

Convocation Address of Dr. G. Madhavan Nair

Sampoojya Swamiji Poornamritananda Puri; Brahmachari Abhayamrita Chaithanya, Vice Chancellor, Dr. Venkat Rangan; Dean of Management, Dr. Sanjay Banerji; Distinguished Members of the Faculty; My dear young graduates and students; Ladies & Gentlemen;

It is indeed a matter of great honor and privilege for me to be amongst this august gathering and deliver the first Convocation address of the esteemed Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham at Ettimadai. On this auspicious occasion, let me extend my warm greetings to all of you and extend my heartiest congratulations to the young graduates for their professional achievement and best wishes for a bright career in the coming years. Mata Amrithanandamayi with her simplicity and universal love has made significant contribution in uniting people, building teams as well as institutions for serving the society. Vishwa Vidyapeetham is the finest of her dream projects. It is a unique organization incorporating multi-disciplinary education targeting overall development of personality. You are, thus, lucky to graduate from this Vidyapeetham, blessed by AMMA.

The divine love of Amma transcends region, religion language and other barriers dividing humankind. The great philosophy of Amma has brought into focus the fact that only through love, affection, compassion, selflessness, one can experience the infinite wisdom of God. This spiritual message of Amma is embedded in all the activities of this great institution. The very idea that someone loves you brings happiness and peace of mind. With peace of mind, concentration comes and concentration leads to knowledge and development of talents in ones area of interest. Acquiring knowledge and skills and their application to enrich the life should be the prime goal of any student. For ages, spiritual meditation has led to major accomplishments. Ancient civilization especially in India has demonstrated that spirituality could co-exist with science. Careful analysis indicates that, both are not in conflict; but, on the other hand, they complement and strengthen each other. Line of separation between the two is quite thin. While pursuit of ultimate truth is the goal of spirituality, the goal of science is search of truth in nature. In science, the pursuit is to seek answers to secrets of nature by constant exploration and experimentation. Quite often nature is equated to God. Mahatma Gandhiji had pronounced, ***“Truth is God”***. So, in my opinion, spirituality and science, both of which seek truth, should lead to the same goal – to unravel the mysteries of life and nature.

Talents, arising out of knowledge and wisdom can lead to innovation, prosperity and satisfaction. Living with contentment is the first sign of prosperity and being useful to the people around you will bring greater satisfaction and fulfillment. The real sign of prosperity ultimately is the willingness to share with people around you without any hesitation, with trust and confidence. The simple smile and the loving hug of Amma embody this message. You should be really proud to be part of this great institute having the constant blessings of Amma and her love.

Since the very beginning of mankind’s quest for knowledge, there has been the realization that at the core of human existence, there is a set of virtues and vices, and that the major goal of life is to live these virtues and overcome the vices. Aristotle defined character as the

life of right conduct, both in relation to others and in relation to oneself. The ability to distinguish between morally good and evil acts is critical to the formation of character that enables individuals to adopt the values and attitudes. Values and attitudes lead to moral behavior and ultimately, to the well being of self as well as humanity. However, it is the individual who has to make the effort to habitually incorporate the ethical values and the moral principles into his or her attitudes and behavior. Thus, character constitutes an inner-directed and habitual strength of mind and will. At the heart of character formation are the habits that are acquired through a practice of process, also facilitated by the moral mentors who guide both by teaching and by example. Acquiring knowledge and skill with due importance to moral values only can lead to success and satisfaction.

It is not only the individual ethics, but the collective ethics as a society and its social conscience, is what matters, particularly in an increasingly globalizing world. Recently, there have been many developments, promoting a holistic system approach interwoven with the cultural and the personal value system of the individuals and that of the society. Only in such a system, wherein knowledge and spirituality are combined in a synergistic manner, resulting in improved workspace culture, character ethics and positive psychology, value congruence will exist between the organizational and individual values. It will naturally produce improved results and efficient products leading to improved quality of life.

