

**Justice M. G. Ranade's Thoughts on Education
Relevance for the
Contemporary Higher Education System in India**

Address by

Dr. Narendra Jadhav
Vice Chancellor, University of Pune

while receiving
Justice M. G. Ranade Award
conferred by
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Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a matter of great honour and proud privilege for me to receive the Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade Award today. It is with the deepest sense of humility, a profound sense of responsibility and some trepidation that I am standing before you today to receive this prestigious Award.

There are at least four reasons why I feel so deeply honoured to receive this Award: First, this Award has been instituted in the memory of Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade - one of our National Heroes and one of the earliest champions of human rights in our country. Secondly, this Award is being conferred on me by the National Social Conference - founded in 1887 by Justice Ranade himself, which has established a glorious tradition of devotion and commitment to social reforms. Thirdly, the galaxy of recipients of this Award earlier is truly formidable; it includes four eminent jurists - Justice Y.M. Tarkunde, Justice P.B. Sawant, Justice Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari and Justice Narendra Chapalgaonkar and three great scientists - Dr. Jayant Naralikar, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, and Dr. Raghunath Mashelkar besides the Award conferred on Shri Somnath Chatterjee, the Lok Sabha Speaker last year. I feel deeply honoured to have been placed in such a distinguished league. Finally, I also feel greatly privileged that this Award is being conferred on me by Dr. Vijay Kelkar, who apart from being a great economist and liberal thinker has been my friend, philosopher and guide for several years.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. M.P. Mangudkar - from whom I have been receiving guidance for more than a decade, and his associates in the National Social Conference for conferring this honour on me.

As we all know, late Justice M.G. Ranade was a multi-faceted personality. He was a visionary political thinker, one of the founding fathers of the Indian National Congress, a great champion of human rights dedicated to the cause of total social reforms, a brilliant jurist, an eminent economist and the father of 'Indian Political Economy' and above all, an educationist par excellence.

In my speech today, I would like to revisit Justice Ranade's thoughts on education expressed more than 100 years ago and compare and contrast them with the state of higher education in India today in terms of the challenges faced and opportunities available, and also relate them to my experiences for the last two years as the Vice Chancellor of the largest University in India, that is, the University of Pune.

Let me begin by recapitulating Justice Ranade's thoughts on education.

I Justice Ranade on Education

At some point in his illustrious career, Justice Ranade held the offices of Syndic and Dean in Arts at the then Bombay University. His thoughts on education are put together in the book, "Miscellaneous Writings of Mr. Justice Ranade" (published in 1915). These thoughts have been analysed succinctly by another great scholar - Prof. D.G. Karve, the third Vice Chancellor of University of Pune, in his book

titled, "Ranade : The Prophet of Liberated India", published in 1942. Drawing from these two sources, the salient features of Justice Ranade's thinking on education may be pieced together, as follows:

1. The system of education ought to emphasize the wider human and universal significance of the efforts of each individual and each people.
2. A balanced, proportionate and full development of personality is the goal for the individual as well as the society, and it is the function of education to equip people with the means of achieving the same.
3. As the foundation of India's movement of cultural and material regeneration, there is a need for extensive development of seats of genuine learning and scientific tradition.
4. The progress of science and the attainment of knowledge are themselves in a way only a means to an end. The end is to ennoble human life and to develop the creative faculties of man. These objectives are essentially moral in their implications and can be hardly achieved unless the necessary emotional background and training are provided by the teachers.
5. The habit of informed as well as free thinking can grow only as a result of a suitable system of education. Educationists should order their systems of instruction so as to create and develop among the students both the desire and capacity for independent thinking. The force of a truthful and genuine thought or idea is after all the motive power of all progress. The freedom of thinking inculcated among students should not stop at a mere negative stage of criticism. The new light should be reflected in creative channels. To achieve this purpose, a strong tradition of active research must be created among our teachers and scholars.
6. Once an intellectual tradition of wide cooperation and creative contribution is set up in the sphere of intellectual and scientific activity, it gradually permeates the mass mind in the same way. Such a spirit pervaded the thinkers and academies of India. The contributions of our ancient Rishis to philosophical and sociological literature are masterpieces of independent and creative thought. India's regeneration and progress needs revival of the spirit of those palmy days of Indian scholarship and to bring to bear on new problems the light and the vigour of the old tradition. Science should be studied with a view to serve human needs. Arts should be developed to improve the finer sensibilities of the people. But these and other advantages of a progressive social life should not be confined to a select few. According to the aptitudes of the mind of the learner and according to the relative academic and practical importance of each branch of knowledge, suitable courses of instruction must be provided for all. Unity, freedom and progress - not for some but for all, should be the objective and the characteristics of the new 'renovated' Indian culture.
7. Any education that would give a lopsided, a sectional or a narrow view of the heritage and promise of the human race is not an education for progress. A nation must realize its allotted part in the larger human scheme so that it could discharge the same most efficiently. Our teachers must know how to introduce their pupils to a correct appreciation of the forces which

