

FOURTH CONVOCAATION

ADDRESS

By

Mr. Justice M. N. Venkatachaliah
*Chairperson, National Commission
to Review the Working of the
Constitution*

NOVEMBER 09, 2001



JAMIA HAMDARD

(A deemed University)

Hamdard Nagar, New Delhi - 110062

JAMIA HAMDARD

(Hamdard University)
Hamdard Nagar, New Delhi

FOURTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION

November 09, 2001

ADDRESS

By

Justice M. N. Venkatachaliah

Esteemed Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Members of the Senate, Academic Council, Faculty, out-going graduates, ladies and gentlemen.

Jamia Hamdard University :

It is a privilege to be invited to address the Convocation of Jamia Hamdard University, a citadel of liberal spirit and modern learning, in its serene, sylvan, beautiful and scenic setting. The Jamia Hamdard and its institutions are a tribute to the far-sightedness of Hakeem Abdul Hameed Saheb. I am grateful to the Vice Chancellor Mr. Siraj Hussain for the honour of this invitation to me to join in this tribute to the founder.

“Education” said Aristotle is an ornament in prosperity and refuge in adversity”. I congratulate the graduates passing out of this great institution and wish them all prosperity. Their education be their ornament. A fitting tribute that they could pay to the memory of the great founder is to imbibe and practise, in their own lives, even in a small measure, the high ideals and dedication that marked the illustrious life of Hakeem Saheb.

The Founder: Hakeem Abdul Hameed Saheb:

Hakeem Saheb was just 14 years of age when the responsibility of the administration of the Unani Hospital established by his father Janab Hakeem Hafiz Abdul Majeed fell upon him.

Hakeem Saheb gave shape to and realized a great dream. From all accounts Hakeem Saheb was an extraordinary human-being. The range of his attainments and talents should have had his energies dispersed in many directions; and towards many causes. But the main stream of his steadfast life was his passion for the art and science of healing. To that calling he gave all he had: His erudition, his generosity, his compassionate, and his determination to make over the wealth of the Unani system of medicine, enriched by modern scientific methods and inspired by great Islamic values, in the service of the nation. Jamia Hamdard is a shining monument to the high purpose of Hakeem Saheb's life. Great many were the worldly occasions in which his honour, dignity and friendship gave their natural expression. In a world of the street-smart, there is a cynical saying: 'Do not say you have known a man until you have shared an inheritance with him!'. Another man, who shared an inheritance with him---his own younger brother Hakeem Mohammed Said, himself a gifted man of medicine---tells us with moist eyes of his unabated admiration for his elder brother's charity of heart, his wisdom, fortitude, piety and more than all, a disdain for personal possessions, the hall mark of great souls. Hakeem Saheb desired to set up institutions inspired by the high values of Islamic culture devoted to the service and enrichment of Indian Society. He envisioned the Unani system of medicine as a means of alleviation of human suffering. He personally treated almost 60 lacs of patients in his life time. He never asked for fees. He made over his entire achievements in life to a "Wakf", an ancient Islamic institution of charity. He personally retained nothing for his own exclusive benefit.

I might recall a passage from T. E. Shaw's translation of Homer's Odyssey that fits this great man: *"God will so crown what he says with a bloom of beauty that all who look on him are moved. When he holds forth in public it is with assurance, yet with so honey-sweet a modesty that it makes him shine out above the ruck of men who gaze at him"*

whenever he walks their city as if he was a God".¹
Hakeem Saheb became a legend in his own life time.

The world we live in : Great transformations in the “World-picture”:

The thoughts and action of men tend to be influenced by some sort of general ideas about nature of the world and man's place in it. This may be called the world picture. Such world picture, --- often a mixture of contemporary views and beliefs on science, religion and morality --- conditions both the scientific temper and religious culture of the times.

But the world we live in today is in a state of continuous transformation. The world is compressed by rapid growth of population, technological advancements and economic interdependence. Advances in Bio-genetic research, stem-cell research, genetic recombinant engineering, assisted reproductive technologies, surrogacy arrangements and a host of other breathtaking discoveries have unleashed forces of great change sweeping across the globe and over all institutions. Genetically modified food is an area of great excitement as well as concern. English wheat, we are told, took 1000 years to quadruple its yield per hectare. This was achieved in just 40 years in the recent decades. Population of the globe was said to be one billion in 1800. It took 130 years for the second billion, but just 11 years for the sixth. The unintended fall-out of the great many changes would indeed be perplexing. How does society grapple with these forces of change?

