

**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY ANANTAPUR**

**ANANTHAPURAMU - 515 002, ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA**

**TENTH CONVOCATION**

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**Convocation Address**

**by**

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His excellency Hon’ble Governor of Andhra Pradesh and Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Anantapur (JNTUA), Sri E.S.L. Narasimhan; Hon’ble Vice Chancellor of the University Prof. S. Srinivas Kumar, Prof. K. Prahlada Rao, Rector, Prof. S. Krishnaiah, the Registrar, Members of the Executive Council, Directors, Faculty members, invited dignitaries, my dear students, and ladies and gentlemen!

It is indeed a great honor and privilege to address the gathering on the occasion of the 10th Convocation of the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Anantapur, and also I am very happy to receive the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) from this great institution.

I am accepting this honour with all humility, as I realize the heavy responsibility this award places on me. I assure the authorities of the University sitting here on the dais that I will try my best to live up to their expectations in upholding the values and the standards of this University.

This honour has also given me an opportunity to visit this one of the oldest technological institutes in the country, which I happen to know since 1961, when I wrote the IIT Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) conducted at this centre. Though I was selected, I did not pursue my studies in any IIT. Instead, I went to IISc Bangalore to do BE in ECE. It is interesting to note that in those days IITs were not that sought after as they are now. In fact engineering colleges like Anantapur, Kakinada and Guindy were better known than IITs, and many parents preferred to admit their wards in these institutions.

I visited this campus several times later. My younger brother and sister studied and graduated from this campus in 1969 and 1981, respectively. In fact, our family made Anantapur a home for over 15 years during 1960s and 70s for studies of my brothers and sisters at various educational institutions in Anantapur.

Convocation address is supposed to convey a message in the form of an advice to the graduating students. On this occasion, I would like to share some of my thoughts accumulated over 50 years of academic life at various institutions. In this process, comparison of attitudes of faculty and students *then* and *now* in teaching, research and evaluation arises naturally. I will touch upon three aspects in this regard, namely, *technology*, *education* and *careers*.

One of the dominant topics of discussion in every forum these days is the evolution of *technology*, and its influence on our thinking. In particular, everyone talks about Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, saying that they are the future. We tend to make changes even in the curriculum, to train the students to acquire these skills. What we don’t realize is that, like every technology, this is also a passing phase. New ideas of technology replace the current ones sooner or later. I request the students not to be carried away by this euphoria, or worry about their lack of this knowledge or expertise. Of course, it is necessary to learn whatever is needed, to be in synchronization with the rest. I am sure all of you have the ability to acquire these new skills quickly, as they are all very simple, and there are very few fundamental concepts in these technology areas, unlike in electromagnetic theory or thermodynamics or fluid mechanics.

*Education* is one area where everyone seems to claim expertise, and thus keep on adding so called innovations in teaching, learning, and evaluation. But the tragedy is that, every such innovation seems to bring down the educational standards, leading to making statements like, the current graduates are not employable, lack communication skills, etc. In my opinion making them employable should not be the only goal of educational institutions. But these days success of education is measured in terms of the job and pay packet one gets. Parental pressures and societal pressures dominate over individual choices, leading to dissatisfaction all over.

The first thing all of us should know about education is that it is meant only to make students *learn how to learn*, using some branch of Science or Engineering or Arts as a medium. Education planners and administrators continuously change the programs and curriculum to make them attractive for parents to admit their wards and for students by giving them false hopes that the newer versions of curriculum are more current and hence useful for them. They seem to ignore the contents of the courses, and focus more to equip the students with tools and gadgets. They even insist that faculty should use modern teaching methods like PPTs, videos and online courses. In the process, they are reducing the importance of teaching and also of the teacher, who in my opinion is crucial for imparting education. It is unfortunate that the society does not seem to realize the role of a teacher in the learning process. As a consequence, the students also develop scant respect for them. I am convinced that the measure of progress of any society should be in terms of number of teachers it has, rather than in terms of the number of teachers it can replace with the so called modern gadgets.

