



Speech Transcript of Dr. G.N.RAO At OSMECON-2022

“Dr. Shashikala Reddy, Dr. Pari Plavi, students, Guests, Faculty, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm glad to be back here in OSMECON after about 7-8 years. One thing that excites me when I see this event is the continuing interest from Osmania Medical College in promoting research and innovation. Another aspect that is close to my heart and close to what we do at LV Prasad, is also promoting art, a confluence of art and science.

The entire world is shaken up, a small invisible virus has demonstrated how powerful it is. We were left clueless and we are still scrambling. Why did that happen? We all think we are very powerful. We all think we have made great scientific discoveries. We all think we have made great technology. inventions. But yet when this catastrophe happened, we were completely left unprepared. That is because of one glaring deficiency. Lack of preparedness for a public health crisis. More so in countries like ours, public health is grossly neglected. We think only clinical medicine takes priority. That is why we have paid a huge price during the past 3 years. We just did not have the infrastructure, the human resources and the system to tackle such problems. All the glorious discoveries made in the area of medical research could not help us. Coming out of this darkness was available at last, the speed with which vaccines were developed, the speed with which countries began to work distributing these vaccines, and the speed with which drugs have been developed to treat this problem. All this happened because of a huge interest in medical research.

Take the example of the American Government, as soon as the problem began to appear, they allocated billions of dollars for the development of vaccines and drugs and supported the pharmaceutical corporations to work at a very fast pace. The result is what we hear, to a large degree we could contain this devastating problem. Quite often in our medical education, we are exposed to what is happening around us. If you pause and think about it, we live in a very difficult world. The challenges of climate change, emerging crises, human stupidity, and wars that we fight with each other, are unnecessary. All this led to a crisis that most of you know about.

Today out of the 7 billion people in the world, 1.82 billion are in chronic starvation. This number is increasing. If you put all of this together, we have a huge public crisis. This also demonstrates to a large extent, the failure of our generation and the challenges for the next generation. It's I'm your generation that has to find solutions to all these mammoth problems and that requires a mindset, a mindset of innovation, of taking the fruits of research to everybody. While research and innovation are products of excellence, making the fruits of that available to everybody on the globe is the equity of that. We live in a very inequitable world. In India, perhaps only 10-20% of us get the best benefits of all the latest gadgets, and 70-80% are deprived of the benefits. As we move forward to be good medical professionals, we cannot discriminate, We are in this profession to take care of the suffering of every human being, irrespective of their colour, caste, religion, region, background, rich or poor, it should not matter to us.

Our human body functions the same way. All human conditions affect everybody in the same way as is proven by COVID-19. It has become the biggest equalizer in the past 3 years. The very wealthy were not spared, the very poor were not spared, and everybody was affected the same way. So that's a big lesson for all of us. If some of us think we can live in ivory towns, escaping all this, go with assurance that this is not true. Everybody has the same degree of exposure to it so whenever we fight challenges it has to be cumulative, with the combined efforts of everybody.

I'm delighted that the medical students sitting here today are thinking of research. I will tell you a story of my own experience. I was a medical student at Guntur Medical College in the '60s and I had no exposure to research at all during that time. But one event, just one event, turned that switch on in me to pursue research. A very renowned medical man of our country, proudly of our previous generations, Dr Ramalinga Swamy, originally from a small town in Srikakulam district was the Former Director of All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, Renowned Nutrition Pathologist, then a Professor at Harvard School, and ultimately an adviser to the United Nations Secretary. He came to our Medical College and delivered a lecture. Without understanding too much about what research meant, after listening to that one lecture that day as a medical student, I thought to pursue medical research. That's how my interest in medical research started. Then of course, I had the privilege of many opportunities in my MBBS and my Postgraduation days, and later on for some years in the United States. But all I want to tell you is I never had brilliance nor I was a topper, all I did was I didn't get disappointed, discouraged, or go into depression. I continued, I persevered, and I made use of every opportunity that I thought to learn more both formally and informally. So probably just about everybody sitting in this room is far greater than me, far more competent than me. So every one of you can create an LV Prasad Eye Institute. Plus, you have that in you. The only thing that stops you is how badly you want to give up. If you are clear in your mind, if you want to achieve something, you must remember that you have to work for it. Earlier this morning, I was talking to Dr. Shashikala Reddy and Dr. Pari Plavi. India now has a huge opportunity to become a leader in global medicine and medical research because America and Europe are in the declining phase. Just about a month ago, I was at two of the most famous universities in the world- Stanford and MIT, and I saw visible signs of decline. We have that opening available to us now. That opening can be filled only by extra effort.

There is a popular saying "The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra". How much extra do we want to work as an individual? How much extra country we have to work, will determine the future status of our country in the scientific world, the medical world and the public world. We think we have made great progress in the country. That is true. While we could have done better, but, we certainly made good progress.

Unfortunately, the Human Development Index doesn't score very high in our country. We are 158 out of 190 countries in the world. In infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, we are worse than our neighbours Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and everybody. We are worse than all the 3 BRICS countries and of course, we shouldn't even compare ourselves to more advanced countries. That's because we did not invest in the health of our people.

