

JAMIA HAMDARD

(Deemed University)

Hamdard Nagar, New Delhi

SIXTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION

February 7, 2004

ADDRESS

By

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Chancellor of Jamia Hamdard, Janab Saiyid Hamid, Vice-Chancellor, Janab Siraj Hussain, Janab Abdul Mueed, members of the Executive Council and Academic Council, faculty staff and students of this great institution, distinguished guests & educationists and friends:

At the outset, let me express my deep pleasure to visit Jamia Hamdard and to pay homage to late Hakeem Abdul Hameed Saheb whose vision, dedication and tireless striving made him one of the great institution builders of 20th century India. Not only he was a great hakeem, but he created numerous institutions, many of which have been amalgamated in this Jamia Hamdard which will stand as a permanent memorial to a truly great but genuinely humble man. In fact he was my neighbour. *Hamare hamsaya the. Bilkul hamare qareeb unka ghar tha aur har saal Holi milan aur Eid milan par ham mila karte the. Jab se mein Delhi aya, chaalis sal ho gaye unke saath hamara mutawatir talluq raha. Mein unhein khiraj-e-aqeedat pesh karna chahta hoon.* (In fact he was my neighbour. His residence was

very close to mine and we used to meet every year on the occasion of Holi and Eid milan. I have been in Delhi for the last forty years and during this period we were constantly in touch. I want to pay homage to him.)

I am very impressed by the way in which this Deemed University has grown, which is clear from the Vice Chancellor's report. A multi-faculty progressive institution with medicine, nursing, pharmacy, science, management and information technology. I am particularly happy that it has a strong Faculty of Islamic Studies and Social Sciences. It is my deep conviction that the re-discovery, re-articulation and re-formulation of the great truths of all the great religions of the world are essential in this global society. In my own way, I have been trying to do this in Hinduism. It is a subject of great interest to me, particularly as I come from a Muslim majority State. *'Mein to Musalmanon se kehta hoon ke Musalmanon ke dil ki dhadkan ki tarjumani mein hi kar sakta hoon kyonke mein apni riasat mein aqliat hoon.* (I say to the Muslims that I can alone feel the heartbeat of Muslims because I am a minority in my own state.)

India is a land of multiple religions. Four religions - Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism were born in India. Several religions - Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Bahai Faith came to us from West Asia, and over the centuries there has been a constant interaction between them, some positive, some negative, some constructive, some destructive. But what is very important, are Interfaith studies. The Interfaith movement is designed to bring together people from different religious persuasions in a harmonious dialogue, not in order to prove the superiority or inferiority of any religion but simply to get a better understanding of all the great religions of the world. In Kashmir in particular, the synthesis between the great Shaiva tradition epitomised by Yogini Lalleshwari and

the Sufi tradition by Sheikh Nooruddin Noorani resulting in the *rishi* cult which is one of the unique intellectual and spiritual formulations of the world. And minority educational institutions, I feel, have a special role to play in promoting inter-religious harmony and understanding.

Mr Chancellor, I was considering what I should choose as my theme for this address, and I decided that instead of giving advice to students, which they get in full measure anyhow, I would pose a series of questions regarding education in its broader sense. These questions are directed at the students and also at all those who are involved in the educational process. It is very clear that the human personality has many facets, many dimensions, and education in its broader sense should address all these various dimensions. In fact as we stand poised on the threshold of the global society, we must equip ourselves to meet the challenges ahead and we can only do that if the multiple dimensions of the human personality are fully developed.

My first question is: Has your education helped you to develop your physical strength? *Shareera Madhyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam*. Shastra says that the body is the basis of all dharma, of all achievements. We need young people with muscles of iron and nerves of steel. Physical strength is essential to build the new India. Has your education taught you this? Has it taught you good eating habits, not simply to eat junk food? Has it motivated you to avoid poisoning your bodies either through tobacco or alcohol or drugs. Listening to cricket commentaries itself will not develop your muscles. What you have to do is to take part actively, whether it is sports, whether it is yoga. Your physical development is extremely important, and it seems to me that this is the first element that all educational institutions must address, whether these are primary schools, colleges or universities. There should be a national physical fitness campaign in which all the university students, men and women must participate.

