

Convocation Address delivered by Shri Digvijay Singh, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh at the 42nd Annual Conference of NAMS on September 06, 2003, Indore

Dr. Vijay Laxmi Sadho, Hon'ble Minister of Medical Education, Prof. Hari Gautam, President, National Academy of Medical Sciences, Dr. J.S. Bajaj, Past-President, Dr. P.K. Khosla, Secretary of the Academy, Dr. Sepaha, Dr. Taneja, luminaries in the field of Medicine, Fellows and Members of the Academy, invited guests, persons from the media, ladies and gentlemen.

When I was told that 42nd Annual Convocation is being held in Indore and that too for the first time in the Central India, I was delighted. I was all the more happy to learn that it is being organized as one of the activities of 125th year celebration of MGM Medical College, Indore. I also learnt that the Academy is apex body in the field of Medicine in the country. I am thankful to the President Prof. Hari Gautam for inviting me to give Convocation Address. I consider it privilege. I am fully aware of the facts that this Academy was inaugurated by our first Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru Ji in 1961 and the first Convocation Address was given by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Many other eminent scholars, have since then addressed this Academy. Today, I stand before you. Let me first of all congratulate all the new Fellows and Members who have been recognized by the Academy for their contribution in the field of medical sciences.

Just now our Minister of Medical Education has expressed her concern in the health delivery system. We have been independent for more than 56 years. At the dawn of independence there were great expectations of betterment of life for the poor, Nehru Ji realized that *"it is science alone that can solve the problems of hunger & poverty"*. But still we have not been able to provide the basic medical facilities, this is something which is bothering not only me but all of us. Have we seriously looked into it?

The 20th Century has been an era of rapid advancement in the field of Science & Technology. There is no doubt that with the advances in technology there has been over all advancement in other scientific fields and medicine is no exception. MRI, CT Scan, Non-invasive Angiography, Organ Transplant, Joint Replacement etc. are some of the examples of the application of technology in medicine. We as Indian are naturally proud of this. I am told there is hardly any operation may it be Heart Transplant, Kidney Transplant or Robotic Surgery or Minimal Invasive Surgery which is not being done at least in few centres in the country. But the question is whether the poorest of the poor in the remotest part of the country is being benefited with these advances. Majority of them are indeed poor. 60% of the population in villages is dependent on bullock cart, 56% are living in mud huts, 70% do not have access to clean water. This is stark reality that we have not been able to benefit them with the advances in technology. Reasons are known and clear. It is the cost which is the major factor and the second important reason which I see is lack of trained manpower and third is lack of will on the part of medical fraternity to go to the interior areas and provide the best technology to needy.

Therefore, there is urgent need to bring down the cost for making the treatment affordable, and to have the trained manpower. I feel it is not possible for any Government these days to provide an absolutely free treatment to its citizens. There is a sea change in the whole scenario. The clinical medicine has been replaced by hi-tech medicine. The private sector has come up very fast and the public sectors have to compete with them. For the first time in India, we started a system what we called as *"Rogi Kalyan Samiti"* based on the philosophy of public participation in which we started charging very nominal fee as users charges in the same way as buying a platform ticket or ticket at airport. With this small contribution hospitals started generating funds. The biggest hospital of the state, the Maharaj Yeshwant Rao Hospital at Indore is generating one crore rupees annually. Even we have given autonomy to medical colleges and they are free to raise their funds. Our this experiment was awarded best Community Project by World Bank in Tokyo. It gives me immense satisfaction that today medical colleges have all the high tech instruments. Almost all type of high tech surgeries are performed in the public sector. This system has been emulated by other states also. I have always emphasized that there is no age bar for learning and there is always a willing

teacher available. Therefore, in our state we have made it compulsory for our Assistant Surgeons to go to the Medical Colleges periodically for upgrading their knowledge and to learn the new techniques. The Academy can play a very important role in spreading such success stories.

Besides this by coordinating with other bodies it can help to find out the best mode of treatment which should be appropriate to our social customs, our needs and based on our economy. What may be true for the Western world may not be suitable to our people. Technology transferred will be second rate technology not suiting to us. Similarly, in the standard of Medical Education much is to be desired. The reasons are not hidden. New Medical Colleges are coming up but here is serious scarcity of teachers in non-clinical and para-clinical subjects. The Academy in coordination with Medical Council of India should seriously look into this and the whole syllabus and curriculum need to be reviewed. I feel there is a scope for an integrated medicine. Who will deny that there are many good remedies in Ayurveda and other therapies? I understand there are 56 types of therapies available in the world.

One thing which is bothering me is the research. We have stopped thinking and only repeating what has already been searched and then we research. Prof. C.V. Raman, Meghnad Saah, Dr. Jagdish Chandra Bose, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, Homi Bhabha and our own President, Dr. Kalam are the examples who made significant contribution of original research with very little tools of research. The famous medical men of 19th Century like Sir Astley Cooper, Jenner, Addison and many others whose contribution in basic research is know to all of you were real thinkers.

