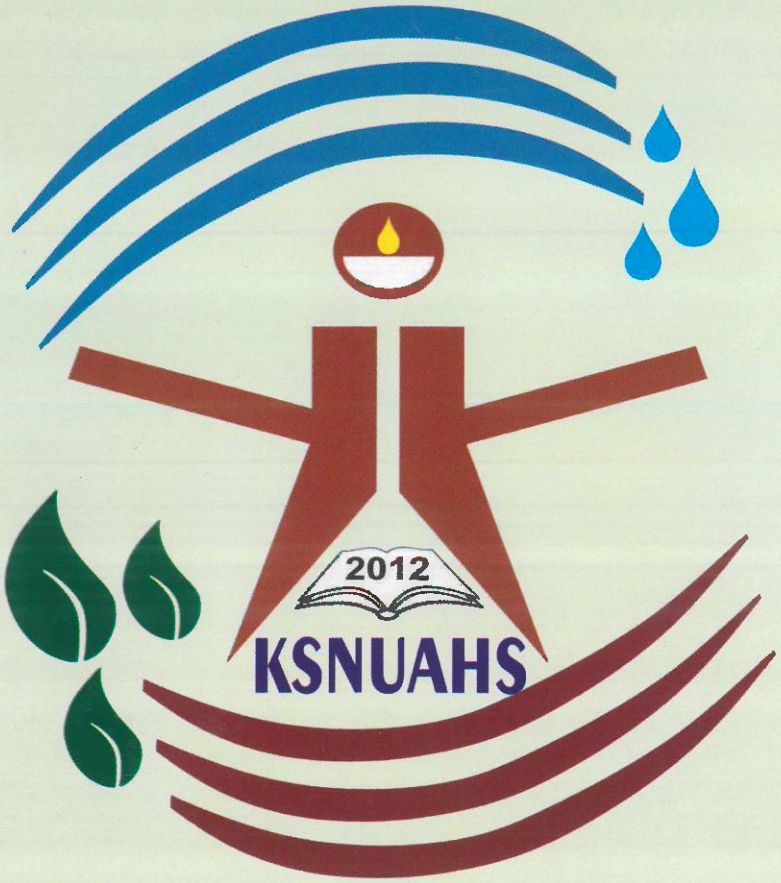

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KELADI SHIVAPPA NAYAKA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL SCIENCES, SHIVAMOGGA

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EIGHTH CONVOCATION

21-07-2023

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

RAJARSHI Dr. VEERENDRA HEGGADE

Padmavibhushana Awardee and Member of Parliament

Dharmadhikari Sri Kshetra Dharmastala

Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga, Karnataka

RAJARSHI Dr. VEERENDRA HEGGADE

EIGHTH CONVOCATION ADDRESS

His Excellency, the Governor of Karnataka and Chancellor of the Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (KSNUAHS), Shivamogga, Shri Thawar Chand Gehlotji, Vice Chancellor Dr. R. C. Jagadeesha, Members of the Board of Management and Academic Council; Guests, Parents, Graduating Students, Faculty Members, Representatives of the Press and Media, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am extremely happy to participate in the convocation programme of the University and address all of you. I congratulate all the students and their parents who must have struggled hard to see this day in their lives. For anybody it is a great achievement to be recognized by the university and receive the degree. I convey my appreciation to the Vice Chancellor, the faculty members present and past, who would have put in their best efforts to bring out this batch of graduates.

Respected Chancellor,

I belong to the Western Ghats, where the Shivappa Nayaka University is located. Traditionally we have a legacy of cultivating many agricultural and horticultural crops in this region for centuries. Recently at

Dharmasthala, we released a book on the queen "Rani Chennabhairadevi" who was called as the "Queen of Pepper" by the Portuguese. Chennabhairadevi ruled the Nagre province which was situated in Sagara Taluk of Shimogga district only where Shivappa Nayaka University is located. This 16th century queen was known for her relationship with the farmers of this area. She supported many innovative ideas for processing of pepper. As a result the pepper produced from the farmers in this area fetched them better price. In this regard a letter written by *Portuguese Captain of Cochin, Affonso Mexia, sheds more light on the technology supported by the queen for producing quality pepper. He writes to the King of Portugal: "Between Baticala and Goa there are certain places called Onor, Mergen and Ancola, from which I hear 5,000 crusados worth of pepper are annually shipped. These places are under the dominion of Queen of Guarcopa. This pepper is larger than that in Cochin, but is lighter and not so hot. It appears to me that we ought to secure this area".*

