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## OPENING ADDRESSES

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### 1. Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah (Conference Chairman)

First a word of warm welcome to all members of the Commonwealth attending this Conference who share a common set of problems and are here to learn from one another. To them I would say that it is appropriate that we meet here in India which has all the problems of development and non-formal education you have at home, and on top of all that some further problems uniquely her own. No other country could have provided a more comprehensive sampling and representative situation for our rendezvous than this one. I welcome, also, the representatives of the various organizations and agencies who are present here, and look forward to their help and support in our work and deliberations.

#### The Meaning of Development

Let me turn around our theme of non-formal education for development and begin by considering the meaning of the term "development" in the Commonwealth today. There are 900 million men, women and children in Commonwealth countries of whom 100 million live in rich countries and 800 million live in poor ones. At this level, development means a new international order which will narrow the economic gap between the two groups of countries. Next, within the Commonwealth developing countries themselves, 500 million people live in poverty and 300 million in relative affluence. For these countries development means ending this state of inequality and enabling the poor to develop an adequate standard of living. Moreover, in these same countries 60 million people are unemployed, underemployed or thinly employed, and 15 million young people are attempting to enter the labour force every year. Development for them means gainful employment, which in turn means employment at a fair living wage. In this year of grace, 1979, that we have solemnly proclaimed as the International Year of the Child, 150 million of our children below the age of eight exist in conditions of under-nourishment or malnutrition that prevent their intelligence from developing normally.

In such conditions development means providing adequate food for these children and their mothers so that Commonwealth citizenship will ensure their common wealth. Again, in our less developed Commonwealth countries, 650 million people live in the politically neglected, economically exploited and socially and culturally starved rural areas, while 150 million people live in relatively well-endowed urban enclaves. Development in these circumstances means some equalization of living conditions between our villages and our cities.

#### A Wide Ranging Concept

Now let me turn to the subject of non-formal education which, despite its apparent negativism, is a wide ranging, complex and powerful concept. It is wide ranging because it comprehends all learning outside of the formal system, and has no parameters of time and space. It can be classified in various ways. One of them is by age group in terms

of the non-formal learning organized for pre-school, unschooled and underschooled children up to 15 years of age, and that organized for youth and adults - unschooled, underschooled or needing new additional skills - in the age group 15 to 60. It can also be classified by the learning content involved, in terms of those organized activities where the major emphasis is on general education, and those where the content is mainly vocational.

The institutions and agencies involved in non-formal education are also wide ranging. They include federal, state and local government departments and agencies bearing various development labels such as agriculture, health, labour and employment, information and broadcasting, rural development, social welfare, industry and education; the political parties and their various cadres and organizations for youth, women, labour etc.; universities and colleges; banks and public sector agencies; private-sector firms; trade unions; and a host of voluntary organizations. Non-formal learning thus reaches out to pre-school children; to school and college drop-outs; to illiterate adults; to the unemployed and under-employed; to agricultural, farm, animal husbandry, fishery and forestry workers; to extension agents, health workers, family planning personnel, village-level workers, and adult education instructors and supervisors; to management personnel at various levels; to factory workers and workers in the unorganized sectors; and to the physically and mentally handicapped. In addition it encompasses a great variety of remedial, recurrent and updating courses including those in universities and national science laboratories, for scientists, engineers, technicians and university alumni.

This is certainly a wide-ranging canvas, which we cannot cover in a fortnight of work. And so at the preparatory phase of the Conference we decided in effect to restrict ourselves very largely to the education and training of school drop-outs and adult illiterates. There was a good pragmatic reason for this self limitation - namely the need to concentrate on the immediate short-term pressures faced by all of us in the developing world. I have a feeling, however, that another reason for this restriction is that, as educators, we are uneasy when dealing with the educational mandate that development, as I have described it, imposes on us. It is very tempting to escape from the cruel realities of inequality and injustice and confine education to teaching the three Rs. Thus, I recall that at the closing session of the annual conference of the Indian Adult Education Association a couple of months ago, the valedictorian - one of our leading agricultural scientists - listened with increasing puzzlement to the reports of the commissions of the conference. Turning to me he said "I thought that I was asked here to share my thoughts on how adult education can organize our farmers to formulate their projects in order to increase their productivity and incomes. Why, then, this exclusive emphasis on adult literacy?" I calmed him down and explained the "deformation process" that we adult educators suffer from. I am not sure that we will entirely escape that deformation at this Conference because so many of us belong to the noble or brahminical caste of "educators". But at least we can be conscious of the fact that we are dealing with only a part of the wide canvas that non-formal education is, and to that extent make sure to continue and fill out what can only be a partial beginning here.

