

# **Dr V.C. Kulandaiswamy Endowment Lecture and**

## **80<sup>th</sup> Year Felicitation of**

### **Dr. V.C. Kulandaiswamy**

**Prof. V.C. Kulandaiswamy**

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Mr. President Prof. Nigavekar, members on the Dias, members of the faculty, distinguished guests and dear students. I need not say that I am really happy to participate in this pleasant function. The participation of Prof. Nigavekar certainly adds lustre to this occasion. Prof. Nigavekar is a Teacher, a researcher, an academic planner, builder, administrator and above all and in short an **academic leader**. I attach great importance to the designation academic leader. We do have in this country eminent researchers, reputed scientists great teachers but they are all specialists in their own discipline. Unfortunately we do not have among our teachers, persons who can be considered academic leaders.

If I ask you to state the name of political leaders, the number will be endless. Certainly you will be able to tell me the names of a number of Industrial leaders: You will have no difficulty in mentioning names of persons who are leaders in the film world: but if I ask you to give me a list of just five eminent members who can be called academic leaders in India, you may not be able to do that easily. This is one of the great weaknesses of our education system. Since academics do not provide the leadership, every one in this country starts making pronouncements on education with a sense of authority. Under these circumstances I may inform you that without any reservation

Prof. Nigavekar is a great academic leader, a bold academic leader. We have worked together on many committees and on many projects. I make my assessment with the full knowledge of Prof. Nigavekars accomplishments. I join with Prof. Mannar Jawahar in extending to him cordial welcome and thank him for his kind acceptance to deliver the 6<sup>th</sup> endowment lecture.

Leadership is important for achievement in any area of activity. Valluvar says:

நிலைமக்கள் சால உடைத்தெனினும், தானை

தலைமக்கள் இல்வழி இல்

[770]

You may have the best of fighters in an army; but it will not win, unless you have a great leader.

The development of leadership needs an appropriate atmosphere. Where everyone is a subordinate, you will only have slaves, where everyone is a leader, there will be only arguments; there will be no leader.

I may inform the members of the audience that Anna University has been a strong source of leadership development. I may give you a few instances. Among the 41 Bharat Ratnas that India has produced so far, two are Engineers – one is Dr. Viswesvarayyah and the other is Dr. Abdul Kalam. Among all the presidents of India, so far, only one is an Engineer that is Dr. Abdul Kalam, who is an alumnus of this university.

If you take a university, the most important position is that of a Vice Chancellor. It is very rarely that an Engineering University provides Vice Chancellor to general universities. Anna University, in its first two decades had provided Vice Chancellors to five general universities in Tamil Nadu: Dr. Muthukumaran as Vice Chancellor

Bharathidasan University: DR. S. Sathik to Madras University: Dr. B. Elango to Bharathiar University and Dr. Ramasamy to Algappa University.

I may mention even at the outset that I am extremely thankful to the vice chancellor Prof. Mannar Jawahar and his colleagues for using this occasion to felicitate me on my 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. I may inform the members assembled here that with nearly 40 years of experience in the field of Higher Education that it is very unusual for a university to honour its former vice chancellor. The tradition of the country has been that for every problem of the university the vice chancellor in position will find fault with, criticise and blame the former Vice Chancellor. It is even more unusual that you felicitate him on his birthday in a large assembly of faculty and students. Mr. Vice chancellor I consider this act of yours as a singular honour and an act of great magnanimity on your part.

Personally again this is to me a new experience. As you can well imagine, there had been my 60<sup>th</sup> birth day; 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. Till this minute there has been no occasion of any birthday felicitation or celebration either in my family or in the society i.e., in other words in a fairly long period of 80 years of living. I am experiencing the birthday felicitation for the first time.

After all we grow old mechanically and effortlessly; there is nothing very special about a person completing a calendar year. In India 60<sup>th</sup> year and 80<sup>th</sup> year alone used to be an occasion for celebration because in the past, not many lived that long. You may be surprised to know that in the year of my birth i.e., 1929 the average longevity of an Indian was 28 for men and 29 for women. People naturally celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> year thanking God for his mercy.

As I stand on the platform of Vivekananda Auditorium my memory goes back to the year when I witnessed many important functions and I attended many events in which I have participated.

It was in 1957 that I joined this college. I had been living and working in this institution till 1990 nearly for 34 years except for a small break. This period has also been the period of tremendous growth of this Institution. Any society that can have a claim for cultural development must be capable of acknowledging and gratefully remembering those that may have significant contribution either to an Institution or to the society as the case may be. On this occasion I must mention the name of Thiru T. Muthian, who was not only the builder of the institution but also the architect of technical education in Tamil Nadu. Even today with all the developments that have taken place, technical education in Tamil Nadu stands on the foundations laid by Padma Shri T. Muthian. It was he who in 1964 formulated and sent a proposal to the Government for establishing a technical university in Tamil Nadu. He wanted that all the colleges and polytechnics should be transformed into Tamil Nadu University of Technology. However the proposal was not accepted mainly because the AICTE would not agree to the inclusion of polytechnics. After Padma Shri T. Muthian, Thiru P. Sivalingam took over as Director of Technical Education. He modified the proposal and recommended the College of Engineering Guindy and Central Polytechnics to be included in the University. The inclusion of central polytechnic Institutions was not again agreed to by the AICTE, After Thiru P. Sivalingam I was appointed as Director of Technical Education in 1974. During this period a proposal for establishing a university consisting of the college of Engineering, MIT, Alagappa College of Technology and the school of

