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This is the second Convocation of the Benares Hindu University. The first feeling that rises uppermost in my heart- and I am sure the same feeling would also rise in the hearts of all those connected with this University is a feeling of supreme thankfulness to the Almighty, from whom flow all blessings, that we have reached a stage when we are celebrating the Second Anniversary of our University. It was in the year 1904 in this city under the presidentship of His Highness the Maharajah of Benares that the scheme of the Hindu University was first propounded. In the year 1905 the scheme was put in the form of a prospectus, and on the 31st of December 1905, the year in which the Indian National Congress was held here, a number of

distinguished men from all parts of India met in the Town Hall to express their opinions on it and the scheme received their general approval. It was pushed on for a while, but owing to one reason or another its commencement was delayed till the year 1910. Much preliminary work had to be done before the scheme could be properly launched. In the year in which His Majesty the King-Emperor was to visit India, the proposal was re-published and another prospectus was issued to show why the Hindu University was wanted and what it aimed at. The first prospectus had clearly indicated why it was wanted, but some vital changes were necessary. When the scheme was taken up in the year 1911 it met with great support. A number of Princes and other donors promised generous help to it. Promises of donations of 25 lacs were secured. and then the Government was approached, and thanks to the Government of Lord Hardinge and to the keen interest which His Lordship took in the scheme, and thanks also to the support of Sir Harcourt Butler, the then Member for Education, it was settled before long that Government would pass an Act to incorporate the Benares Hindu University. Subscriptions began to flow in greater measure. Over 50 lacs had been subscribed when on the 1st October 1915, the Benares Hindu University Act received the assent of the Governor-General of India. In the year 1917 the Government permitted us to start work on these very premises.

In the meantime a magnificent site, two miles long and one mile broad, has been acquired at Nagwa which has cost us nearly 6 lakhs, and buildings are rapidly rising upon it. The College of Arts, the Physical Laboratory and the Chemical Laboratory are superintended and guided by Mr. King, the Principal. We have arrived at such a stage in the construction of the buildings that we will have to make a move in July next or at latest in January 1921. In the mean-time we will have the great honour

and pleasure of welcoming. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in our midst and the Council of the University has decided to send a respectful invitation to His Royal Highness. In the meantime a great deal has to be done and much more money is needed. It has been said that in order to push forward and promote the objects of the scheme we should pay more attention to the foundation of chairs and not devote all our funds to building work. Let me assure you all that that has not been overlooked by the University authorities. On the one side we have taken care to hurry up such buildings as are necessary in order that we could move on to the new site. At this stage what is wanted is that we should get much more support from all our donors and I hope everyone interested in the University will help us to realize the money that is necessary in order to complete our object. It is also necessary to bear in mind that we are at a very important period in the history of our country and of the University. We have to bear in mind that apart from the programme which we first sketched out, i.e., the constitution of a faculty of agriculture, the faculty of commerce, of medicine, of music, of fine arts, etc., we require much more money in order to have a library a worthy of the University. We require to have museum which will enable our student to study the various branches of learning which they have to pursue here. We require to build a temple and more hostels to accommodate the increasing number of students who are coming to the Benares Hindu University from different parts. In all these matters you cannot make sufficient progress without money, and therefore I hope you will agree with me that our first necessity at this stage is to get together whatever money is necessary to put the University on a satisfactory footing by the time we have the honour and pleasure of welcoming our Royal guest.

We are entering upon a new era in the history of our country. You all know the Gracious Proclamation which His Majesty the King-Emperor has sent to us. You also know the Reform Act has been passed. The Act may have been passed but the signing of the Royal Proclamation is of even special importance to which I shall draw your attention. The sentiment which His Majesty expressed when he was leaving India on the occasion of his last visit was a message of hope. That message has been realized and you have now in the Gracious Proclamation the promise of full responsible government in the fullness of time. You have in that Proclamation expressions of His Majesty's sincere desire that the people of India should take their proper place in the scale of nations. You have in that Proclamation the command to us all to co-operate with every one to make the Reforms Act a success.