Shri N.A. Palkiwala wrote in his famous book "***We the people***" that Indian brain is the best in the world and I fully agree. Being a technocrat myself and having met and known many professionals I am convinced that Mr. Palkiwala wrote. Why, then we are not able to progress and become number one in the world.

If we honestly do an introspection we would realize that we are indisciplined people. Our's individualistic society. We are not responsible citizens. When I say this I do not want to spare the politician. As a leader we have to set example to provide the right leadership.

We talk about the scarcity of funds for research. I don't deny that the funds are not required for research. If we compare the funding for research from the Western world, funding for medical research in this country is a pea nut. Looking into this and to encourage the research we have set up a Council for scientific research. The main objective of the Council is to encourage good and genuine research. At the centre there are many big institutions like ICMR, CSIR, and DST which are suppose to fund the research projects. But there is general impression that most of the funds are used by few bigger institutions in the country. It does not percolate down to the state level and particularly to medical colleges. Every state has its own problem. We have a big tribal population and they have there own medical problems, we had very big gas tragedy. Many people are still suffering from respiratory diseases, lathyrism in Rewa division, Silicosis in Khargone district, Thalasaemia in Indore and Sickle Cell disease in Jhabua are some of the problems of our state which need immediate attention of medical world and similarly other states have their own problems. Academy can play an important role.

It is also interesting to note that inspite of all what I have said the country is progressing but not the way it should have progressed. The world is watching us and they know India has all the potential to be a big economic power.

Allen Toffler in his book has written that "*Power does not stay at one place. May it be a money power, muscle power, or knowledge power. It just keeps shifting.*"

Kim Woo Chung of Korea, the owner of the Daewoo Group of Industries in his autobiography has mentioned that power keeps shifting. The economic power shifted from India to Middle East, from there to Roman Empire and then to Anglo Saxson and from there to United States of America and

then if shifted to Japan and now to Korea and of course the next halt is going to be India. The future of this country is bright. Our youth is intelligent, inquisitive, full of verve and zeal and enthusiasm. They have their own mind and they think for themselves. All we have to do is to make them think for the country first and then for themselves.

I was told that yesterday Academy held in Continued Medical Education Programme on "*Medical Services in Geriatric Age in the New Millennium*". A very relevant theme because life expectancy is now over 64 years which was less than 30 years in 1920. The elder lies, besides family and psychological support need immediate medical care. The medical advances have brought in the new hope and new life. A visually impaired is out of the hospital in couple of hours after phaco operation, a totally disabled persons with arthritis of joint are up and above and pain free with the joint replacement. The fracture are fixed immediately, the newer drugs take care of weak bones. For this you all deserve congratulations because a country who takes care of elderly population and use their wisdom is a rich nation indeed.

For taking care of the higher education and its monitoring there is University Grants Commission which is also a funding agency to the universities. For medical colleges there is MCI which is supposed to control the standard of medical education in this country. But there is no funding. The medical colleges in public sector are entirely dependent on Government. Can we not have a "*Medical Grant Commission*" like UGC we can strictly implement the norms only if we are funding that particular institution.

Whereas we are now producing a large number of medical personnel but in case of para-medicals we have to cut a sorry figure. Looking into this we are the first state in India to constitute a Para-medical Council under the Act of Legislature. The country needs trained technicians, physiotherapists and nurses for a better health delivery system.

Our medical colleges are running para-medical courses and the students are getting employed and proving a useful pillar in the society as they have full filled a big void which was being felt for long. At the same time, I wish to emphasize the need for community participation in health care programme. I am sure you all are aware of Dr. Raj Arole work at Jamkhed. He brought down infant mortality rate to 20/1000.

I urge upon the National Academy to start such specialty Academies like Cardiology, Orthopedics, Ophthalmology which should hold a high level refresher courses for the medical teachers. These medical courses should be compulsory and the teachers should pass these courses through examination. Those who pass these courses should only be considered for a higher position and should be considered for promotion.

Doctors are intellectuals and extremely good in their profession. But not necessarily they are good administrators too. Dr. Bajaj, Dr. Hari Gautam and few of those who are sitting here may be exception. Having realized that a teacher of today will be administrator of tomorrow, we have started short courses for doctors in finance, administration & hospital management and other administration duties at our State Academy of Administration at Bhopal. But it is far from satisfactory.

I would plead to the Academy to work out minimum requirement for the doctors, the level of management training, and monitoring of their performance. This will help the Government to run the institution more effectively and efficiently.

In the end I leave you with a question which India are we serving – India of few elite or the people republic?

Ladies and Gentlemen I have taken your valuable time and I think you all for your indulgence and for being patient.

Once again I congratulate all the new Fellows and Members of the Academy and thank your President Dr. Hari Gautam, your organizer Dr. Sepaha and Dr. Taneja for inviting me to the convocation and your annual meeting.

Thank you.