

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

OF  
SIND UNIVERSITY

By

Begum Nusrat Bhutto

April 1973

M. H. Panchsari

**Convoocation Address**

*OF*

**The University of Sind**

*BY*

**Begum Nusrat Bhutto**

**The First Lady of Pakistan**

پاران ايم ايڇ پنهور انسٽيٽيوٽ آف سنڌ اسٽڊيز، ڄامشورو.

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**SATURDAY, THE 28TH APRIL, 1973**

*Madam Chancellor, Mr. Vice Chancellor,  
Students, Ladies and Gentlemen;*

I wish to express my gratitude to the Sind University for inviting me to speak to my young friends. They are the true builders of the tomorrow, of our dreams. I also see before me an impressive assembly of educationists and intellectuals.

I do not have to remind this great institution of its responsibilities as the main projector of Sind's great traditions of scholarship and its cultural heritage. It might be said that I am putting forward too tall a claim on behalf of Sind and thereby imposing too heavy a burden of obligations upon this institution. But the fact remains that the claim is not unjustified.

To begin with, it is evident that the full canvas of Sindh's past, has not as yet been discovered, dusted, restored, and laid bare before us. We still lack a complete view of life led across the centuries. We cannot, therefore, perceive the beauties of its composition, lines and colour. In that respect, I am afraid, we have failed to employ the technical inventiveness and research of the 20th Century. The many gaps in our history remain to this day unfilled. Our old script has not yet been deciphered. The network of ancient sites of this Province lies buried. Some rudimentary archaeological excavations have no doubt taken place. It is these modest efforts made over half a century ago which led to the fantastic discoveries at Moenjodaro. But even what little has been unearthed of our past is in peril of decay. Moenjodaro is threatened by salinity and water logging. Only international interest can ensure the preservation of this invaluable heritage. Our own resources are too meagre for this purpose.

Ladies and Gentlemen, despite these worrying thoughts, you have enough before you to enable the formation of a mental picture of your past. You can recapture the pageant of Sindh life, appreciate the vigour of its culture, evaluate its contribution to civilization, comprehend the true significance of the universality of its spiritual and moral message, understand its distinctive humanitarian philosophy and take pride in the achievements of your ancestors, in the field of Letters and Arts. There is enough to bear out Sindh's singular traditions of cosmopolitanism. By empathy and imagination, we can trace the psychological root of those sweet "nothings" which one comes across in Sindh's day-to-day life and which soften the tumult of life.

Sind, without doubt, has had a chequered history. This was inevitable because of its geographical location on an international highway, resulting in continual trampling of the invaders' feet on its soil. We do not know what destroyed the Moenjodaro civilization but that it was destroyed by human hands and not by a natural calamity is beyond doubt. We, of course, know that the Army of Alexander had passed through Sind and that it could not have been a Moral Rearmament Force. In less remote times, Sind has been the victim of one armed incursion after another, each wreaking havoc. However, it is remarkable, that the misery and torment that followed every aggression was quickly absorbed by this fertile land. When in 1843 the British, the last of the conquerors, seized Sind, none of the alien traces was obtrusive. The vestiges of the Greek influence along with that of the Persians and the Arabs and the Rajputs and the Moghuls were so thoroughly intermingled that Sind remained as much Sind to Charles Napier as it had been to Alexander. The Baloch ruled Sind before the English conquest. They had ethnic traces in Sindh's veins due to their large population throughout Sind. Yet they did not then, and indeed do not today, dominate the native surroundings of the Indus. It was in resisting one invasion after another that, you will recall, the celebrated hero of Sind, *Doolah Darya Khan*, met his martyrdom. His deeds are still sung by the bards. Then there occurred the terrible sack of Thatta by the Portuguese free-booters who turned the capital into a heap of ashes, and its humanity into a mass of corpses. In course of time, this was followed by the plunderous march of Nadir

Shah from Larkana to the sand dunes of Umarkot. Nadir Shah left only, after he had, in the style of Napoleon, taken possession of, and carried home, Sind's great national collection of priceless manuscripts and irreplaceable works of Art. Stray specimens of these, one still comes across here and there in the world.

This series of invasions was responsible for so much destruction and despoilment of a great wealth of written material and historical evidence. Yet, providentially, it did not prove an unmixed misfortune. The constant flux and movement among the people, did, indeed, result in Sind becoming a melting pot of cultures. It became a point of confluence for the great cultural streams of the East : namely, the Arabian, the Iranian, and the Central Asian. Sind received what was best in them and, in return, gave them what was best in its own. It was in the course of these historic upheavals that countless men of outstanding scholarship and spiritual merit, hailing from various cultural centres of the East, found their way into Sind. They found the Sindhian way to their taste, settled here and devoted their lives to the embellishment of Sind's culture and the enrichment of its life and language. Today you observe your entire valley studded with the noble shrines and imposing mausolea of Saints and Sufis, scholars and religious teachers. Where did they come from ? The bulk of these luminaries came from outside, for example, Qalander Lal Shahbaz from Marand in Iran, Shah Abdul Latif and Sachal Sarmast's ancestors from Arabia, Masoom Shah and his father from Sabzwar, the great family of Shaikh Mubarak, the father of Abul Fazal and Faizi, from Yemen, Mir Abul Qasim Nimkin from Herat, the various Jilanis from Iraq and the Bokhari Sadaat from Central Asia. Sind raised monuments to perpetuate their memory. It did not regard them as aliens. On the contrary, it recorded its eternal gratitude for what they had contributed towards the richness of its life.