Thus, in an Indian environment, any learning organizational structure should essentially incorporate the rich cultural and personal value systems inherited over ages, appropriately with the modern knowledge tools. Such a knowledge-based organizational structure is expected to be need-based, flexible in capabilities, diverse in expertise, networked with many organizations in a symbiotic relationship, and above all fiercely innovative. It is here that independent India has excelled herself in meeting the existing challenges and exploiting the emerging global opportunities. Today, India can be proud of many organizations and individuals who are rated high by global standards. We have the knowledge, the wisdom and the associated talents. We have the spiritual leadership, cultural background, and strong ethics and value system handed over to us down the ages as well as a strong science and technology backbone. It is our responsibility to exploit them fully and work hard to enable India to reach the exalted position of a developed nation in the next 10-15 years.

In spite of satisfying developments and progress in many areas such as atomic energy, space, IT, and bio-technology, as well as an impressive economic growth achieved in the recent past, the challenges facing our country are plenty. Our country still remains as an agrarian economy with more than 650 million people associated with agriculture in one way or other. Almost 27% of the GDP comes from agricultural sector. It is also a well-recognised fact that the Green Revolution that transformed agriculture in some parts of India had little impact on the rain-fed agriculture in the semi-arid tropical regions, where the agricultural productivity is still abysmally low. A large section of poor farmers live in vast areas of land, looking for rains every year for their livelihood. Natural disasters such as floods and agricultural drought are recurring events in our tropical country, further affecting the marginalized farmers and the poor. Obviously much needs to be done. Additionally, the country has also seen wide spread environmental damage and depletion of natural resources base on account of the ever increasing population pressure and wild pursuit of economic growth. It is estimated that the ecological devastation and depletion of the natural resources

base in India is around 4% of the GDP every year. The economic and the social costs associated with the environmental degradation and their linkages to the poverty and the food security in the country are matters of concern. Major part of nearly 360 million people in the country live in villages. Illiteracy along with poverty has led to poor health also. Thus, the major challenge before us is how to improve the literacy level, health care and agricultural practices. Such challenges can be met only by use of high technology. It calls for visionary approach to application of high technology for solving the problems of common man.

It is one such vision to reap the benefits of high technology inputs to the common man that Dr. Vikram Sarabhai spelt out around 40 years back that propelled the Indian space programme. Today, it is hailed as one of the most cost-effective programmes in the world with societal outreach. Similar is the vision of Dr. Abdul Kalam, our esteemed President, who made India proud by developing the first indigenous launch vehicles and missiles, who has formulated recently the '**Vision of Developed India by 2020**'. I share the vision of these great personalities - **Dr. Vikram Sarabhai and Dr. Kalam** - that only concerted indigenous efforts taking on the challenge of cutting edge technology will take India forward. Dr. Vikram Sarabhai saw an opportunity to exploit the space technology as a community resource outreach to all, and capable of serving the remote rural villages without discrimination and without any geographical boundary. Dr. Kalam envisages developing villages by bringing in urban infrastructure to rural areas using latest innovations in science and technology. Thanks to such visions from these illustrious personalities. India has developed internationally acclaimed space systems in a competitive manner, while at the same time it has developed innovative applications for national development using such high technology inputs. Teamwork was the buzzword, which made it all possible. In these pioneering efforts, it was the role of young scientists and engineers and managers, which made the real difference.

