

# **Diamond Harbour Women's University**

## **Annual Convocation I, 2018**

The 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2018

### **Convocation Address**

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Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal, Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi, Professor Anuradha Mukhopadhyay, Vice Chancellor of Diamond Harbour Women's University, other dignitaries on and off the dais, my very dear students, members of the faculty, staff, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to address you on the occasion of the first Convocation of this Institute. Diamond Harbour Women's University is a newly established University where the academic programs started only in 2014. As such, it is both a daunting challenge and a great opportunity for all the stakeholders of this University - the management, faculty members, staff members and students - of building a world class University. I am sure under the able supervision and mentoring of the Vice Chancellor, this University will scale great heights. The beginnings are bright. The way in which the First Convocation has been planned and executed demonstrates that here we have a budding University which will go places. It is now up to all of you, the members of this University including the students, to nurture the seed that has been planted into a large tree. Here is a once in a lifetime opportunity to build a great organisation based on a strong foundation of integrity, high work culture and quest for excellence, where there will be free flow of ideas, where academics will flourish, and where the leaders of tomorrow will be shaped. Let us not let go of this opportunity. Let us put all our effort, dedication and hard work into building this organisation that all can be proud of. An academic organisation is only as great as its teachers and students, ably supported by other staff members. As William Arthur Ward, a frequently quoted American writer, has said, "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." I hope this University will nurture outstanding teachers who will be truly inspirational. At the same time, graduating from here puts a lot of responsibility on you also, dear students, as you will be the ambassadors of the University. Conduct yourselves in a way that will create a brand-name.

My heartiest congratulations to all the graduating students who have worked really hard to earn the degrees that will be conferred on you today. This is one of the most memorable days of your lives when you will be leaving the cocoon of the familiar, and stepping out in the unknown, equipped with the knowledge and training imparted to you so painstakingly by your teachers. Come tomorrow, your skill will be under test. Your teachers and parents will also, in a way, be tested as to how well they have groomed and inspired you. Remember, your success or failure will be partly theirs.

I am sure you have different dreams for yourselves as also great apprehensions of how the world will treat you hereafter. From amongst you all, leaders of tomorrow will emerge. Therefore, some words of advice from someone who has tread this path before. Do not be afraid to experiment, to go beyond what you think you are capable of. As Sir Arthur C. Clarke put it "The only way of finding the limit of the possible is by going beyond them into

the impossible.” Often you will face challenging situations, and will have to make difficult choices. At such junctures, do not be afraid to take risks and step into unknown territory if required. As the saying goes, “A ship in harbour is safe — but that is not what ships are built for.” Work hard to attain your dreams, do not turn away from opportunities, tread where others have not gone before, and accept the consequences happily. Remember, if you try you may fail, if you do not try you have already failed. Young friends, I have burdened you enough with my words of advice which I recommend that you promptly forget. Follow your heart and be a good and kind human being. The rest will fall in place.

From my childhood I was highly interested in mathematics and physics, along with English. The other subjects scared me. In physics and mathematics, I had to memorise very little as things followed logically. Later I turned to computer science, a subject very close to my heart, where again logical thinking is the key. I have often been asked at different fora why I chose subjects like mathematics that typically girls avoid. This is a notion that, as many in this audience will agree, is baseless. It is a problem of mindset, that starts right from birth. The boys are usually given games to play with that enhance their logical abilities and mechanical skills, while the girls are given toys that enhance their aesthetic senses and home-making abilities. I do believe that there is nothing wrong per se with giving certain kids certain types of games to play with, but that should be based on a natural inclination and not stereotyped with gender. A child should be allowed to play with things that interest him or her. We have seen women who are great scientists and men that are great chefs. If one is allowed to do what comes naturally to him/her, if all forms of labour are respected and rewarded, the world will be a better place to live in.

This University is rather unique in that it is aimed at nurturing the girl students. Although we have completed 70 years of independence, the reality still is that girls do not get adequate support or opportunities. A handful of women like me who have got all the opportunities that anyone can get is not enough. This is unfortunate as no country will progress without the adequate participation of all. No one knows from which section of the population, greatness will emerge, new inventions will be made. We just cannot afford to leave any one behind in our march towards a more developed economy. Opportunities must be equally distributed. On our part young friends, we have to prove ourselves worthy of demanding more opportunities. We cannot beg, we will not take alms, we will take what is rightfully ours and will not settle for anything less. For that, sacrifices will have to be made, hard work has to be accepted with a smile. The joy of being recognised for one’s own worth is really worth the sleepless nights spent on walking the extra mile. I have studied in some of the top colleges after school, including Presidency College, IIT Kharagpur and Indian Statistical Institute. Each moulded me in different ways, but each institution taught me that I cannot rest, the goal has not yet been met. That I have miles to go. I fondly recall the academic enjoyment I felt while doing my M. Tech in IIT Kharagpur, my PhD in Indian Statistical Institute. At IIT, almost every day we worked in the laboratories beyond midnight, went back to our respective hostels chatting with friends, and were in class 8 AM the next morning. Lot of hard work, and pressing deadlines. My first grey hairs appeared during this period. But what an enjoyment I felt in this hard work! It is really important to love and enjoy what one is doing - believe me, hard work can be enjoyable. A complaining attitude gets us nowhere. This is especially true for girls who need to put in extra effort to achieve the same. So what? Till the time society learns to give equal access, equal opportunity, equal acknowledgement, let us work extra. Our battles today will ease the lives of the women tomorrow. This much we have to do to make the world a better and a more balanced place. There will be successes and there will be failures, but let failures not deter you my friends, since as Thomas Edison very famously put it, “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”

After leaving the University, you will take different paths. Some of you may join industry, some may go into government jobs, and fewer still may possibly opt for higher studies, some may become entrepreneurs, and some may decide to become home makers. If some of you are really passionate about research, and want to dive deep into the ocean of information to bring out nuggets of gold, remember that the country needs your research output. It is important to do our own research, to solve our problems, to own knowledge and intellectual property and to set up business. India is viewed primarily as a service providing nation, not a knowledge generating one. This needs to change if we want to be counted as a developed nation. We need to own IP, and turn these into avenues for national development and human welfare. Those who go into other types of jobs, do your work with dedication and integrity. While it is good to be aware of ones rights, it is equally, if not more, important to be aware of ones responsibilities. Those who devote themselves to working within the confines of their homes, try to build an environment that will nurture talent, foster excellence, and encourage respect for each other. At every point, all of us make certain compromises, but do not compromise on your passion, on your dignity as a human being, and on your basic principles.

Today's age is extremely competitive. The key for survival is innovation and collaboration. Simple innovations also make great business ideas. Successful collaborations happen only through a mutual respect and appreciation of each other's works. Learn to think simple - believe me, it is more difficult than you can imagine. Set your sights high, and put all your effort in trying to achieve your dreams. Wherever you are, whatever you attain, always remember that there are millions of our fellow citizens who are much less fortunate. If you care to look, you will find children without enough food, proper health care, education and basic facilities that many of us who are fortunate have taken for granted. Do not forget them. If you can, through your business, through your research, through your dedication, try to return something to this society. This country needs us. There will be great challenges, great obstacles on the way, but never give up. Young friends, the world is yours for the taking. Go out, and make your mark.

Thank you.