

**Address delivered by Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, Minister of State, Ministry of Health, Family
Planning and Urban Development at the 5th Convocation of the Indian Academy of
Medical Sciences held in the University Club House, Bombay
on December 02, 1967**

Mr. President, Fellows and Members of the Academy, Ladies and Gentlemen :

I feel greatly honoured to be asked to deliver the Convocation address and to give away the scrolls to Fellows and Members admitted to the Academy. This I say with full realization of the fact that our late Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, inaugurated the Academy in 1961; that the first Convocation was addressed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and the subsequent ones by our present President - Dr. Zakir Hussain and by two very distinguished sons of India, Shri M.C. Chagla and Dr. C.D. Deshmukh. To be included in this galaxy is an honour in itself. The Academy has been launched by distinguished medical men of the country and is really fortunate in having as its Presidents two internationally known scientists, Dr. Khanolkar and Dr. Pandit. A tradition of leadership in the field of medical science is thus already being established by the Academy.

The Academy has a twin purpose, the cultivation of scientific knowledge and its application to human welfare. These two laudable purposes are also the aims of other learned bodies ; societies, associations and councils in the field of medical and allied sciences. How does then this Academy differ from other bodies? I learned from the President's address that the Academy is interested in Post-graduate medical education. The Association of Advancement of Medical Education is also equally interested in this subject. The interest of the Academy and the interest of the ICMR are also on the same wave length with regard to medical research. The interest of the universities and the Medical Council of India and those of the Academy are also identical in several fields. I concede that there is bound to be a certain amount of duplication, but I am a little concerned that these different bodies may not function at cross purposes. If there could a mechanism that would help to ensure that the activities of all the bodies and agencies could be supplementary of all the bodies and each other, the limited sources of the country then could be put to maximum use.

Regarding the method of selection of Fellows and Members of the Academy, I am tempted to quote from the address of the President of India delivered on the occasion of the first convocation of your Academy. *"I hope this Medical Academy which represents different sciences, which represents men of achievement in their respective spheres, which offers an incentive to men of promise that they can also get these distinctions, will be regarded as something to which all our youngster will look. A Fellowship of the Academy must be a matter of honour and not a matter of manoeuvring of intrigue but a manner of straight forward work which is acknowledged as first class in its nature. That should be the quality which we should encourage."*

I do hope that you are living up to these expectations and that it has not become an exclusive club in which you admit only convenient persons and not necessarily those who deserve to be admitted on their merit.

A reference has been made by the President of the Academy to the conference of scientists and technologists called by the Prime Minister and the Scientific Policy resolution of the Government of India. In brief both of these refer to (1) the atmosphere, (2) the scientist, his training, the score of his work and its recognition, (3) the benefit to the country and the

people that can accrue from the application of the scientific knowledge and effort of the scientist.

What makes the scientific atmosphere or temper of the country? The overall atmosphere of the country – good or bad – has a great deal to do and is reflected in the atmosphere of a particular discipline – science, education etc. As such, when things do not go well it is not proper to blame only the administrator or the scientist. We all are to blame, particularly the politicians and the decision making bodies.

The administrative set up is to say the least, a great drag on the development of the scientific temper. It is hierarchial and status-bound where pay and power are equated instead of pay and utility. Administration in the technical fields should be in the hands of technologists and experts and not in the hands of lay administrators. It is only when such sweeping changes are made in our administrative system that it will reflect the individual's contribution to human welfare and economic gain and give greater opportunities to the creative young. Has the Academy taken any steps to develop such an atmosphere so that the scientist and his equipment can best create new knowledge from which material results may flow?

Mr. President, it is for you and your fellows to answer this question. Besides this general question, I have a few other questions of direct relevance to the Academy which I would like to ask this distinguished body.

I feel that the Academy, consisting as it does of top medical scientists, can play an important role in advising the Government in drawing up, and implementing, assessing and evaluating the results of, medical and health programmes. Have any positive steps been taken by the Academy in this direction? I would like to know on what subjects and to what extent the Ministry of Health and DGHS can look to the Academy for advice and guidance?

I have great appreciation for the Academy's programme of holding multidisciplinary seminars on important topics as referred to by your President. I would also like to know what the Academy has done about establishing outside contacts with eminent medical scientists regarding the new techniques employed in the various medical disciplines for importing advanced knowledge to post graduate students in our country.

As regards the financial assistance to the Academy by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning, I would like the Academy to appreciate the fact that the Ministry is not as affluent as the other Ministries of the Government of India. Many of our programmes like water supply and sanitation, communicable diseases, family planning etc. are very extensive and the Ministry finds it difficult even to meet their financial requirements. I would like to assure you that there is every desire on our part to give as much assistance as we possibly can. However, the tendency to depend only on government help is neither desirable nor healthy. Those activities of the Academy that do not require much money, and there are several, should be developed to the full extent in the first instance, and suitable economics effected wherever possible. From the note on the activities of the Academy sent to me by your Executive Director, I gather that you have several ambitious programmes. We all have had too many ambitious programmes. I plead that our programmes be practical, realistic, modest and meaningful.

I offer my heartiest felicitations to the new Fellows and Members on their election to the Academy and I feel privileged to present them with their well deserved scrolls.