

Patriotism begins at home: Guha

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Renowned historian, erudite scholar, biographer and reputed columnist Dr Ramachandra Guha Sunday said that patriotism, like charity and democracy, begins at home and that it should be substantial, non-symbolic, compassionate, more humane and more dignified and should not be reduced to singing



the national anthem.

Guha was addressing as the chief guest on the occasion of the 80th and 81st Award Convocation 2017 at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS)

K K Birla Goa campus in the presence of Vice Chancellor BITS Pilani Souvik Bhattacharyya, director R Raghurama and registrar S S Sivasubramaniam.

In his inspiring convocation address, Dr Guha highlighted the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity as the hallmark of our nation. He also pointed out that the greatness

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of India has emanated from its civilisation depth and the rich tradition of democracy. Dr Guha said that sustenance of linguistic and religious pluralism is absolutely crucial not only for the survival of Indian democracy but also for the growth of Indian economy.

He recalled that in 1920, Mahatma Gandhi promised to have a linguistic state after independence and because of the same, India has now survived. He said that Pakistan was created on the basis of religion, but was divided on the basis of language. Speaking about Sri Lanka, Dr Guha said that Sri Lanka has an impressive democratic record of dominance and also has much better human indications. While comparing the three neighbouring countries, Dr Guha said that India is much better off in terms of human and social indications with a lower infant mortality rate and better education for women.

Dr Guha was of the opinion that democracy has to be cherished and it needs

to be deeply married with diversity. "Apart from Sri Lanka, India is the only country in the post-colonial world which has consistently held regular free and fair elections since Independence," he said.

Speaking about the difference between Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi over economic policies in the country, Dr Guha said that both these leaders were united for their absolute commitment to religious and linguistic plurality. He said that as patriotism and nationalism indicate love towards one's country and hatred towards another's country, respectively, it therefore appears that people are living in a danger zone by confronting the truth and substituting true patriotism with vulgar nationalism.

Dr Guha said that India has created a world record every time during general elections wherein people have turned out in large numbers by voting freely and fairly, breaking the records of previous elections. He was of the opinion that democracy should

be much more above elections. Giving a recent example, Dr Guha said that the Election Commission has proved last week during the Gujarat Rajya Sabha election that it was competent, transparent and a non-corrupt institution.

Dr Guha said that the greatness of India has emanated from our civilisation depth and the rich tradition of democracy. He also said that Indian civilisation is deeply spiritual and contains philosophical, artistic and musical tradition. "India lives simultaneously in the 12th century and the 21st century and all the centuries in between," said Dr Guha.

Sharing his experience, Dr Guha said that in his younger days, he visited eight states of the country including Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Bengal in order to see the diversity. "I found surprises, struggle, education, enriches everywhere due to the special extraordinary feature of India which is unity in diversity due to the existence of all community people like Hindus, Christians,

Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis and Jains," said Dr Guha. He said that religious and linguistic diversity in India is something extraordinary. He said that Indian currency is written in 17 different languages and 17 different scripts. He also made references to ecological diversities which are of utmost importance to study the highest mountains, deserts, diverse coastlines. He also said that technological diversity is important, as BITS is connected to technology and science.

Vice Chancellor of BITS Pilani Bhattacharyya read out the message of Chancellor of BITS Pilani Dr Kumar Mangalam Birla and urged the graduating students to be innovative and disruptive for being creative. He pointed out that disruption displaces an existing market, industry or technology and creates something new, more efficient and worthwhile.

Dr Guha awarded gold medal to Talluri Varsheeth, silver medal to Ayush Sharma and bronze to Sudeep Mishra. This year, 625 students received their degrees, of which 21 were PhDs.