

Eleventh Annual Convocation

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Convocation Address



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Dr. R. S. Paroda

Former Secretary (DARE) &
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Anand Agricultural University
Anand 388110

CONVOCATION ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF GUEST

Padma Bhushan Dr. R. S. Paroda

Former Secretary, DARE & Director General, ICAR

Chairman, Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences

Hon'ble Governorshri of Gujarat and the Chancellor of Anand Agricultural University, Shri O. P. Kohli; Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture, Cooperation and Animal Husbandry, Government of Gujarat, Shri Babubhai Bokhiria, Dr. N. C. Patel, Vice Chancellor, Anand Agricultural University, Anand; Vice Chancellors of other Agricultural Universities of Gujarat; Members of Board of Management and Academic Council; Deans of various faculties, learned faculty members, distinguished guests, dear students, representatives of the press and media, ladies and gentlemen.

I feel highly privileged to be here on the occasion of eleventh convocation of the Anand Agricultural University. It is also an opportunity for me to pay rich tributes to this great land of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Shri K. M. Munshi and many such luminaries. At the very outset, I congratulate the students who have successfully completed their studies and would be receiving the degrees and awards today. I also compliment the faculty members who have imparted a high quality education to these graduates and post graduates.

Gujarat is agriculturally an important State where several

major crops such as rice, wheat, pearl millet, maize, pigeonpea, chickpea, groundnut, castor, cotton, cumin and tobacco are grown in addition to several horticultural crops. Animal husbandry and dairying also play a vital role in the rural economy of Gujarat. The State has also emerged as a leading producer of marine fisheries in the country. Over the last decade, the agricultural growth in Gujarat had been phenomenal and the major credit for it goes to SAUs, besides very enterprising farmers and the enabling policies of the Government.

The Anand Agricultural University since its inception has made valuable contributions and I wish that this growth is accelerated further. Keeping in view the concerns of poverty, food and nutrition security, sustainability, profitability, environmental protection, natural resource degradation, climate change, World Trade Organization (WTO) regime etc., we need to revisit our agricultural research for development (aR&D) agenda as well as educational programs in order to make them relevant to current needs.

Agriculture as a profession is quite complex. On one hand, production is mainly dependent on natural resources such as soil, water, environment, climate etc., besides inputs from industry, whereas on the other, dependent on variable marketing and trade system where the farmer has no control on price fixation, unlike in case of industry. Also, to reach 110

million farm families, spread over more than six lakhs villages is an up-hill task. The agro-ecological diversity in our country further adds to this challenge. Farmer's needs are much more diversified and the knowledge required by them calls for improving drastically the existing extension system, which has invariably become weak. In fact, we now need trained youth in agriculture to work as technology agents, equipped well with the best knowledge and means to serve the smallholder farmers effectively.

Dear Graduates

In the present times, you have ample opportunity to either become young entrepreneur, progressive farmer or technology agent to provide either knowledge or quality inputs, which farmers need badly. In the present era of specialization and modern science, it is necessary that agricultural education is restructured in a manner that you all are adequately equipped both in terms of knowledge and skills. Several initiatives taken during my tenure as Director General, ICAR, such as rural awareness work experience (RAWEX), creation of Centers of Excellence under National Agriculture Technology Project (NATP), sabbatical leave program, fellowship exchange program and increased emphasis on human resource development (HRD) by sending our bright scientists abroad were all aimed to enable our universities

to strengthen their educational activities. In fact, we now need world class graduates, with enough practical knowledge around different vocational activities, so that you become entrepreneurs and take role of job providers rather than job seekers while serving the farming community. We also need to link science with society, as was recently acclaimed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi while addressing the Indian Science Congress in Mumbai on 3rd January, 2015. He further emphasized that we need both science and technology that are relevant to our needs and we must have romance with science. Thus, we need scientific approach and innovations that can lead to resilience in agriculture. We also need a paradigm shift from monsoon dependent to science dependent agriculture in a farming systems' mode.

