

**FIFTH DR. AMITABH CHOWDHURY ANNUAL MEMORIAL  
LECTURE**

**ON THE TOPIC**

**“THE NECESSARY EDUCATIONAL AGENDA  
FOR AN INCLUSIVE GLOBALISATION”**

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**DATE: FRIDAY, the 19<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2008**

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I am nearly delighted to be here Sir. Amitabh must have been a person, who touched many people gently through others, and he left a permanent permanent imprint. Through these Memorial Lectures, the Trust brings together marvelous people like yourselves, others in the dais, Hon'ble Chief Justice, who tried to rebuke me. I stand properly rebuked but I shall offer an apology, not an apology but an explanation. Because, when I say Universities, I include you in that. If anybody would like to think or worry about these, but my problem is that the moment the cleverest people are not worried about the basic problems of humanity. I mean, I will not completely stick to the Lecture, which has been distributed, because one doesn't very often have a chance to interact with such marvelous people. Are there any children here? Anybody below forty is a child. Are there any children? Ah! Come one I don't want to treat all of you as children. Why I asked, is I think some of the people, or humans we don't think of as teachers of humanity, continuing teachers of humanity are children. In what sense? It will become pretty clear as I go on. Those of us who take on the responsibility of learning, any topic/subjects becoming experts in law, in any of the humanities, languages, sciences, literature, music, whatever. More prominent we get, more important we get, more advanced we get, more professorship we get, more higher positions we get, we become specialists. If you look for great specialists these days, I think there are far more specialists at present in the world in any area, far more than they were ever born, before 1980 let's say, ever! Philosophers, scientists, Musicians, Psychologists, lawyers too, and all kinds of people. There is so much expertise; there are so many peaks there, that somehow the space between the peaks is never reached. People have a tendency the cleverest

people have a tendency to become mere experts. I put to you a very simple question. Take a country- a great country like United States of America, which I admire very much. It has fantastic scientists, fantastic writers, musicians, philosophers, social scientists, social psychologists; any number of people of any kind. How come...how come, the combination of all these people, doesn't tell the people whom they educate that, if you are going to form a country almost out of existence, you will not finish everything, you will increase it. It is an extra terrestrial way to come and look at this world, from outside and see all these riches of expertise, which we have, enormous riches of expertise, fantastic even to think, earth must be a heaven on earth. There can't be any problem left in this place, with so many wonderful people, marvelous people. That doesn't go away. So, in some sense, I have been connected with education, Universities, academics, scientists, and so on for a life, I do feel that all of us who think we are thinking great thoughts, that we are wondering all the time, are in some sense responsible for the state of the world, at the moment, maybe distantly responsible. Maybe we haven't trained people properly. Maybe we haven't educated people properly. Maybe we have been engaged in making experts and not human beings. Maybe we missed something. Can we do anything about it? I am not addressing it to India only. I am addressing it to the world, to the whole world, and infact there was a meeting recently in Beijing, and I tried to do it there also. Kya Hain? What's gone wrong? Much of what I say in this paper which has been circulated is elaboration of this worry, this concern, which is not been properly addressed. And I might mention, I have also tried to address it in terms of what we could do, for our own higher education system and our own higher education system as such, particularly our own, which is getting into a real trouble in this regard. We all have a tendency just as we make peaks of expertise; we have 3tendencies to make more and more cubicles. Life is not covered with cubicles. Life cannot be contained in any cubicle. Life spills out and goes into other cubicles. But, we don't have time to look at it. We don't understand those cubicles. You go to any University, they will like to make more departments, cut departments into more and more subjects, more and more fields, so that there can be separate heads of departments, who never talk to each other. I happen to be these days Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University. You know, you probably know very well,

