

**Acceptance Speech by  
UC's 42nd Honorary Doctoral Degree Recipient**

Dalveer Bhandari

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I am deeply beholden to the distinguished Dr. Kao Kim Hourn (Founder, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and President of The University of Cambodia), Mr. Travis Mitchell (Director of the Council for Research and Creativity), Dr. Hem Sras (Dean for the College of Law of The University of Cambodia), LCT. Khem Rany (member of the Board of Trustees, Vice President for General Affairs of The University of Cambodia and Director General of South East Asia Television), Dr. Michel Minehan (Dean for the School of Graduate Studies of The University of Cambodia) and Prof. Achyuta Samantha, learned professors, academicians, dear students and other officials of The University of Cambodia for organising this special convocation to confer this honour of an Honorary Doctorate on me. I am really overwhelmed by your kindness and magnanimity.

The University of Cambodia is very distinguished and well known university of Asia. It is an excellent centre for higher learning. I feel privileged to have received this honour from this great university which I accept with a deep sense of gratitude and humility.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to dedicate this speech to Prof Achyuta Samantha and speak on the subject 'Education and Its Importance.'

**I. Education and Its Importance**

Education is a basic human right and important means to build our society, both civilized and peaceful. Education plays a key role in shaping our present and future. Education is the

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<sup>1</sup> Parenthetically, Justice Bhandari noted that "The University of Cambodia is conferring the UC Distinguished Professorship in Humanities on Prof Achyuta Samantha. In my view he is eminently worthy of this honour. I do not know of anyone who has made greater contributions to the cause of education for the tribal students anywhere in the world. He has dedicated his entire life for the cause of education. He firmly believes that poverty can be eradicated only by education."

most powerful tool for upliftment and progress of the society.

Education has great influence in social reconstruction and reducing poverty, narrowing extreme inequalities and improving public health. It also helps the society to strengthen its economic growth because knowledge is an important driver for economic growth and productivity.

Professor John Kenneth Galbraith, a distinguished academic, diplomat and statesman of the United States of America, in a lecture delivered in New Delhi in November 1992 remarked (Anagol, 2001):

Once it was understood: an education is the first requirement for economic progress. That essential fact was forgotten: impressive steel mills, great hydroelectric dams, glistening airports, were too often cited amid ignorant people. I have previously made the point: in this world there is no literate population that is poor, no illiterate population that is other than poor.

The importance of education was emphasized in the *Neethishatakam* by *Bhartruhari*, a great Indian epic as early as the first Century BC in the following words:

Education is the special manifestation of man;  
Education is the treasure which can be preserved without the fear of loss;  
Education secures material pleasure, happiness and fame;  
Education is the teacher of the teacher;  
Education is God incarnate;  
Education secures honour at the hands of the State, not money.  
A man without education is equal to animal.

A large number of educational institutions at all levels are functioning all over the world. The question is how many institutions are imparting value education. What Swami Vivekanand, a very distinguished social and religious reformer, aptly observed, “What we are today is the result of what we valued yesterday – what we will be tomorrow will be the result of what we value today.”

Several authors and philosophers have given different definitions to what is value education, but universally acknowledged definition that value education contains five main elements:

1. Right conduct;
2. Peace;
3. Truth;
4. Love; and
5. Nonviolence.

The main objective of education should be to prepare good human beings. Educational institutions should give more importance to value-based education rather than only

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preparing the students to obtain high marks in the examination. Education should mold the personality of an individual. His or her knowledge must lead the world to the right path. The purpose of education should be to build a good character: strength of mind is increased and, the intellect is expanded so that one can be called a good human being.

A very distinguished ancient philosopher of China, Confucius, taught his disciples the concept of Jen, which signifies love, compassion, virtue, moral achievement and character.

The youth is the backbone of any nation. Youth's strength is the nation's strength. Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders. Youth can make or mar the nation. The real strength of the nation depends not on physical resources: it primarily depends on the strength of its youth. The object of the education should be character-building of an individual through education.

Arising out of this, the purpose of Education should be the development of moral, spiritual and ethical values. Education devoid of ethical values and sound moral values is in the true sense no education. The values must be inculcated from the very inception in the educational institutions.

The greatest challenge the world is facing today is the crisis of confidence and character, mental and moral decay and ignoring rich traditions of the past.

UNESCO's (1996) report on education on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century entitled *Learning - The Treasure Within* also pleads for an education which is rooted in culture and committed to progress. Developing a harmonious and integrated personality would just not be possible if the system does not inculcate value embedded in culture, heritage and traditions.

Education should be designed to develop character, courage, compassion, comradeship, humility, gender equality, respect for all religions, respect for ecology and environment, discipline, leadership, secular outlook, a spirit of adventure and sportsmanship and an ideal of selfless service. In substance education should mean harmonious development of character, head and heart. Teachers can play a vital role in this regard.

In concluding my speech I would like to say that the character of people may eventually decide the destiny of the nation.

I once again convey my deep sense of gratitude to the President, academicians, professors, dear students and other distinguished people connected with this great university for organizing such a graceful special convocation to confer this honour on me. I shall be forever indebted for this kind gesture.

Dalveer Bhandari

Thank you for your patience.

### **References**

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- UNESCO (1996) *Learning – The Treasure Within*. Paris: UNESCO.