By the year 2030, we would need 70 per cent more food to meet our demands of ever growing population. It is when we are supposed to become the most populous country in the world, surpassing China. Despite decline in our population growth rate from 2.6 per cent when we became independent to now around 1.5 per cent, we still add one Australia to our population every year. Also, we have the concern of poverty which is around 30 per cent and that of acute malnutrition. Every three out of five children below the age of 5 years are severely malnourished. Despite significant increase in the production of food grains (263

m tons), with a buffer stock of more than 50 m tons, people below poverty line have no economic access to this food. Hence, our major national challenge is to bridge the gap between 'Haves and Have Nots', for which a Food Security Bill was passed last year by the Parliament. Indeed, implementation of Food Bill would require major efforts and commitment at all levels, which seem to be not happening. On the contrary, the prices of inputs and those of the food items are increasing thus making the access to food even more difficult. Hence, we need to promote innovations that help in reducing the production cost, increased yields and resilience. This, indeed, is a gigantic task which you will have to face and resolve. Remember, we have met such challenges in the past when we were considered "Bagging Bowl" in mid-sixties as that time we neither had the technology, nor the resources. Thanks to the "Green and White Revolutions" we could raise our heads high before the rest of the world. The situation today is rather more optimistic as we can take recourse to number of innovations, efficient farming skills, better infrastructure and increased capacity of agricultural institutions. In order to ensure food and nutrition security on a sustainable basis, we will have to follow technology-led path, wherein application of modern science such as biotechnology, nanotechnology, information technology, post-harvest technology, food processing and value addition, market economics; etc. would lead to prosperity

through agriculture.

One of the key concerns today is to produce more with lesser inputs and ensure sustainability of existing production systems. The declining trend in productivity in many agroclimatic zones is a matter of serious concern. To reverse factor productivity decline, we essentially need to develop good agricultural practices (GAP) around integrated crop management consisting of improved seeds, balanced use of nutrients, efficient water management, small farm mechanisation, integrated pest management, etc. We now need resilience which is possible only through outscaling of innovations in agriculture and improving our natural resources, especially the soil. Our soils are deficient in N, P, K, micro-nutrients and organic matter content. Fortunately, 2015 has been declared by the UN as an 'International Year of Soil'. Our efforts should, therefore, be to improve health of soils by adopting sustainable agricultural practices. In this context, the State of Gujarat has shown the way to the rest of the country by ensuring sustained higher growth in agricultural production.

On one side, the yields have considerably improved, while on the other the enhanced production has led to the surpluses resulting in marketing difficulties and fall in prices. Hence, we need to ensure integrated market oriented development (IMOD) and see that farmers are linked to markets. This is an area where

trained youth in agriculture can help in eliminating the role of middle men and avoid distress sale by poor farmers. This will be a 'win-win' situation for all. To ensure this to happen, we would require reforms in our marketing system, including revision of agricultural produce market committee (APMC) Act, and the reorientation of export-import (EXIM) policy to capitalize on emerging opportunities due to globalization of agriculture.

It is quite encouraging that agriculture has been accorded high priority by the Central Government, and major schemes like Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Technology Mission on Oil Palm (TMOP), Livestock Mission, National Project on Management of Soil Health and Fertility, Integrated Farming Systems' Project, Seed Mission, etc. have been initiated. What we need now is to focus more on **“secondary agriculture”** and **“specialty agriculture”**. The precision farming, efficient and timely harvesting, on-farm post-harvest handling, value addition, fast and safe movement of commodities, better storage, quick processing and distribution are the real segments that would need attention of youth. This also calls for farmer centric policies achieving a target of 4 per cent agricultural growth.

As said earlier, globalization being a reality opens up new

opportunities to our farmers. To capitalize on this, we shall have to make our production system more efficient and competitive. We need to position our farmers to take advantage of the new markets available overseas. For this, our products would need to meet quality standards and be globally competitive. To facilitate this, our agricultural universities will have to impart knowledge on various aspects of international trade and marketing, business management, food processing, food safety, biosafety regulations, intellectual property rights (IPRs), etc.

