

**Speech by Shri O. Pulla Reddi, Vice-Chancellor, Agriculture University, Hyderabad on the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Convocation of the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences on January 27, 1972, Hyderabad**

I deeply appreciate the high honour you have conferred upon me by being called upon to be the Chief Guest at this function. At the same time, I must make it clear that I am speaking by proxy, as Dr. Bhagavantam who was to have filled this role has been unavoidably held up. Thus, I have only stepped into the breach but I realize my inadequacy and my limitations. This is an occasion when a high medical-scientist should have given his testament, and to this extent my appearing in this role is therefore an unorthodox experiment. However, this has given me an opportunity to meet several old friends from all over India, whom otherwise I might have missed.

I congratulate Dr. Gopalan for having hosted this function and I extend my heartiest felicitations to the recipients of degrees, prizes and other distinctions.

This is essentially a medical function and therefore quite appropriate that this is held under the shadow of a National Nutrition Research Institute which is also directly concerned with the promotion of human well-being.

We have met at a time not entirely free from national excitement. The events of last December filled our hearts with pride and satisfaction, but we are still in a twilight stage. The future has to be watched with care lest we find ourselves prematurely jubilant. In the hostilities of last December, the Army Medical Corps have rendered invaluable service to the wounded and injured and I congratulate them for the part they played in relieving suffering and sorrow, and hope that when the need arises again they will do even better.

Due to historical and climatic reasons, we in the East and particularly in India have yet miles to go before we can achieve the health and hygienic standards of most of the western countries. There is a new awareness of the urgency to catch up with western standards, and I have no doubt you men who have distinguished yourselves in the medical profession, are and will be making a significant contribution in this regard.

After our independence, we have covered much ground on the economic front and made notable progress in stepping up food production, but I fear it is not quite the same from the point of view of health and hygiene. In addition, to inherited problems, environmental pollution is adding a new dimension to our problems.

The frontiers of knowledge are expanding at an incredible pace. India has produced thousands of medical graduates and thrown up some distinguished men in all specialized fields of medicine. Probably to our ancient legacy, we are especially qualified to distinguish ourselves in the field of medicine and yet, paradoxically enough, there is a relapse in certain directions. Those diseases which had practically disappeared from this country in the first half of the century are reappearing, as for example, Malaria, Plague, Cholera etc. Therefore, there is need to reconcentrate on the preventive as much as on the curative side of medicine.

We have also yet to acquire sufficient confidence and pride in our own professional competence and skill. It is distressing that for ailments which could be easily cured in our country many people are still going to western countries. Perhaps such weakness is a status symbol. We have to get over this weakness, as also the lingering craving for foreign degrees. A time there was when foreign degrees were easily marketable and proved lucrative passports in the marriage market, but today except for his specialization, there is no need to go in search of degrees which are available in this country.

New sciences are growing, such as nuclear medicine, space medicine, and measures to deal with space technology. As human beings begin to conquer outer planets, our knowledge must keep step

and therefore, I hope, sufficient imagination and enterprise will be forthcoming to develop indigenous space medicine.

What of our immediate internal conditions and problems? Why do not medical graduates fan out to the country-side instead of clinging to urban areas on precarious incomes? There is endless scope in the country-side to improve nutritional health and hygienic standards. Under and unemployed medical graduates will be doing themselves and the nation a service by starting practicing on their own in the country-side. Thus only can the health of the nation improve. The health of a nation cannot be divided into segments.

As the concepts of welfare state, socialism and solicitude for the vulnerable sections of society take roots and "*Garibi Hatao*" gets translated into practice, more money must necessarily be invested on research, education and public health and opportunities will arise for enterprising young men to make good in our own country.

While there are two sides to the question of "brain drain" from this country. I see no serious objection to youngmen serving in other countries for a while, but they must come back to their own country after a few years abroad to enrich the cultural heritage and professional skills of their own country. There is scope for a proper synthesis of service to self and service to the country.

In some respects there is a relapse to mediaeval obscurantism – a revival of faith in ancient practices. The correct approach is to utilize whatever good there is in our ancient skills and blend it with modern science, so that a new mutation may develop which will be original and richer for this country.

I think, a more intensive study should be made of the herbs of this country, particularly in the mountainous regions, for, God and nature have provided us with vast resources in herbs which are denied to the colder countries and which can easily enrich our pharmaceutical stores and provide more effective cures for tropical and sub-tropical diseases.

A Doctor should not be content with merely curing diseases but also prove a guide, philosopher and friend to his patients and to the public, to the extent possible, to maintain better standards of health, hygiene and physical fitness.

I must also warn against a tendency now noticeable of professional men being dragged into politics. It should be remembered that when politics and professional competence clash, politics easily triumph to the detriment of professional men.

I am happy to have shared my thoughts with you, men who have distinguished yourselves in various fields of medicine with the few hours of notice unexpectedly given to me by our host. Let us all cooperate to make our country a better place to live in, than we found it when we arrived. Therein, would lie our satisfaction, reward and fulfillment.