A Complex  
Concept

Non-formal education is a complex concept, and in this it is like development. It is complex in that its learning content has to be improvised for each group of clients. It is complex in the multiplicity of techniques it uses, of which the teacher with the book is only one - and increasingly a marginal one. It is complex in that its end-products should be

measured not by pieces of paper called certificates, degrees and diplomas, but by such criteria as income generation for the millions who live below the poverty line, employment creation for the millions of unemployed, and the provision of protective food for the millions of children who are under-nourished. It is a part of the total education system and in that sense we must delve into the integration and harmonization of the formal, informal and non-formal components of the system. But I believe that an even greater imperative is to integrate non-formal education with the development system. For to me, an economist, there is an indelible link between non-formal education and development.

A Powerful  
Concept

Non-formal education is a powerful concept. Its power stems from its being, like all education, the source of knowledge which is power. But even more than that, non-formal education feeds back into our societies a rather grim and explosive power process by assisting the poor and down trodden majority of the people to organize themselves so as to end the state of injustice in which they have been forced to live. We can call this "dialogue and action", "conscientization", or, as in India, "redistributive justice". No matter what term we use, non-formal education is people's power - the power to change society and make it move towards the paths of justice, tolerance, understanding and charity.

The Aims of  
the Conference

I end with a reminder of the aims of this Conference. We meet together to assist member states to examine the contribution of non-formal education to development over the last five years and to identify the problems which at present impede it; and to assist in the development and improvement of existing programmes and in the planning and implementation of new programmes, taking advantage of regional and Commonwealth co-operation.

Bearing in mind the wise words we shall be listening to from the Prime Minister and the larger canvas that I have tried to trace, I have no doubt that the double aims of the Conference - to learn from each other, and to learn to serve a little better the deprived people we represent - will be achieved. I hope this can be achieved; I know it must be attempted.

2. Professor K. S. Murshid (Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General)

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Prime Minister, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen: it is my privilege, on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, to extend to you a cordial welcome to this Conference.

India's  
Heritage

India has long been a pioneer in the field of education. It is particularly opportune that this Conference should bring to India representatives of 27 Commonwealth nations, specialists concerned with non-formal education for development. For India's educational soil has always been fecund. Poet-teachers and sages, the popular arts and rituals, parishads or gatherings of learned and concerned people, not altogether different from the present assembly, are major features of India's educational history - of which the Mahatama's 'Naiya Talim' and Tagore's efforts at Sree Niketan constitute two resonant chapters. India's heritage is that of a great matrix of culture and learning; so much so that, in the midst of today's problems of development, in a vast land where the matter of scale can reduce so many good intentions to impotence India is still a matrix of bold initiatives, enterprise and commitment.

Specialists attending this Conference on non-formal education for development will find this nowhere more apparent than in the gigantic National Adult Education Programme, inaugurated on 2 October 1978, and intended by 1984 to provide adult education programmes for 100 million previously illiterate persons.

Problems and  
Solutions

It is well to remind ourselves of the scale that practical solutions to the problems of development can take. As we sit in conference for the next two weeks we must however remember that we have not come for one another's polite society - we have come to make a contribution to the solutions.

This was certainly the intention of the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee as it set about developing the nature of this conference and its theme. The Committee intended that the conference should be multi-disciplinary, that this should be reflected in the collective efforts of five different divisions of the Commonwealth Secretariat besides the Education Division in preparing for the conference, and that this should be finally reflected in the range of participants from different Commonwealth countries and in the composition of the conference programme. Although we are "specialists" then, ladies and gentlemen, we are bound to develop our specific recommendations against the broadest background and considerations.

This is why, when we examine the conference papers, we find that we are already committed to a fortnight where we shall consider not only the scale of problems and their solutions but their detail. Talking of solutions, it is clear that these must be directly relevant, integral and achievable in a finite context of resources and time. It is also clear that the precondition of success is a demonstrable relationship between effort and its material benefits as a means to at least minimal dignity for men and women too long without it.

This is by no means to denigrate the other objectives of education, namely the enlargement of knowledge and enrichment of the spirit, but merely to suggest that to treat the process of education, formal or informal, as a tranquil way out of the cruelties and inequities of existence, as a kind of ersatz "nirvana", is positively obsolete. Education has always been a means to power, variously exercised by privileged groups in society. Now in the changed context, it is for the development of the masses, and seeing that the true agents of their development are the people themselves, they must possess this power to transform their fate.

Motivation

Of all the questions raised by the background papers, some seemed to me fundamental. The question of motivation, for instance, is not simply one of public exhortation. There is, I think, overwhelming motivation on the part of those who are deprived to take advantage of any meaningful educational opportunity related to their needs. Motivation is in fact concerned with political will. Our governments must be ready and prepared to extend education (in this case, non-formal educational) opportunities. This is why it is opportune that this conference should be hosted in India - because of the availability of political will.

