



# SANT GADGE BABA AMRAVATI UNIVERSITY

27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVOCATION

**Convocation Address**

by

**Hon'ble Prof. N. R. Shetty**  
President,  
Indian Society for Technical Education  
New Delhi

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## **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University**

### **Convocation Address**

**By**

**Prof. N. R. Shetty, President, ISTE, New Delhi and Former Vice Chancellor,**

**Bangalore University**

Hon'ble Chancellor of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor Dr. Mohan Khedkar, Members of Senate, Management Council, Academic Council, Faculty, Distinguished invitees, Parents, students, graduating students, members of the Press and ladies and Gentlemen,

I am indeed happy to be here this morning to participate in the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual convocation of the Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University located in the sacrosanct land of Vidarbha, the famous Berar region haloed by great saints. The University campus surrounded by impressive hillocks on one side and the famous "Tapovan" of the great social reformer Dr. Shivajirao Patwardhan on the other is an ideal abode for advanced learning. I am informed by your learned Vice Chancellor that the university is making noteworthy contributions in the field of environmental protection as well as maintenance of ecological balance and has been quick in adopting the information technology in all its activities. The university has 402 affiliated colleges and 23 PG departments and is committed to the advancement of technology, healthy academic culture and a symbiosis between teachers and students. I must congratulate the university for demonstrating capabilities to generate its own resources such as creating water reservoirs on its campus to meet its requirements of water and thus saving a significant amount of money. Indeed this is a red letter day in the life of the students who are graduating and making a new beginning in their lives. I hope that you will not only achieve distinctions in the fields you are going to choose but will serve the mankind in general and the nation in particular with devotion, dedication and enthusiasm. I hope each one of you will not only be making your educational endeavours a lifelong activity but also spread the light of knowledge, skills and values acquired in this university to enlighten the mankind. I am confident with the use of knowledge, wisdom and skills you acquired here you will bring glory to our nation.

We are living in an era of globalization driven by science and technology. Education is about raising the confidence of an individual to think a worthy dream and to translate that dream to reality by high performance action. For India to become a 'developed' country, all parts of India and all segments of our Society must develop fully. Improving the quality of life of the people, particularly those living in rural areas and an increase in agriculture productivity is essential for rural



development, particularly in areas where this productivity is currently low so that the people living there can go above the poverty line.

### **Challenges of the Higher Education Sector – Current Scenario**

“Loss of primacy of the Universities in the scheme of the Higher Education sector in India, erosion of their autonomy, undermining of undergraduate education, the growing distance between knowledge areas and the isolation of the universities from the real world outside and cross commercialization are some of the problems that characterize the growth of the Indian Higher Education system.

### **Distances and Disconnects**

The chasm that exists between theory and practice combined with the fragmentation of the idea of knowledge leads to the confusion that our system of higher education is suffering from. To overcome this, it would be necessary that universities adopt a curricular approach which treats knowledge in a holistic manner and creates exciting opportunities for different kinds of interfaces between the disciplines, which is unthinkable today in most of the universities and institutions of higher learning. It is important that universities relate to the world outside and the walls of disciplines are porous enough to let other voices be heard. It would also be necessary that university education is seen in its totality and subject areas not be designed in isolation.

The Indian system of higher education has also kept itself aloof from the local knowledge base of the worker, the artisan and the peasant. It has kept itself at a distance from the real world. Within the system, there are distances between disciplines. Within a single campus, disciplines often grow in complete ignorance even of each other's presence.

This lack of dialogue becomes more profound when we talk of areas like engineering, medicine and teacher training etc.. Here we have ended up with statutory bodies which exist purely for the task of regulation. While universities award engineering and medical degrees, it is ironic that they do not have the power to determine whether an institution that claims to train engineers or doctors has the wherewithal to do so. Nor do they have sufficient say in designing the academic programmes, in professional disciplines as these are largely influenced by statutory bodies like MCI/AICTE. Ostensibly, the university's loss of academic influence in this respect looks like a case of distribution of responsibilities. Yet, at its heart lie the erosion of university's concept of knowledge, and perpetuation of a divisive view of knowledge and skill.

## **Divide between Research bodies and Universities**

Universities were historically conceived as spaces where teaching and research go together. They are closely linked. Research and teaching are simply different aspects of academic work. To teach effectively at the university level one needs to actively engage in research. However, now the universities in India have become mass institutions and costs of research, especially in the context of science and engineering have become very high. This has led to a situation where there is an increasing tendency to treat teaching and research as separate activities. Due to this disjoint between teaching and research universities in India have been reduced to the status of centres that teach and examine masses. On the other hand, more and more elite research bodies are being created where researchers have absolutely no occasion to engage with young minds.

## **Erosion of Democratic Space**

The role of higher education in creating an institutional space for dialogue and liberal inquiry is well recognized, but it is seldom appreciated in the context of establishing norms of democratic behavior and exchange. In India, where social hierarchy and divisions are sharp, institutions of learning serve as sites where powerful social forces vie for dominance. The institutional capacity to maintain peace and a democratic process plays a critical role in shaping the ethos of this site. Peace in this context can be described as a pre-condition for rationally organized dialogues between contending forces, ideologies and viewpoints. If institutions of higher education fail to ensure peace on their own premises in this sense of the term, they cannot avoid failing in a far greater sense when they claim public money on a gigantic scale and lose public faith.

For a considerable length of time following Independence, institutions of higher learning succeeded in providing a space where dialogue between rival social forces and ideologies could take place in a peaceful atmosphere. However, over the last few decades certain distinct signs of the erosion of this space have surfaced quite often in different parts of the country. The situation has worsened over the last few years. Not only organized youth but the official machinery of the university has been deliberately used to obstruct or subvert the possibility of peaceful debate and inquiry resulting in a long-term institutional damage to their capacity to serve as sites of peace. This is a matter of great anxiety, not just because it marks the erosion of institutional sanctity, but also because it distorts the idea of a university and its role in the creation of knowledge by free and open inquiry through research and dialogue.

