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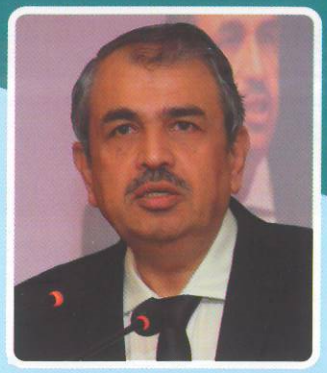
9ನೇ ಘಟಿಕೋತ್ಸವ
9th CONVOCATION

22-01-2025



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ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು, ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಜೀವ ವಿಜ್ಞಾನ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಮತ್ತು
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Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga, Karnataka

PROF. L. S. SHASHIDHARA

NINTH CONVOCATION ADDRESS

Honourable Governor of Karnataka and Chancellor of Universities - Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot-ji, Honourable Minister for Agriculture & Pro-Chancellor Shri N. Chaluvarayaswamy, Shri Kagodu Thimmappa, the Vice-Chancellor of Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga, Prof. Jagadeesha, distinguished faculty and my dear students and Ladies and Gentlemen,

Congratulations to all the graduating students, gold medal winners and other recognitions on this day. I am delighted to be the Chief Guest to deliver this address at the 9th Convocation of Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, which is only 11 years old but has already made many strides in providing quality education and pursuing high-quality research in the areas relevant to the sustainable development of the region. Alums of this university have excelled in national competitions for fellowships and recognitions, bringing laurels to their alma mater. The University has contributed immensely to the region, state and country by developing new varieties, farming technologies and many well-trained human resources in Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry. While congratulating the leadership and all faculty and students at the university, more importantly, I would like to convey my gratitude and appreciation on behalf of us citizens of this land. You are one of the strongest supporting pillars of our society.

I am a proud agriculture graduate. I earned my BSc and MSc in agriculture from Dharwad. Although I moved away from Agriculture soon after my Master's, I give full credit to the liberal arts

curriculum and excellent teachers at my university for whatever little I have been able to do in my career in the past 30+ years. It helped me understand genetics and evolution, the history and philosophy of science, and how to pursue high-quality science while keeping its impact on society at the forefront. My teachers used material straight from research journals, often the latest from the library. On many occasions, prescribed/popular textbooks proved wrong, given the latest discoveries in the field. As knowledge progresses, not only do we better understand various phenomena around us, but it also nullifies unsubstantiated information and bursts many myths and superstitions. The very purpose of higher education is to verify what is known and discover what is unknown. Agriculture universities have set the right example in this context as faculty are equally dedicated to research and teaching. They bring their research experience to the classrooms, and students learn by doing research in the fields and the labs. Naturally, students at agriculture universities develop self-learning, analytical and critical thinking abilities better than students of other educational programs, wherein, unfortunately, exam-centric learning dominates. I urge all Government policies to consider the curriculum and pedagogy of agricultural universities as role models while implementing NEP across the country and the education landscape.

As you are all aware, when India became independent in 1947, we were one of the poorest countries. Food was being sent to our country as donations. Literacy was around 10%. Perhaps less than 1% of those were with sufficient S&T knowledge. Given such a scenario, expanding human resources in S&T immediately was necessary, which was the focus soon after the independence. Research-integrated education in S&T was given maximum importance as part of these initiatives. Establishing agricultural universities across the country was part of this nation-building exercise. Faculty and students of these colleges, universities and research organizations worked hard to make India self-reliant in food and nutrition, resulting in a new generation of confident Indians who

excelled in IT, space, sports, various manufacturing businesses, etc, making India the 4th largest economy. Without access to required quantities of food and good nutrition at affordable costs, none of the other achievements we have made as a nation would have been possible.

But we are still in the developing stage. A large population of India is below the poverty line. Inequity in access to good food and nutrition is still very high. With increased water use, chemicals, fertilizers, and intensive agricultural practices, we are facing severe stress on agricultural productivity. Farming costs have increased multi-fold while returns on farmer's efforts are diminishing.

Furthermore, climate change maximally impacts the environment and agriculture more than any other sector of society. Agriculture depends on good weather and soil conditions and heavily relies on the presence of forests in nearby locations. Both agriculture and animal husbandry directly benefit from the ecosystem function and services of biodiversity around us. For India to be self-reliant in access to food and nutrition for its entire population and sustain food security during periods of natural or other human-made disasters for decades to come, it is vital that we now focus on conserving and expanding our natural resources, restores degraded habitats and adopt sustainable agricultural practices.

