

येथेआल्याचामलासन्मानआणिआनंदहोतआहे

मीयापूर्वीपुण्यातकामकेलेआहे

अस्मिन् दीक्षान्तसमारोहेअत्र उपस्थिताःसर्वेभ्यः नमः

Shri ChandrakantPatil, Honourable Minister for Higher and Technical Education, Government of Maharashtra; Honourable Vice Chancellor, Professor Pramod Pandey; Professor Jayant Udgaonkar, Director, Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research; Shri Pramod Chaudhuri, Chairman, Praj Industries; Honourable Pro Vice Chancellor, Professor Prasad Joshi; Members of the Board of Management and Academic Council; Heads of Departments and Faculty Members; Distinguished Invitees; Parents; and most important of all, graduating students,

Let me first thank the Government of Maharashtra for having conferred this signal honour on me. मीआभारीआहेआणिभारावूनगेलोआहे. This is my first Convocation as Chancellor and of course, it will not be the last. Let me also thank the Vice Chancellor for not only inviting me, which is only to be expected, since I am the Chancellor, but also for inviting my wife and hosting us in these august and auspicious premises. August and auspicious is the right expression. Deccan College is like a *tirtha*, a *tirtha* that is now just over two hundred years old. It is associated, as faculty and students, with the names of so many people I have grown up reading – Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Ramchandra Dattatreya Ranade, Edwin Arnold, Ramakrishna Gopal Bhadarkar, H. D. Sankalia, Irawati Karve, M. A. Mehendale, Vishwanath Kashinath Rajawade. The list is long and if I seek to name them all, my time will run out. The contributions made by Deccan College in linguistics, archaeology, ancient Indian history and culture, Sanskrit and lexicography are phenomenal. Imagine the kind of dedication it takes to bring out the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sanskrit, a work that was started in 1948 and is nowhere near completion. We are on the 36th volume and still on अ. Often, the outside world does not know of the stupendous attempts being made to preserve Bharatavarsha's culture and legacy. Therefore, I think Open Day is a wonderful idea. The outside world needs to know. I urge those who have visited Deccan College for the first time today to visit the museums on ancient Indian history, culture and archaeology and Maratha history.

I mentioned that I worked in Pune once. Many years ago. Some forty years ago, to be precise. I used to be an Associate Professor at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, a short distance away from the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. My association with BORI and interest in Indology and Sanskrit started then. In forty years, Pune has changed, as it is bound to. But the sense of awe when I visited Deccan College then, is no different from the sense of awe I feel today. The students who are graduating today must also have felt a sense of awe when they entered through these portals at the beginning of the दीक्षा.

The word Convocation simply means to come together and the purpose wasn't always academic. When used in an academic sense, it sometimes meant graduating students could now be a part of the governance structure of the university. The expression typically means a graduating ceremony today, sometimes also referred to as commencement. In our tradition,

we would call it दीक्षान्तसमारोह or padvi pradan samaroha or समावर्तन. दीक्षान्तसमारोह simply means that we are celebrating the end of the period of *diksha*. समावर्तन conveys a sense of return, with the student returning from the *gurukula*, having successfully completed a course of studies and having paid the *dakshina*. The student is now free to step into the next stage of life, typically the transition from *brahmacharya* to *garhasthya*. *Samavartana* is one of our listed *samskaras*, stepping from one stage of life to another, crossing over the threshold. As with every *samskara*, there is a ritual purification of taking a bath, *snana*. That is the reason all of you graduating today are *snatakas*. Today is a day of purification, of taking a resolution.

