

Honorable Chancellor and members of the University,

Distinguished guests,

And my dear students of the University of Calcutta,

You may have in the past had as speakers, leaders from your society and country – whom you could identify with and might even wish to emulate. Sometimes you would have had speakers from beyond India, who were nonetheless familiar as famous leaders in their respective fields. I fit in neither of these categories. Still, I feel so much at home and among friends as I stand here today. After all, India is Bhutan's closest neighbour and friend and beyond that, the great state of West Bengal has been Bhutan's partner and comrade since time immemorial. I feel privileged to be here at this august institution and I feel a deep sense of happiness in being among so many of Bhutan's young friends. I thank you all for this opportunity.

Today, I am here to share my thoughts and experiences with you, people of my own generation, who face the same challenges and opportunities that I do. I am here for a simple conversation, and only hope you will take away something from it.

I don't want to talk about what the world should do or what countries should do – or about great subjects and issues and what leaders must do. Instead, let us talk about what we, the youth, should do and how we should live our lives as individuals – about how we are going to tread this earth during our time. What kind of footprints are we going to leave as our generation gives way to that of our yet unborn children?

To do so, first of all, let's get an idea of the kind of world we have been born into - the one you are entering after this convocation. It is not a pretty picture, I must warn you.

Now, these facts and figures that I quote are easily available anywhere, and one quick glance on the web will give you much more information than I can read out to you today.

First, lets talk about the environment:

If you listen to these numbers, it is alarming how reckless we have been and continue to be. Something as fundamental as the environment – the Earth – has been forsaken for profit:

- Up to 70% of the world's known species risk extinction if the global temperatures rise by more than 3.5 degrees centigrade.
- Every second, rainforests the size of a football field disappear
- Water problems affect half of humanity
- Glaciers are receding
- Often as a direct result of the disrespect for the environment, natural disasters become more frequent and forceful. Very recently, disasters have struck Ladakh and most parts of Pakistan
- The costs of natural disasters can set back a community or nation by decades – not to speak of the lasting emotional damage inflicted on the people affected

Yet, sadly, there is not much hope for quick global action that is so essential. As we all know, the efforts to build global cooperation towards a lasting solution have been failing regularly. It seems the interests of humanity always lose out when faced with the interests of individuals.

It is quite clear now, that we will be handing to our children, a world which has been, in so many ways, made worse than when we inherited it.

Now, lets talk about poverty:

In a world that has seen unprecedented material growth:

- The poorest 40 percent of the world's population accounts for only 5 percent of global income while the richest 20 percent get 75%
- More than 1 billion people live on less than a dollar a day
- 24,000 children die each day due to poverty
- About half of humanity – 3 billion people - live in cities – of which 1 billion are confined to slums.
- The problems of poorer countries and people are often worsened by corruption.
In developing countries, bribes alone total \$20 to 40 billion a year – imagine what it could do for health, education and economic opportunities for the poor.

Poverty brings hardship, suffering and untold misery to the poor. But those in richer communities or nations should be mindful that with such disparities come disharmony, conflict and ultimately instability on a global scale.

What about health?

- 1 billion people lack access to proper health care
- 11 million children under the age of 5 die every year from malnutrition and preventable diseases
- 300 million suffer serious sickness due to malaria and 1 million die each year
- 40 million people are living with HIV/AIDS of which only 4 million have access to antiretroviral treatment

All this in a world that prides itself on scientific achievement. We can send people to the moon but we cant find out how to get essential medicines into the hands of those who need it the most.

Then there is the global economy:

- The unpredictability and imperfect legislation of advanced economies has caused instability and uncertainty in poorer countries affecting the already insecure livelihoods of their people
- Coupled with military spending the world's future is even more unpredictable and dangerous. World military expenditure in 2009 was estimated at \$1.5 trillion or about \$225 for each person in the world
- The poor countries, most in need of resources are typically the ones with the weakest voice in how the global economy is shaped

Thus, we are only laying the groundwork for a world of inequality and resentment – of future conflict over resources and livelihoods – of continued strife, of terrorism and instability.

The list of global problems goes on and on. And coupled with the rapid growth of the world's population – from 2 billion in 1930 to 6.8 billion today and 8 billion in the next 10 to 15 years. That is something to think about.

I could summarize everything and put it simply – “The greatness of humanity, of science and inventions, of great philosophers, of enterprise and industry has undoubtedly brought the world immeasurable benefits. Today we live a life far removed from that of our forefathers. Yet, we face new and greater global challenges. Why? Because – growth that overlooks inequality, injustice, environmental degradation, unbridled consumption is ultimately unsustainable. And it will continue to throw in humanity's way greater and greater problems, until one day when we will not be able to repair the damage.”