Ladies and Gentlemen : I would now like to make two more observations. First, I maintain that these great men made Sind their home, because they found here what they had not been, perhaps, able to find elsewhere—a congenial atmosphere, generated and maintained by a long and unbroken tradition of humanism and tolerance. My second point is that it was the influx of so much

talent and its efflorescence that enabled the language of Sindhi to attain such a high degree of development.

This is evidenced from two facts. First, Sindhi is perhaps the only language that can exactly record and reproduce the original phonetics and pronunciations of all tongues of the world. Second, its vocabulary is so vast that it can describe with facility all the states of the human mind: love, anguish, spiritual ecstasy, deep yearning, happiness. Not all advanced languages of the world can make a comparable claim. Those who are able to read Sindhi poetry alongside other poetry can easily see the point. This is no occasion to illustrate it elaborately. Let me only quote a few lines from the great Shah and invite scholars to translate them, if they can, preserving the beauty and the indefinable magic which is found in the symphony of words.

ڪڪي ۽ هائون ڪاريون، ڇڇي ۽ هائا ڇڇ،  
بانڊ جنهن جي بانڊ سين، لڳو ٿي لڳ،  
سمون ڄام سوڄ، اڀو ڪري ان سين.

The distinctiveness of this poetry is unmistakable. It generates love; it does not arouse passion. It soothes the mind; it does not excite violence, hate or anger. Basically, Sindhi poetry is not a poetry of war or of revenge. The genius of Sind is antipathetic to these evils. Unlike much of Western poetry, it does not cater only to the aesthetic instinct. Its orientation is primarily spiritual.

While we are discussing poetry, ladies and gentlemen, we might as well briefly deal with Sindhi music. Sind, as you know, has had its own School of Music, its own modes or *Raags*, such as, to mention a few, Sindhi *Bhairvi*, Sindhi *Jog*; Sindhi *Kamad*, *Karihar Sur Sasul Abri* etc. At one time, the music of Sind enjoyed widespread popularity and influenced the Gujrati, the Muharashtrian and the Agra Schools of Music. Its echoes probably travelled as far as Spain, across Iran, Baghdad and Syria, through the agency of the Sindhi settlers who, in the

Ummayyad and Abbaside times, carried their own music there. It is being claimed that until recently a certain stamp of the Sindhi School of Music was found on the Andalusian tunes in Spain.

I have so far dealt with what Sindh has owed to the talent which came from outside. However, the commerce of talent is never a one-way traffic. Sindh amply returned in kind what it received from outside. In the matter of supply of talent, it provided even the highest seats of learning at Mecca and Madina with scholars whose names adorned the pages of the history of Islam. To name a few: Abdul Hasan Kabir, Abul Hasan *Saghir Thattavi*, Mohammad Hayat Sindhi, Mohammad Qaim Thattavi, Shaikh Abdullah *Muttaqi Darbelvi* and Kazi Abdullah. They taught the Arabs Ilm-i-Hadith. The works of some of these scholars have been published in Egypt and are taught at Al Azhar University. Monumental works were written in Arabic by Sind scholars like Makhdum Mohammad Hashim, Ibrahim Thattavi, Abdul Latif Thattavi, and Makhdum Mohammad Moin. Abu Ata Sindhi and Abu Raja Sindhi ranked among the foremost poets of Arabic. In point of time, the first book on our religion, being a collection of Ahadis, was compiled in Sindhi. The first translation of the Holy Quran in any language was in Sindhi. The first collection of the Holy Prophet's letters was arranged and put in book-form by a Sindhi scholar of *Debal*. The first book on the Principles of Education in Arabic was produced in Sind. The first historical work in Persian (*Tabaqat-e-Nasiri*) was written in Sindhi. So were the first 'Tazkara' of Persian poets and the first 'Tazkara' of women poets of Persian. In addition to these, hundreds of miscellaneous works in Arabic, and thousands of works in Persian, were written by Sindhi scholars and the bulk of these await Publication. In short, as I have just said, Sindhi, in its turn, had contributed a great deal to the enrichment of Arabic and Persian languages and mode of thought also. Surely, if Sindhi's talent had not conformed to high standards, Sind's poets and musicians, physicians and artisans would not have been in demand at the court of the Abbaside Caliphs. We have it on record that even the Baghdad Gun Factory was manned by the gun and sword smiths from Sind.

And finally, I must place before you my ideas about the fundamentals of Sind's philosophy of life. Sind's thought has been deeply influenced by mysticism. The Sindhi mind constantly strove to attain the higher states of consciousness without which it is impossible for the human being to comprehend the ultimate reality. Its vision is Islamic because it does not view matter and spirit as opposed to each other. Its spirit is that of humility. In the words of Shah Sain.