The second question: Has education developed your intellectual capacity? Not only to absorb the existing knowledge but to continue to learn throughout your life. Always remember, education is a life-long process. It starts in the womb. In fact, the old tradition that children can be influenced even in the womb of the mother is now being proved by science. So, all the way from womb to the tomb, the entire gamut of life is a learning experience, and therefore your minds must be sharp. Are your minds sharp? Do you ask questions? It's not really so important as to what you learn, but whether you develop the capacity to learn. Much of the physics and mathematics, geography and history that we learnt at school are out of date, but nonetheless, I have been able to imbibe a capacity to learn. Everyday I try to learn something new.

This capacity to learn, to have sharp questioning minds is very important, because knowledge is now doubling every five years. Therefore, you must have the capacity first of all to take cognisance of all that wealth of information and then to discriminate and choose among them those aspects to develop your knowledge, and then move on from there to wisdom. You have information, which is the first stage. You have knowledge from that which is the second stage, and then you have wisdom which hopefully will result from that knowledge. India was once, as you know, in the forefront of the world's intellectual development. The Islamic world also at one time, whether it was mathematics, whether it was medicine whether it was philosophy, was at the cutting edge of knowledge. We must regain that position. We have already done that to a considerable extent in the information technology sector. I am happy that Dr. Bhan has developed a new vaccine. This is what we need. We need creativity. We need people at the cutting edge of knowledge if we are really to keep up with the

world and play our leadership role there. So the first level is physical and the second level is the intellectual.

The third: Has your education helped to develop an emotional maturity? The emotions are totally neglected in our educational system. There is so much stress nowadays. More and more young people are falling prey to stress related problems, psychological and physical. Do you learn how to cope with stress? Are you taught at all how an emotional centring can help in dealing with problems of the emotions? Are you taught to sit quietly sometime and to contemplate, rather than all the time to get tied up in the rush of events. Are you able to deal with your emotional problems in a mature fashion? This is another element of education, very rarely addressed in our universities but one which cannot be overlooked because, as I said, the human personality is multi-dimensional.

Then have you developed an aesthetic sensibility? The capacity to perceive beauty in a flower, in the sunrise, in the full moon at night. One of the few distinctive features which set human beings apart from other species on this planet is a capacity to react to beauty, to respond to beauty, to create beauty. It involves art. It involves music. It involves creativity. You do not have to travel very far, you can just look up at night and look at the stars and be filled with wonder at the heavens and earths around us. When you look up and consider that there are billions of suns in the galaxy which we inhabit, there are billions of galaxies in the unending universe around us, is that not a matter of wonder and awe? Is the beauty of a flower not something unique? Are you taught that capacity at all, or do you merely skim across life brushing aside all the beauties that life has to show to you. That is the fourth dimension. The physical, the intellectual, the emotional, the aesthetic.

Then, have you absorbed socially desirable values of compassion, of helpfulness, of punctuality, of cleanliness, of teamwork, of coordination? Do you look upon your education simply as something that you are doing individually, or do you consider yourself part of the society in which you live? Do you realise that you have a debt to repay to the society that has given you this education? This is something which we neglect. Do we have the capacity for teamwork? India has never lacked in individual greatness. We have produced great philosophers, great scientists, great poets, great authors and great warriors. But what we have lacked is the capacity to disciplined teamwork to work together. I always say when you go to Germany and Japan, countries totally destroyed after the second world war, they are real *karmayogis*. They have rebuilt themselves and they are at the peak of their respective continents. Why is it that we in India cannot act together? Why is it that Indians do so well when they go out of India but within India we are unable to achieve perfection?