are at work in the wider world outside and which, represent all that is best in human efforts for the elevation and happiness of man.

8. No organized effort has been made either by the Universities or government to initiate a regular series of extension lectures on several topics of cultural and material interests. The university should not, as at present, wean away its children after their graduation, but should adopt measures by which it can retain its elevating connection with the graduates in their afterlife and conversation. This can best be done by encouraging a modified scheme of University Extension. Several stray efforts made hitherto indicate the usefulness of the work and if a regular system of extension lectures could be incorporated in the educational organization of the country it would serve a very high national purpose. The purpose of educational effort is not completed till it reaches the masses.
9. The courses of general study at a University ought to keep in view the wider purpose of sending out into the world well-trained and well-equipped leaders of the several aspects of the community's life. A college and a University are something very much wider in their appeal than a mere research institute, which has a purely scholastic or academic purpose to perform. A college or University have, in addition to their academic function, a social and moral utility. While the academic function is not subordinated to the wider social one, it has to be discharged in a fashion compatible with the needs of the community. Everything immediately possible must be done to bridge the gulf between University education and the cultural life of the community.
10. The whole nation should be organized for the purpose of realizing its own conception of the good life for the individual as well as the society. Willing membership of this association and a faith in the creed of national progress are the essentials of citizenship. It is as much to the interest of the State as to that of the individual that, at as early a stage in a man's life as possible, these patriotic qualities should be inculcated in the mind of the young generation. Even after the initial training is imparted the moral as well as intellectual qualities of good citizenship require to be refreshed and readapted to changing circumstances and needs. For this reason a well directed organization of educational institutions and extension courses ought to be made an integral part of national life. Without laying emphasis on any narrow denominational loyalty and without leaving such things to the private associations concerned, the State ought to take the lead in organizing and at least partially financing the cause of national education. Expenditure of money and effort incurred on this score was more than fully justified as much as a means of national progress as an end of civilized life.

Much water has flown through the Ganges since this global vision of education was presented by Justice Ranade more than a Century ago. Yet, these pearls of wisdom continue to be relevant. Indeed, this vision turns out to be timeless.

Against the backdrop of this vision, let us see where we stand in terms of higher education today.

II Higher Education in India Today

In recent years, knowledge has come to occupy the center stage of the development process of any nation with the realization that a significant new relationship has emerged between knowledge and economy. It is increasingly being recognized that those countries which have capacity to generate new knowledge and skilled human power are likely to have a comparative edge in attaining high economic

growth and sustaining their growth momentum, over those countries that do not. India is no exception to this widespread and growing global belief.

With the comprehensive economic reforms which were launched in the aftermath of the unprecedented macroeconomic crisis in 1991, India has not only arrived on the global scene, but is now increasingly being seen to be marching towards attaining the status of a economic super power. Of course, nobody believes that this transition would be seamless. On the contrary, it is widely being recognized this ride is likely to be bumpy, given several imponderables especially in the social sector. Indeed, India today is beset with a major contradiction - on one hand, it has emerged as the second fastest growing economy in the world (next only to China) but on the other hand, paradoxically, when countries are ranked by the Human Development Index (HDI), India finds itself almost at the bottom of the world order (- being 126th among 170 odd nations). Given the overriding importance of education in the Human Development Index, it is clear that India would have to put its act together in education sector rather quickly, so as to reap the full benefit of the much-touted 'demographic dividend'. In other words, importance of the education sector at the present stage of India's economic growth and development is probably more than when Justice Ranade presented his universal vision.

