

# 10<sup>th</sup> Convocation

## Ramakrishna Mission Sikshanamandira

### Presidential Address

by

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Respected Maharaj Swami Vidyamritananda, Srimat Swami Shastrjananda, Prof. Rajive Mohan Pant, Faculty members, family, friends, and recipients of certificates and medals, here I am honoured to be part of the Convocation.

Let me say a few words about our University of Calcutta. It was established on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1857, covering the geographical region from Lahore to Rangoon (now in Myanmar). The main entrance of the University's Ashutosh Siksha Prangan campus is in College Street. The first Chancellor was Governor General Lord Canning, and the first Vice-Chancellor was the Chief Justice of Supreme Court, James William Colvile. Jadunath Bose and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay became the first graduates in 1958. First women general graduate was Chandramukhi Bose (1882) and medical graduate was Kadambini Ganguly (1886). Some other notable Alumni of this university are Subhas Chandra Bose, Satyendranath Bose, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, C. V. Raman, C. R. Rao, Pranab Mukherjee, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Meghnad Saha, Sharat Chandra Chottopadhyay, Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, Mahasweta Devi, Satyajit Ray, Rajendra Prasad, Jagjivan Ram, Bidhan Chandra Roy, Jyoti Basu, Amartya Sen, Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee, Manna Dey, Soumitra Chatterjee, Uttam Kumar and Saurav Ganguly.

The University College of Science or Rajabazar Science College, was established in 1914. The Institute of Nuclear Physics was founded under the leadership of Meghnad Saha in 1945. In 1934 Dr Syamaprasad Mookerjee became the Vice-Chancellor and requested Rabindranath Tagore to compose a song for the University which was Shuvo Kormo Pothe Dhoro Nirvaya Gan. The University's central and 40 departmental libraries were opened to the general public in 2019.

The university has 14 campuses spread in Kolkata and its suburbs. As of 2020, 151 colleges and 21 institutes and centres are affiliated with it. It is considered as one of the best state research universities all over India every year. At present the university has 68 departments organized into seven faculties. Three Nobel Laureates associated with the University are C. V. Raman, Amartya Sen and Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee. The main motive for telling a bit of the University's history is that we all should feel proud to be associated with it.

I would thus like to thank the Management and faculty of the Ramakrishna Mission Sikshanamandira for their continuous hard work and dedication in guiding students to achieve their desired academic and character building goals. Thakur and Swamiji both believed in and preached that Service to Man is Service to God. Providing education is one of the most significant services to the society. It can make one capable of fulfilling basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. We also know that Swamiji reminded us that education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. Swamiji also stressed that the idea of all education, all training, should be the man-making. But instead of that, we are always trying to polish up the outside.

Today is the day of recognition to students for awarding degrees like all other training across various institutes. The difference here or in institutions of Ramakrishna Mission is beyond formal education that students should not only forget in their life, but also put into practice the lesson of man-making and character-building.

Technological advancement has changed our lifestyles and will continue to change current and future generations in many ways. Computers, smartphones and the internet have strongly affected how we interact with other people. Many of us believe that technology dehumanises our lives and makes us more solitary. Today, children play less with other children and spend more time watching videos on their gadgets and playing video games. Many around us are victims of the same behaviour. People are doing less physical exercise than their ancestors. We are becoming detached from nature and attached to technological gadgets. The world or society around us might not often be pleasant, and we face many challenges and social issues around us. Corruption, malpractices, crimes, etc., are now in daily news, and the absolute need is to follow and practice the real meaning of the education, which is short “Man Making and Character Building” that Swamiji taught us. Collective efforts can make society a better place to live, and we should encourage others to follow or join us.

Today is undoubtedly the day of great joy and satisfaction in your life of academic fulfilment. The next step in your life to begin soon is the real world, with ups and downs. In some way, we all need to contribute to society, but our contribution should be positive. Carl Jung (a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst) said, *“Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.”* - So, today I remind you all to look into your heart and be awake before you embark upon a dream that is not your own. Up to this point in many of our lives, most things have been decided for us. From now on, it is up to us to choose. So be sure to make your choices when you are fully awake, which are communicated by your heart and not by what others say, think, or believe.

Helen Adams Keller was an American author, disability rights advocate, political activist and lecturer. She said, *“I am only one, but still I am one; I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and just because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do”* - In the same spirit, authors Linda Catling and Jeffery Hollender wrote the book *How to Make the World a Better Place: 116 Ways You Can Make a Difference*.

Thus, our contribution to the world will not be measured by the money we make or the accolades we receive but by how we share our unique gifts with the world, and the only place to find those gifts is to look within yourself.

Thank you all, and pranam to Sri Sri Thakur, Maa and Swamiji.