

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND*

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors, Director, Staff and Students of the Institute, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be amidst you today and to deliver the Convocation Address. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences is a major institution in our country, established by the family of Tatas who have pioneered not only in industry but in education, medicine and other fields. Hence at the very outset I would like to express our appreciation for the noble sentiments with which this Institute has been enshrined by the family of Tatas.

The Institute is being managed by a Board of Governors under the able leadership of Dr. Bhabha who has taken personal interest and is responsible in many ways for the achievements of the Institute. Dr. Gore, Director, and the distinguished Staff of the Institute under whose guidance and instructions the students of this Institute have been pursuing studies and research, hold high reputation in our country and abroad. On this occasion when the students of this Institute are passing out it is but appropriate that we acknowledge the services rendered by all those who are responsible for the running of the Institute. My sincere congratulations and best wishes to the students who are passing out and going into the world of life.

Social Sciences is a very wide field. It embraces various disciplines like economics, political science, anthropology, culture, law etc. The central theme, however, is the human being in his group dynamics. Chan-

ges keep on taking place every day. How does it affect a human being? How does he react to the changes? When we think of the human being, quite often we forget the weaker sex, namely the women. Due recognition has to be given to women in the study of social sciences.

Social studies should not end up as mere theoretical exercises. In fact these studies should be a pointer for guidance and action by the community and by established authorities. They should influence the thinking of legislators and members of local bodies. Take for example the effects of urbanization which results in the growth of slums. Urbanization is a development which cannot easily be prevented but which can perhaps be regulated and planned. Authorities concerned from time to time suddenly become aware of the problems of urbanization and decide that the centres of activity should be shifted and for that purpose provide incentives. But this is an area which requires constant attention and would have to be made part of a system. What are the reasons for people congregating in congested cities? These would have to be identified. Amenities which are available only in the cities, and are an important reason for people congregating there, would have to be fanned out in the future. This would apply, for example, to the provision of minimum medical facilities in districts and smaller towns. Similarly, in the case of educational institutions and industrial activities etc., while this would have to be taken up, you cannot prevent the poorer classes from coming to the cities for employment. It is the contribution made in the form of work by

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these poorer classes on which the entire economy of the cities is based. Just imagine what would happen if that work force which lives in the slums is not there. What investments, therefore, should be made by those who benefit by having this work force. Today it is no one's responsibility. Studies would have to be conducted to identify sources which could rightly be expected to contribute to the welfare of those who live in slums. Such contribution would have to be again utilised in a planned manner so that while on the one hand the slums as they exist today are improved and made habitable from the point of view of hygiene, sanitation, etc., and for future planned settlements are provided.

If one looks into the lives of the underprivileged, one is shocked to see how child labour is exploited. That a child would have to contribute to the earnings of the family cannot as at present be objected to or prevented. Is the child being exploited, that is the question? Should not such a child, while he may be employed, be provided with some minimum education and also provided the opportunity to play and enjoy himself? Social workers have done something in this area. But I think much more remains to be done.

Juvenile delinquency is on the increase and is one of the evils of the urban slums. It is only because they do not have a happy home, lack education and other minimum facilities that youth are thrown into evil ways. If they do not mend their ways early, they become hardened criminals with no future. Correctional administration is becoming increasingly important in major towns and cities. Very often the measures taken lag behind and the problem of delin-

quency keeps on growing. In the matter of legal justice, be it civil or criminal, the system that we have is such that justice is delayed. We all know that justice delayed is justice denied. Studies in these areas may reveal the various points at which corrective measures can be taken, procedures rationalized and perhaps the provisions of law amended.

Social disability is another area which is worthy of study by social scientists. This is more true in the rural areas than in the cities. In the cities the identity of the individual is lost. Whereas, in the villages it is not so. On considerations of caste and religion, depending on whether the individual belongs to a sizeable group or not, there are occasions when the rural poor are put to great difficulties. Wells for drinking water may be sunk but certain groups may be prevented access to them. Tenancy rights, minimum wages, may well be prescribed by government but when it comes to the benefits being availed of by certain groups, vested interests come in the way. When studies in these areas are made by social workers they are resented by vested interests and obstacles put in their way — so entrenched are the vested interests. But this resistance would have to be broken surely though slowly.

These are but a few of the pressing problems in our society which I thought I might mention before this distinguished gathering, for I feel that institutions like yours have to engage themselves in the study of these problems, as I mentioned earlier, highlight them, bringing out facts and, in the process, suggesting measures for policy formulation and implementation.

JAI HIND.