I urge you to fulfill your commitment to the nation and the international community to create a better world to live in. Let me for the benefit of dear students, who will be awarded their degrees, quote from Paulo Freire, who in his *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed* aptly remarked:

The important thing, from the point of view of libertarian education, is for men to come to feel like masters of their

thinking by discussing the thinking and views of the world explicitly or implicitly

I am sure, I shall not be disappointed when I conclude with the hope that our University community will remain committed to this 'libertarian' view of education.

11 September, 2009

Suranjan Das
Vice-Chancellor