The queens ability to negotiate with the foreigners for the sale of various horticulture products made this area very prosperous. During her time the production and sale of pepper was at its peak. This region is known internationally for centuries on the quality of pepper cultivated. The necessary marketing facilities were created by the other kingdoms also from this region. They had created and protected a route from here to Bhatkal, Kumta

and Karwar from where the agricultural produces were exported to Europe and Arabia. The Bhatkal and Kumta harbors were well developed 500 years back to serve the needs of the farmer of this region. I am narrating this so that all of you students realize the legacy of this area. I have always believed that without understanding our past there can be no future. This region is also considered as the bio diversity hotspot being home for a variety of plants, animals and insects. Some of these are found only in our region.

Looking at the reports of the university, I am happy to note that our University is transforming itself into one of the premier Agricultural University in the country. The students from this university are procuring good number of scholarships from the ICAR. It is a matter of pride that the nurseries at Ullal and Mudigere are getting recognized at the national level, the college of forestry at Ponnampete has secured A++ accreditation to be named as one of the best colleges in the country. I am also happy to note that the KVK, Chikkamagalore is recognized by the "Agriculture Today" magazine. I note with pride that the University has released several high yielding varieties of seeds. It has developed several production technologies which I am sure are helping the farmers at the ground level. The University seems to have actively collaborated with various government agencies, World Bank, in developing and implementing various projects of significance.

At the curricular level the university has been performing to the expectations and producing quality

doctorates, post graduates and graduates in various disciplines. I wish there will be more contribution forthcoming from the students passing out today for the welfare of our state in general and this region in particular.

The focus given by the governments since the 1960's on increased productivity in farm sector had initial impact in the country which is felt even after sixty years. As per the present estimate the food grain production has reached an all-time high of 324 million which is about 4% higher than last year. The agricultural universities, the ICAR and the hard work of the professionals can definitely feel proud of this great achievement, which has catapulted India as the third highest food grain producer in the world after China and USA. Similarly the efforts of 'white revolution' have made India the number one milk producer in the world. We are the second largest fruits and vegetable producer after China.

Amidst all this mindboggling achievements we have areas of concern which has to be addressed by the young scientists who are waiting here today to receive their degrees. Inspite of increased productivity, the farmers in our country continue to be distressed. Vagaries of nature, spurious seeds, fertilizers, pesticides have affected the yields from the farm lands more so with particular reference to small units. The farmers are fighting new pests and diseases attacking their crops every now and then. Some of our staple crops are on the verge of being wiped out from the region. Horticulture crops have several years

of incubation. A farmer struggles for atleast five years before he sees flower on his arecanut and coconut plants. If in the interim period there is a calamity, then the whole effort goes waste. Inspite of so much of efforts the nature of farming has remained highly unpredictable even today. Added to their woes, the farmers are faced with marketing problems when they get a better yield.

It is therefore very important for us to find out ways to insulate the farmer against shocks. In this context the Governments have introduced many a support structure. Crop insurance, minimum support price, assured subsidies, Pradhan Manthri Kisan Mandhan Yojana are some of the measures implemented to support an ordinary farmer. While these efforts have mitigated the problems to a large extent, a proper technology which will help the farmer in crop selection, production, management and marketing will surely help the farming in our country. I find that there is an important role to be played by the qualified agricultural professionals to prepare the farmers to understand the technology and the ware withal to be a successful farmer.

Social Medias, communication technologies have drastically changed over the last decade, forcing the professionals to change their extension methodology. The young graduates from agricultural university today cannot depend on the age old extension techniques. We need to update ourselves to the era of You Tube, Facebook and Whatsapp. We have to learn from 'reels and TikToks'.