Political will is not itself a one-dimensional object. It must cut through what one background paper calls "bureaucratic imperialism" so that a range of government resources can be mobilized, so that governments in turn can be multi-disciplinary in their approach.

In exactly this manner, I think we must beware of persuading ourselves that there is a single thing called non-formal education, and that there should be those who alone are non-formal educators. Non-formal education is not a profession but one part of a broader development process that demands the integration of all its parts. Non-formal education, therefore, is not just a replacement for formal education. Nor, to take a western view that is sometimes expressed, is non-formal education meant to be the harbinger of a dream-like non-formal society. Rather, it works towards the betterment of that society in which it exists by enabling those people afflicted by the problems of development to meet those problems. They are problems of attrition. Non-formal education is no single cure-all, just as, in more developed western societies it cannot by itself lead to a higher state of society and a new enlightenment of social intercourse.

Democratizing  
Research

Finally, in studying the conference papers I was particularly pleased to find an emphasis on the democratization of research. This advocates the removal of the distinction between the researcher and those who are researched, on the basis that each has much to learn from the other and that perhaps it is those who are being researched who hold within themselves the keys to proper and meaningful solutions. In like manner, the democratization of research is apparent in the fact that interest in the problems of development is no longer incidental to the well-funded research institutes of the North, but of central concern to the rapidly developing research institutes of the South.

This democratization of research, involving a shared humility to learn, lies at the heart of any philosophy of non-formal education.

Commonwealth  
Co-operation

This interchange of information, not only between North and South, but between one area of the South and another, has particular relevance to the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat, growing as it does from the emphasis of Common-

wealth governments. Since the first Commonwealth Education Conference at Oxford in 1959, through the succeeding Conferences at New Delhi, Ottawa, Lagos, Canberra, Jamaica, and Accra in 1977, this emphasis has stood out.

We look forward in particular, therefore, to your recommendations for future Commonwealth co-ordination and co-operation in the field of non-formal education, assuring you that your recommendations will receive careful attention within the Commonwealth Secretariat.

We anticipate that this conference will clarify many issues, and provide a structured balance between philosophy and action which will further Commonwealth co-operation.

It is by way of Commonwealth co-operation that this conference is now taking place. But assistance has come from many quarters. I place on record our gratitude to the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the International Planned Parenthood Foundation, and the Commonwealth Foundation for their financial support.

It is the Commonwealth context, however, that has most encouraged our assembly here. It was in the spirit of Commonwealth co-operation that the Government of India offered to host this meeting, and our thanks go to the Government and people of India for their generosity and care.

Mr. Prime Minister, I can only convey to you my deepest appreciation of your personal support. The encouragement that your presence brings to us is something that will benefit our deliberations in the two weeks ahead. In the midst of urgent preoccupations of state you have borne home to us the true importance and urgency which you and your Government attach to non-formal education for development.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is in this context that I welcome you to this conference.

### 3. Shri Morarji Desai (Prime Minister of India)

Mr. Chairman, Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General, Minister of State for Education, delegates from all the Commonwealth countries, and friends. I am very happy that this Conference is held here in India, and I hope that you will find that there is much in this country to show the nature and significance of the problems of education and to give some keys to the solution of those problems.

This Conference is held to discuss the problem of non-formal education for development. I hope we don't get lost in a controversy over the definition of what is formal and non-formal education. Many times that is what has happened. This will not happen if we keep in mind the basic purpose of education. If that is agreed upon, I have no doubt that there will not be much difficulty in finding solutions for the various problems that each country of the Commonwealth faces in the matter of education.

#### The Purpose of Education

I believe that the purpose of education can only be one. It cannot be merely teaching people how to read and write, or education for arts or sciences. The real purpose of education should, in my view, be to enable every human being to know his own capacity and his limitations (for we all have capacities and limitations in different degrees) and also to enable him to get a proper sense of discrimination between right and wrong. For by understanding his capacity and understanding his limitations, he can reduce his limitations and increase his capacity to discriminate between right and wrong, seeking the right path and giving up the wrong path.

There are rare people in the world who do not require any education from anybody. They are people without any education - formal or non-formal - who acquire all the wisdom that is possible. They also guide the world, many a time in many things, but they do not require any help from anybody. They are not concerned with the work of governments; nor have governments any effect on them. But for all the rest of us it is necessary to have an instrument which enables us to understand and to develop our capacities in the right manner. That, in my view, is the purpose of education.