Chancellors are not supposed to do anything in the University; they sit around and occasionally get letters of complaints, and they preside over the Court meeting once a year, if they like to. There is nothing much he has to do. Now, from Jawaharlal Nehru University, at the time of this debate, whether India should have an agreement, about Civilian Nuclear collaboration in United States. There were many people politically inclined and socially inclined, who came out and gave many speeches and wrote many articles. And you know, there were also lot of people who understood what is nuclear energy and what are the issues involved, and how our nuclear programme is organized? How it could be held and how we it could be taken in a different direction. But in the same University, there never was a single seminar, where the nuclear scientists and the social and political scientists, sat together and talked. This you would find in every place you go. This tremendous tendency to separate and form cubicles of expertise everywhere, and go on with all kinds of degrees and everything else, this is what concerns me. Just a few words about these categories which I mentioned ; to which I drew your attention to the article. I think they are likely to be misunderstood, as they do not respect the wisdom of the people who have gone past. Whether you talk of Sankara, Buddha, Christ or Gandhi. What I am talking about is not what somebody said, and you accept. There are many quarrels in this world, which are based about people who have all said beautiful things. But, who have become brand names. Not, the content of how it came about? Not the flu, but they said it so he is sick. And once you say something is secret, you say something is secret, and you say something is secret; it is quite possible that if you are not friends you come to a blaze. That's not what I am talking about. The first thing I am talking about, is that there is a marvelous thing present amongst all humans, and everybody, all living things, which comes to us from the fact, there is a single biology, which has been found pervading in the whole of the earth and we haven't found biological lives so far anywhere else. That is the messages are sent the same way- whether you take a little animal, or you take this beautiful flower or human beings- or a very beautiful smiling girl or a child or anybody else, it is the same messages the same thing which perhaps there. That is so fantastic, isn't it? But in that...hidden in that, what I mentioned is the genes. What is the gene? Why does the mother love the child? Altruism... Why do you care for the family? Why do

you care for people you live with? These are beautiful things... these are inherited. All of us inherit these. We inherited. In addition there are other beautiful things. That, if we inherit some things... long ago some of us inherited these things. We started staying together in tiny groups. I am talking of thousands of years ago. Some children, started making noises, and they created language. They created music; they created humour; they created literature; they created music; they created dance; they created ways of living; ways of dressing; ways of behaving; they created rituals. Those were some beautiful things which came out of our culture of living together. Now there are differences in this. But, the basics are similar. Everywhere they are similar. The other aspects of the culture, which we talked about is religion, faith and so on. That is it doesn't come through the genes. It comes through the fact that these groups developed some ideas and they propagated. A human child, when it is born is very helpless. It can't get up and go away. It is forced to live with its mother. It needs care, and sometimes people how helpless human children are... human babies are? Compare them with the babies of...let's say horses, or cows. How self dependent they become very quickly. I think the important thing is that this helplessness which forces us to live in the community, to live with the parents, to be with the parents, to be instructed by them, to be told by them how to behave what to do, is a tremendous move... and that's how human civilization developed. But the other side of it... let's face it. The other side of it is also the period, when you are instructed a great deal, you learn a great deal, you learn affection. You learn love, you learn respect, and you learn things which you can't learn through words. You simultaneously have a tendency; it can happen that you become arrogant. You think that your tribe, your community is the best, that your language is the best. This means everybody else is the worse, that your country is the best. You become soldiers. That's all right, to protect. You become dictators. You become tyrants. You become super nationalists of the kind which will go and conquer every other country, which is not yet conquered. This has happened all through history. There are few. It happens. This is the danger... and this is the danger against which many wise men have wondered, and I think we need to do something about it. I will go the extent of saying something else which may sound very strange to you. That sociologically there is that idea of the self and the other-

what is that? They are like me and they are not like me. They speak the same language and they don't speak the same language. They eat the same food; they don't ok... So them and us... between communities, between tribes, between countries, between races... this is not being wiped out. We know that it has not been wiped out even to present day education for most people. There are some for whom it is wiped out. But for most it is not. And one of the consequences of this is very very terrible. This consequence... Sir have I gone too long? Can I go on? Can I go on? I say just to you as a hypothesis not assertion. OK. The other three were assertion. This is hypothesis.

Now, hypothesis is the following- and if you begin to define these communities, these groups who live very peacefully together, who always like to speak the same language, laugh at the same joke, create jokes, beautiful music, and wonderful things. But if they are together, this together, this collectivity is developing a character which is similar to that of living organisms. Unless you are like living organisms, you don't give and take. You support each other, and all living organisms. I am talking of biological; all living organisms cannot be viable for long unless they have an internal security, and the security system given to most living organisms is their immune system. If any bacteria strike me, and there are God knows, large number of bacteria, which are helping us without whom we couldn't be...we couldn't live. But there are other who can really take over. Otherwise we will be gone and that is why our immune system fights that and protects us and that is why this auto immune disease occurred occasionally but this immune system is a fantastic thing. Now, if sociological immunity comes into operation and if the sociological groups then try to say, Oh! How we are being attacked, our honours are being reduced; Doordarshan gives our music and not their music and so on and so forth. There is a feeling of being somehow discriminated. Quite possible that a peculiar kind of intensified auto immune disease system come into operation, which can be converted by some people into a horrible... horrible thing, and that is terrorism. Sustained kind of thing to talk about is that it is hypothesis. But this is growing everywhere. Why...why...why it happens? I grew up in Punjab, in Pakistan. When I see a Pakistani, I feel like hugging. We speak the same language, we speak