As desired and envisioned by Justice Ranade, there has been a large expansion of education sector. As a matter of fact, the spatial expansion of the network of higher education in India over the last 60 years has been quite impressive. At the time of Independence in 1947, there were only 20 Universities in India, around 500 colleges, and 2,40,000 students. By 2005, there were 357 Universities, 17,625 colleges and as many as 751akh students. Traditionally, what constitutes the bulk of the Indian higher education system is the State Universities. In 2005, while there were 20 Central Universities (and 13 Institutes of national importance established through Central legislation), what dominated the higher education system in India was 216 State Universities (and to a much smaller extent, 102 Deemed to be Universities).

By most accounts, impressionistic evaluations of the State Universities are far from being laudatory especially when seen in the light of the visionary thinking of Justice Ranade. Much later in 1966, the Kothari Commission had observed:

"While the fundamental values to which the Universities owe their allegiance are largely unrelated to time and circumstances, their functions change from time to time."

Their tasks are no longer confined to the two traditional functions of teaching and advancement of knowledge. They are assuming new functions and the older one are increasing in range, depth and complexity".

Broadly speaking, it would be fair to say that the hopes of Justice Ranade have largely been belied. In respect of the State Universities, what was perceived much later by the Kothari Commission has also not actually happened, and wherever something did happen, much was left to be desired. Widespread pessimism seems to prevail about the possible reform of the State Universities. Indeed, it is often said that the State Universities are beyond any reforms and, perhaps are 'reform proof'!

This well entrenched belief is not uniformly valid, any longer. Many State Universities have been carrying out basic structural reforms in the same spirit as was presented by Justice Ranade. A case to the point is the University of Pune - the largest of the State Universities in India.

III University of Pune : A Case Study

A) Evolution of the University of Pune

Pune has been the seat of education in India for several centuries and has a unique heritage of great saints and litterateurs as well as visionaries and social reformers. In fact, the first school for girls in India was established in Pune in 1848. In addition, one of the earliest colleges in modern India was also established in Pune i.e. the Hindu College way back in 1821 (now called the Deccan College). Furthermore, one of the earliest Engineering Colleges in India was also established in Pune i.e. the College of Engineering, Pune (COEP) in 1854. Nevertheless as a full-fledged University, the University of Pune was established much later, in 1949.*

When the University of Pune was established in 1949, its jurisdiction spread over 12 districts in Maharashtra but had only 23 colleges and 8,186 students (8000 undergraduate and 186 postgraduate). The Headquarters of the University was placed in a monumental building constructed in 1864, which was the residence of the Governor of Bombay during the British Raj, and with which the University of Pune has been symbolically identified in recent years.

Over the years, the jurisdiction of the University of Pune shrank to only three districts - Pune, Nashik and Ahmednagar, when the affiliated colleges in the remaining nine districts were assigned to other Universities in the region.** But there was a spectacular expansion in terms of number of students, colleges and recognized Institutes. By the academic year 2005-06, the University of Pune had 41 University Departments, 17 Schools and Centers, 433 affiliated colleges, by the 232 recognized Institutes, 12,214 teachers and as many as 4,96,531 students.

During the last two years, there was more than 30 per cent increase in the number of students, taking the total number to an estimated level of 6.5 lakh students - which makes University of Pune as one of the largest Universities in the world. Notably, there was more than 40 per cent increase in the foreign students. With more than 14,000 foreign students from 89 different countries,

University of Pune has now been established as the most preferred destination of foreign students coming to India. In fact, nearly 45 per cent of foreign students coming to India come to the University of Pune alone.

In sum, the University of Pune has now emerged as the largest University in India (and among the largest Universities in the world)

* When the first three Universities were established in India i.e., at Bombay, Madras and Calcutta in 1857, all the colleges then existing in Pune were affiliated to Bombay University.