So what do we do when our generation is faced with such great challenges? I suppose we must first acknowledge, even as we contemplate the sad statistics that define our predicament that one lesson history has taught us is that we are the authors of our own global problems.

I believe that every generation has faced its great challenges as far back as we can find the history for. And every generation – has ultimately realized, often too late – that humanity faces its darkest moments when we forsake the very characteristics that make us truly extraordinary living beings – our human Conscience – our Values.

As we begin to play our role – from the moment you leave this hall - let us not speak of world leaders and great nations – let us demand answers from ourselves, as individuals. What is our role?

Did we ever sit down and think about this while at university? Some of us will have done so – but most of us feel limited in our capacity to make real change – most of us would think - we are young – we are not billionaires or world leaders or famous celebrities – we are students fresh out of college – it is difficult enough for a young person to survive – to make a living – shouldn't it be world leaders who make a change in the world?

This is the flaw – this waiting for saviors – why must the world wait for a few individuals to be born?

In a way, the environment we live in inculcates in us this outlook to life – those words we use so often at university - competition, future, jobs, income, investment and other such words –nothing wrong with the words – except that we have slowly become their victims not their masters. In the absence of other ways to qualify and evaluate success in education, we equate success with money or power. Even Mahatma Gandhi during his time felt that we had no idea what education really meant and how to put a value to it. It is the same today. We know what we get if we work hard, a good degree and find a good job – we get a nice car, nice house and the appreciative admiration of others. We don't know what we get exactly from being honest, just and compassionate. The benefits from this do not accrue so easily or visibly. But as Gandhiji said, “an education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other, is a misnomer.”

For our generation, no matter what we have all studied in university or where we are from, we have been born into a world where it is more likely that we will pursue material rewards more than what is morally right – that we will follow the path of individualism at the cost of community and fraternity. This is the direction we have been pointed towards by the kind of growth the world has pursued.

How unfortunate – for if we take this path - then no matter how much scientific or material progress is made in our lifetimes, global problems will prevail, in fact multiply and we will continue to endanger each other and the future of our children.

But how wonderful if we decide today that we will make the effort, as individuals, to try and solve global problems, to make the world a better place for our children and for the less fortunate among us. If we decide to change the way we are expected to think and behave. If we, in this room, seize this chance to do things differently. If we act without waiting for great leaders to be born. If we can believe in the extraordinary potential of simple human values then We can be the

generation that made the difference – the generation with a conscience – the generation that the world has waited for, for so long.

None of us here may have, today, the wealth or skills to combat natural disasters or plug the ozone layer or remove world poverty. But we know that there is one thing we can change – that is ourselves. That is the most important thing – that is the one obvious starting point in our quest to find a solution to global problems - one's self. As Gandhiji said, "Be the change you want to see."

Do not feel alone, small or inconsequential. Too often leadership is associated with one great person giving an inspiring sermon to the masses and leading them to greater heights. I would be happy with this version of leadership if only it happened enough. By enough I mean if great leaders led millions everyday all over the world and solved all our problems. But that is not going to happen. We need millions of Mahatmas but history has given us only one.

Therefore, even if all of us cannot own billions or rule the world - what we can do for certain is we can touch the life of one person at a time – that is what is humanly possible and that is the great equalizer – whether you are the richest woman in the world or an ordinary man making a living you have the same power to truly touch someone with kindness, compassion and care.

When I speak about kindness, compassion and care – I know I may sound naive but the fact is that I believe in what I am saying. What I am saying is that in this global village – on a daily basis we are not fighting world wars or military conquest – every single day we are fighting the consequences of simple human negligence, complacency, lack of compassion, inequality. What we need is not a Leader to lead the Masses - we need Leadership of the Self.

This is my message today. I do not know how to find the cure for diseases and I cannot tell governments or multinationals to respect the environment - but I can assure you with all confidence that each of us can be better individuals – better human beings. Whether we become farmers, scientists, inventors or bureaucrats, the one thing we can all do alike is to live our lives according to the values of kindness, integrity, justice – we can be good human beings.

How does Leadership of the Self – being better human beings - translate to a better world?

Well, there are ... hundreds of us here today and thousands more under the University of Calcutta. Some of us will become scientists, some corporate leaders, some national leaders and teachers so on. The difference will be that as good human beings we will be scientists who make the right inventions and cures; corporate leaders who do business with ethics; national leaders who keep in mind the weakest sections of society and the welfare of future generations; teachers who nurture and build good people. Imagine all the good we can do with the skills that our education provides, the tools that science and technology offer and all the resources of the world.

