

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION

December 27, 2019

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

BY

Chief Guest



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CONVOCATION ADDRESS AT THE 15TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION
OF THE JUNAGADH AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY,
JUNAGADH ON 27TH DECEMBER, 2019.

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Hon'ble the Governorshri of Gujarat and Chancellor of Junagadh Agricultural University, Shri Acharya Devvratji; Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Transport, Government of Gujarat, Shri R.C. Falduji; Respected Vice-Chancellor of the University, Dr. V.P. Chovatiaji; Registrar, Dr. P.M.Chauhan; Hon'ble MLAs, Respected Members of the Board of Management and Academic Council, Vice- Chancellors of other Universities, Former Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Directors of the University; dear graduating students of various degree programmes, Teachers, young student friends, farmer-friends, distinguished invitees, Press and Media, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured and pleased to be here to deliver the 15th Convocation Address to the distinguished gathering. I am thankful to the Hon'ble Chancellor and the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor and the Members of the Board of Management for inviting me on this occasion.

I have been a regular visitor to Junagadh Agricultural University, on several occasions and am moved by the history of Junagadh located at the foot of Girnar Hills and is known for wild life sanctuaries and the people all over the country including foreigners visiting Junagadh for seeing the lions in the natural habitat in Gir forests. It has been rich both culturally and agriculturally and the region is also known for Porbandar, the birth place of Rashtrapita Mahatma Gandhiji. Located in the Saurashtra region, Junagadh is also famous for its fort, markets, song-dance culture, the spices and pickles and for friendly people. The history of Junagadh dates back many centuries. The Mauryan King Chandragupta Maurya constructed the famous Junagadh Fort as early as in 319 B.C. Every time I visited Junagadh, I enjoyed the hospitality of the University teachers and employees including the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellors Dr. A.R. Pathak and

Dr. N.C. Patel and carry a fond memory of the delicious and typical Gujarati food.

We all know that higher education is becoming more competitive day-by-day both nationally and internationally. The institutions are competing for quality, students resources, faculties, research foot-prints and are trying to reap the economies at the same time. With the expansion of higher education, quality has always been the main focus. True education is a proper blend of knowledge including societal values that can motivate our young students towards nation building. The new Educational Policy focuses on ACCESSIBILITY, QUALITY, EQUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY and AFFORDABILITY. Keeping this in view, the Government of India initiated National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) to rank higher educational institutions in the country with an aim to promote competitive excellence in academics.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research, an apex organization in the field of agriculture in the country has brought and continues to bring necessary reforms for quality assurance in agricultural education in this ever changing digital world. In this resolve, Agricultural Education Division has been involved in bringing reforms through consultations and deliberations with all stakeholders and updating academic norms and standards towards improving challenges and opportunities. Internalizing the Bhuvaneshwar Declaration and adopting a bottom-up approach involving all stakeholders, the Deans Committee constituted by the ICAR has contextualized academic aspects of challenges and opportunities in addition to articulating the knowledge and skills needed among the graduates recommended curricula reforms for enhancing employability, employment, potential entrepreneurship and science-led transformation of India's food and agricultural system enabling our graduates to become job providers rather than job seekers.

Indian Agriculture continues to occupy a pivotal position, like in many developing countries, and contributes about 14 per cent to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). We have travelled successfully from insufficiency to self-sufficiency in food production. With the production from agriculture activity of 27 thousand billion

rupees, India is the 2nd largest producer of agriculture product. Though India accounts for 7.39 percent of total global agricultural output, is way behind China which has 71 thousand billion rupees GDP in agriculture sector. The Rainbow revolutions including the Green, Blue, White and Yellow Revolutions are the manifestations of remarkable accomplishments of our farmers, scientists, planners & policy makers. It is important to note that the technological interventions have played a key role in these revolutions, and such interventions are the only options to achieve national food and nutritional security. We need to increase the food production to about 300 million tons by 2020 which is not far away amidst various challenges in agriculture.

Some of the issues and challenges include; yield plateauing in most crops, imbalance use of fertilizer and nutrients, lack of agricultural credit, poor price policy, size of the agricultural farms, poor storage and post-harvest handling, regional disparities, change in cropping pattern, poor trade policies in agricultural commodities and above all uncertainties in the intensity and distribution of rainfall which all have lead to building pressure on land and the environment to meet the challenges of food production. We are also aware of the effects of recent climate change which the country has witnessed, for which, we need to develop suitable strategies like change in the cropping pattern to meet the ever increasing demand of food grain production.