Effects of changes in education are reflected in the inability of the students to develop independent thinking. This is evident when they face the world after graduation. Most of them look for jobs, preferably high paying and comfortable, rather than challenging. It also looks as though most of them want to retire early, say in their fifties itself, and many companies are making it happen these days. I am 75 and retired, though not tired. I am active, and would like to be like that, as long as I am not a burden to the society.

At our time, graduating engineers took couple of years to get a job, and there was hardly any concept of placement during the study years. Now the students expect job placement even couple of semesters before the completion of their degree program. Once they get a job, their interest in the remaining part of their studies declines.

It is also interesting that after graduation in engineering, they end up mostly in non-engineering professions, which of course is not their fault. But then the four years of engineering training goes waste. Even in jobs they end up with, they start disliking it very quickly, looking for excuses to leave. This way they develop dislike for whichever job they take up later.

Note that the study years are crucial for students to equip themselves with the process of learning how to learn, especially with the help of teachers. That will help them later to update themselves with the help of technology resources such as literature, courses, tools, etc. Try to take up jobs which you like, if possible. Otherwise, develop liking the job you end up with. This is especially true for jobs related to teaching, research, design and development. In particular, teaching and research jobs demand more effort and commitment than other jobs, as they require continuous update. But these jobs are highly rewarding, as you will continue to be active throughout your life.

***Now, I would like to share a few lessons I learnt:***

* For success, it is not how much you know, but it is how well you know what you say you know.
* Never talk ill about others, especially about the organization you left. Always keep good memories of your past job.
* Don’t develop enmity for others. Use words carefully. Remember, *while pointing a finger at others, 3 other fingers are pointing towards you.*
* It is not important what others think about you. It is important what you think about yourself.
* Remember that, if you deserve credit/promotion, and you don’t get it, then it is others’ problem, and not yours. You have to really worry when you end up getting credit or a job that you don’t deserve.
* You can never grow by suppressing others. You can grow by sitting on shoulders of others, and allowing them to grow.
* Always keep writing, reading and speaking about your work, as a matter of routine. It sharpens your intellect. In contrast, typing, watching and searching can reduce your IQ.
* Remember that small things add up, like savings, learning, cleaning, helping, etc.
* Never look down at others who are inferior to you. Everyone has a role in the society, as each may be good in his/her own way. Throughout my life I never looked at any individual, especially the students, as bad. I believe that given an opportunity, everyone will shine. I have number of examples to show in my interaction with students over the years.
* About earning money, note that it is a zero sum game. If we get, someone else does not. All cannot be rich. Also, as Gandhiji said, *there is enough for everyone’s need, but not for their greed.*
* Always think and talk, rather than the other way.
* As far as possible, act rather than react.
* Have something to say, rather than saying something.

Finally, ***a few comments on the media***:

Beware of the ill-effects of the media and technology. Influence of the media was aptly summarised by the former Editor of Illustrated Weekly, late Kushwant Singh, some years ago: *In early days of parliament what was debated in the parliament used to get reported in the newspapers. These days what is reported in the newspapers gets debated in the parliament.*

It is good to recall a quote from the English novelist Jonathan Swift: *Falsehood flies and truth comes limping after it.* Unfortunately, media acts as a catalyst for spreading the falsehood.

I will end my address with a small story from the children’s magazine *Chandamama* in Telugu, to enable you appreciate the words *deep learning* and *intelligence.*

In conclusion, I am very happy to receive the honour bestowed on me by JNTUA. I enjoyed standing in front of you to share my thoughts, and I thank JNTUA for giving me this opportunity.

Dear graduating students, from the comfort of home and college, you will be entering a world full of challenges, which you should enjoy facing them, and try to make the world a better place to live for everyone.

Thank you for your attention. Best wishes. God bless you. Jai Hind.

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