

**Convocation Address by Shri M. Hidayatullah, Vice-President of India on the occasion of 18<sup>th</sup>  
Annual Conference of NAMS on March 22, 1980, New Delhi**

President Dr. Anand, Fellows and Members of the National Academy of Medical Sciences, Ladies and Gentlemen :

I am very grateful to you and feel honoured to have been invited to be the Chief Guest at the 18<sup>th</sup> Convocation of the National Academy of Medical Sciences and to inaugurate certain Fellows and Members.

It is a unique occasion for the prize winners and awardees and I congratulate them whole-heartedly on their achievement. I must say that I owe an apology to you, Mr. President, for having put you out twice for this Convocation – firstly, I had to request you to shift the time of the Convocation from 4 p.m. to 11.00 a.m. as I have to preside over the Lecture by Lord F. Broackway in the afternoon today; secondly before I could come for your function, I had to be present at the Command Investiture Ceremony at the Rasthtrapati Bhavan this morning, as a result of which I was late by half an hour, for which again you have my sincere apology. It is due to the fact that I do not have much free time of my own and have to attend certain things which are obligatory.

I am very glad, indeed, that the National Academy of Medical Sciences over the space of 18 years has made such a great headway. I must say I was a little puzzled when I received an invitation, because in this very Hall, I attended the Convocation of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences a few days back. I, therefore, read through all the literature that you sent me to find out where this Academy fits in and after making full research in this behalf and learnt that after electing 100 Founder Fellows you have been electing more Fellows whose number reached the figure of 317 in recent years. With the addition of 50 newly elected, I find that the Fellowship now stands at 367. Well, it seems quite an achievement, because the Academy has been able to honour so many persons. Its functions correspond to the functions of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons. The Academy can legitimately take pride in having established an institution equal to any in Britain or Edinburgh, and that our Fellowships and Memberships of the Academy are now being recognized all over the world.

As announced by the President in his introductory lecture, I have been invited to say a few words of advice. I am very sorry that I have not prepared any written speech. So I will go on with whatever I can say impromptu on this occasion. You must forgive me if it may be a little discursive and lacking in depth, although, I feel I am consuming much more time than I should. As far as advice is concerned, I think a doctor or a professional, who has practiced in the field of Medicine and Surgery for quite some time and has then obtained Fellowship/Membership of the Academy, must be knowing his or her duties towards the patients, towards himself/herself, and towards the country. The trouble is that our country is not yet fully mature to receive such eminent doctors, partly because of poverty of the people and partly because of the facilities which they seem to lack. It is alright in a hospital, or inside an Academy like this, or an institution of the standing of All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, to provide all the necessary assistance and facilities to the sick, but outside in the country, it is very difficult for you to provide all such facilities to the common man. These are the practical difficulties faced during every day of our life. I am again repeating the pessimistic picture which I painted at the time of the Convocation of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences. The two main troubles in our country are (1) the high cost of treatment because of the fees of the doctors, and (2) the cost of drugs involved in the treatment. It has been said by a wit that it is surprising that for the same disease the doctor cures a poor patient sooner than a rich patient. That is because more fees are involved in the latter case. It is also said that the potency of the drug is in its price. When the patient knows the price his urge to get well is stronger because he knows that the next doses will cost as much as the first dose. Therefore, it is the cost of treatment as a whole which is the deciding factor in our life. Many of us cannot afford to go in for costly drugs to cure ourselves. Therefore, we have to submit ourselves to our fate. I would, therefore, implore

the doctors, Fellows and Members of the Academy, to be a little generous towards the poorer sections of our community.

After a long time – 25 years to be exact – I entered the profession of Law and found that many of my clients could not afford to pay my fees and to such of them I gave my legal advice free.

Quite often, we just follow the directions of the doctors. I am reminded of a writer who in her book *“Doctors and Dietician”* describes how she consulted experts – she was over-weight. When she went to a doctor, the doctor was asked what was necessary for her diet and he gave her a list saying that those were the things she should take and those were the things which she should not. They were fats, carbohydrates, minerals etc. All the things prescribed for her she found were present in chocolate eclairs, which she very much relished and she kept on taking chocolate éclairs only. She continued to put on weight but could not understand why. So you see how a doctor’s advice is something wrongly understood.

I do not wish to hold you any longer and wish to conclude my address by again extending my congratulations to the recipients of Membership and Fellowship this morning from the President of the Academy.

Thank you.