

## Address by Dr VM Katoch, MD, FNAsc, FASc, FAMS, FNA

**NASI-ICMR Chair on Public Health Research at RUHS, Jaipur, Former Secretary, Department of Health Research, Govt of India and Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research.**



Professor Ravichandiran, Director, NIPER, Kolkata; Dr Samit Chattopadhyaya, Director, CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (IICB), the Mentor and Host Institute to NIPER-Kolkata, all dignitaries invited to this important function; all esteemed colleagues – teaching faculty, administrators as well other staff, colleagues from CSIR-IICB and dear students,

I would like to begin by conveying my heartiest congratulations to all the students who are being admitted to various degrees today. I always consider it a great privilege to convey my best wishes and blessings to students getting degrees. We expect alumni of NIPERs to become stalwarts in Pharmaceutical Sciences whether they join industry, academic and research establishments. Besides being successful professionals, we wish them to have happy and prosperous lives and at the same time serve the society with dedication and bring glory to our country.

Established in 2007 along with five others, the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Kolkata is the first such national level institute in pharmaceutical sciences in Eastern India. Despite challenges of having proper campus and adequate dedicated faculty this institution has started growing well. The institute has started with three disciplines of Medicinal Chemistry, Natural Products and Pharmacoinformatics, Along with other institutions dedicated to and or contributing to disciplines related pharmaceutical disciplines in Kolkata, NIPER-Kolkata has great opportunity to strengthen these sciences in this region. I am sure that it will expand to other important branches in future. Contribution made by CSIR-IICB to NIPER-Kolkata will always be fondly remembered. I am optimistic that in near future this institution will become a centre of excellence for advanced studies and research in pharmaceutical sciences.

NIPERs are national institutes with global aspirations. However, locating them in different parts of country has also got regional purpose which is fully justified. These academic and research

institutions are expected to provide not only human resource to industry but also thoughts as well as partnerships for innovation and translation. It is appropriate occasion to recall that Indian Pharmaceutical industry originated from this city and this state of West Bengal. Establishment of Bengal Chemicals Ltd in 1901, 116 years ago by Acharya PC Ray was the start of pharmaceutical industry in India. I have read that this PSU, now Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Ltd, has regained its financial vibrancy and started making profits. Two more industries – Bengal Immunity and Calcutta Chemicals established before independence had contributed immensely to India being able to have become largely self reliant at that time. Several outstanding individuals of successive generations across the country have made us proud by their achievements in pharmaceutical sciences and industry. Let us start the day by paying tribute to Acharya PC Ray, this great visionary and many others who led the movement under difficult circumstances of colonial rule. Remembering them today will not be a symbolic gesture but it can ignite the minds of our going students to emulate such examples when they move into public space from now on.

All of us take pride in recalling that for quite some time India has been ranking second in global pharmaceutical industry. Excellent quality of medicines and vaccines produced in India are fulfilling global need. Biopharma has also done very well. This shows our capacity and competence in various aspects of pharmaceutical sciences as well as marketing skills. India is now rapidly emerging in innovation and adaptation in traditional pharmaceutical as well as biopharmaceutical industry. Start of programmes on rare diseases by NIPER- Kolkata is praiseworthy step which will stimulate young minds to think of unmet needs which offer opportunity but are usually not part of goals of mainstream industry. I am confident that students passing out with postgraduate degrees from NIPER, Kolkata will significantly contribute to this revolution going on in Indian pharmaceutical industry. Besides succeeding at national and global level, they will bring joy to this “city of joy” by accelerating the pace of growth of pharmaceutical industry in Kolkata and eastern India.

In the unfolding scenario, not only it will be important to have adequate knowledge of your key domains and related aspects but you need to focus on creation of interdisciplinarity capabilities and teams and think integrative medicine from the beginning. World is rapidly moving in that direction specially for incurable / difficult to treat conditions like cancer, endocrinal problems, rare diseases etc. I take this opportunity once again to call upon the students getting degrees today to seriously think of these issues, recognize the immense potential in each of you to be innovators, entrepreneurs and successful socially useful Indians.

We expect you to be original thinking minds. That will make you competent professional whether you serve in industry, teaching or research. We hope that many of you who are passing out today will emerge as leaders who will not merely look to the comforts of working in well established institutions but will create set-ups in the various institutions ( academic/ industry) in different parts of our country. I will like to reiterate my often repeated advice that we have to rapidly reduce and finish the developmental gap that exists in the different geographical areas of India today. It is absolutely essential for the evolution of healthy Indian society, it is do-able and let all of us collectively work to achieve that.

We can not survive and thrive by day dreaming alone but have to translate dreams into reality. First succeed in whatever opportunity you get but keep on dreaming and planning. Ultimate goal should be to make a mark in life. New generation specially outgoing students must pledge to work for making a mark in the growth of Pharma/ Biopharma in India.

I am confident that students getting degrees at this 5<sup>th</sup> convocation will contribute to this build up of image and brand name of NIPER -Kolkata. I am extremely happy to be present on this auspicious occasion. I take this opportunity to convey my gratitude for this invitation and convey my best wishes to all of you for all success in your careers and lives.

Jai Hind !