** Mumbai University, Shivaji University and North Maharashtra University.

These problems were and are common to most State Universities. In the case of the University of Pune, they appeared more glaring.

as measured by the student population. With the Five Star rating by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the status of University with Potential for Excellence (UPE) accorded by the University Grants Commission (UGC), the University of Pune is the most highly rated State University in India. If one University in India is to be chosen as a Global University on the basis of international linkages and the world-wide outreach, that unique distinction unequivocally belongs to none other than to the University of Pune.

B) Structural Deficiencies

Notwithstanding the impressive expansion, the Five Star accreditation status and placement in the category of University with Potential for Excellence, at the beginning of the academic year 2006-07, the University of Pune was subject to some serious structural deficiencies : #

1. The curricula for most courses taught have become largely' obsolete; in some cases, not being revised for as many as 20 years or even more. There is a distinct disconnect between the ever changing societal needs in the region and what the University actually has been offering.
2. A discomfortingly large number of teachers have been hopelessly out of sync with the recent advances in their own subjects. Academic Staff College established at the University for Training the Trainers has been grossly inadequate given the large training requirements.
3. Research activities, by and large, have taken a back seat. There is a widespread belief that conducting research was really the responsibility of the University's Departments and not that of affiliating colleges, where teaching was enough! Sure enough, in some isolated University Departments, high quality research is being undertaken, but there is very limited dissemination of the research done and awareness about the research being carried out across the Departments (sometimes even within the Department) has been appalling.

Nobody could answer simple questions such as whether the quantum of research (as published in referred Journals -national and international) at the aggregate University level was rising, falling or was stagnant. Data base in this regard has been conscious by its absence.

4. Governance of the University has been a big challenge. There is no Management Information System (MIS) which has made regulation of the affiliating colleges an exceedingly difficult task besides being extraordinarily inefficient. Over the 25 years preceding 2005-06, the total number of students rose by more than 750 per cent, yet more than 40 per cent of teaching positions had remained unfilled and there was virtually no change in the size of the non-teaching staff. Not surprisingly, the quality of teaching and other student services had taken a considerable beating. The examination system has been non-transparent and is being beset with serious leakages.
5. The social connectivity of the University has been virtually lost. Ideally, the education system and the society should evolve in tandem, growing on each other. This was severed long ago. Indeed, for several years, the University seems to have evolved in splendid isolation as if it has nothing to do with the society.

C) University of Pune Model

For the last two academic years, i.e. 2006-07 and 2007-08, metamorphic changes have been taking place in the working of the University of Pune, essentially building on the acquired strengths while addressing the shortcomings identified. An unprecedented transformation is currently underway leading to, what we believe, can be termed as the University of Pune Model of State University.

The salient features of this Model are discussed below :

1. Mission of the University

Probably for the first time in the history of the University, a formal and forward looking Mission Statement ⁴ has been formulated. The Mission Statement of the University is as follows :

"The Mission of the University of Pune is to be a global, socially conscious Center of Excellence in the conservation, creation, advancement and dissemination of knowledge, equipped to take up challenges of the enormous change taking place all around and committed to empower its faculty and students to contribute meaningfully to economic, technological and social development and progress".

In accordance with this Mission, the University of Pune aims at

- becoming a vibrant Knowledge Center and a Center of Excellence in teaching, research and extension activities;
- bringing about conservation, creation, advancement and dissemination of knowledge.

- creating technologically equipped thought and action leaders in a wide range of spheres by providing value-based and high quality education, generating cutting-edge research and innovations, and enabling empowerment through social and regional inclusion;
- increasing global linkages by attracting international students and establishing collaborative programmes with educational institutions of repute.

2. Revision of Curricula

Early on in 2006, it was decided that all curricula of all courses taught in the University and affiliated colleges and Institutes (around 500 in number) would be comprehensively revised and such revisions would be undertaken with the involvement of the relevant industry experts. The following time line was set up:

4. The Mission Statement was drafted with the help of leading thinkers outside the domain of the University.

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|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| UG (First Year) and PG (First Year) | June 2008 |
| UG (Second Year) and PG (Final Year) | June 2009 |
| UG (Final Year) | June 2010 |

All the Deans of Faculty (13) and all Board of Studies (67 Regular and 56 Ad-hoc) were entrusted this challenging task. Subject wise Theme Papers were prepared and the Draft Revised Curricula were placed on the University website soliciting expert comments/corrections. Peer Review was conducted with the help of 182 identified experts, through a series of workshops, thus finalizing 222 curricula which have been disseminated through the University website.