The Western word, Convocation, suggests a University, in the Western sense. The earliest such Universities, Bologna, Paris and Oxford, date to 11th and 12th centuries CE, if we take Universities to be those that emerged in medieval Europe. But much before that, there were Universities in India too, a history and a legacy we should not forget – Takshashila, Telhara, Nalanda, SharadaPeetha, Vallabhi, Pushpagiri, Odantapuri, Vikramshila, Somapura, Bikrampur, Morena, Kanthaloor Sala, Jagaddala, Nagarjuna and somewhat later, Mithila and Nadia. If these names don't ring a bell, with the possible exception of Takshashila and Nalanda, that's because not enough research, including archaeological, has been done on these and there hasn't therefore been sufficient dissemination. When we say that Deccan College is the third oldest educational institute in India, it is in this modern Western sense. In that modern Western sense, Chandramukhi Basu and Kadmbini Ganguly were the first women graduates. They passed the examination in 1882 and received their degrees at the Convocation held in 1883. This is material for quiz questions, or questions on general knowledge. What people don't often know is that these two Indian ladies became graduates much before women graduated from Oxbridge, indeed, much before there were women graduates anywhere in the British Empire.

If education, teaching and learning existed in India much before the advent of the modern education system, there must have been Convocations too. तैत्तिरीयोपनिषद् has three chapters and one of these (the first) is called शीक्षावल्ली. I think every graduating student today should read the eleventh and twelfth *anuvakas* of *shikshavalli*. The eleventh *anuvaka* is nothing but a Convocation address, spoken by the *acharya* after the student has completed studies. We are familiar with these expressions, but we don't always know where they are from. The bits I will quote are so simple that I do not need to translate. सत्यं वद।धर्मं चर।स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः।मातृदेवो भव।पितृदेवो भव।आचार्यदेवो भव।अतिथिदेवो भव।एष आदेशः।एष उपदेशः।I am surprised that more people don't know where these expressions are from. Therefore, people often think *atithidevo bhava* is a slogan meant to attract tourists. As I said, the eleventh *anuvaka* is a Convocation address and, as far as I know, it is the first recorded Convocation address anywhere in the world. The tenor of what the *acharya* told the *shishya* then is not very different from what you have been hearing, and will hear, today.

In some places, graduating students have to take a pledge. You don't have to do it formally here. Therefore, you should do it mentally, in your mind. The twelfth *anuvaka* of *shikshavalli* is like that, it is a student's pledge. It is essentially an invocation for peace, with

a promise by the student to speak what is right and speak what is true, since that gratifies and pleases both the student and the teacher. The expressions are so familiar that I do not need to translate again. शं नो मित्रः शं वरुणः। शं नो भवत्वर्यमा। शं न इन्द्रो बृहस्पतिः। शं नो विष्णुरुक्रमः। नमो ब्रह्मणे। नमस्ते वायो। त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि। त्वामेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मावादिषम्। ऋतमवादिषम्। सत्यमवादिषम् । तन्मामावीत्। तद्वक्तारमावीत्। आवीन्माम्। आवीद्वक्तारम्। ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥ Today, I also wish and pray that you may find peace and be protected against the three kinds of calamities and adversities – *adhyatmika* (caused by your own self), *adhidaivika* (caused by destiny) and *adhibhoutika* (caused by nature).

You are at an age when you don't know for sure what you will do in life. Yes, Deccan College and your teachers have given you all the skills and expertise needed to face life and destiny. Yes, you have plans and yes, you think life is a clearly-determined path that you have chalked out for yourselves. Nothing can be further from the truth. Life and destiny have a way of catching you unawares. Many years ago, in 1785, Robert Burns wrote a poem titled, "To a Mouse". That said, "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men/Gang aft agley, An'lea'e us nought but grief an' pain, For promis'd joy!" That bit, about mice and men, has of course been made famous by a John Steinbeck novel. Faced with life and destiny, we are like mice. The best laid plans may come to naught. But that should not lead to grief and pain. Nor, in the other eventuality, should it lead to joy. *Adhyatmika* is about discovering yourself and finding the inner peace, or *shanti*. There is a difference between *shanti* and *sukham*. *Sukham* is happiness and joy, while *duhkham* is unhappiness and misery. What constitutes *sukham* and *duhkham*? What are the definitions? All too often, these are defined in terms of relationships with external objects (owning a car, owning a house, owing a smart phone or television) or relationships with other individuals (parents, children, spouses, superiors, subordinates). As the Bhagavat Gita and other texts tell us repeatedly, these are impermanent and transitory. मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः। आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत॥ They come and go. I am not talking about anything extremely profound, like giving up *samsara*, resorting to *sannyasa* and striving for *moksha*. I am making a much more limited point. When we seek to define happiness or unhappiness, we seek to define them in terms of transitory objects or relationships. When I was ten years of age, I was unhappy because my classmate possessed a valuable toy I did not have. Will possession of that toy make me happy today? Certainly not, I am miserable today, because my boss has scolded me. When the boss smiles at me tomorrow, that misery goes away. The intention is not to play with words. If happiness and unhappiness are defined through these temporary attributes, there is an inner peace or bliss that is beyond the transitory. That's the pursuit of *adhyatmika* we all seek. Again, as the Bhagavat Gita says, न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम् ॥