Because these are the medium which are easily assimilated by the current day population. A lot of things can be achieved virtually. The Rural Development Project run by Dharmasthala reaches out to the farmers and women through You Tube channel. As you may be already aware India is fast transforming itself into a digital leader. Already we have the highest number of mobile connections in the world. We stand number one in the number of mobile phones purchased in the last year. I call upon young students to look for ways to reach out to the farmers using the advancement in communication technology.

Promotion of startups has a huge potential in agricultural sector. There are opportunities in skill up gradation, supply chain management, demand creation and digital marketing. Farm mechanization is another area which is waiting to be conquered. It is the era of collaboration. A batch of young persons coming together to create synergy in ideas and resources can surely multiply the number of startups in the farm sector.

As the farm technologies have advanced, we see that more and more farmers are going towards monoculture. We must remember that most of South India, the farmers believed in multiple cropping for centuries. That is how we have become famous for multiple varieties of rice, arecanut, spices, pepper. As the demand for cereal production has increased farmers are transforming their lands to single crop. As students of agriculture I need not

explain to you the need for changing the crops, season after season. Even in the field of horticulture, we see that there is a great affiliation for cultivating profitable crops such as arecanut, disregarding other horticultural crops. A time has come for us to ponder whether monoculture is good for the sustainability of the farm in the long run. Multiple cropping which encompasses horticulture, agriculture, animal husbandry as the integral part of the farm can protect the farmer against any calamity including adverse market. Over dependence on arecanut for income in this region could be dangerous. This crop also requires lots of water which is becoming more and more scarce. Either in horticulture garden or in field crops application of multi crop methodology will not only hedge the farmer against the risks but also increase the soil fertility.

In our state, the land under irrigation is only 30% and 70% are rain dependent dry lands. This region has also got high share of dry lands. Managing water is very crucial for the survival of the farmer and his farm lands. Cultivation of drought resistant crops will certainly reduce the cost of cultivation as also dependence on water. Taking to cultivation of millets is a big step in managing water in our state. This year as we are celebrating the 'International Year of Millets', the demand for precious millets have gone up and the price fetched is also quite high. As agricultural graduates we must be in a position to guide the farmer not only with his interest in mind, but also that of the environment and country at large. From this perspective

we must understand the importance of multi cropping, cultivation of drought resistant crops and millets in our day today life.

Recently I was in France and was amazed by the application of innovative farm technology in that country. They have mechanized most of their farm operations. The yields are also relatively high resulting in higher income at the hands of the farmer. The increased income level makes the farmer live in pride. I feel that in India also high tech farms have reached the village environment today. India gets maximum sunshine. As you are aware suns energy is the food for the plants. You as the farm graduates are lucky to be in a situation where the plants are well fed with sunshine. Using this, we are in a position to cultivate high, tech crops using little space. Floriculture, vegetable cultivation, Mushroom cultivation can bring in higher returns to the farmers. While the investment would be understandably high, the returns would be definitely satisfying. When you take up high tech farming one needs to be thorough on the usage of technology. This is where the role of the scientists like you will make a difference in the lives of the farmers.

Inspite of so many agricultural colleges in the state, and centers for farm science being established all around the state, I find that still there is a gap between the farmer and the university. While I admit that farmers are naïve and gullible, we need to bridge this gap. Mere demonstrations, visit to agricultural universities or extension programmes

cannot bridge this gap. The days have gone when the farmer was told to change the seed and the manuring practice and one could see the result. Today we require application of scientific technologies some of which are complicated, to see the change, that the government desires to implement. From this perspective the young graduates have a challenging task ahead. Yes we have achieved so much through technology. But have we changed the mindset of the farmer? Have we protected the vulnerable Western Ghats? Are we providing space for the wild life, the beautiful flora and fauna which are fast disappearing?

I wish to conclude my address with this thought. Technology can increase the levels of comfort of human life. But is it creating an imbalance in the environment? And if so what steps do we need to take to achieve the prosperity of not just the human beings but all things around us? You as the scientists of the soil are in a position to address these questions. In whatever you do I appeal to you, to keep these questions foremost in your mind and act. For, this will define the future of mother earth.

I thank His Excellency the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for inviting me to share my thoughts with you. I once again congratulate all the students who are getting ready to face the world and my gratitude to the faculty of the university who have prepared the students to face the world.

May Lord Manjunatha Swamy Bless you all.