Dear Faculty Members,

Anand Agricultural University has many distinctions to its credit. It has over the years played an important role in meeting successfully the expectations of stakeholders. The technologies developed here have propelled growth of agriculture in the State. I was pleased to see some very exciting initiatives this morning in the disciplines of Food Processing Technology, Bioenergy, Biotechnology and Agricultural Information Technology. Several new diploma and vocational courses introduced here in the recent past are a welcome step. I congratulate the university for developing new high yielding varieties, ecofriendly cost effective liquid biofertilizer, NABL accreditation of Pesticide Residue Laboratory, molecular characterization of different breeds of cattle and buffalo, developing seed village program etc. I wish

this phenomenal growth is sustained and moves with much faster pace. Let me congratulate Dr. Patel and the entire faculty for these significant achievements.

I am sure you would agree that there is an urgency to nurture well the state agricultural universities to meet the emerging challenges, many of which are striking at our doors. We all have to work now towards attaining the much needed 'Evergreen Revolution'. At the same time, it is evident that some complacency has crept in since 'Green Revolution'. We obviously need to address this concern. We also know that 'business as usual' will not work. We shall have to think 'out of box' and bring in much needed 'change' which otherwise is difficult. Our investments in aR&D has to be doubled immediately if not tripled, as otherwise advocated in the global conferences (GCARD I and GCARD II). Also, our emphasis should now be more on impact and monitoring. We need now more accountability in the system. At the same time, we need to be more innovative and forward looking. No one will disagree that autonomy of SAUs be respected and ensured in true sense. Somehow, in practice it is not happening. We must collectively decide as to what strategy we should have as a "Way Forward".

We must also take new foresight initiatives, reorient our aR&D agenda to make it more farmer centric, bring in needed 'change' in M&E system, build inter-institutional partnerships

and lay greater thrust on human resource development. China currently spends around 25 per cent (US\$ 1 billion) of total allocations on HRD per annum compared to less than 5 per cent in India. Sending young scientists abroad for conferences/training/study visits be seen as an investment in the national interest rather than considering them as pleasure trips. Such a mind set in our bureaucratic management system must be changed immediately.

My dear Graduates,

Each one of us has some potential to serve the society. All out efforts are needed to realize this potential. Let us understand that career-oriented education fulfils only one part of our education. The other part includes character building, self development and above all service to the society. In the self building process, therefore, let us not forget our service role to the society. Also, an educated person must exhibit high moral character and willingness to help fellow-beings. I am sure you are aware that higher the education, greater be the humility and sense of responsibility. The intelligence being a gift of God, combining with inputs of hard work and dedication, individuals can spread happiness and prosperity around them. Hence, be diligent and have perseverance as well as patience. I can assure you that success will ultimately be yours in whatever you aim for. Accept failure as first step to success and never get disheartened.

Also, dream high, as stated by the former President of India, Dr Abdul Kalam, and work hard towards its realization in your life. These are the ideals that you must strive for at your work place, at your home or in any environment that you are in. You must take out time to read the autobiographies and works of great men like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Swami Vivekananda and others and try to emulate some of their great virtues in your life.

Today marks an important day and a significant milestone in your lives. By your hard work and dedication, you have successfully earned your degrees and awards. It is a moment of pride for you as much as it is for your teachers and parents. You can rejoice that your mission for higher learning began on this campus, yet remember that it is not the end. It is rather first step to make you feel confident to address many uncertainties and challenges that lie ahead in your life. Be confident to deal with successes and failures as new opportunities come in your journey ahead.

Learning is a continuous process. Our goal should always be to apply available knowledge for the upliftment of down trodden and betterment of society. All technological advancements we have today are the outcome of endeavours of scientists of earlier centuries. At no time, human being was beaten by the problems. People have strived in the past to

subjugate impossibility and then succeed. Therefore, if the challenges of eradication of poverty, health for all, education for all, and better livelihood for all are to be addressed successfully, our youth must rise to the occasion with full confidence.

I extend my heartiest congratulations to all the graduating students for receiving their well deserved degrees and awards. I also congratulate the teachers who had put in their best to impart knowledge to you. I am sure, the knowledge that you have gained would hold you in good stead and help you face the challenges that lie ahead in your life.

Finally, while wishing you all a great success, let me also remind you that the world is changing fast and along with it, we must change to make a difference.

Thank you.

JAI HIND