

■ Portions of the Commencement Address of Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, member of Parliament, Republic of India, at the University of the Philippines, May 7, 1967.

## A MORAL CHALLENGE TO PEACE

The world's economic resources, as well as its political energies have for years past been directed toward the arms race. Nearly \$200 billion are spent the world over on armaments. If a tenth of this amount could be directed to peaceful purposes, dramatic and far-reaching changes could be achieved. It would then be possible to erect an edifice to peace which would be a testimony to man's wisdom and his abiding faith in his fellow men instead of the lofty memorial we build, to those he has slaughtered in senseless wars of hatred and revenge — one crying need of the world today is, in Jane Adams words, "Not the heroism connected with wars and destruction but that which pertains to labour and nourishing of human life." This is the task that faces the younger generation.

Education has a vital role to play and universities have

a heavy responsibility. Jawaharlal Nehru said: "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search for truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately then it will be well with the nation."

A good education must prepare the student to serve not only the nation but the international community. It is this spirit of service which will, in the final analysis, overcome the hurdles in our path. In a country like mine we are constantly up against the lack of men and women required to work in the rural areas. We have given undue importance to the work the city can provide, even if it is only a small clerical job. We have done little to raise the prestige of the village, to recognize those who are will-

ing to dedicate themselves to this labour. This has resulted in a set of false values which the unthinking person accepts as guide lines. If the object of education is to develop the human personality it must also arouse the conscience.

The student must feel the challenge of the times and respond to it. The enormous vitality of youth, its enthusiasm, its extravagant emotions all must be harnessed to a purpose for in this way the cause and the individual are both enriched, each acquiring a share of greatness from the other. It is because youth seems to be without a purpose — because, for the moment at any rate, they feel there is no cause to serve that so many are driven by restlessness hither and thither wasting their energies in trivial matters. Service in the building up of the community — in sharing the burdens of the under-privileged would give the final polish to what was begun in the university and help immeasurably towards the solution of the problems that plague us.

The whole complex situa-

tion we face today is, a moral challenge. We are called upon to love our neighbor, we are told we must share abundance and skills with those who need them. But we see around us ample evidence of things which are contrary to all this and we find people in high places of responsibility subscribing to them. How is the common man to find out where his own duty lies?

The threats to the world stem from our own limitation — it is possible for *man* to communicate with planets a million miles away — it is not possible for *men* to communicate with each other on this small planet we inhabit.

I have been brought up in politics and politicians are a strange breed. They live in a tight little community for which the world has less and less use. In the difficult period through which we are passing, it is not political maneuvers, however adroit, which will present solutions to our mounting problems. The real search should be for that which will cut across boundaries, transcend political ideologies and create conditions for the

health, progress and happiness of the whole human race and not just a section of it. My aversion for politics grows and I realize more and more strongly that man's search today is not for the ending of his physical hunger alone — or for the means to raise himself to better conditions of living and greater comfort — his yearning goes far beyond these things. He longs for dignity, security, peace and above all for a purpose in life.

Too many voices try to tell us that in this age when science and technology have become our guiding stars and their might influence shapes the destiny of men and nations, we with the demands of the scientific age. They would imply that these demands are based on a new set of values — that one cannot move into the bright new world of promise which science is creating, without uprooting the foundations on which our lives were built in the past; that we must reject the philosophies on which we were raised in order to inherit the future.

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science and the values of the spirit.

Thinkers both of East and West tell us that there is no incompatibility between science and the values of the spirit. Mahatma Gandhi never ceased to emphasize that politics needed the guidelines of morality if it was to fulfill its role in the life of a nation. Likewise, science can only pave the path to progress if it is rooted in a moral purpose. Our refusal to recognize this is largely responsible for our present plight. David Sarnoff in a recent statement agreed with Gandhi's view. He says "today science and religion meet on common ground, in a common effort to achieve a common need of world understanding, peace and harmony. Never were science and religion more compatible."

Principle and morality belong as much to science as to any other human effort; perhaps more so. To reject this is to lessen the great benefits that are waiting to be shared by mankind.

As the frontiers of science advance, we are presented with questions of great depth

to which no answers have been found. Science has opened many doors, made conquests undreamed of given man power; but science has, so far, been unable to solve the problem of man himself. He is unhappy, unstable, insecure without direction. What he needs above all else at this moment is to reaffirm his faith in the things of the Spirit. He needs to strike a balance between his moral and material well-being, for, what shall it profit us if we conquer the world's material problem and then commit suicide because we cannot conquer our own minds?

This is a time for greatness, for great issues are at stake. We must have clear minds, hold fast to principles and dare to move forward to end the fear and hate that have become the motivating force in the world.

As Bertrand Russell has said: "We are in the middle of a race between human skill as a means and human folly as an end, resulting in strife, insecurity and sorrow. Unless men increase in wisdom, as much as in knowledge, the increase in knowledge will only be increase of sorrow."

Young men and women of the Philippines — never has a challenge been more worth accepting. You will leave the sheltered life of your halls of learning to enter the competitive life of a troubled world. Meet life with courage, have faith in yourselves and in God and go on your way unafraid. My blessings and good wishes are with you. — *By Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Part of her Commencement Address at the University of the Philippines, May 7, 1967.*