“The beloved would be on their path, who walk upon it in humility.”

ڊول تنهنن جي گهر، هيٺانهيون هلن جي.

It is in this context that I alluded earlier to the liberalism and cosmopolitanism of the Sindhi thought. By nature and tradition, the Sindhis are a broad-minded people; a Sindhi is a born citizen of the world. He is a believer neither in parochialism nor in exclusivism. For a mystically inclined community, the whole humanity is but one single family. A Sindhi, therefore, cannot hate a fellow human being. That would be contrary to his philosophy of life. I place before you again a few lines from Shah Abdul Latif which have been often quoted but their meaning is never fully understood :

موٽي مانڊاڻ جي واري ڪيائين وار،  
 و جون وسط آهيون، چونڊس ۽ چونڊار،  
 ڪي آهي ويٺيون استنبول ٿي، ڪي مڙيون مغرب پار،  
 ڪي ڇمڪن چين تي، ڪي لهن سمرقندين سار،  
 ڪي رمي ويٺيون روم تي، ڪي ڪابل ڪي قنڌار،  
 ڪي دهليءَ، ڪي دکن، ڪي گڙن مٿي گرنار،  
 ڪنهنن چُنبي جيساڄر تان، ڏنا بيڪانير بڪار،  
 ڪنهنن پڇ پڇائو، ڪنهنن ٻٽ مٿي ڍار،  
 ڪنهنن اڇي عمرڪوٽ تان، وسايا ولهار،  
 سائينم! سدائين ڪرين، مٿي سنڌ سُڪار،  
 دوس مٺا دلدار، عالم سڀ آباد ڪرين!



These lines are difficult to translate literally but their meaning can be gleaned. The poet here invokes divine grace for the benefit and prays for the prosperity and well-being, of not Sindhi alone, but of the whole world. He mentions Istanbul, the Western world beyond Istanbul, China, Samarkand, Rome, Kabul, Qandhar, Deccan, Girnar, Jaisalmer, Bikaneer, Bhuj, Dhat, Umerkot and, finally, to leave no loophole, the whole world (Sabh Alam). Thus if Sind had been parocnially inclined, why would its greatest poet and teacher has undertaken the burden of praying for the welfare of the whole world and not limited himself to the affairs of Sind, if not of his own Bhit? The fact of the matter was that the whole system of Sindhian thought was one of humanism. Shah Saheb was but an exponent of that system of thought.

My young friends, Ladies and Gentlemen, you will forgive me for having so heavily taxed your time and your patience. But, on an occasion as this, I could not resist the temptation of sharing my thoughts with you. As had been said by the Great Hafiz of Shiraz.

حدیث دوست نگویم مگر بہ حضرت دوست  
کہ آشنا سخن آشنا نگہ دارد

The meaning being : ‘‘I wouldn’t share confidences except with friends, for a friend values what a friend says.’’

I hope and trust that you will give your consideration to these thoughts of mine, and, if possible, try to reconstruct Sind’s history and reinterpret its culture and thought. That would be, to my mind, a great service not only to Sind but to Pakistan. Sind is but an integral part of Pakistan. Let it not be forgotten that patriotism was the basis, or the strongest point, of Sind’s culture and tradition. Who has not heard, and drawn moral from, the story of Marvi.

Let me conclude by saying :

By birth I am an Iranian Kurd from Kermanshah. In this sense I am a Muhajir who came to Pakistan like millions of other Muhajirs in 1947 in the

wake of partition. We have the greatest respect and admiration for the Muhajirs who braved the hazards of the greatest upheaval the sub-continent has witnessed. From wherever we came, we are here and we chose to be here. How can we be anything but a part of this soil? Within the State of Pakistan, the Province of Sind gave my family a hospitable welcome and shelter. Our fate is bound body and soul to this soil, this warm and gracious land, where history passes like a breeze and whose personality and culture have remained untarnished by one mighty incursion after another. How can one not be enchanted by these surroundings? How can one feel a total allegiance? Perhaps when my life's span on this earth reaches its end, I know that, like my children and their children later, I will find a final abode in a village called Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Butto in the sweet and salubrious land of Shah Latif. This is where our human dust will mingle with the soil of Sind. Let this not sound too sentimental. It merely expresses the immense pride one feels in this belonging. Of course, I adore the language of Iran and its unrivalled culture. Of course, we are attached to the language of Ghalib. But these attachments do not and cannot diminish, by a jot, our esteem and respect for the language of Latif and the culture of Sind, the land which gave us generous haven and a life full of meaning and promise. Naturally, I fondly recall with pride the roots of my ancestors in Iran but this is my land, and for it alone will I pine and sacrifice. After living here for over twenty five years, after giving birth to four children in Larkana, how can anyone call me an Iranian or a Muhajir? I proclaim with pride that I am none other than an ordinary Sindhi citizen of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. I am sure that, in saying this, I echo the sentiments of millions of others.

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