Architecture and Planning was submitting. Alagappa college of Technology and School of Architecture and Planning belonged to the University of Madras and Madras University was not willing to part with the institutions. After some delay, the University of Madras agreed and in 1978, Anna University was established with the name of Perarignar Anna University of Technology. The name was later changed to Anna University.

Anna university has today many advantageous. There are many departments that are unique to this institution. There are many branches of study that can claim much longer tradition, than similar ones in the country.

I may mention Printing Technology, Rubber Technology, Remote Sensing, Bio Technology, Crystal Growth and Design and Manufacture of Foot Wear.

I may inform the members of the faculty that it is not as though communication of knowledge takes place only during the lecture. The class room itself is an instruction medium; the maintenance of the campus, the cleanliness of the campus, the discipline that is maintained; the punctuality that is valued – all these prepare the students for their life.

I may say that even the statues that you have in the campus have lessons to convey. I may give you the instance of Pokang University in South Korea. In front of the main building of Pokang University there are 6 pedestals. In four of them you have the bust of scientists: you have the bust of Einstein, Newton, Edison, and Faraday, and two pedestals are kept vacant. Naturally every student will start wondering as to why there are two pedestals that are kept unoccupied. It is written in the two vacant pedestals,

that they are meant for the future scientists of Korea. In a way the two empty pedestals really have lessons more than the ones that are occupied.

For one of the major functions a large number of Noble Laureates assembled in the University. Each one was asked to plant a sapling. The saplings have been attended to carefully and more were added and recorded. The garden is named as Nobel Garden. The students spend their evenings in the garden looking at the names of Noble Laureates associated with each tree.

We do have in Anna University two statues: one of Anna, and another of Tiruvalluvar. A unique feature of each of this statues is that you will not find on the pedestal the name of the person, who unveiled the statue or the person who presided over the function or the name of the vice-chancellor or registrar. The pedestal is free and has just one saying; in the case of Anna statue it says:

அறிவுடையார் எல்லாம் உடையார்

In the case of Valluvar statue it says:

உள்ளுவதெல்லாம் உயர்வுள்ளல்

One cannot think of a better lesson for the student community. Though Anna was a leader of a political party he was a person who symbolized scholarship; was an epitome of culture and civilization: a person who valued education and the only politician who used to mention in every meeting that every house should have a library. Valluvar perhaps is the one of the greatest thinkers of the country and he is the author of a philosophy that is universal and immortal. I may perhaps mention another project that we had in mind but was not realized

When we completed, **Ramanujan Computing Centre**. It was our intention to erect the statue of Ramanujan. It is difficult to make a full size statue since adequate

photographs are not available. Even today there are no statues of Ramanujan excepting three or four busts ordered by a Professor of the University of Illinois, USA. One such bust is available in the office of the Defence Research and Development Organization, New Delhi. The then DRDO advisor Dr.V.S. Arunachalam promised me that he would give us the statue for the Ramanujan Computing Centre. We completed the building, made also provision for the bust. But Dr. V.S. Arunachalam changed his mind and informed that the members of his office are not willing to part with the bust.

I may say that Ramanujan was not just a great mathematician. If you identify today some 20 or 30 most eminent mathematicians of the world, Ramanujan will be one of them. He really symbolised the mathematical tradition of India that goes back to the days of Aryabhata; and Bhaskara, If there is a statue of Ramanujan it will almost represent in stone or bronze, the intellectual heights that India had reached.

My experience as a Vice-chancellor has been a fairly pleasant one. It was also a rewarding experience. Since I had been associated with every brick and every tree in the campus over a period of time. I had the friendship and co-operation of all the members when I became the Vice Chancellor.

In conclusion I may have only two suggestions to the young academics who are assembled here. The very first requirement of any one who wants to be a teacher is expert knowledge in the subject. There is an anecdote about the great Mathematician Pythagoras. It is partly legendary but mostly History. He was a student of Thales. When he informed his teacher that he wanted become a teacher Thales advised him that he should become a scholar to be a teacher Pythagoras went to Egypt and spent some 10 years: from there he went to Babylon and spent another 5 years.

Then he thought that he was learned enough to become a teacher he came back and established an academy. You will be surprised to know, that even in those days. It was difficult to get admission in his academy. He was an so effective and so excellent teacher that and one of his own girl students fell in love with him and married him. To my knowledge that was the greatest award that any one got for good teaching.