The most important question with which we are concerned is the question of education. You all know that education is going to be a transferred subject, not merely primary and secondary education, but even University education will be a transferred subject. You all know the tremendous opportunities it gives us to promote the cause of education, which is dear to us all, in the best way we can. We have long been complaining that education has not been adequately provided for. We have long desired a great deal more to be done. The duties and responsibilities of trying to do what we have asked our fellow-subjects in the Government service to do, is now cast upon us. We have to survey the situation and to see how and in what way the University will be affected by it.

There is also another important event which affects the situation and that is the report of the Calcutta University Commission. At this important juncture when education is going to be transferred to ministers elected by the

people and responsible to the Legislature, the Calcutta University Commission have published their report. That report is the result of several years of close study and these recommendations are receiving the attention of various Provincial Governments. I think it is not possible to have a full survey of the recommendations at present but I will draw your attention to one or two important recommendations which are vital, because they affect our own work here. You know that one of the most important recommendations of the Commission is that the First Arts or F. A. classes should be cut out from the rest of the college and constituted into intermediate colleges, and that the courses for the degree should be limited to three years with honours and pass courses. Students who pass with honours are permitted to appear as special cases for the M.A. degree in the course of a year. These two points will make a very vital change in the position of the Colleges and the Universities. There is a difference of opinion as to which course will be the proper course but there is unanimity of opinion that the F. A. classes should be separated from the University proper. But difference arises on the question whether these classes should be constituted into separate intermediate colleges or whether these classes should be added to the high schools.

Now gentlemen, it would be venturesome on my part to express any opinion off hand on matters which have received the consideration of such distinguished educationists as Sir Michael Sadler and our own distinguished countryman, Sir Asutosh Mukherji. There were also other educationists like Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad, Mr. Hornll and others, who were very competent to deal with the question. But it seems to us that the matter is of such vital importance likely to affect the work of all Universities, that the proper course would be to call fro a conference of expert educationists who can

speak with personal knowledge and experience, to consider what would be the best course to adopt. I have myself discussed the matter with many of my colleagues and others and there is a great deal of opinion against the view that intermediate colleges should be constituted separately.

It is urged that we should boldly deal with the problem of education as a whole, and not merely in part. If we approach the question in that way the first point for consideration would be, what the Commission have indicated, *viz.*, the question of the medium of instruction. I am happy to think that the Commission has recommended that the mother-tongue should be the medium of instruction in the schools. They have also recommended that in the intermediate colleges and the University the medium of instruction should be English. To these recommendations I would make a little modification. I think the time has come when the vernacular should be the medium of instruction not merely in the schools but throughout the University and even higher stages. I am fully aware that our vernacular does not at present possess a vigorous literature to enable us to teach all subjects in the vernacular. But that want will not be made up by our postponing the beginning of the work in this direction. That want will be removed only if we clearly define to ourselves what is the aim which we have in view and what is the policy which we are going to achieve. There is no civilized country that does not employ the mother-tongue of the people for imparting instruction, higher as well as elementary. Why should we continue to be singular in that respect? That is one of the matters which require consideration as to whether even in the colleges and Universities the medium of instruction should be in the vernacular. You have to consider the problem from the top downwards. Because English is the medium of instruction our educationists have to employ their time and thought from an

early period to determine at what stage the teaching of English should be begun. That vitiates the position. If from the outset the Government and the public make up their mind that the vernacular shall be employed wherever it may be practicable, and that efforts should be made to remove the want of suitable books, which is no doubt a very serious consideration, then, I say the question of elementary education and of the position of English in the middle schools will be better solved than otherwise. In advocating a change let not anybody think that we are not grateful to the English language. I am sure we all are deeply grateful for the benefits which our countrymen have received for the last several decades as the result of that education. It is the result of that education which enable us to breathe national sentiments and which have widened our outlook. Let us therefore gratefully acknowledge the debt that we owe to the present system of education. Let us at the same time discriminate between our duty to the past and to the future. We have had disadvantages also from the system being pursued. In this matter the fault lies more with us than with the Government and I am sorry to think that not many of us have realized the responsibility to our own people in translating works from other languages from the benefit of those who have not received English education. I am not forgetting that in some provinces, especially in Bengal, remarkable progress has been made in this direction. In these provinces also the progress made in Urdu and Hindi is great. But I feel that it is like a drop in the ocean compared with what remains to be done.