In an article '*A new map of the world*' Jeffrey Sachs spoke of today's world as '*divided not by ideology but by technology*'. He said "*With the end of the cold war, old ideological divisions are over. Virtually all nations proclaim allegiance to global markets. But a more intractable division is taking hold, this time based on technology. A small part of the globe, accounting for some 15% of the earth's*

1. Benjamin N. Cardozo by George S. Hellman.

population, provides nearly all of the world's technology innovations. A second part, involving perhaps half of the world's population, is able to adopt these technologies in production and consumption. The remaining part, covering around a third of the world's population, is technologically disconnected, neither innovating at home nor adopting foreign technologies".² In the Professor's new map of the world, the whole of north India is part of the technologically disconnected.

Stephen Hawking also stressed the role of technology and science. He said, "*The world has changed far more in the past 100 years than in any other century in history. The reason is not political or economic but technological -- technologies that flowed directly from advances in basic science*".³

Scientific Temper and Religious Faith: Ethic-neutrality of Science:

Science is generally associated with 'Mechanism' and religion with 'Teleology'. The discerning of a purpose in evolution was considered unscientific. This scientific temper militated against the religious concept of the world as a moral order and the declaration implicit in it that moral values were objective. Modern science postulated propositions which were inconsistent with moral values being objective. What effect these scientific discoveries had on religious faith? Do these physical truths, asks a scholar⁴, have any bearing at all on the problem of existence of God? How can they possibly provide any argument against it? Surely God can as well exist with the Earth going round the Sun as with the Sun going round the Earth! Or is the existence of God consistent with circles but not ellipses? Or can He not exist in a universe which follows Galileo's laws of motion and not one which follows Aristotle's. And yet, he asserts,

2. Jeffry Sachs - A New Map of the World - Economist.com - June 22nd 2000

3. "A Brief History of Relativity": Stephen Hawking Time: Special Issue "Persons of the Century: Albert Einstein" 31st December, 1999, p. 33.

4. W. T. Stace.

the scientific revolution did, actually and historically, profoundly under- mine faith in God. Rise of science was immediately followed by a great wave of religious skepticism. On the heels of the seventeenth century--modern mind is said to be the product of seventeenth century science-- 'came the most skeptical age of the modern world, the eighteenth century. This was the age in which an English king could complain that half of his bishops were atheists'.

Cressy Morrison⁵, former President of the New York Academy of Sciences says that;

“Suppose you put ten coins marked from one to ten in your pocket and give them a good shuffle. Now try to take them out in sequence from one to ten putting back the coin each time and shaking them all again. Mathematically we know that your chance of first drawing number one is one in ten; of drawing one and two in succession, one in 100; of drawing one, two and three in succession, one in thousand; and so on; your chance of drawing them all, from number one to number ten in succession, would reach the unbelievable figure of one chance in ten thousand million.

By the same reasoning so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance. The earth rotates on its axis at one thousand miles an hour, if it turned out at one hundred miles an hour; our days and nights would be ten times as long as now, and the hot sun would then burn up our vegetation during each long day while in the long night any surviving sprout would freeze.....”

“.....The slant of the earth, tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, gives us our seasons; if it had not been so tilted, vapours from the ocean would move north and south, piling up for us continents of ice. If our moon was say,

5. A. Gressy Morrison - Seven Reasons Why a Scientist Believes in God.

only 50 thousand miles away instead of its actual distance, our tides would be so enormous that twice a day all continents would be submerged; even the mountain would soon be eroded away. If the crust of the earth had been only ten feet thicker, there would be no oxygen, without which animal life must die. Had the ocean been a few feet deeper, carbondioxide and oxygen would have been absorbed and no vegetable life could exist. Or if our atmosphere had been thinner some of the meteors now burned in space by the million every day, would be striking all parts of the earth, starting fires everywhere.