Our spending is not adequate, our spending on medical research is very poor. That has to change if we have to make progress. Medical students like you should be working in research laboratories by this point in time to stimulate your brains. You are wonderful, very talented people and all of you should begin to think differently. The first thing you should ask yourself is: Do I want to become a clinician only? Or become a clinician and a researcher? Or do I want to become only a researcher? Do I want to become a clinician and a technology innovator? Or do I want to just be a technology innovator? Do I want to do public health or combine that with my medical practice? All these are possibilities for your exposure. You should get exposure to each of these possibilities along with your medical studies, and then you can make a decision. What is it that you want to do in your life, if you want to make money there is nothing wrong with it but making money without stooping too low, where you need not bow your head before anybody and make money with respect. If you want to become famous you can but both making money and becoming famous requires a lot of hard work. Be prepared for that.

Atul Gawande, a famous doctor and author from Harvard University says medicine is a journey of difficulty so we have to realize that we have to be prepared for that. Also, we have no option. We have to work hard. The question is how good a doctor you are? I always talk about, I think even in the message that I sent to your Souvenir yesterday, I mentioned that a 3 H doctor, someone who is good with the HANDS becomes a superb surgeon, good with the HEAD that is the knowledge that understands why you are doing a procedure, how you are doing a procedure and the intricacies of that surgical procedure. A heart that touches everybody who requires your care. and those who are just good with the heads I call them average doctors. and most of our professionals are in that category regrettably. The second is when you are too good with your hands and neglect other things that are dangerous because you make a lot of money just with your hands. and you will become dead as a doctor. When you combine Hands and head I call you a good doctor. When you combine the HEART with these two you become an excellent doctor. and you also practice ethically which would make you an exceptional doctor. Again if we think about it, it's In your hands which of those categories you want to be in future. I also leave you with a guilty feeling, putting the element of guilt in everybody.

In our learning, In our training, we all know all over the world, we learn about the bodies of economically underprivileged people. We don't learn about the bodies of rich people. During that learning, we lead to some increased mortality and increased morbidity because as trainees we cannot be that go... so when you become experts you have to repay that debt so that you are indebted to that group of individuals and if you have that time to all your payback of debts, this debt also you have to pay back. That is by taking care of everybody that comes to you. I can tell you that nobody will become poor by Taking care of a few poor patients without expecting money from them. In our profession, we have a unique advantage. There is a saying "Go into the world to do well but more importantly go out into the world and do good" and in our profession, we can combine these two in our daily professional work. We don't have to sweep the roads occasionally to do good every day.

The other aspect I want to touch on briefly is we are living in an age of technologies, Technological innovations, Information technology, Mobile technology, Communication technology etc. We put a lot of effort into machine learning and artificial intelligence, augmented reality with so many tools at our disposal and in our care. But to think technology alone is the answer to all the problems, you are mistaken. Technology is controlled by human talent that gives the best results for physicians. I think the combination is a 3 T combination: Talent I mean your talent plus Technology plus as a health care professional the Tenderness with which we provide care to the people who come to you with a problem. We look into the future. Technology brings knowledge closer to you at all times available with a flicker of talent so that is an equalizer for the most brilliant among you to the average among you but what makes somebody a better doctor among you is not going to be your knowledge in the future, it is going to be how caring you are to that minute. Ask yourself that question when you are seeing patients. Have I done the way I would like the doctor to provide care to the mother and father or my children?

If you ask that question you automatically become an excellent doctor, a simple good question every time you see a patient ask that question. End of the day, ask yourself the question, have I done the correct things today? You don't have to report to me your internal reflection at the end of the day, end of the week, end of the month. Make notes, read through them, and reflect along with experiences, and power to become a good doctor so there are lots of opportunities for those of you who want to pursue this sector. I don't know how I want to give this idea to Dr Shashikala Reddy, she thought about it. Is it possible for medical students to take a break in the middle of the year so that in future medical education, I think these provisions should be made like a first interaction, they go out for years and come back every 2-3 years.

In MD and degrees, this set becomes an integral part of the qualification. also have a combination of MD and MPH masters in public health so in future all of you medical professionals can think of these possibilities for future generations. but research should be simple, if we can't get away, use your summer vacations, identify the great research in your talk, go and work reluctantly for it, and get exposure. See if that turns you out There were many outstanding researchers who were originally medical doctors like Professor Ramalinga Swamy himself was an MD in general medicine at Andhra Medical College before he pursued research and rose to certain great heights in his life.

A great example is one of your students with whom I was speaking yesterday Professor Srinath Reddy, president of the public health foundation. He was an outstanding clinician and researcher in cardiology and then he moved to complete public health and became founding president of the health foundation. Perhaps the most celebrated medical man in the country today, so you have outstanding examples from all the borders of Osmania than others across the globe. Read about them. In my life the one thing that inspired me is that I have always been a fan of biographies, a fan of medical history, Reading about the great medical people of our country and of all great people in other fields inspires you. You have lots of lessons to learn and then you can implement some of them so in your general reading, keep that as a thought. reading biographies of outstanding individuals around the world. In each of the biographies, you can think of what those lessons are. You can habituate yourself to move forwards in your life so these are some of the reflections I want to share with you this morning. I want to thank you once again for giving me this opportunity to speak to you and share some of my thoughts and I hope in the future you will be leading medical research.

Thank you so much”