Government has come up with certain initiatives to boost the development of agricultural sector in recent years. The Prime Minister of India has launched the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana** (PM-Kisan) and transferred Rs 2,021 crores to the bank accounts of more than one crore beneficiaries on February 24, 2019. The Government of India has come out with a scheme to provide financial assistance for transport and marketing of agriculture products in order to boost agriculture exports through the Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA). The Agriculture Export Policy-2018 approved by the Government of India aims to increase India's agricultural exports to 60 billion US dolloars by 2022 and 100 billion US dollars in the next few years with a stable trade policy regime.

In September 2018, the Government of India announced Rs 15,053 crores (US\$ 2.25 billion) procurement policy named

'Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan' (PM-AASHA), under which, States can decide the compensation scheme and can also partner with private agencies to ensure fair prices for farmers in the country. Under this, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved a Rs 5,500 crores (US\$ 820.41 million) assistance package for the sugar industry in India. The Government of India is going to provide Rs 2,000 crores (US\$ 306.29 million) for computerisation of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) to ensure cooperatives are benefitted through digital technology. With an aim to boost innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture, the Government of India is introducing a new AGRI-UDAAN programme to mentor start-ups and to enable them to connect with potential investors. The Government has launched the **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana** (PMKSY) with an investment of Rs 50,000 crores (US\$ 7.7 billion) aimed at development of irrigation sources for providing a permanent solution from drought. It has also plans to triple the capacity of food processing sector in India from the current 10 per cent of agriculture produce and has committed Rs 6,000 crores (US\$ 936.38 billion) as investments for mega food parks in the country, as a part of the Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters (SAMPADA). It has also allowed 100 per cent FDI in marketing of food products and in food product e-commerce under the automatic route. In order to implement such ambitious schemes, we need to have strong agricultural education policies and requisite resources. If we look at the current scenario, the present agricultural education system suffers mainly from low access, lack of quality standards, low funding, gender inequality, non-contemporary course curricula and delivery methods, inbreeding and lack of faculty competence.

The notable looming dangers of food security in our country include: stagnating or declining productivity and profitability, degradation and depletion of natural resources, increased risks of climate change, regional imbalances in agricultural productivity, unsafe livelihoods, rising input costs and unsound profits, vulnerable markets, high post-harvest technology losses and weak ToT system.

If we closely observe the contribution of Gujarat in the national agricultural output, despite 54 per cent of the area being arid

and semi-arid, it has maintained a double digit growth for over a decade and is the national leader in agricultural growth. In 2001, the State was on the verge of less water resources but today, it stand as World's biggest water resource because of Narmada Canal, wherein the farmers cultivate 3-5 crops in a year which has contributed immensely for the State's agricultural growth. The Government of Gujarat has also supported through public-private partnership.

Gujarat has evolved its one month long '**Krushi Mahotsav Campaign**' as a unique extension model that brought agricultural scientists, extension staff, agro-industries, input suppliers, cooperative banks, local and state level political leaders together on a platform to exchange knowledge and information on the latest technologies and market opportunities. Entrepreneurial mind set of Gujarati populace coupled with well-developed infrastructure including roads and versatile cooperative sector are the two handy strengths of agriculture in Gujarat.

The *Make in India* mission of the Government of India has rightfully taken-off in Gujarat State which has encouraged a good number of manufacturers of not only quality farm implements but also in industrial sector which has made the economy of the Gujarat State stronger.

The Jurisdiction of Junagadh Agricultural University falls under Saurashtra region which has rich domestic livestock breeds; it is the native tract of world famous Gir cows, a most popular milch breed in India and abroad, Jaffarabadi buffaloes, known for its high fat content in milk. The Kathiyawadi horses and Asiatic lions have added proud feathers to animal wealth of the Saurashtra region. The pure germplasm of Gir cows and Jaffarabadi buffaloes have been maintained at Cattle Breeding Farm of the Junagadh Agricultural University which is in high demand. The University has religiously implemented all the schemes of ICAR, such as, Experiential Learning Programmes, Niche Area of Excellence, Student READY Programme, etc. The Bio-control Unit of the University is one of the best among SAUs and is able to meet the demands of the farming community.

The University which has achieved academic excellence apart from its contribution in research and extension activities in a span

of just 15 years since its inception, has been in the fore-front to fulfill the demand of both farmers and students. It is noteworthy to praise the dedication of the faculty and the administrators in bagging the prestigious World Bank funded Project on the theme *Application of Artificial Intelligence, Robotic and Drone in Agriculture*. To the best of my knowledge, it is the only University in India which provides seeds to the farmers at subsidized rates. The bio-pesticides, bio-control agents and liquid bio-fertilizers developed by the University have attracted the attention of farmers. I compliment all staff and the University administration for such a remarkable achievement in the service of the farming community apart from human resource development.