Because of these, and a host of other examples, there is not one chance in million that life on our planet is an accident".

World today is knowledge-based and knowledge-driven. Excellence in education and research and development of technology alone can enable any country to survive in the present world of fierce competition. While scientific knowledge is essential and technology crucial, the world of materialism has an inevitable de-humanising influence on man. It can corrode man's inner culture. Such an influence can be counteracted or overcome or atleast put in perspective, by pursuit of a higher wisdom that provide a vision of that great unity that pervades and validates scientific truths, as well as mystic experience. This has been also the search of the scientist today, search for a "*Theory of Every Thing*" that unifies all branches of knowledge. This search is the synthesis of science and religion -- a search of which Stephen Hawking⁶ spoke. He said:

"We find ourselves in a bewildering world. We want to make sense of what we see around us and to ask: what is our place in it and where did it and we come from? Why is it the way it is?"

"However, if we do discover a complete theory, it

6. "A Brief History of Time" - Stephen Hawking.

should in time be understandable in broad principle by everyone, not just a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of the question of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason -- for then we would know the mind of God”.

Max Planck in his “New Science” made a profound statement as to the relative and tentative nature of scientific concepts:

“How can we say that scientific concept, to which we now ascribe an absolute character, may not at some future date show itself to have only a certain relative significance and to point to a farther absolute? To that question only one answer can be given. After all I have said, and in view of the experiences through which scientific progress has passed, we must admit that in no case can we rest assured that what is absolute in science today will remain absolute for all time”.

Humanism and Spirituality: Essential Unity of All Religions:

Dr. Bhagwan Das (Bharat Ratna) refers to these universalities in his work -- “Essential Unity of All Religions”. He says⁷;

“Religion is as necessary as science..... so long as human beings suffer from, and fear, pain and death, and look before and after, and think about such things, so long will human heart and head demand, and will not be denied, the solace that only religion can give. When anguish wrings the heart, then we overwhelmingly realise that it shall not profit a man anything if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul. If they are not given true and scientific religion by the philanthropic and the wise, then men will inevitably swallow false and superstitious religion”.

7. Essential Unity of All Religions by Dr. Bhagwan Das. Chapter-I, pages 64-65

Constitution, Pluralism and Ideals of Liberal Democracy:

It is this universal vision and the sanctity and validity of religious truths of all religions that the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution envisioned by extolling religious freedom and freedom of conscience for everyone to believe what he considers true, and the duty to honour and respect the composite culture of this ancient land where, from time immemorial, great caravans from distant lands arrived and settled together in a spirit of brotherhood and harmony. It is a mistake to think that democracy survives only if the composition of society is homogenous. A strong democracy, in the words of Benjamin Barber;

“.....rests on the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogenous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or their good nature. Strong democracy is constant with -- indeed it depends upon -- the politics of conflicts, the sociology of pluralism, and the separation of private and public realms of action”.

In this land, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and followers of many other faiths have lived for ages in harmony and peace. Islamic culture has made its splendid contribution to the enrichment of this composite culture.

A majoritarian democracy is no democracy at all. It is mere crude statistical view of democracy. It is only a participatory, representative and inclusive democracy that can take a pluralistic society farther and make it conflict free. Muslim community, as yet, has not had its legitimate and rightful representation in the legislatures and policy making bodies. For instance, the average percentage of its representation in the Lok Sabha since independence has been just 5.8%. In the present Lok Sabha it is 5.6%. At the time of the framing of the Constitution when the idea of reservation of seats for minorities was given up,

Jawahar Lal Nehru exhorted that it was an “act of faith above all for the majority community. They will have to show after this that they can behave with others in generous, fair and just way. Let us live up to that faith”. In one of the larger States, not long ago, the legislature did not have even one Muslim member. These inequities need to be removed. That apart, the base of opportunities for modern education for Muslims needs to be greatly expanded.

