

03/11/2010

Convocation Address by Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, Smt. Meira Kumar at the Sixth Special Convocation of Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences, Rewa Road, Allahabad on 3 November 2010.

I am delighted to be amidst you at this beautiful University Campus of the Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences on the occasion of its Sixth Convocation Ceremony. Coincidentally, this prestigious Institute has also completed hundred years of its eventful existence this year. I extend my heartiest congratulations to all of you on the occasion. I express my gratitude to the distinguished Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, academic council and learned faculty members of this institute for conferring on me the honorary doctorate degree.

It is particularly gratifying to be here in this historic and holy city of Allahabad. The *Prayag* is not only the city of confluences of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati but also the seat of literature, poetry, culture, knowledge and learning. The city played an active role in our freedom struggle. It has given us many legendary national leaders. Today, Allahabad is a modern city and is contributing immensely to the industrial development of the country. But at the same time, it is geographically an agrarian region and the people here mainly depend upon agriculture and related activities for their livelihood.

Since its foundation in 1910 in this very city, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences has expanded at a remarkable pace during these illustrious one hundred years, it has come to occupy a place of pride for itself on the academic map of our country and particularly so, in the field of agriculture sciences, engineering and technological innovations. It was a dream of its founding fathers to establish a progressive and value-oriented education system based on science and technology, aimed at rooting out ignorance, illiteracy and detrimental social evils. Basically, they had the zeal to educate the village students, introduce improved agricultural methods and help the local farmers in solving their day to day agriculture-related problems. This Institute has made valuable contributions to socio-economic upliftment of the poor and downtrodden by understanding cultivators' plights and thereby, making path-breaking innovations in the field of agriculture. The contributions of learned faculty members to the remarkable achievement of this institute has been immensely appreciating.

When we talk of prosperity and development, can we ignore or overlook agriculture? No, we cannot, because, as it is said that it is in the agricultural sector only that the battle for long-term economic development will be won or lost.

Soon after independence in 1947, our first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had emphasized upon the fact that everything else can wait but not agriculture. He had said this in the context of prevailing famine conditions and the acute food scarcity in the country at that point of time. His words hold true even today, particularly in the face of burgeoning population and increasing food demand.

More than 70 per cent of our population lives in our villages and more than 50 per cent of the total work force are directly dependent on agriculture. India also has one of the highest proportions of arable land to total land area — almost 194 million hectares are irrigated,

making ours one of the largest irrigated land masses. There are different agro-climatic zones suitable for all-year cultivation of many crops. Sixty per cent of India's household consumption expenditure comes from rural India, and approximately, 10.2 per cent of the nation's exports also are attributed to rural India. These statistics reveal a very interesting scenario. We have arable land, irrigated land, agricultural knowledge and yet 60 per cent of our working population contributes just 19 per cent to the growth process. In reality, the picture is not very encouraging. 80 per cent of our poor live in rural areas. It is pretty clear that we have a problem of agricultural productivity, natural resource management and non-availability of new agro-technology to the farmers. This is a well known fact that agriculture is the lifeline of rural India but it has not been given due attention. Consequently, it could not contribute to the GDP in its optimal capacity.

You are students of agricultural science and technology. You must be aware of the fact that agriculture in India is primarily dependent on the rains. If it rains well, crops are good and lack of rain leads to drought and thereby, to famine. To the opposite, heavy rains lead to floods which damage the crops. We in India are destined to face this. You might perhaps be aware that there were no rains for two-three years during 1966-67 and it caused severe drought, a state of famine and starvation. Even the cattle and birds, not men alone, craved for a drop of water. Consequently, the country was compelled to import foodgrains from America under PL-480 scheme. And it was during those challenging times of a national crisis, my father Late Babu Jagjivan Ramji took over as Minister for Food, Agriculture and Irrigation.