The issue of geo-cultural diversities is another critical area where our universities have increasingly failed to act as spaces where students would learn to respect diversity as a value. In a world where boundaries are blurring, it is important that we learn to acknowledge and appreciate differences and not try to homogenize

everything.” (Report of the Prof. Yashpal Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education.)

### **Higher Education and Innovation**

Innovation has today become the need of the hour. India has been one of the best performers in the world economy during the past few years with an average growth rate of 9.2 percent in 2007-08, and 6.7 percent during 2006-07 the year of the worst global financial crisis in recent history. In every field we can innovate and innovations can have a multiplier impact on the organization's performance. While investing in innovation is time consuming, its results have a multiplying effect. Innovation, being a profitable investment also has a certain degree of risk associated with it. Thus, innovation has to be recognized as an inherent component of corporate strategic objectives and entire business visions.

Excellence is not a destination but a journey. Continuous improvement happens when we believe it is possible and when we are willing to work for it. Our country of over one billion population, second only to China in the human resource numbers, a country with one of the most ancient civilizations in the world, however does not find a place among the top ten. With an adult literacy rate of about 65% and with 35% of the population below the poverty line, the nation's social welfare efforts are an unqualified disaster. Even in technology, where India has made rapid advances, the country's progress is lopsided and disparate. India ranks 63 on the Technology Achievement Index in the Human Development Report 2001 compared to China's ranking of 45.

Revival of creativity and the innovative spirit needs to be made into a national movement today, in the same spirit and on the same scale as marked our freedom struggle. The serious problems of our country are population, poverty and illiteracy. The reality of economics demand speedy direction and action to spur economic growth and create wealth. The curricula must relate closely to science and technology experience of every day life. But equally importantly, we must take into account all the factors that affect the teaching processes in the classroom and tackle all of them in an integrated manner.

### **Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship has become an integral part of higher education as it primarily aims at imparting entrepreneurial qualities to enable the products of higher education to be job-providers rather than job seekers. As we know that, 'Entrepreneurship' refers to all those activities, which are to be carried out by an entrepreneur to establish and run the business enterprises in accordance with the changing socio, political and economic environments.



Entrepreneurship is an integrated concept that permeates an individual's business in an innovative manner. It is this perspective that has revolutionized the way business is conducted at every level and in every country. Economic growth, productivity improvement, innovations, job creation, poverty alleviation and social opportunities are interlinked and can be achieved only through entrepreneurship. Universities can generate highly perspective business ideas and contribute to the quality of start-ups through incubators. The economic benefits of sustainable entrepreneurship are compelling, and its potential effects on the development process are equally promising.

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship is a set of skills, traits and characteristics that could be useful in a variety of circumstances, not just as a business creator, but as a leader or employee in the private, public, or non-profit sectors. Major challenges in imparting entrepreneurship as a curricular activity in education include large size and heterogeneity of the student groups as to entrepreneurial intentions and expectations, background in technical subject and not in economics and employability of graduates and shortage of skills in key areas. We should establish incubators in the educational campus along with venture capital as well as seed capital. University incubators provide spatial infrastructure, business coaching, mentoring, consulting, financial support etc. Business plan competitions with suitable rewards and follow-ups will encourage more ideas to pop-up. All innovation initiatives should be nurtured.

We need an entrepreneurial society in which innovation and entrepreneurship are regular, steady and continuous, just as management has become the specific organ of all contemporary institutions and the integrating organ of our society of organizations. By tradition, the self-employment culture has been exemplified as a male phenomenon. Entrepreneurship, a game of risk and chance, used to be the exclusive domain of the male population. However a growing number of women are venturing into self-employment and getting inclined to start an enterprise. Innovations and entrepreneurship have to become an integral life-sustaining activity in our organizations, our economy and our society at large.

### **Entrepreneurship and Sustainability**

Now, people have begun to realize that for achieving the goal of economic development, it is necessary to increase entrepreneurship both qualitatively and quantitatively. To achieve the sustainability, one has to explore fully the potentialities of the country's available resources such as labour, technology and capital. Sustainable development embodies the vision of an equitable and prosperous world where environmental and socio-cultural resources are also taken in to considerations. The present education system in India has to ensure promoting independent thinking, creativity, a spirit of innovation and motivation for setting a

challenging and achievable goal. Higher education needs to focus on the process of achieving certain results so as to produce products that are globally efficient, competitive, innovative and with a vision above all.

Entrepreneurship development programmes have to be methodically and meticulously conducted on a regular basis. They have to be properly planned and phased to identify, select, and train potential entrepreneurs. Each College should have a 'think tank' consisting of students, teachers and industrialists where a promising entrepreneur with promising ideas and dreams can walk in for technical assistance. An entrepreneur need not be technically self sufficient. The 'think tank' can assist him in materializing his ideas. Also there should be R&D units with every institutions of higher learning. It is imperative to create visionary entrepreneurs who can develop innovations, create jobs, and contribute a lot to national economy and indirectly solve the problem of unemployment.

My dear young students, there are many areas you can make a mark and contribute towards progress of the country. You should cultivate the habit of thinking and only when you think you can have vision for the future. To realize your vision you have to dedicate yourself and channelize all your energy and resources. You need a positive mindset and willingness to use your capabilities for a larger good of the people. Before I conclude, I would like to quote the words of Swami Vivekananda "We are responsible for what we are and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in future can be produced by our present actions, so we have to know how to act". I once again wish you a great future and "May God Bless you to realize your goals".