Once you find that inner peace, you radiate positivity. There is a Buddhist monk named Matthieu Ricard who lives in Nepal. He has been called the "happiest" person in the world. In his case, neuroscientists from the University of Wisconsin plugged 256 sensors into his brain. This is what they found. "The scans showed that when meditating on compassion, Ricard's brain produces a level of gamma waves – those linked to

consciousness, attention, learning and memory...The scans also showed excessive capacity in his brain's left prefrontal cortex compared to its right counterpart, allowing him an abnormally large capacity for happiness and a reduced propensity towards negativity." One doesn't necessarily have to be a monk. When you exude positivity, you get positivity in return. You attract positive people and there is a virtuous cycle. When you exude negativity, you get negativity in return. You attract negative people and there is a vicious cycle. What is described as luck or bad luck is probably nothing other than a manifestation of this. I think this message, about imparting positivity, is an important one, especially in our day and age. Our day and age is such that print media, electronic media, social media, are full of negativity. Civilized discourse is a rarity. We have a lot to learn from our civilized norms of discussion and debate depicted in our *nyaya* texts and in descriptions of Nalanda. If there is a single message I hope you imbibe from today's ceremony, it is that of positivity. Positivity is like a halo. It radiates and protects you. It makes you prosper and thrive. Scientists contest claims about enhanced, and diminished, auras and Kirlian photography. An enhanced aura represents a state of well-being and a diminished aura its opposite, a state of ill-being. The left brain is the rational part, the right brain is the intuitive part. The left brain may not appreciate the positive halo, the right brain comprehends it. Therefore, we speak of good vibes and bad vibes. There are people who attract us and people who repel us. However, as I said, scientists contest such assertions as pseudo-science, since propositions cannot be quantified and measured. Be that as it may, birds of a feather flock together. Like attracts like. Positivity attracts positivity and repels negativity, while the opposite is also the case.

Positivity is good for you as an individual and for those who are near and dear to you, irrespective of what life and destiny bring. But it is also good for Deccan College. After all, as you pass out through these gates and take your steps into the wide world, you are a brand ambassador for Deccan College. Remember its illustrious alumni. Those are standards and norms you have to measure yourself against. Forty years from now, one of you may be seated here, as a Chief Guest or Chancellor at a Deccan College Convocation. Sixty years from now, one of you may be mentioned in the list of illustrious Deccan College alumni. Wherever you go, whatever you do in life, you represent Deccan College. Anything positive you do brushes off on Deccan College. So does anything negative you do. While you remember that, when you are in a position to do so, you should also think in terms of paying back to your alma mater. I do not necessarily mean financial contributions. There is that of course. But more importantly, there are also other ways to ensure that your alma mater continues to uphold that illustrious legacy. There are many educational institutions, especially abroad, that have prospered and thrived because of what alumni have done. We have seen the beginnings of that in India, more so in so-called professional institutions, narrowly defined. Some day, it will be more pervasive in institutions that can broadly be said to specialize in social sciences. That's the template the New Educational Policy also sets out for 2030.