Having completed the first phase in time, the University feels confident of delivering the rest as well as per the agreed time line. An attempt is also being made to put in place a mechanism for regular revisions of curricula every three years.

3. New Courses

In order to bring academics closer to the evolving industrial needs, the University has instituted a new MBA ++ Program in place of the conventional MBA program, with effect from the academic year 2007 -08. The structure of the new program has been formulated in close consultation with select experts from industries as well as the academicians with wide experience in their related fields keeping in view the current and emerging needs of various

industrial sectors in the region. Under this unique program, students are free to choose any one of the 30 combinations available - one from the 5 Functional specializations and one from the 6 Sectoral specializations. Building on the success of the MBA++ program another distinctive program i.e., Executive MBA for working professionals has been launched from the academic year 2008-09 and has also received an overwhelming response. The other new courses launched include: M.Tech. (Bio informatics), M.A. (Mass Relation), M.Lib. Sc. (Information Science), M.Phil (Information Science), B.Ed. (Virtually Impaired), M.Phil (Vacation) and Diploma in Modeling & Simulation.

The University has signed a MoU with Global Talent Track (GTT) on August 23, 2008 to introduce comprehensive Information Technology Enabling Services (ITES) courses with certification by University of Pune, GTT and CISCO. These courses would be launched in the immediate future for students as well as teaching staff of the University and affiliating colleges. With this significant initiative, the University would be taking a quantum Leap in ITES education by covering an estimated 30,000 students this year.

4. Research Initiative

A major initiative was taken so as to give a fillip to research, especially outside the University Campus, thus harnessing the research potential at the college level. For this purpose as much as Rs.8 crore were provided in the budget for 2007-08 and the same amount again in 2008-09. Individual research projects were solicited, offering from the University funds amounts ranging from Rs.50,000 to Rs.3,00,000/- per project.

It is heartening to note that 469 research projects were received in 2006-07 and 624 more research projects were received in 2007-08. Interestingly, more than three-fourths of these projects were received from the affiliated colleges. Special Workshops and Conferences were conducted so as to guide these potential researchers regarding appropriate research methodology and the like., These efforts have significantly contributed towards creation of the research culture outside the Main Campus.

Furthermore, a Compendium is under preparation which will provide an annotated listing of Research by the University of Pune Faculty in the form of research articles/papers in the referred national and international journals published in the last 10 years. From the next year onward, the major research publications of the faculty will also be summarized in the University's Annual Report.

5. Going Global

The University of Pune has always had strong linkages with leading educational institutions abroad. These linkages needed strengthening so as to attract more students, by providing new courses and programs and, by extending the areas of cooperation beyond exchange of students to faculty exchange, joint research and even running programs abroad. The University followed a dynamic marketing strategy so as to place the University of Pune on the Global Map:

- An elegant Brochure of the University of Pune styled, University-In Profile has been published and circulated for the first time. The Brochure provides information about the Administration and Management, Campus, Academic Programs, Departments, Schools, and Centres, Admission procedure, Student Welfare and Social Service Programs and the International Students Center of the University.
- The University of Pune is currently in the process of establishing its branch campus at Dubai. The State Government has already accorded a sanction for the proposal and relevant procedural formalities with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of the Government of India are being completed. The New campus in the Academic City of Dubai is expected to be operational during this academic year, which would make University of Pune to be the first State University in India to establish a branch campus abroad.
- The University of Pune makes available all its academic programs to international students provided that they fulfill the eligibility norms laid down by the University. In addition, the following special programmes are offered to them by the International Students' Centre: With a view to facilitate the induction of international students coming from non English speaking countries, English Language Intensive Course for International Students (ELICIS) is conducted regularly three times a year at five different levels. Moreover, customized courses are given to international students visiting the University under the Students Exchange Programmes covering Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi, Environmental Sciences, Economics, Sociology, Indian Art and Culture, and Cinema Studies, depending on their requirement in their home Universities for getting necessary credits. In addition, some foreign students attend courses in subjects such as Economics, Political Science, Physics, Chemistry, etc. for one full Semester through the provisions in the MoUs with the collaborating universities on reciprocal basis.
- Concerted efforts were made in the last two years to streamline the procedural matters relating to international students. Illustratively the University of Pune has introduced a Single Window System for admission to foreign students in collaboration with the local Foreign Registration Office (FRO) which has been working smoothly. More recently, the Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has formed an Inter-Ministerial Committee to examine the problems faced by the foreign students studying in India. The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) has been asked to conduct these Inter Ministerial meetings and present its report to the Hon'ble Prime Minister. Since more than 45 per cent of foreign students coming to India study at the University of Pune, the University has been working closely with ICCR in identifying and sorting out the problems related to foreign students coming to Indian Universities.
- With a thrust on improving the standard of higher education, the Government of India is working on a proposal to set up 14 World-Class Universities across the country, out of which one University is going to be in Pune. The University of Pune plans to submit a

