

**Address by Shri Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Speaker, Lok Sabha on the occasion of the 8th Convocation
of the NAMS on January 03, 1971**

Mr. President, distinguished Executive Director, Fellows and Members of the Academy and distinguished guests :

I deem it an honour to be called upon to participate in the 8th Convocation of the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences. When I was asked to address this august gathering, I was hesitant to accept. I was busy with the Conference of the Commonwealth Speakers and the time given to me was too short to enable me to acquaint myself with the affairs of the Academy. More than that, I felt a little embarrassed to address a gathering of specialists and eminent medical men who are authorities on their subject. Truly speaking, I have had, unlike some of my colleagues, little or no opportunity to mix with them. Nature has blessed me with good health and vigour and I hardly felt any need to meet any of them. But when my friend, Dr. Wig asked me I could simply not refuse him and I find myself today amidst you. Whatever I say therefore is what I feel as a layman.

Let me at the beginning offer my felicitations to the Fellows and Members who have been recently admitted to the Academy. I should think that to them admission does not merely imply recognition and honour but it enjoins on them a more than ordinary responsibility. It is on their conduct hereafter and their dedication and contribution to medical science that the reputation of the Academy will grow. I am sure that they will live up to the expectation and establish traditions worthy of the nation's pride.

I was looking up to see whether the Academy has any prominent motto which can sum up its aim and object. Ours is an ancient country. No country in the whole world gave recognition to knowledge and pursuit of knowledge to such an extent as ours. We have deified knowledge in the form of a goddess. Take any field of human activity – our forefathers devoted all their life to unearth knowledge on the subject, guided as they were by a singleness of purpose. The country hallowed them as sages. To us the field of activity was not material but we respected their attainments. Every branch of knowledge had its own patron-saint. I would like every one who is a fellow of this Academy to be fired with the same single-minded devotion to the task he had undertaken and the field of pursuit he had earmarked for himself. In a way doctors and men of medicine are sages. The medical profession is the noblest of all the professions. Our sages pursued knowledge for the purpose of assuaging mental and spiritual suffering. They desired to bring about peace and tranquility to the soul. Budha by his precepts tried to remove spiritual sufferings of men. But it was Asoka who went further. He attached as much importance to the bodily ailments as to the suffering of the spirit. He gave priority to the opening of hospitals not only for human beings but also for animals. By removing the ailments and ills of the body, the spirit and mind become equally well.

The medical profession naturally expects from the practitioners a higher standard of both mental and bodily well-being. It calls upon its votaries to show a special aptitude. Their attitude towards life has to be different from others. They have to condition their whole life pattern for the purpose of service at the cost of even personal comforts. As a nascent institution, naturally, the Academy should have kept a very high standard for its members. I was glad to know that your Academy prescribes a very high standard for admission as Fellows into it.

From the Annual Report of the Executive Director and the address of your President, I gather that you have been able to make a considerable progress within the short span of eight years in the fulfillment of your objectives. I wish that your Academy will continue to make greater strides towards fulfillment of your twin objectives of promotion of scientific knowledge and its application to human needs.

Mere pursuit of knowledge has no relevance to modern conditions unless it is related to social purpose. Of course, pure knowledge has its own charm but unless that knowledge is translated into practical utility it loses its import. We have institutes established purely for the purpose of research into different fields of human ailments. But I would suggest that your Academy should give greater emphasis to applied research and the application of known knowledge in the present state of our development. It should serve the purpose of translating the results of researches into benefits to the ordinary man. In translating such results you have to bear in mind the need of India for cheaper medical aid to be spread over not merely in the urban areas but to the vast rural areas dominated by superstitious and illiterate masses.

It is not for me to tell you the various ways in which the Academy could serve the country. It is actually for the experts and has to be conditioned by the funds available to it. But I would like to lay stress on the fact that if the purpose is good, funds usually become available.

Before I conclude I would like to refer to one of our national problems in which field medical practitioners could do a lot. I mean the explosion of population. On the one hand, the welfare schemes embarked upon by the Government resulted in eradicating many of the diseases which were a national menace during the early twentieth and late nineteenth centuries. The mortality rate has fallen to make much stride in controlling the rise of population. Of course the problem is as much a social one as it is medical. But I feel that there is greater realization today not only among educated men but also among our illiterate villagers of the need for birth control. Our slogan should be : *"Produce more food but less children"*. The members of the medical profession whether in private practice or in service in the hospitals should take advantage of the new realization of the economic advantage of birth control. They are in a unique position not only to give advice but also encourage birth control and family planning.

Fellows and Members of the Academy, you are senior and experienced teachers. You could and should try to infuse the younger generation with ideas of social awareness and national duty. I would conclude this with a few words of Dr. Radhakrishnan :

"Man is essentially a maker. He is not content with merely repeating the past. He knows that every morning brings a new day and every pulse-beat a new life".

Let me wish that every day will see you more and more engaged in the pursuit of knowledge and creative thinking. Let your heart throb with a sense of dedication and service for the good of the country.

I thank the authorities of the Academy for giving me this opportunity to address you.