See, throughout history, we have always had the resources, the technology and science to not only solve but also actually prevent the problems that have plagued our world. What we lacked at certain moments is the Conscience to direct these resources to their right and noble use. When 24,000 children die every day due to poverty, we spend \$1.5 trillion dollars on arms and ammunition. So now we can direct a missile at a target on another continent with the simple press of a button, but we cannot yet bring safe drinking water to half of humanity. We always had the resources. We lacked steadfast commitment, conscience and compassion.

I hope you see why I have kept speaking about the need to develop ourselves as individuals before we seek change in the world. We live in a highly globalized and interdependent world, a world where problems facing humanity like poverty, disease, war, strife do not recognize borders of nation, ethnicity or religion. It affects all of us; it affects every part of the world.

The solution to global problems will not just materialize from politics, from great leaders or from science and technology. The solution will come from us living as citizens of our communities, our societies, our countries and above all as citizens of the world. As citizens of the world, our unifying force – our strength must also come from something that is not bound by nation, ethnicity or religion – from fundamental human values.

Values shape the future of humanity.

Values are the root of our character – if we do not tend the roots, the character that springs from it no matter how much wealth, power and fame surrounds it will bring little benefit to oneself, the lives of others and to the well being of the planet.

All these buildings, monuments, this life that we hold so dear – all of these must give way and perish – not Values – Values of kindness, integrity, justice. Even death shall not extinguish them. Nothing travels endlessly with time and stays relevant from generation to generation, era upon era except fundamental human values.

I hope we will realize that we are at the cusp of a fundamental change of thought – a social revolution that will change the way humanity will pursue growth forever. Our generation is called upon to rethink, to redefine the true purpose of growth. And in doing so, to find a growth that is truly sustainable.

We must never forget that for lasting peace and happiness in this world, the journey forward has to be one that we must all make together. No one should be left behind.

This we must achieve without waiting for some great leader or genius who may or may not ever emerge – we should instead seek to do so, each of us, on our own. As we become better human beings, we build better families, stronger communities, successful nations and a peaceful stable world for ourselves and our future generations. It all starts with Leadership of the Self.

Calcutta, 5 October 2010 – speech by HM Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk

Now, as you go into life beyond university – you might say – everything that Jigme has said, I have thought about them before ... and ... I want to be a good human being – a kind person - a just person – but sometimes its not enough to be good. How does one cope in this ever-changing world, where the ups and downs are so unpredictable?

Yes, the world may not be an easy place – and life can be hard sometimes. If it is of any worth to you, let me share my approach to keeping myself on the right path. It is a simple way in which I try to keep my goals, hopes and aspirations and above all my conscience always in the forefront.

I imagine my life is a book that I am engaged in writing. In so doing, I find that every moment brings the urge and energy to do something special, something worthy to write into the book. When I am confronted by some challenge, I find the opportunity to write a wonderful tale of hardship, suffering, hard work, determination and commitment. When faced by the temptation to take short cuts and cheat, the book serves as my conscience. In the end, after all, like anyone else I want the story of my life to be as good as possible. But this story is written by my own best judge – the one that cannot be cheated or deceived – myself. As is said in the Gita – “Let a man raise himself by himself; let him not lower himself; for he alone is the friend of himself; he alone is the enemy of himself.”

So my young friends of the University of Calcutta - let us - you and me - today introduce a new Individualism - the individualism of values – that seeks the progress of oneself as an individual - as a human being – and thus, the progress of humanity.

Before I conclude, thank you for having me here and for taking the time to listen. I want you to know that being here with you means a lot to me. It has been a real privilege. As you begin your lives after university, I pray that all of you go will go on to live wonderful happy lives; that you will find true love - its important you know – some of you may have already found your soul-mate, some waiting in anticipation while some desperately looking for one – well, Good Luck - I hope it leads to happy marriages and beautiful children who make you proud and bring you comfort.

On a more serious note – I pray that you will find wisdom, courage and determination to overcome challenges and grasp opportunities; I hope that you will develop a strong moral compass that will help you navigate towards leading honorable lives. I pray that at the end of it all, you will all be able to look back at extraordinary lives free of regret, full of satisfaction, happiness and fulfillment. And that I will learn, year after year, with great pride, of all the good you have done as wonderful human beings and as my friends.

Thank you.

Tashi Delek!