My dear young friends, today, India has a state-of-the-art constellation of INSAT and IRS satellites, providing services not only to the user community in the country, but also to international users. INSAT system is one of the largest domestic satellite communication systems in the world, and has enabled phenomenal expansion of television coverage in the country, enhanced the communication capabilities as well as improved meteorological observations. In the field of remote sensing technology and applications, India is the leading country with a fleet of Indian Remote Sensing satellites providing information services for meeting the national developmental needs. India is one of the very few countries, which have integrated remote sensing applications as part of the planning process. The data from IRS satellites has enabled many applications of direct relevance to society. Today, be it in the land and water resources management; be it in the forest management; or be it in the disaster management activities, the remote sensing data is operationally used in the country. Biennial forest mapping by forest Survey of India using satellite remote sensing data is one such example. Ministry of Rural Development is using remote sensing data to identify potential drinking water sources in rural villages. Department of Ocean Development is using satellite remote sensing for mapping of potential fishery zones in the oceans to enable poor fishing community to harvest more fish catch per unit effort. Ministry of agriculture & Cooperation is making use of the data for crop acreage and production estimate much ahead of actual harvesting. Fertilizer companies are making use of such data to market their products.

Similarly, India has carried out many societal applications using the INSAT communication satellite system operating from the Geo-stationary orbit. Based on the pilot developmental education experiments conducted in Jhabua in Western Madhya Pradesh, which is one of the most backward regions populated largely by tribal community, ISRO has taken up major initiatives in the recent times to reach the deprived rural populace both through tele-education and tele-medicine services. ISRO plans to expand the telemedicine experiment in many places in the country, linking the village hospitals to the super-specialty hospitals in the urban centers, thus, making available the advanced medical facilities and consultancies to the rural community. The very idea behind these initiatives is to energize an innovative social process to enhance the quality of human resources and ultimately empower the local populace by bringing in synergy between various agencies such as the voluntary bodies, local governmental machinery, entrepreneurs, service industry as well as the expertise from the academic institutions.

I can go on adding many such applications carried out in India, which have attracted attention of world community. The essential thing to note is that India has positioned an appropriate institutional arrangement to integrate these advanced science and technology inputs into national developmental priorities and goals. In short, the focus of the Indian space programme has been on the applications of space technology to serve as a tool for the socio-economic development of the country. The conceptualization, design, development, launching and in-orbit operations as well as implementation of application programmes tailored to India's developmental needs required creation of institutional infrastructure, development of technologies and integration of applications at the user end demanded unique managerial skills.

It is such a conviction and the vision that only through cutting-edge science and technology that India could leapfrog in development that has led ISRO to plan a series of thematic satellites in the coming years such as EDUSAT, Healthsat, Cartosat, Resourcesat and Oceansat etc., for both communication and in the remote sensing applications. These satellites will enable India to take up many such innovative applications so as to ensure that the benefits reach the under privileged and the marginalized in the society. In the coming years, ISRO has also plans to set up integrated village information kiosks to locally empower the rural populace to improve their quality of life. These kiosks will provide locale specific information services such as telemedicine, tele-education and agricultural advisories as well as information for local governance and other people-centric services. This will enable synthesizing the efforts of multiple agencies, tapping the knowledge base of all including villages and enhance the process of development, by effectively targeting collective actions for achieving higher literacy, better awareness on the healthcare, social norms, agricultural practices etc., ultimately leading to creation of wealth and prosperity. There are also plans to set up an operational Disaster Management Support Services network, linking with other knowledge networks to address the pre and post disaster management issues.

My dear young friends, you have a role cut out for you when you take up your cudgel. As you are entering the real world after successfully completing your educational curriculum, you should realize that learning is a continuing process to keep yourself ahead of others. Continuous quest for knowledge and the effective utilization of that knowledge for societal upliftment should be the prime goal of your life. The lifelong education will provide you with a discipline that enables you to face the rigors of practical life with confidence. I am

sure, the value system and other endearing qualities you have inherited from this esteemed Institution blessed by Amma will stand the test of time, and enable you to face the challenges in your chosen career. Humility, hard work, sincerity, and above all developing a broader social vision to contribute to the societal upliftment should be the buzzwords. Being useful to the people around you will bring the greatest satisfaction and fulfillment. I am sure, being the product of such a noble Institution; you will serve this country with dedication, and will bring laurels not only to yourself but also to your family, friends and above all, your Alma Mater.

Once again, let me wish you all the very best in all your future endeavors.

Thank You!