Considering the importance of agricultural education in the country, the Government of India declared 3rd December as the National Agricultural Education Day which happens to be the Birthday of the first President of India, Bharat Ratna Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Several new initiatives have been taken for improving the quality of agricultural education in SAUs which include:

- Implementation of revenue generation at AUs through capacity building, training, consultancy, testing certification and technology outreach approach
- Implementation of Green Initiatives as per Global needs (Rain water Harvesting, Solar Energy Utilization, Composting, Waste water recycling and e-governance;
- Developed minimum standards for establishment of new colleges;
- Initiated draft bill for establishment of National Council for Higher Agricultural Education;
- Introduction of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Unnat Krishi Siksha Yojana through 100 Training Centres across the country to train farmers in organic farming / natural farming / cow-based economy to achieve environmental sustainability, improve soil health and to develop skilled human resources;
- Introduction of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan to connect institution of Higher Education with local communities to address developmental changes of rural India through Non-formal

education of farmers, growers, milkmen and entrepreneurs on organic farming, natural farming and cow based economy;

- Emeritus Professor scheme to attract superannuating teachers;
- Introduction of External Research Projects to enhance the quality of Agriculture Education.

Although these initiatives have been introduced both by the Government of India and State Governments for improving the quality of education, we still lag behind many institutions and Universities in the world. In support of this statement, if we look at the top 50 higher educational institutions on Times Higher Education's World University Ranking released last week, no Indian educational institutions figure. However, the small countries like Belgium, Germany, Hong Kong, Sweden, Japan, Switzerland and Singapore figure in the list. A major share (46%) is occupied by the USA followed by UK (10%). This clearly shows that focus on higher education system needs to be addressed on priority in India for which the faculty, students, infrastructure and facilities are of prime importance.

It is said that "A change not monitored is a change not desired". Hence, it is necessary to design suitable indicators to monitor the students who would be the next generation leaders.

Another issue which is of a great concern to NARES system is mushrooming of private agricultural Colleges and Institutions in the country. As of date, there are nearly 375 constituent Colleges among 75 SAUs, DUs, CAUs and nearly 1,000 private Colleges. The students coming out of the constituent Colleges are certainly more competitive and innovative because of the strict quality assurance through accreditation, common academic guidelines, updated and contemporary course curricula and delivery system due to implementation of Fifth Deans' Committee Recommendations. It is high time that we to impose strict measures of quality assurance in private institutions to maintain the quality of agricultural education in the country.

The ICAR has also come out with several measures to improve the faculty competence through Summer Winter Schools, Centre for Advanced Faculty Training (CAFT), Niche Area of Excellence, Extramural Research and Best Teacher Award. On an average, nearly

5,000 faculty are trained in these programmes every year. There is still scope for the SAUs to participate in this capacity building programme wholeheartedly to improve the education standards. ICAR has also come out with ranking of Universities, which takes into account, the parameters in teaching, research, extension, outreach activities including entrepreneurship development and skill development programmes by the Universities. The SAUs must compete holistically in the ranking framework to improve their standards. In order to attract the students to agriculture, ample amount of incentives have been devised by the ICAR and the State Governments in the form of stipend during Student READY Programme, Experiential Learning Programmes. Recently, the ICAR has enhanced both JRF and SRF scholarships. It is for the young graduates to choose their career either to go for higher education or to enter into business. The new programmes envisaged mainly focus on developing entrepreneurial skills among the graduates. Recently, ICAR has launched World Bank funded NAHEP Programme, wherein under Component-II, viz., IDP, importance has been given for faculty training abroad and several UG students are deputed to foreign Universities to learn entrepreneurial skills.

Dear students, as we celebrate your accomplishments today, remember there is no room for complacency. Though it is said, that life is not a bed of roses alone, you will do well to remember that life is beautiful only when thorns come along with the beautiful flowers. Challenges provide you opportunities to improve and excel and the secret of success lies in hard work. We can learn from the experiences of great personalities like Noble Laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug who is responsible for bringing Green Revolution, Dr. Verghese Kurien for bringing White Revolution and Dr. M.S. Swaminathan to help conquer hunger, poverty and malnutrition.

I extend my hearty congratulations to all the graduating students for having achieved a landmark in their career through excellent academic performance. At the same time, I commend the faculty members for their untiring efforts in imparting best training and guidance to the students with warm acumen.

JAI HIND