proposal through the State Government to the Government of India for conferring the World-Class status on the University of Pune.

6. Triple Connectivity and University of Pune Network

The University is currently formulating an ambitious plan of establishing Triple Connectivity (i.e. audio, visual and data) linking the Main Campus with all affiliated colleges, recognized Institutes and International locations, and creating in this process a network of the University of its own.

This would be a quantum leap in the IT infrastructure which would enable launching of several path-breaking initiatives as illustrated below:

(a) Teachers' Training Program

Leading lights in each subject would be invited to give seminars on recent advances in their subjects which through the virtual classrooms would benefit all teachers of that subject across the spread of the University in an interactive manner. This would give tremendous boost to updating the knowledge of teachers.

(b) Learning Management System

The University can enter the world of web-based learning in a big way by converting all distance learning programs into the elearning mode and by introducing a range of new courses in consonance with the evolving industry needs.

(c) Workflow Management

The governance of the University set up could be improved a great deal (possibly by a factor of five!) through better workflow management across the Main Campus, affiliated colleges and recognized Institutes.

(d) Knowledge Bank and Centralised Data Base

Centralised data Base would be built for better efficiency along with a Knowledge Bank - a repository with search engine.

(e) Student Facilitation Centre

Student services could be streamlined through improved communication between student, staff and teachers over an integrated e-mail solution. Online admissions, examinations and announcement of results could be facilitated. The process of establishment of Triple Connectivity has already begun and is being implemented in a phased manner.

7. Recruitment

The long awaited critical issue of assessment and review to sanction the State Government approved teaching posts in the University was finally resolved in 2007 and the Government sanctioned 371 teaching posts proposed by the University, subject to some conditions.

Accordingly, a Recruitment Drive on an unprecedented scale was launched, which received excellent response. As a matter of fact, the University has succeeded in recruiting teaching staff covering a large part of the accumulated backlog for over 10 years. During the last two years, the following appointments of the teaching staff were made:

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|---------------------------|--|
| Professor | 16 (including 8 on contractual basis and 3 by promotion) |
| Reader | 42 (including 7 by promotion) |
| Lecturer | 105 (including 15 by promotion) |
| Coordinator | 2 |
| Research Associate | 1 |
| Total = | 166 |

Advertisements for the remaining 101 more vacancies are expected to be released within next one month and the entire backlog (upto end March 2009) is expected to be fully covered in the next few months.

In view of the fact that the number of non-teaching staff has remained virtually unchanged for the last 25 years, a historic decision has been taken to create and recruit up to 400 persons on non-teaching positions. This recruitment would take place in a phased manner. In the meantime, so far, in the last two years, as many as 159 non-teaching staff positions have been filled including Class I (29), Class II (17), Class III (88) and Class IV (25). Furthermore, 77 nonteaching staff have been promoted: Class I (10), Class II (14), Class III (35) and Class IV (18).

