Prof. G. RAM REDDY MEMORIAL LECTURE 2022



Four Decades of India's First Open University Through the Past into the Future

By

Prof. V.S. Prasad
Formerly Vice Chancellor (Acting),
IGNOU, Vice-Chancellor, BRAOU &
Director, NAAC

Organised by

Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University,

Prof.G.Ram Reddy Marg, Road No. 46,
Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad (TS) 500 033

About Dr. BRAOU

The University, initially known as Andhra Pradesh Open University, was set up on 26th August 1982 through an Act of the A.P.State Legislature (APOU Act 1982). Subsequently the University was renamed as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University on 26th October,1991. The establishment of this University, the first of its kind in India, heralded and era of affirmative action on the part of the Government of Andhra Pradesh to provide opportunities of higher education to all sections of society to meet the changing individual and social needs. The University is providing services to the student community through a wide network of 179 study centres spread across both Telangana & Andhra Pradesh States, including 23 Regional Co-ordination centres and 11centres exclusively meant for women students. Prison inmates under life sentence also enrol themselves as students and pursue education through exclusive study centres at Central Prison - Cherlapally, Warangal, Rajahmundry, Visakhapatnam, Kadapa and Nellore and exclusive Study Centre for Army Personal and their family members, which was located at AOC, Secunderabad. The University offers Certificates, UG, PG Diploma and PG Degree and Research Programmes in including various Professional Programmes.

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- Prof. V.S. Prasad

"Yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream"
- Khalil Gibran

Introductory Remarks

I am thankful to Prof K. Seetharama Rao, Vice-Chancellor of the University, for giving me the opportunity to deliver Prof. G. Ram Reddy Memorial Lecture, in this momentous occasion of celebrations of four decades of India's first Open University. I have had the privilege of associating with this University for these four decades; first two decades as an internal staff member in different positions and next two decades as external associate in various ways. I am also fortunate to live long and active enough to participate in the forty years celebration of the University. Let me congratulate Prof. Seetharama Rao and his Team for many new initiatives on this occasion. Presently the University is also in the process of self-evaluation of its performance as a preparation for external assessment and accreditation by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). It is the right time to reflect on our four decades experience. It is also an opportunity to pay our respects to Prof. G. Ram Reddy and to all others who have contributed to the development of the University during the last four decades. Prof. G. Ram Reddy, the founder Vice Chancellor and a legendary in the field of Open Distance Learning (ODL), has laid the sustainable foundations of the new system. He has inducted me into this new system which gave me many career opportunities and life enriching experiences. I am proud of association with and inspiration from Prof. G. Ram Reddy. I join all of you in paying my respects to him on the occasion of his birth anniversary.

Look Back to Look Forward

We look back to past to understand the present and plan for the future. The study of institutional history helps us, if properly appreciated, in today's institutional decisions of what to do and what not to do. John Dewey, perceptively observers that education is **"a process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences"**. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (here in after referred to as BRAOU or the University) has the rich tradition of action studies on its experiences and on ODL first under the aegis of **'Centre for Evaluation'** and later from 2001 by **Prof. G. Ram Reddy Research Academy in Distance Education (GRADE)**. The University has the distinction of having a dedicated unit for evaluation studies on distance education. The University also has another distinction of being the most explored research site on ODL. More than 20 scholars have undertaken research on different aspects of functioning of the University leading to M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. More than a hundred research studies were conducted and a large number of articles on the working of the University were published in journals and presented in workshops and seminars. These studies provide a rich **knowledge resource** to draw meaningful lessons from past practices, useful for future actions.

This University to my knowledge is the only Open University in India to undertake a research project on impact study of institutional experiences. The study was sponsored by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on the occasion of Di-Decennial celebration of the University in 2002. My-self and Prof. V. Venkaiah, the then Director, GRADE were the researchers of the project and the study was published by the University in 2005 under the title: **"India's First Open University: Experience of Two Decades"**. The Important parameters considered in the study include; access and equity, flexibility, innovation, quality and relevance. It is worth examining the feasibility of extending this study to four decades experience and impact. The COL may be approached for support to the study as extension of time-series study of institutional impact.

During the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of University in 2007, the '**Centre for Social Empowerment'** led by Prof. Ghanta Chakrapani, (present Director, Academic) has brought out success stories of BRAOU learners under the title **'Memu Saitam'**. It is a good work of inspiring stories of struggles and extraordinary achievements of learners inspite of many social disadvantages. The University may continue the publication of **'Success Stories Series'** to authenticate its legitimate claims as a '**University with a difference'**.

