

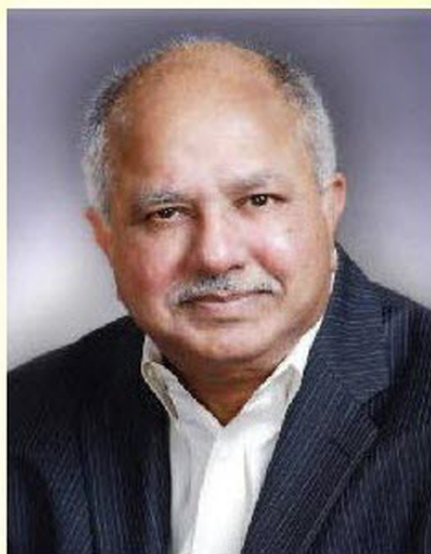


**Rajiv Gandhi University  
of Knowledge Technologies**



# *Convocation*

Monday, 4 August 2014



Convocation address by

**Prof. Raj Reddy**

Chancellor

Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies



RGUKT Nuzvid



RGUKT RK Valley



RGUKT Basar

Hon'ble Governor of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Sri ESL Narsimhan, Hon'ble Chief Minister Andhra Pradesh Sri Chandrababu Naidu garu, Graduating Students, Parents, Distinguished Guests and Friends:

Welcome to the first Convocation of RGUKT. Congratulations to the pioneering first batch, the class of 2014. Today is your day! Today we witness the transformation of 15 year old boys and girls, away from home for the first time, somewhat scared and lost, emerging successfully after 6 years into confident young men and women. I congratulate you on your accomplishment.

I congratulate the parents who trusted your children into the hands of a new institution. I thank you for standing by your children and supporting them through the trials and tribulations of being the first batch.

I want to thank Hon'ble Governor of AP and Telangana Sri ESL Narasimhan for agreeing to be our Chief Guest today in spite of his very busy schedule. It has been my privilege to work with our Guest of Honor, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Sri Chandrababu Naidu for almost twenty years. I thank him for kindly agreeing to grace this occasion in spite of the pressures of creating a new state, new capital, and new institutions.

On the Dias, we have today the Governing Council of RGUKT. I request them to stand and be recognized. Professor KC Reddy, Professor Balakrishnan and many others have been with us since the founding of the University. Without their wisdom and knowledge, it would have been impossible to reach this point. Thank you.

RGUKT was created in 2008 by an act of the AP legislature inspired by the vision of late Dr YSR. The top 1% of the 10<sup>th</sup> class graduates from each mandal were admitted to a 6 year integrated educational program. About 6500 rural students started attending classes in three residential campuses of Basara, Nuzvid and RK Valley beginning in August of 2008.

Although over 70% of our population is rural, less than 10% of the rural students are selected in national competitive exams such as IAS or JEE. It cannot be the case that all the smart people live in cities. If we start with the assumption that talent and intelligence are spread uniformly among populations, it is time that we examine the underlying reasons for a significantly poorer performance of rural students.

Marks have traditionally been used as a measure of merit of student performance. Marks are indeed an effective measure within a school or a city where every student has equal opportunity to learn and to succeed. However, marks may not be a true measure of capability when the populations span across a wide geographical area such as a state or a country.

What marks you get is a result of contributing factors such as quality of the teachers, education level of the parents, ability to pay for coaching classes and the time-on-task learning the subject. Rural students are at a serious disadvantage along each of these dimensions. No wonder then that almost none of them get into IAS or IITs. In any national ranking, their marks will always be lower. Are all the children born in cities smarter than those born in villages? I think not. At RGUKT, rather than select students based on a statewide rank, we use the local-best model of mandal-wise ranking to select the top students, independent of how their marks compare with marks of the students from other parts of the state.

Even within a mandal, students who go to private schools or residential schools with access to better facilities always get higher marks when compared to students going to Zilla Parishad schools. At RGUKT, we try to minimize for this effect by adding a deprivation score of 4% to the marks of Zilla Parishad school students.

Selecting just 1% of a million graduating students results in a huge number to be admitted. Using IT enabled learning solutions, where

each RGUKT student is provided with a laptop, it becomes possible to provide quality education to large number of students.

Where do we go from here? We are wasting 70% of the brain power of the country by not providing quality education to rural youth. If we are to be the second largest economy in the world in 30 years time, it is imperative that we immediately begin to harness the intellectual capacity of our rural youth.

We cannot be satisfied by providing quality education for the top 1% of rural youth only. To reach parity with a state like Singapore, we must aspire to provide college level education for 20 to 30% rural youth. This can only be done by reinventing the education system to create a scalable, affordable, cost-effective, quality education model.

Given the exponential advances in Information Technology, the emergence of internet, world wide web, and resources such as Wikipedia, Khan Academy and Massive Open Online Courses, it is now possible to access almost any desired educational material in the form of video, audio and text. If any subject that is taught locally is also available from world class teachers for free on the web, do we still need schools, teachers and whole educational systems of the 20th century?

We need a national dialog about future directions in education. What should be the curriculum? What should we be teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How can we scale to provide quality education to 26 million children born every year? How do we fund such a massive effort? and so on. Every aspect of education has to be reexamined in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> Century technologies.

What is taught in a classroom has not changed much in the last century, in spite of the fact that much of what is taught today is already available on the Web. Why do we still spend the first three years of our primary school memorizing multiplication tables? Instead we should be teaching our 7 year olds the computational algorithmic concepts behind addition and multiplication and teach

them how to search the web and discover the fact that they can find answers to most questions by themselves. In the new curriculum, rote learning and memorization needs be replaced by the skills of learning-to-learn and learning-to-think.

In the future, we may move towards learning without a teacher model, using techniques such as learning from example, learning by doing, learning by discovery and self-paced learning, all of which have been validated by cognitive science research.

In the future, learning will become student centric. As in the case of SAT and TOEFL tests, all a student may have to do is to demonstrate mastery-level performance without having to attend schools and colleges with structured regimented activities. A student will be able to learn what they want, when they want and how they want. Instead of stopping after the first 25 years, learning should be viewed as a life-long process.

In the future, funding of education will have to cope with different challenges. Conventional costs associated with schools, colleges and universities such as buildings, salaries and operations will be significantly transformed in the 21st century. IT enabled self-paced learning models will require creating environments where students are able to learn on their own using online content and online tutors in a 24x7 connected computing environment and conveniently accessible testing centers

You the first batch of RGUKT have been a great source of inspiration. The future generations will see you as the pioneers in this great adventure to transform education. You are paving the way not just for rural students but for all those who can benefit from these new ideas about education.

Of all the interventions that the Government might make, educating the rural youth is probably the best investment of time and money for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century India. Only you, the first graduating class of

RGUKT can validate this assertion by excelling in everything you do.  
Congratulations and best wishes for an exciting future.