

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF INDIA AT THE 21ST CONVOCATION OF
BIDHAN CHANDRA KRISHI VISHWAVIDYALAYA**

I am happy to be present amidst you for this special occasion of the 21st Convocation of the Bidhan Chandra Krishi Vishwavidyalaya. At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chancellor, His Excellency, Governor of Bengal Shri Keshri Nath Tripathi, Vice Chancellor Dr. D.D. Patra, Members of Faculty and Administration and above all, the students on reaching this milestone. I would specially like to congratulate you today for achieving this momentous feat in your lives.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

2. I am happy to learn that Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya that started its journey as a full-fledged State Agricultural University in the year 1974 has worked consistently in achieving its focal objective of imparting education and undertaking research and extension activities in the field of agriculture and related sciences. I am told that that initially the University started functioning only with just two faculties – Faculty of Agriculture and

Faculty of Veterinary and Animal Sciences offering Under-Graduate, Post-graduate and Doctoral degrees in Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences and Dairy Technology. Later in 1996, following the establishment of the West Bengal University of Animal and Fishery Sciences, two new faculties - Faculty of Horticulture and Faculty of Agricultural Engineering came into existence under this Viswavidyalaya. Recently two new colleges of Agriculture have also started functioning - one at Burdwan since 2014 and another at Bankura from 2015. At present the Faculty of Agriculture comprises of 16 academic departments. The Faculty of Horticulture and the Faculty of Agricultural Engineering encompass 5 and 4 academic departments, respectively.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the students for their keen interest in agricultural sciences, the science that constitutes the very backbone of our agricultural system, our economy, as indeed our survival. It is remarkable that a good number of students from different states across the country, as well as from different countries, have chosen this very University for their higher studies.

Dear Students,

3. Today, I beckon you to look upon those who could not be here today. The youth of this great nation whose economic conditions could not aide his/her education. Today, I wish to talk to you about the farmers of this country and their families. They who toil the land for survival of the rest.
4. India's arable land is the second largest in the world. Second only to the United States (IWR report 2017). The area of land tilled 141.2 million hectares. The total cropped area is 189.7 million hectares. However this vast land faces great crises. I quote the World Bank Report which mentions "***Slow agricultural growth is a concern for policymakers as some two-thirds of India's people depend on rural employment for a living***" unquote. The world is weary of our condition. This report mentions the problem of un-developed roads and problems of storage. What is surprising is that we have been facing these problems since the First 5 Year Plan. I say this to you so that you may look into these persistent bottlenecks of our society and the agriculture sector. Pandit Nehru remarked that the way you are brought up shall reflect on the

community. It is for this reason that I remind you of this condition.

5. History has always asked questions of the future. You are the future of this nation and the people demand your support. No latest consolidated data is available on farmer suicides, however in 2012, the National Crime Records Bureau of India reported 13,754 farmer suicides. Furthermore, these days, news reports from agrarian districts in multiple states show us a disturbing picture with unabated farmer deaths. According to report by news agency United News of India, around 909 farmers ended their lives in the Marathwada region alone between December 2018 – January 2019. This is an extremely grave condition which needs to change. Life is extremely precious and that the sole cultivators of our bread and butter have to end it due to distress and poverty is the biggest failure on our part. They, because of whom we receive our meals, need our consideration.

6. The scientific mind is an inquisitive and curious mind. It attempts to find answers to all unanswered questions and problems faced by the humanity. One such idea of was the

Green Revolution in the 1960's, which offered great bounty to the country. The aim of the first Green Revolution was to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains through a combination of the use of high-yielding varieties of seeds, increased use of fertilizers and strengthening irrigation. However, there are some lessons to be learnt from the first Green Revolution. The excessive use of chemical fertilizers became unsustainable in the long run as it gradually led to the decline in productivity. The use of high yielding seeds was confined to only food grains. Thus, the revolution touched only a limited percentage of India's total arable land.

7. There is a dire need for next generation revolution in the Agriculture sector. It is here that I envision a Second Green revolution. And the Eastern region of the country, where we are located, with its rich productivity has a greater onus to usher this second Green Revolution in our nation. I envision this revolution to be more holistic and widespread. Such an initiative should be accompanied by development of rural infrastructure, human development and increased sensitivity to ecology and environment.

Given the Herculean task ahead, it is imperative that students of this discipline like yourself help and support the Government and contribute your insights towards making this dream into a reality. Only then will we be able to find tangible solutions to real time agrarian problems. In this regard, reduction in cost of cultivation, increase in productivity and production, and remunerative price for produce are the three fundamental sutras for a farmer's prosperity that needs our immediate attention.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

8. I understand the allure of technology, even though I may not extensively use-it. I understand the positives it can bring about. Information Services Based Agriculture Loans, Digital land Records, Yield Assessment Technology, Image Processing in Agriculture, Innovation through research and technology development for devising economically viable solutions to enhance productivity of small farms are few technological solutions that will help the farming community immensely.

Dear students,

9. I have seen the passing of currents and I shall warn you of them. Do not let pure private interests shroud your eyes. Look beyond the screen of your phones and computers into the fields. Travel along the road and see what problems are to be addressed. You can rely on the government for change, but you must ensure progress. The leaders of tomorrow should not forget their roots.
10. After leaving this portal of your alma mater, face the real world. Be brave to accept the challenges. Do not be down-cast by failures, learn from them and move ahead. This is your age of new opportunities; do not become ignorant of your responsibility.
11. I am happy to be amongst you today as I receive your warmth. I ask you not to forget or ignore our villages and our farmers. I implore you to find an answer to their problems and amend the lapses of the past. Before concluding, I would once again like to wish you all the very best for all your future endeavours.

Thank You.

Jai Hind.