The next question is : What is the extent of primary and secondary education to be given to our people? I feel we ought to do what Germany did many years ago, what Japan did in more recent years, what America and France had done for many years, and what England has been slowly awakening to do in recent years. England did not go in for a thorough system

of education for a long time, but now our English friends have recognized the need to put secondary education on a thorough footing. The Education Act of 1918 is the outcome of that feeling. What I ask is that here too the course of primary and secondary instruction up to the age of 14 should be one which will not concern itself merely with the Three Rs. It is an absurd course in view of the progress achieved. We should have a good course which will enable our boys to know something of the things which they ought to know. The next question will be what will be the duration of the next stage. I believe the duration should be from the 14th to the 17th or 18th year. In short the secondary school here should be what the secondary school is in France, Japan and England under the new Act. A lad who goes through the primary course will be qualified to enter upon the secondary course with advantage. At the high school course with advantage. At the high school he would learn not merely what he has learnt at the earlier stage, but he would also be preparing himself to pursue a career in some direction or another. Then the high school would be a real training ground for life for the great bulk of your young men. Under this system the number of students going up to the college will not be diminished, but on the other hand I expect the number will increase and the money spent on higher education will produce better results. The Calcutta University Commission then recommend that there should be an intermediate college in every district. The result of this will be that many students who thirst after knowledge, who want to qualify themselves for some work, will not have to leave their homes for distant University centres but will remain up to the age of 16 or 18 in their own districts. It will cheapen education to the bulk of our students and improve their qualities.

If then this proposal is worthy of consideration the question is how is it to be decided. Should each University be left to decide the matter for itself? Will that conduce to that unanimity of progress in all provinces that is desired? I say no. The question affects all Universities, and I submit that there should be a Conference where this matter should be discussed. It may be that on consideration this view may be rejected, but personally speaking I do not apprehend that this will be the case. The time has long gone by whom merely, arts education would satisfy the needs of the community and in view of the great progress that science has made during the last two centuries, and the tremendous advance that has been made in applied science, I do not think any body will come forward to say that any instruction will be complete and satisfactory which did not provide for instruction in elementary science.

We think it is possible that vernaculars can be made the medium of instruction and it should be our endeavour to prepare ourselves for it at the earliest opportunity. We know the value of English as a language of worldwide utility. It is not suggested that English should be dropped. In a well-organized system of education English should find its proper place. I feel the necessity of our young men learning a foreign language. I do not know any foreign language which can compare in the matter of utility for us with English. For sixty years and more English has been taught in all parts of the country and it is to-day understood by quite a large number of our people. It is also the key to arts and sciences of a very high kind which our vernaculars cannot be for a long time to come. English should be learnt by the direct method as the second language but not as the first language to which years will be devoted for its study and mastery.

I hope that either the Government or some University will call a Conference to consider all these questions and to have them in an off-hand way. We must be prepared to be guided by the opinion of those who have given years of their lives to the teaching of English and the vernacular both in school and college.

If I may offer an invitation we will be glad to welcome friends in the months of March or April to a Conference in Benares. I am sure if we can get together ladies and gentlemen who are interested in education, the discussion will lead to great good. When this has been done the work of the University will be simple. At this stage it is a matter for satisfaction that in almost all matters, speaking generally, the Benares University occupies a favourable position. The recommendations which have been made by the Commission both on the administrative and on the academic side were forestalled by the organizers of this University. The constitution which Commission has recommended is on the lines of the Hindu University.