everything the same. But the fact, that we got separated is something happens suddenly, and you again become enemies with time. Why don't know why? These things have to be addressed. You noticed what I am saying; it is not a simple thing, something very pretty and beautiful, from our genes, the affection all the wonderful ideas, religiosity and spirituality, whatever you talk about. This is part of being human. This comes and attached to this is the other aspect, which has been with us all through history. All your sagas you see, no matter which period you go- all the mythologies are full of this business, this Yagya, Rajasamitha Yagya and that Yagya. I am greater and I am bigger and so on and so forth. These are the things that are full of it now. To grow out of it- is it at all possible? And that is why I suggest to you- for me and for lot of people, many things which may have happened. Some for quite a while ago, many of them very recently in the sense last 50-100-200 years, as it might have been last 20-30 years. Do you know I can prove without fear of being disproved that, all of us sitting in this hall are cousins? Distant cousins but we are. I can prove your name any great men are of history. The greatest man of history, I can prove definitely, either he was the ancestor of all of us, or are ancestor of none. These are not empty talks. These we haven't realized as yet. In addition, I found that if I pour tea here, from a jug and use certain dynamics. I tilted the Kettle like this; the tea comes in a certain way and falls in the cup. The child can do it and there is a lot of vital information in that. Why did not fall there or here? But, the remarkable thing is not only I understand this. That's the same technique which I used here and it can be used here, it can be used there, can be used in Delhi. It is something that it doesn't matter where you are? That is the universality. Same way, working of all laws which control us, which control the growth of flowers and beautiful things at the base, they are here, they are everywhere. There is a fantastic deep unity; amazing unity and it is very hard to find any difference in that. It is only not that, but the same laws operate on the moon. We have sent a mission to the moon. There were not people sitting around praying, saying, *'let the rocket please go to the moon'*. They had to worry, giving the same laws, same pushes, at the right places; so it starts going round the moon at 100 kilometers. Not only the moon, the sun, the stars, the whole Universe, and to the extent we say, look the stuff we are made of was cooked sometime in the middle of a star and dispersed out of which

new star happened, or a sun happened, or earth happened. Areh! Isse Zyda rishte kya mangte ho? What more do you ask for, and how much it is ingrained as such? I am not talking about understanding it all. All this should make a difference, which is bit intellectual understanding; bit romantic understanding. A deep...almost spiritual feeling of a different kind, which doesn't have a brand name! Do I have the right to ask those questions which are too tough to reply? Why don't we...why don't we have a right to ask questions which are tough? I think they have perfect right to ask that question, and a perfect right to make you feel foolish because, you can't answer them. Then they occurred to you, you didn't ask when you didn't know how to answer them. But you can try... and you find that, when your try these in terms of example, in terms of ways of thinking, it is a fantastic joy! Let me give you one or two questions, and you spend time answering.

A child asked some years ago- I recorded my voice on a cassette God and I listened to it, and it didn't sound like me. Is that correct or not? Have you had that experience any of you? Even you record your voice, on a recorder and listen to it, it doesn't sound like you. Is that correct or not? You have even forgotten that. So, I went to a School and I asked the teacher, Teacher! It doesn't sound like me, when I recorded and listened, but my friend says it is my voice, and I sing very well. How does it happen? And the teachers answer was, come on, no need to know. Sit down! And I happen to encounter lot of teachers, the day I ask them, please, tell me frankly, didn't you have this particular experience? They say, yes Sir! But did you know, that when you ask your teacher, some said yes! But were you told, no need to know, sit down. And we propagate this all the time...and it's easy after a time to find out, you ask a child, to close its ears, and speak and then you say did you hear yourself? Child said yes! But thik nai hain...it is a different kind of a sound. So, what happens is, when you record your voice, you get the sound which others hear? But when you are speaking, then you hear a sound which other hear, plus the sound which comes to you internally through conduction. And the two combinations are very different. Then it occurred to me, that this probably is the cause. Are there any musicians here? People who sing, there must be. Gaate kaun hain? Eh! Please you are too grown up. Children usually raise their hands. Eidhar! Some one of you who

sing? No! I won't ask you to sing, I want you to listen and see whether what I am saying has a meaning. It occurred to me, that quite often you see, vocal musicians when they sing they have a tendency to put one hand in the ear. Is that correct or not?

Audience- Yes!

Haa, woh kon tha? Must, be a child.

[Haa, who was that?]

Audience- Hahaha Hahaha...