8. Student Welfare

i) Earn and Learn Scheme

Inspired by Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil, several Universities in Maharashtra have introduced 'Earn and Learn Scheme' which has been very useful in extending a helping hand to the students from poor and the underprivileged strata of the society. While the University of Pune has had a long tradition, of implementing this Scheme, its reach was rather limited. During the last two years, the Scheme has been strengthened significantly. In fact, the allocation under the Scheme was raised from Rs.1.5 crore per annum to as much as Rs.5

crore per annum. (No other State University in Maharashtra has been spending more than Rs. 25 lakh annually under the Scheme). At the Campus level, this has taken the form of "Education Guarantee Scheme" wherein 'Work on Demand' has become operational for all students. This is being progressively extended to all affiliated colleges, and the share of the University contribution has been raised to 60 per cent (90 per cent in the case of colleges catering mainly to Aadiwasi students). Moreover, the remuneration to students has been hiked progressively from Rs.15 to Rs.20 per hour. In addition, conscious efforts have been made to widen the skill-set of the participating students. This Scheme of the University has been making a singular contribution towards improving and retaining access to higher education for the underprivileged youth.

ii) Soft Skills Development

In the last two years, the University of Pune has launched yet another unique and innovative Soft-Skills Program for Personality Development of the students. Under this program, students from rural areas, socially disadvantaged groups and economically poor strata of the society were chosen for an intensive fifteen-days training program wherein outside experts were invited to impart training on Conversational English, Techniques of Interview and Group Discussion and Overall Personality Development. At the pilot stage, eleven such programs were conducted, 3 in Pune, 4 in Ahmednagar and 4 in Nashik. A batch of 50 students from the final year of Undergraduate Program was chosen in each of these colleges of which more than 50 per cent were girls. The pilot stage was completed with an overwhelming response and these programs marked the establishment of Personality Development Centers at their respective colleges with investment almost entirely by the University.

During the year 2007-08, Personality Development Centers were established in as many 190 colleges. During the summer, Training Camps were conducted in Pune, Nashik, Ahmednagar and Baramati for 660 teachers (i.e. 3 from each of 220 colleges). These Trainers in turn, were instrumental in establishing the Personality Development Centers in respective colleges, with financial assistance from the University. The University provides financial assistance of Rs. 5,000/- for each batch conducted (maximum 3 batches per academic year) to meet the expenditures incurred. All these colleges having Personality Development Centres also have established language laboratories. For this, the University has provided financial assistance of Rs. 60,000/- per college (for colleges from Aadiwasi region) and Rs. 25,000/- (for other colleges). Apart from this, the University is also providing 25 language improver machines to each of these colleges. By the end of the academic year 2008-09, all colleges affiliated to the University will have their own Personality Development Centers, imparting communication skills especially to the underprivileged students and contributing thereby to their employability and realisation of their potential.

iii) Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Scholarships

Another path-breaking decision taken by the Vice Chancellor was to provide scholarship of Rs. One crore to the girl students at the Under-Graduate and Post-Graduate levels. Under the Scheme, scholarship of Rs. 5000/- are awarded to 2000 girl students per year. A special feature of this Scheme is that 30 per cent of the total amount has been specially reserved for daughters of Devadasis, Prostitutes and women affected with HIV. For the year 2008-09, the budgeted amount for this Scheme has been raised to Rs. 2 crore.

iv) Sports Scholarships

With a view to promote the student participation in games and sports, the University took a major step by announcing Sports Scholarships from the academic year 2007-08. To begin with these Scholarships are being awarded to those students securing first, second or third position (individually and in team events) in All-India Inter University Sports Meet. The University has thus become the first one in the country to offer such scholarships.

v) Campus Placement Centre

Corporate entities in the booming economy of the Pune region typically refrain from going to rural areas for recruitment. As a result, deserving students from the rural areas often miss out on the opportunities for gainful employment. In order to address this important problem, the University of Pune has taken a decision to establish a Campus Placement Centre which could facilitate the interaction between prospective employers and students through Campus Interviews.

9. Social Connectivity

i) Samarth Bharat Abhiyan

The University of Pune launched a comprehensive program styled "Samarth Bharat Abhiyan" in May 2007 recognizing the growing disconnect between the youth and the society, and the need to reorient the youth power towards constructive engagement especially in the rural areas. Under the Abhiyan, each of the colleges affiliated to the University adopted one village in its vicinity and several large University Departments also adopted a village each. Of the targeted 500 villages, 480 villages have already been adopted. An ambitious 15 - point program of action for integrated rural development has been formulated. The program includes primary and secondary education, sanitation, tree plantation, watershed management, environment, GIS mapping, soil and water testing, writing local history, ensuring communal harmony and the like. Under each point, an Action Group has been formed with participation from University Teachers and outside experts from Government, NGOs and general public. These Groups have formulated their respective Action Programs. With the overwhelming participation from students, teachers, non-teaching staff,

Government machinery, social organizations and the general public, the Abhiyan has been spreading very fast and has already assumed the scale of a 'movement' .