The only other suggestion that I will make to the members of the faculty, is that teacher must love his students. If he examines his attitude and finds that he does not love his students he must change his attitude. If he finds that he was not able to change his attitude he must change his job.

Love and affection to the student must keep in mind the welfare of students. I may be pardoned for giving my own experience in this regard. I was Dean of Post Graduate studies. The Ministry of Education was giving through the AICTE Rs. 2000/- per month as stipend for P.G. students For releasing the stipend every month I laid down certain conditions.

1. They must have in the class tests held for internal evaluation, a score of at least 50% which is the pass mark.
2. They must have put in for that month 75% attendance.

In the case of scheduled caste students. I did not insist on minimum mark. But they should satisfy the minimum attendance requirement. The stipend was stopped for a few S.C. students who did not meet even the attendance requirement. They approached a lawyer and complained against the Dean.

He took them to the Governor and informed him that the poor Scheduled Caste students have legitimate complaint. They are to be paid Rs.2000/- per month by the



Government of India but the Dean of Post Graduate Studies is refusing to pay them for one reason or the other. The Governor naturally was unhappy: the secretary called me over the phone and communicated to me the reaction of his Excellency to the complaint of the students and the desire of the Governor that the grievance of the student should be redressed. I informed the secretary that I would take appropriate action.

I called those students to my room. There were 3 or 4 of them. I asked them about the occupation of their parents. One said his father was an agricultural labour, another said that his father was a traffic constable: the third one informed me that his father worked for daily wages under a contractor. After listening to them I said; "you may now imagine the condition of your parents. They don't have the kind of accommodation that you have or the dress you wear or the kind of food that you eat. They all hope that you people would complete the degree and contribute to the welfare of the family. And you find that you don't you have time even to attend classes. I do not need the Governor to recommend your case. I will pay the train fare or bus fare for your parents to come to the university and return. I will accommodate them, you kindly bring them to me. If they tell me that I can pay you stipend even if you do not attend classes. I will release the stipend every month. So you need only your father to recommend the case not the Governor". One or two of them wept before me and the problem was solved. Some times saying no may be a greater help to an individual than saying yes, when a request is made.

## I

Before I conclude, a few words about higher education in India. During the last two years we have been having a few reports by high power committees. The first one is the Report of the National Knowledge Commission established by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Dr. Pitroda. The commission suggested that the existing autonomous bodies like the UGC, AICTE Bar Council etc., may be abolished and an Independent Regulatory Authority as an apex body may be created.

The second one is the recent Yashpal Committee which also suggested the abolition of all the existing autonomous bodies and the creation of a Central Authority. The suggestion by all these bodies concern mainly the top regulating bodies and in some cases the funding authority. There are three units involved in Higher Education.

1. The Colleges
2. The Universities
3. The Central Autonomous Organizations.

## II

**Higher Education really takes place only in the Colleges and Universities and major reforms must be made at the level of the colleges and at the level of the universities.**

**The most important step needed is the appointment of the right kind of people at different levels of decision making. In a country like India an institution is just as big as its head of the institution. There is no institution so constituted that it can perform well and discharge its responsibility if the head of the institution is unequal to the task. In my opinion the very first task that central and**

the state governments should address themselves. Is there own approach to the choice of persons for important positions. The past record leaves much to be desired.

### **III**

The greatest weakness of Indian Higher Education is the concentration of degree programmes including Postgraduate programmes in 20000 odd affiliated colleges which are understaffed, poorly equipped and inefficiently managed to say the least. Therefore what is needed is a national programme to improve the colleges at least to meet the requirements of UGC if not the NAAC, grant autonomy and ensure that there are professorial positions at least in Postgraduate colleges.

### **IV**

Secondly Higher Education all over the world takes place in universities. India must have as pointed out by the National Knowledge Commission at least 1500 universities by 2015 and 2000 by 2020. There are three ways by which this could be accomplished:

- 1. The Government must establish more universities at the centre and state level.**
- 2. Private providers must be allowed to establish universities subject to well defined conditions.**
- 3. Some of the extremely well equipped colleges must be upgraded as universities.**

## V

Thirdly the autonomous bodies at the centre may be examine or may be reviewed critically and reformed as may be needed. The National Education Policy (1985) as recommended the establishment of a National Board of Higher Education as a coordinating body for all these autonomous bodies. That is quite practical and purposeful. Bodies like the AICTE, UGC, MCI, NCERT, Bar Council etc., established some in the 40's, some in the 50's and some in the 80's cannot be so easily wiped out of existence and new body brought in place so easily. Also there might have been national consultation for the Yashpal Committee Report. But the report itself requires a national review. It is quite unimaginable that the government have announced a report of such far reaching nature would be implemented in 100 days. It is obvious country like ours such a thing will not cannot happen.

## VI

With these few observations, I once again thank the vice chancellor Mannar Jawahar, the Registrar and Dr. Samuel Knight who made all the arrangements for this function and for the preparation of the report and all the members of the faculty for their generous gesture and all of you for the kind participation.