Where is the quest for excellence and where is the commitment not only to rights but to duties? I would like to pose a question to you. I will not embarrass you by asking you to raise your hands, but how many of you know that along with the Fundamental Rights there is a chapter on Fundamental Duties in the Constitution. I do not think that anybody has taught them. Everybody clamours for his rights, but what about your responsibilities? What about your duties? You cannot have the one without the other. I go from university to university. I never ask people to raise their hands because I do not want to embarrass my fellow academicians, but my hunch is that hardly 2 or 3 per cent of people even know that there is a chapter IVA on Fundamental Duties. There are 10 fundamental duties laid down in the Constitution. Do you learn about them? Or do you

only learn that in a democracy you have certain rights? Certainly you have rights, that is the glory of democracy. But never forget that no right can ultimately sustain itself unless there is a corresponding duty. That is where young people must realise that it is only by discipline and by team work, by compassion and helpfulness and the commitment to social responsibility and to fulfilling duties that you can really enjoy the rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution.

And, finally, the sixth dimension. Have you developed or identified your spiritual centre, perhaps the most important element in a human being? Allama Iqbal writes:

*Khudi ko kar buland itna ke har taqdeer se pahle
Khuda bande se khud puche bata teri raza kya hai*

Have you developed that *Khudi ki bulandi*? Are you aware of that? Have you developed *nek kirdar, nek pindar, nek guftar*? Or do you just skim across the surface of life without once diving deep to get that many splendoured light that shines within us. That light mentioned by all the great religions of the world. The Bible calls that the light that lighteth every man that comes into this world. The Sufis call it '*Noor-e-Ilahi*'. The Sikhs call it '*Ekonkar*'. The Hindus call it the light of the thousand suns. *Vedahametam purusham mahantam aditya varnam tamsah parastat.*

That light ultimately lies within us. And if we complete a whole educational system from pre-primary to Ph.D. and never once dive deeply within our own consciousness, we will have

missed a great opportunity. Whether you believe in rebirth or whether you believe in a single life, life is a unique opportunity for spiritual growth and development. And unless this aspect is brought to the fore, our lives remain incomplete.

Our outer achievements are very important, there is no doubt about it. But what about the inner? Will you leave the world a more integrated, better human being than you were when you came into it? Will you try and reflect in your lives the unattainable glory of the divine? That is a question I would like to ask. I have asked you whether your physical development and intellectual growth, emotional maturity, and aesthetic sensibilities are developed, whether your social commitment is there, and whether or not you have developed a spiritual centre? It is not enough for us simply to pursue unidimensional education.

Today, India is on the threshold of great things. It is tremendously important that we strengthen our civilisational links. It is tremendously important that the harmony between different religions, castes and faiths in this country is maintained, because if we were to accept the concept of the clash of civilisations then India itself could be gravely endangered. India is a standing symbol of the confluence of civilisations rather than the clash of civilisations. That is where I feel that the Hindu-Muslim relationship is tremendously important. That should be strengthened. Anything that weakens that, any act or any action that weakens these links is something that is going to weaken India.

Therefore, friends, Mr. Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and all those who are associated with Jamia Hamdard, while congratulating you and congratulating the degree holders and gold medal winners on this occasion, let me urge that the

young people here develop qualities of leadership, become real leaders in their own fields. Again in Allama Iqbal's words:

*Nigah buland sukhan dil nawaz jan pursoz
Yehi hai rakht-e-safar meer-e-caravan ke liye.*

(A vision of the future, speech that pleases the heart, a personality suffused with compassion. These are the only requirements for the leader of the caravan).

Meri dua hai ke Jamia Hamdard ke jo talib-e-ilm hain woh apne apne kshetron mein, apne fields main 'meer-e-caravan' banein. (I pray that the students of Jamia Hamdard may become leaders in their respective fields). *Bahut bahut shukriya.*

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