You are not only an ambassador for Deccan College, you are an ambassador for the country. In 1899, Swami Vivekananda wrote a piece in Bengali. Yes, he mostly spoke and lectured in English. But he also wrote wonderful and powerful Bengali prose. This piece sounds far better in Bengali. You will find the English translation in Volume 4 of Swami Vivekananda's "Complete Works", translated in English as "Modern India". At the end of this essay, he speaks of a Swadesh *mantra*, a pledge that all of us, all of you, should take.

Let me read out the English translation. “O India! With this mere echoing of others, with this base imitation of others, with this dependence on others this slavish weakness, this vile detestable cruelty — wouldst thou, with these provisions only, scale the highest pinnacle of civilization and greatness? Wouldst thou attain, by means of thy disgraceful cowardice, that freedom deserved only by the brave and the heroic? O India! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not that the God thou worshippest is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Shankara, the Lord of Umâ; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, “I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.” Say, “The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother.” Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice: “The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age.” Say, brother: “The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good,” and repeat and pray day and night, “O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me! O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a Man!”

It sounds far better in Bengali. I have no desire to inflict Bengali on you, not on this occasion. But let me read out a little bit, to illustrate how wonderful it sounds in Bengali. I don't need to translate, since I have already given you the English version. “হভোরত, এইপরানুবাদ, পরানুকরণ, পরামুখাপকেশা, এইদাশশুলভদুরবলতা, এইঘণতিজঘনঘনষিঠুরতা-এইমাত্রসম্বলতেমউচ্চাধিকারলাভকরবি? এইলজ্জাকরকাপুরুষতাসহায়তেমবীরভোগ্যাস্বাধীনতালাভকরবি?...হবীর, সাহসঅবলম্বনকর; সদর্পবেল—আমভিরতবাসী, ভারতবাসীআমারভাই।বল—মুর্খভারতবাসী, দরদিরভারতবাসী, ব্রাহ্মণভারতবাসী, চণ্ডালভারতবাসীআমারভাই; তুমিওকটমাত্র-বস্ত্রাবৃতহইয়া, সদর্পডোকয়িবল—ভারতবাসীআমারভাই, ভারতবাসীআমারপ্রাণ, ভারতরেদবেদবৌআমারঈশ্বর, ভারতরেসমাজআমারশিশুশিষ্যা, আমারযৌবনরেউপবন, আমারবার্ধক্যরেবারাণসী; বলভাই—ভারতরেমৃত্তিকাআমারস্বর্গ, ভারতরেকল্যাণআমারকল্যাণ; আরবলদনি-রাত, ‘হগৌরীনাথ, হজেগদম্বে, আমায়মনুষ্যত্বদাও; মা, আমারদুরবলতাকাপুরুষতাদূরকর, আমায়মানুষকর।”

Proudly proclaim – I am an Indian. In a short while from now, the national anthem will be played. When you hear it, it should make the blood course faster in your veins, it should make your heart beat louder, there should be a throbbing in your veins. From the snowy-capped peaks of Kashmir to where the ocean laps its tongue against the sea-shore, from the lush green valleys of Arunachal Pradesh to the salty deserts of Gujarat, this is our India. India is in the air we breathe, India is in the water we drink, India is in the food we eat.

This is our Bharatavarsha. This is the Bharatavarsha that Deccan College has taught you about. Our generation inherited this country of ours as a legacy, in the form of a trust, from our forefathers. To paraphrase what a famous US President said, the torch now passes to a new generation of Indians, a new generation of Deccan College alumni. Go and build that new India, so that you can pass it on in trust to the next generation. As our Prime Minister said in his speech from the ramparts of Red Fort on the occasion of India's 75th Independence Day, a better India, a more prosperous India, requires "*sabkaprayas*". You will provide that *prayas*. You will build that new India.

Go out and find your destiny. Go out and build that new India. My best wishes for whatever you do. शुभास्ते सन्तु पन्थानः।जयतु भारतम्। जयतु भारतीम्।