Taking stock of the gravity of the situation, he immediately summoned an emergent meeting of the top agricultural experts and urged upon them to take war footing measures for intensive agro-research and to propagate appropriate new agro-technology aimed at development of farming and increased production. As a result of his efforts, the ideas and devices like, testing of soil-quality and the use of suitable fertilizers, preparation of low-cost compost and manure from newly invented bio-gas plants, use of electricity for irrigation, seed-processing and extensive use of the high-yield wheat seeds like *Sharbati*, *Sonora* and *Sonali* which were prepared through hybridization of *desi* and Mexican wheat seed as suggested by Dr. Borlog, augmentation of small irrigation devices like tube well, *Rehat* mini checkdams etc. instead of bigger ones for accelerated growth of farming, and incentives to multi-crop farming and production of coarse grain like, *Jwar*, *Bajra* and Maize for the use of common people, were emphasized upon and promoted. 'Central Arid Zone Research Institute' was established to convert barren land into cultivable land and to do research work for growing unirrigated crops so that the cultivation area could be increased. Low cost small tractors, new ploughs and new agricultural implements for cutting, thrashing and separation of grain from husk were developed. At the same time 'Inland Fisheries Research Institute' was set up for development of fisheries in ponds, tanks and rivers in rural areas for the livelihood of poor fishermen of interior areas of the country. Provision was also made to provide remunerative prices to farmers for their produce in Govt. procurement by protecting them from exploitation of middlemen and arrangements were made for the marketing of their produce providing food processing facility for the same. Krishi Vigyan Kendras were set up in each district of the country to take new agricultural technology to the farmers. Appointments of Agriculture Development and Extension officers at block level were made and telecasting/broadcasting of programmes such as 'Krishi-Darshan' were started on Doordarshan and All India Radio.

Thus, herculean efforts made for agricultural development resulted in green revolution. Our country not only became self-reliant in regard to the foodgrains but it was also able to export it and create large buffer stock of foodgrains.

On the occasion of centenary celebrations of Babuji, Hon'ble President, Shrimati Pratibha Devisingh Patil said, **'As Food and Agriculture Minister, Babu Jagjivan Ram pulled the country out of a severe drought. The country heralded the Green Revolution under his able leadership and as a result, India for the first time became self-sufficient in food. Babuji helped reshape agricultural priorities and revamp the agricultural research management system in a manner that there was synergy between scientists' expertise and farmers' experience. We now need a Second Green Revolution that will enhance our agricultural productivity and make India an agrarian superpower. I would urge all policy makers, scientists and farmers to work towards this objective.'**

Hon'ble Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh had said while speaking on the same occasion, "It was during Babuji's tenure as the Agriculture Minister that the country achieved self sufficiency in foodgrains. Agriculture sector is heavily indebted to Babuji for his immense contribution which is a matter of renewed concern and renewed attention today."

Ladies and gentlemen, Babuji gave the credit of these achievements primarily to the Indian farmers, agricultural scientists, the administration and the agricultural workers. He had said, **'The contribution made by the agricultural scientists deserve special mention in this respect. The efforts they have been putting in and the original and fundamental research that they are carrying on for evolving high yielding varieties of seeds, which increase production several fold, is one which has been primarily responsible for this agricultural breakthrough. They deserve all encouragement, all appreciation.'**

In addition to revolutionary increase in the production of foodgrains, he stressed to provide additional opportunities for employment for small, marginal and landless farmers and agricultural workers so that their purchasing power may increase and they may not have to suffer for want of food. Today, the nation is self dependent in terms of foodgrains but all of you would agree that there is an imperative need to double the production of grains for our continuously growing population.

All our agricultural scientists and technologists have to work in the direction of doubling the productivity of the arable land. Without irrigation, even with high yielding varieties of seeds and fertilizers, we cannot produce the desired results. The type of technology needed for good productivity of foodgrains is the plant bio-technology. This technology has tremendous potentials to enhance agriculture yield by using the seeds that are automatically resistant to pests and other abiotic stress such as drought and salinity. We have to pay immediate attention to animal husbandry, poultry, agro processing, fisheries and other related activities like growing medicinal plants, coconut crops and so on to get the solution to all our problems in addition to agriculture. Besides, I feel there is a need for networking research. Towards achieving effective and multi-dimensional success, there has to be a link among different development partners, the users, the implementers and the experts of new agricultural technology.

Despite the basic facilities like high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, mechanical equipment and irrigation, etc., if no steps are taken for the betterment of landless farmers and agricultural workers, how their interest in agriculture will increase and how our dream to double agricultural production will be realized? So, I think that those who toil in the fields should be given adequate

wages and they should also be given due share of profit earned from enhanced produce to improve their economic status so that they may take keen interest in increasing agriculture production. Agricultural labourer is the real farmer. With their hard work, we are able to grow crops but they do not have lands. 'Land to the tillers' this revolutionary target should not fade away. This should be achieved honestly. We should continue to make honest efforts to achieve it.

Before concluding, I would again like to mention that learning is a continuous process and that the learning process must be a harmonious blend of academic excellence and human development. Do not restrict it to the portals of your University. In fact, the real learning begins as you go out into the world. You will discover many things and know the world from a close quarter. You will realize that the life has many more dimensions than what you had thought of. Combine your knowledge with professional experience to face successfully the challenges that lie ahead. I wish you a happy future and glorious life.

I thank the University management for giving me this opportunity to be with you on this occasion, share my views and interact with our promising agricultural experts.

Thank you.