India : Developmental Issues : Achievements and Failures:

India at the time of independence, emerging out of a long period of foreign domination and social conflicts, developed visible and patent faultlines which were deep and strewn across the social fabric. The dominant divide covered a whole range of ethnic, linguistic, religious, class and caste differences so pronounced that it provided a nearly intractable ground for formulating an agenda for visualizing a democratic society with its legal, social and economic benefits accruing to all the participants. Some of the achievements in post-independence economic performance were indeed impressive. Between 1950-2000, the index of agricultural production increased from 46.2 to 176.8. Between 1960-2000, wheat production went up from 11 million tonnes to 75.6 million tonnes. During the same four decades rice production went up from 35 million tonnes to 89.5 million tonnes. The index of industrial production went up from 7.9 in 1950-51 to 154.7 in 1999-2000. Electricity generation went up from 5.1 billion KWH to 480.7 billion KWH in 1999-2000.

Life expectancy at birth of an Indian in 1900 was 22 years which is now 80 years for urban women in Kerala. But then there are serious regional disparities. If the urban woman chooses Madhya Pradesh instead of Kerala, she would instantly lose 23 years in life expectancy. While the rates of infant mortality in Kerala are comparable to the best in South Asia. -- it is said that a child born in Kerala today can expect to live longer at the one born in Washington -- the regional disparities are

very marked in some northern states. The figures are still embarrassingly high, worse than those of sub-Saharan Africa. Maternal mortality levels in India are 100 times more than found in the West. The per capita income also varies widely; in Punjab it is four times that of Orissa. But the most significant deficiency has been in the field of elementary education; particularly, the education of the girl child. Kerala has shown what the education of the girl child has meant to social development. The most important agenda today is the developing models of high social development in a low income situations.

The richest top 1/5th of the world command 86% of the world's income and wealth but the poorest 5th have just 1%. Even in India, the richest top quintile has 85% of nation's income and the lowest quintile just 1.6%. The inequities of the international income order are indicated by the fact that out of 3.47 lacs patents administered in 1998, 91% went to OECD countries which represent just 19% of the world's population. Out of 70 billion dollars spent on global Health Research in 1998, just about half per cent was devoted to tropical diseases. Out of some 1223 drugs were introduced between 1975-96, only 13 were relevant to the problems of developing countries.

The Way Ahead : Leadership of the Future:

The aspiration to build just and caring societies based on the values of composite culture has not yet been realized. It calls for great leadership and statesmanship to unite the country in the common bond of constitutional aspirations.

Qualities of good leadership demand a sensitive awareness of the early indicators of social unrest. Social conflicts result from poverty, inequality and inability to accept the values of pluralism, lack of democratic practices, criminalisation of politics, Human Rights violations, deterioration of public service, sharp and severe economic distress, uneven economic development, a legacy of vengeance seeking groups, etc., are indicators of break down of social equilibrium and the machinery of the

State. Social stress and fanatical leadership become a deadly combination. A charismatic but inflammatory leadership tends easily to become harsh and deprecatory of others. The value of enlightened selfless leadership in India cannot really be sufficiently emphasized.

In recent history, Europe has been a shining example of great leadership. Europe could achieve not only the unification of the two Germanys but also of the European states with their different cultures, languages and levels of economic development into a powerful Union. When Helmut Kohl, who was Chancellor of Germany for 16 years announced his retirement from public life, a political observer paid a glowing tribute that it was "as if the Alps have announced their departure".

Conclusion:

We of our generation seem to be denied the full blessings of liberty and fraternity. It should be our fervent hope that posterity will be blessed beyond us. Each one of us has to think deeply how we can contribute to the building of a great society which is just and caring.

In dysfunctional societies money has displaced our sense of spiritual connection as the foundation of our cultural values and relationships.

"Our universe" says Dunai Elgin in *"Awakening Earth"* "is deeply caring but intent upon giving us the precious freedom we need to develop our unique capacity for reflective self-determination.....After giving us the priceless gift of existence, the Meta-universe demonstrates its great compassion by not interfering in our choices, whether personal or planetary".

Thank you for your patience and courtesy.

J A M I A H A M D A R D

(A deemed University)

New Delhi-110062 India

website: www.jamiahamdard.edu

E-mail: inquiry@jamiahamdard.edu

Phones: (91)-11-608 9688, 608 4685, 608 8682 Extn. : 250

Fax : (91)-11-608 8874 *Tele Fax :* (91)-11-608 9686