So, I framed a hypothesis, that when a person put a hand in his ear, what unconsciously, he or she is trying to do, is pay more attention to the voice which is conducted from inside. Because, that is not affected by the acoustics, and he or she has realized that if it does then, somehow the music comes out better. So, I put this hypothesis, to a daughter of a friend of mine. I said Neena, this is my hypothesis about this. That's why musicians do this.

Ahhh, Uncle aab samaj mein ayah. [Ahhh, Uncle, I get to understand it now]

Maine kaha kya samajk mein ayah. Bolu Hindi ek, Hindi mein.

[I asked what did you understand. Can I speak in Hindi]

Audience- Yes.

Kehti hain, ki jab mein riyaj kaarti thi naa, to Khan Sahab kehte the, Gaadhi, Kaan mein, ruih dal lein phir riyaj kaar.

[Started to say, that when I used to practice, then Khan Sahab used to tell me, Donkey, put cotton in your ear, and then start practicing]

So, then you will hear, the voice comes only from outside. You see the connection emerging out of physics, electronics, amplification, theory of sound, physiology, and any cultural trait.

Aah this is so beautiful. Kon jawab dega isska? [ Who will answer this query]

And we don't do that. This has happened in the present day world. Many things are so interlinked with each other, and we have expert, experts, experts and experts. Kisi ek ka kaam nahin hota [ None of us can get our work done]; and the experts really people who are merely experts. I am sorry, can often be very very dangerous, because, they can be only used, by somebody else, who has no expertise at all, and this is happening all the time.

So, coming finally! Chowdhury Sahib, you probably didn't want me to go this long, just last part. And these days, are there any reporters here. Press Hain? Haaa?

Haa, hain naa. [ Yes, we are here.]

You may have something, but I will think about it today. Not what I have said. But I am going to say now. It happened to me at a moment, on a Committee, to advice the Government, on a renovation and regimentation of higher education. I think we are more than half way through our work, and I am letting out a secret to you. Higher education at the moment is managed by some organization, UGC; AICTE; Central University; also there are Central government, State Government, and Agriculture is separate, medicine is separate. Today all kinds of fields are separate. I think part of the reason is that even while we administratively look at these things, we look at them as separate entities. If somebody wants to work together on something which belongs in Engineering, in Science and Social Science, it is pretty hard to get a project like that, put together. So, we are looking at some aspects of how to moderate these, in terms of Counsel to support it. But let's have a railroad, a single council of higher education, which includes Engineering and Science and philosophy, everything, languages in principal. And there is a rail road running from top that if anybody, of any Institution works together and law incidentally also...and work together and find out together from each other, that there are no impediments. That there are least number of impediments, and furthermore let's think in terms of the University, in the organizational level...in terms of a curriculum framework, where the boundaries between disciplines are poorest. That, you can go from one discipline to the other- redefine Physics and Chemistry and Biology and Social Science. You can take any combination of courses and you can go one to the other, define differently. Don't have rigidly defined the

disciplines. Coaching classes' bhi muskil ho jayegi. [ Coaching classes will also be difficult]. That's precisely the objective. Tution dia he to tumhe maine. [I have sent you to tuition]. To give a concrete example, this will probably be understood better, and without having to say very much. One of our recommendations were- I have talked already quite a bit, is that prestigious institutions like Indian Institute of Technology, should expand and become like great Universities, with large number of subjects. They still make all themselves- Institutes of Technology, as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, call itself. But they shouldn't confine themselves only to undergraduate Engineering Education is concerned. Limiting, wasting the time of some of our brightest children without allowing them to flower, and do things which they could do otherwise, and that will make their future much better, other than confining people much too much all the time. That is Universities otherwise in principle should come out as Universal knowledge. It should be connected with the ground, the subjects are to be connected with each other, should be possible to take any combination; should be possible to learn. Even, some people have learnt through their fingers, and back apply to Agriculture, apply to health, and apply to everywhere in totality. Can we move in that direction? All the recommendations come out, but this is basically the direction which are there at the moment in the interim report, which is not been presented here. I think this is the first time, I have talked about here in this Hall. Thank you very much, for being so patient, with this wide ranging thing, where I am saying consider children also to be your teachers, all the time... your teachers in terms of observations, in terms of what is important. Don't consider them as been slates to write on. Similarly, when you are working with farmers, don't consider them only as targets to whom knowledge has to be given. Farmers can be collaborators, of the people in Agricultural Institutes, and if we move in that particular direction, it is possible that there might be able to create a new type of country, and a new type of work. Thank you very much Sir, thank you for giving me this opportunity of talking to all these wonderful people. Thank you!