Now the question that arises in this respect is how are we going to discharge our duties by carrying on the objects which we have set before us. Here we come again to the question of ways and means. They are of two kinds : men and money, and we need both to build up the University. We should realise the opportunities that this University gives and the responsibilities which it casts upon us. We have a special message to give to the world. At this juncture there is a great deal of stir in the educationla world, Europe feels rather doubtful about the wisdom of the course which it has pursued, because it has not prevented the terrible war which ahs attacked civilization itself. We have our ancient system of education which holds up before you the four objects of Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. Are we going to profit by it or drop it? These are questions which we have to

consider. There is another duty. When we think of the great Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and when we hear people dwelling with pleasure and gratitude on the atmosphere that they have breathed and of the ancient fountains which flow there, what is it that we have to do here? When we read of the love of Frenchmen for their ancient Universities and national institutions, when we read of the Japanese showing so much love for their national treasures, what ideas force themselves upon us! We, the inheritors of a civilization which knew Universities such as Taxilla and Nalanda, what have we to show to the world now? When His Royal Highness honours us with his visit, when we expect many other foreigners, we desire to show what this ancient seat of learning has done. Benares goes back long into the past. It is one of the most ancient cities in India. The great Harishchandra lived here and wrote his name for right and truth in indelible characters. Other great men have come and gone through Kashi, and it was here that Buddha preached his great religion. Now what are the national institutions which you can show in Benares? Where is the national museum where you have preserved your national arts and treasures? Where are the national paintings and national sculptures that you have preserved? I have reminded you of these things with a purpose. I have heard criticism that we are spending money to a large extent on buildings and that we are not doing all that we should do. I would only invite your attention to these ancient Universities and the lessons they have for us. Let us all co-operate wholeheartedly and sincerely in order to build a modern Nalanda and a modern Taxila at Benares. Let us build up this place as the great seat of learning of the Hindus if not of Indians. We have a magnificent site which is two miles long and one mile broad and which can be added to; we have got a Government which is helping us in every way and we have got princes and

donors who are willing to support us. If we all join together and look at this question in a broad spirit, if we make up our minds to devote ourselves to the task, I hope we shall soon achieve something for which we shall have reason to be proud. I hope this appeal will find response from every sister and brother whom I see here. It is fortunate that we have in our midst Mrs. Annie Besant. She has laboured long and assiduously to help this College and University. I hope that Europeans and Indians would help to build this great institution in the future. I wish it were possible for me to make you realise and feel as I myself feel that we Hindus have not much reason to feel proud of the part we have played in preserving things which are sacred and dear to us. But let the dead bury its dead. Let us think of the present and make Benares a place of culture for which it was noted in the past. It is for us to build this University so that every inch of this university shall have a story to tell and a purpose to display. It is not a work which you shall look at merely as spectators standing aside. It is a work to which I invite the whole-hearted co-operation of every one who loves all that was great and glorious in our country. It is possible to build here a place really worthy of the great traditions which we have inherited. I ask you not to despair, but to go forward with the determination that what was done in the ancient past shall be done and done better in the present age. You should all join with the determination to realize the past the better in the present and in the future. If scholars and students come in that spirit and if friends and fellow-men in all parts of the country will help us in that spirit. I do not despair that we shall be able to show the same good work as in the past.

Graduates and those who have received degrees to-day, I appeal to you in particular to consider it your sacred duty to do all that you can to build up what you are entitled to call you Alma Mater. Let it be our dutiful

endeavour to build a place for which every Hindu shall feel that he has contributed something-it may be labour, money or thought. Every Hindu should feel it his duty to visit this place at least once in his lifetime. All our adoration for the Rishies who lived in the jungles and sacrificed worldly pleasures for the sake of promoting spiritual culture, demands that we should build this up as a great centre of light and life. I hope you will devote yourselves to the task.