Under the tree - plantation program, slogan given was 'Each one, Plant One', i.e., about 5 to 5.5 lakh saplings were supposed to be planted. With the tremendous response from all, more than 8 lakh saplings were planted in 2007. Under the environmental program of the Abhiyan an Environmental March through the Pune City was organized on August 09, 2007, wherein more than 7,000 students participated. The March culminated in a rally where the Vice Chancellor made a power point presentation regarding the evils of global warming and an oath was given to students regarding their civic duties which could help contain the adverse effects of global warming. Additionally, during the first year of the operation of the Abhiyan, 4300 toilets were constructed and 16 villages were made Nirmal Grams. Local history writing has been completed for 58 villages. Socio-economic survey has been completed for 200 villages while the GIS mapping has been completed for 23 villages.

ii) Senior Citizen Centre

In May 2008, the University of Pune launched yet another socially relevant unique program: Senior Citizen Centre. The Center is going to cater to the felt needs of the large and growing body of Senior Citizens.

The Center would engage Senior Citizens in five different activities:

- (i) One-day workshops on health and personal financial management;
- (ii) Three months Certificate Programs of their choice (e.g. Indian History, Culture, Philosophy, Religion and the like);
- (iii) A special Ph.D. Program for senior citizens with relaxed entry norms;
- (iv) Teaching under Adult and Continuing Education Program, and,
- (v) Working as volunteers in the Samarth Bharat Abhiyan.

Under this unique Scheme, Senior Citizens Cell has already been established on the Campus and three Workshops for the senior citizens have been held so far. Decisions have also been taken for amending the entry norms for Ph.D. by senior citizens, as also for instituting two Lecture Series : Sant Gadagebaba Vyakhanmala (wherein senior citizens would deliver lectures under the Board of Extra-Mural Studies) and Dr. Dhananjayrao Gadgil Vyakhanmala (wherein leading experts in various fields would deliver lectures under the Board of ExtraMural Studies).

iii) Career and Education Fair

The University took an unusual initiative - the first of its kind, in organizing a three-day Career and Education Fair on the Campus (June 11-13, 2008). During this Fair, career and education counseling was offered to students entering college (and their parents) by Deans of Faculty and other leading experts. The response to the Fair was phenomenal - more than 100,000 students and parents participated.

iv) Entrepreneur and Technician Development Centre

The University is planning to establish a Entrepreneur and Technician Development Centre through collaboration with Jan Shikshan Sanstha (established in every district by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India). The proposed Centre would impart short term training in income-generating skills for students as well as school! college drop-outs. To begin with. the Scheme would be operational in 48 colleges and cover 18 different income-generating courses. Subsequently, the Scheme would be extended progressively to other colleges as well as to other income generating courses.

v) Cultural Festival

As part of the Commonwealth Youth Games festivities, a major Cultural Festival is being organized on October 8, 2008. More than 5000 students are expected to participate in this grand event.

IV Concluding Remarks

On this auspicious day, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have tried to relate the thoughts on education of the great visionary, Justice M.G.

Ranade, with the state of higher education in India in terms of the challenges faced and the opportunities available, especially in the context of my own experiences of two years as the Vice Chancellor of the largest University in India. It is about time we change our misconceived perceptions regarding State Universities. Contrary to popular notions, not only are the State Universities themselves transforming, but they are the ones which are also driving the change and I am happy to report that these metamorphic changes taking place in the University ofPune are broadly in alignment with vision presented by Justice M.G. Ranade.

With these words, I thank Dr. M.P. Mangudkar and all others associated with this function for having given me this opportunity to share some of my thoughts and experiences in Contemporary Higher Education System in India, in memory of Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade.

I receive this Award with great humility.

Thank you.