The education that is given in universities, colleges, secondary schools or primary schools may be called formal education, and all that is given outside those institutions may be called non-formal. But the purpose of both ought to be to enable a man to fulfil the purpose which I have tried to define, and it should continue throughout one's life till the end of life. Nobody can say that he is completely educated till the end of life: he has always something to learn, and learning in that way is non-formal education. Whether you learn it yourself or from others makes no difference. The purpose of education ought to be to enable a person to learn from everywhere. If this is done, the learning of arts and sciences will become much more useful to society and also to the person himself. After all, what is our purpose? As human beings the main purpose ought to be to help each other to be happy and in the happiness of all lies the happiness of everybody. If this purpose is

achieved, the person will be useful to society; and he will not be dependent on anybody. If education does not enable a person to have the confidence in himself to do what he has to do in life, and if it does not make him optimistic in facing the problems of life, I am afraid the purpose of education is not served. That is what is happening in this country, more than anywhere else. We are therefore engaged in revising our educational structure, the whole of it, in order to find out the best way of fulfilling the purpose of education through formal education and through non-formal education.

#### Literacy

Those adults who have not had the chance to get any education in schools are illiterate; they do not know how to read and write. Their number is large in nearly every country of the Commonwealth. It is no fault of theirs, but the fault of circumstances, if I may say so. They are handicapped because they do not know how to get knowledge, and they become a liability for future generations because they have no interest in the education of their own children. Therefore, adult education is very vital.

But what is adult education? Merely teaching reading and writing cannot be the sole purpose of adult education. That is only an instrument to be given to people in order that they can educate themselves. Literature can be published so that they can read it and think about it. That is one purpose of adult education. It must also see that the person who receives education is able to educate himself further than he could before.

#### Educating Ourselves

If we want to have proper education - and I hope this conference will enable us to do that - we cannot seek to educate other people and not ourselves too. The real teacher goes on educating himself. That used to be the ideal of this country but we have forgotten it today. We have got to recapture that spirit. This country will give you all the problems on earth - that is what this country's peculiarity is. No country has such a large variety of climate, men, religions, customs and castes and what not. but there is also unity in this diversity which has kept this country alive throughout the centuries. It had correct education at one time. We cannot forget it even if we want to forget it; that is the strength of that education.

Education, therefore, teaches us to know our own shortcomings and not only to find shortcomings in others. It is the key to make the whole of society happy and one, and that is why I attach such importance to this Commonwealth Conference. It is a miniature Commonwealth of nations; it represents nations from all continents, of all races, and of all stages of development from the poorest to the richest.

The Commonwealth can be the real basis of a future commonwealth of all nations, but that can happen only when we work as one family. I am therefore very happy that this Conference and various other meetings are being held in different parts of the Commonwealth, so that there is a feeling of oneness - of problems being tackled together which ought to be the purpose of the whole of humanity.

#### The Right Sort of Education

As I said, education can be the instrument to give us this capacity, but it has to be the right sort of education. That is what you have to grapple with in this Conference. Whether you call it non-formal or whether you call it formal education, all education must have the same purpose. Otherwise there will be a difference between the two, and you will make one more important and the other less important, and that will ruin all education. So if we say non-formal education is

what is given outside the school, and formal education is what is given inside the school, there will be no difficulty because that is an easy demarcation. But for both of them the purpose must be properly defined, and that is to enable a person to educate himself and not depend upon others; to fight the whole world, if necessary standing alone; to have self-confidence if he does what is right; and to give the same to other human beings. In my view we have to bring that out in every human being, and until we have arrived at that state of development, I am afraid we will not be able to contribute to the making of a proper human society. Our purpose should be to work for that, so that there is peace and not war and we all live to enrich our lives.

I therefore hope and trust that in your deliberations you will give some thought to what I have said. I do not say you should accept it. You are all educationists, and I cannot call myself an educationist, in the formal sense. In the non-formal sense, I am. In the formal sense too, I am qualified because I am the Chancellor of not one but several universities. I have taken the deepest interest in education though circumstances have so happened in my life that I have never been able to look after the portfolio of education in all my career of ministership. But now that I am Prime Minister I can dabble in everything. That is why you have invited me: otherwise you would not have invited me. But as I have said, my deepest interest is in education because that alone can solve the problems of a world which is threatened with destruction. Future generations will bless or curse us depending on whether we succeed or fail. I therefore earnestly request you to pay some consideration to what I have told you, and if you agree with some of it to find out solutions to these problems in a practical manner and not get lost in controversies.

As I have said, I have the deepest interest in the Commonwealth and its future. In my view this Conference is of the greatest importance, and I feel it an honour that you have invited me here. I have the greatest pleasure in inaugurating this Conference and thank you for inviting me.