I am happy to note that Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences focuses on these challenging problems in its research and educational endeavours. First, it is an integrated university that includes agriculture, horticulture, and forestry. Inputs from all three sciences are needed for sustainable living. Agro-forestry and crop rotations, including food crops and fruits and vegetables, will help increase soil productivity and farmers' income. The university has taken innovative initiatives on agroforestry, bio-fertilizers, bio-control agents, biofuels, pollinators etc. I am told the University is giving

much importance to the farming community that is naturally living and traditionally protecting the Western Ghats ecosystem. Their plans to set up a gene bank to conserve genetic resources and preserve local biodiversity are commendable. I am told the university plans to launch an innovative dual degree program and a paid integrated postgraduate program to provide students with a comprehensive multidisciplinary education. It is the need of the hour. We must integrate basic sciences, agriculture, forestry, social science, rural economy, etc. into the education system. I urge all faculty and students of this great university to focus on developing practices and technology that would help productivity in the region without disturbing the Western Ghat ecosystem, one of the world's foremost biodiversity hotspots. Towards this, we should strive to conserve rivers such as Tunga and Bhadra, lakes and other water bodies and ground water giving more importance to reducing the use of chemical fertilizers, weedicides and pesticides.

The National Centre for Biological Sciences, which is located in Bengaluru within the GKVK campus, of which I am currently the Director, is focusing on developing advanced technologies based on more integrative knowledge of natural ecosystems for climate resilient agriculture, for long-term monitoring of agricultural lands for their physical and chemical properties, and long term ecological monitoring of natural ecosystems vis a vis climate change. This is being done in close collaboration with neighbouring institutions, including GKVK. Since Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences is also prioritizing research on climate-resilient agriculture, NCBS would be very happy to partner with you in pursuing our common interests. I am pleased to work with the honourable Vice chancellor of this University to facilitate close interactions in this regard.

Finally, agriculture, horticulture, and forestry students work directly for and with the local community, both rural and tribal. Witness and learn from their traditional living practices in social

harmony and peace with nature. Western Ghat community is specifically known for this. Learn suitable lessons from them and spread social and environmental peace messages wherever you go. Charles Darwin, credited with the profound theory of evolution, was greatly influenced by plant and animal breeders while thinking about the mechanism of adaptation and speciation. Those plant and animal breeders knew no genetics. They were farmers using their great observational powers and rational decision-making abilities. Theodor Dobzhansky said nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution. When he referred to biology, he meant life. Nothing in life makes sense except in the light of evolution. Our farmers are living examples of this. They are the first-generation scientists of the world. Their understanding of nature and seasons has helped them frame scientific farming practices. They have continuously explored new crops; for example, crops like wheat, corn, chilli, potato, and tomato, which are now inseparable from our diet, have been introduced to India only in the past 2-3 centuries.

Similarly, they are not shy of innovation in farming practices. But for their ability to change, adapt, and adopt, we would not have had self-sufficiency in food and nutrition within such a short time since independence. Farming practices have greatly influenced our cultural and religious practices. While rationality is part of Indian customs and philosophy, the society is still riddled with superstitions and pseudoscience. Interestingly, it is observed that farmers are more rational and ready to accept modern knowledge than urban dwellers.

In this context, I remember a couplet from one of Karnataka's greatest writers and philosophers, DV Gundappa, popularly known as DVG.

ಹೊಸ ಚಿಗುರು ಹಳೆ ಬೇರು ಕೂಡಿರಲು ಮರಸೊಬಗು।

ಹೊಸಯುಕ್ತಿ ಹಳೆತತ್ವ ದೊಡಗೂಡೆ ಧರ್ಮ॥

ಋಷಿವಾಕ್ಯದೊಡನೆ ವಿಜ್ಞಾನ ಕಲೆ ಮೇಳವಿಸೆ॥

ಜಸವು ಜನಜೀವಕ್ಕೆ ಮಂಕುತಿಮ್ಮ।

Sarvagna says

ಕೋಟಿ ವಿದ್ಯೆಗಿಂತ ಮೇಟಿ ವಿದ್ಯೆಯೇ ಮೇಲು. Indeed, farmers are those rishis in DVG's couplet. We should identify good traditional methods of agriculture, validate them scientifically and spread those practices to the others in the region. It is time we also involve farmers as partners and collaborators in agricultural research, teaching and bringing more rationality to society. Under NEP, there is a provision to recruit professors of practice in the universities. Who could be better than progressive farmers as Professors of Practice for agricultural universities?

Again, I am thankful to the University for giving me the honour to be with you on this significant occasion in the lives of outgoing students and for addressing you all. Best wishes to you all in your future endeavours.

Bless You all