The Focus of the Lecture

Now I have moved from the life of action to life of reflection. Today, in this lecture I propose to reflect on four decades of India's first Open University journey through the past into the future. The focus of discussion includes a brief narration of the trajectory of experiences, the significant contributions and a few observations on the next phase of the University. My focus here is more on events and lessons than on individuals and their contributions. In this long journey of four decades, certainly individuals have made a very significant contribution and deserve all appreciation and gratitude. But in the exercise of learning from experiences, it is more appropriate to reflect on collective wisdom, collective contributions and may be also on collective limitations. We are what we are today is because of these collective strengths and limitations. Recognition of this **'collective spirit'** is the right way to move forward. Here a qualifier is necessary. These are my subjective reflections. It is quite possible to draw different conclusions from past experience with different perspectives. I have reflected on the institutional experience from the perspective of realisation of basic premises and values of the Open University system. In my understanding the foundational goal of the University is **'to provide inclusive quality higher education and lifelong learning to large numbers at affordable costs, overcoming the limitations of time and space'.** We should try to draw meaning of our experience from this broad perspective of foundational goal of the University.

The Trajectory

The four decades of trajectory may be broadly divided into two phases of The Early Years or the First Phase (from 1982 to 1993) and The Campus Years or the Second Phase (from 1994 to Present). The first phase of early years is a period of excitement, experimentation and uncertainty. During this period, the University functioned from a rented accommodation in Somajiguda and surrounding areas in Hyderabad. The Campus Years of the Second Phase begins in 1994, with the shifting of University to its own campus in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad. The Second Phase is the phase of growth, consolidation and development. Below is a brief overview of important developments in these two phases.

The Early Years (1982-93): The Tipping Points

Let me start the discussion by raising the question of why the first Open University was established in Andhra Pradesh, not in any other state or at the national level. Malcolm Gladwell's 'The Tipping Point' idea, i.e., the moment of threshold or a boiling point resulting in significant social event, may provide a partial answer to this question.

At the national level the idea of starting an Open University has been under consideration since December, 1970. It was in that year that the Ministry of Education has organized a Seminar under the Chairmanship of Prof. D.S. Kothari. Later in 1970s a project report was prepared by a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. G. Pardhasarathy. But nothing has happend at the National Level till 1985. At the State level in 1978, the then Education Minister Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram, based on discussion with Prof. G. Ram Reddy, the then Vice Chancellor of Osmania University, evinced a keen interest in the concept of Open University. There was a change in the Ministry at the State level in February 1982 and the then Education Minister Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram become the Chief Minister. This was the tipping point for the establishment of Open University in Andhra Pradesh. He was in position of Chief Ministership only for a short period between February to September 1982. During that short period he has taken all

steps for the establishment of Open University with the active academic support of Prof. G. Ram Reddy. The University was inaugurated by the then President of India Mr. Gyani Jail Singh on 26th August at Nagarjunasagar. Though the political necessity to find ways of meeting the increasing social demand for higher education, desire to make higher education the cost effective and the example of British Open University in the use of technology for education are the major driving forces for the establishment of first Open University, the tipping point or the threshold moment was the Chief Ministership of Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram. At that time the Chief Minster also has decided to locate its headquarters at Nagarjunasagar and got it inaugurated at that place.

There was a change in the Ministry in September 1982 and Mr. K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, became the Chief Minister and Prof. G. Ram Reddy was appointed as Vice-Chancellor in November, 1982. Prof. G. Ram Reddy could persuade the new Chief Minister on the desirability of making Hyderabad as the University Headquarters in view of better connectivity and the availability of wide range of educational and technological resources. The Government being convinced of the reasons, has made Hyderabad, the headquarters of the University. The wise decision of the then Government made a significant difference in the functioning of the University. In India we have examples of many Open Universities facing locational disadvantages, because of political decision on headquarters location. The tipping point for the change of headquarters of University from Nagarjunasagar to Hyderabad was the change of Chief Ministership. That is how we are in Hyderabad today. The wisdom of political masters and the coincidence of many contextual factors contributed for the establishment of first University in Andhra Pradesh and its location in Hyderabad. It is the beginning of a new phase in higher education in India.

The University has started its operations in November, 1982 with the appointment of first Vice Chancellor on 18th November, 1982. Its operations initially have started, in a private rented building with two persons; Vice Chancellor and his PA brought on deputation from

Osmania University. Later in 1983, the University was shifted to a Government building in Somajiguda and started its under-graduate academic programmes of B.A., B.Com and B.Sc in 1983-84. It is a record in the Open Universities' history that a University could start its academic operations within six months of its establishment. Launching Science degree programme through distance mode was a bold initiative at that point of time. The University in 1985, first time in ODL system has launched a professional programme in Library and Information Science, another bold initiative at that time. In 1993, another professional programme, Master of Business Administration was launched. Initially the University has started functioning with a few academic staff, mostly brought on deputation from other Universities and a small number of support staff appointed on contract basis. The staff was initially engaged in multiple tasks, blurring the distinctions of academic and administrative tasks. In later years regular academic and administrative staff was recruited. Most of the academic staff recruited in the early period had some experience in conventional system, which brought more credibility and experience to the operations of the Open University system.

During the 11 years early phase, the University mostly functioned from rented accommodation in Somajiguda and launched a number of programmes, developed a network of student support services and most importantly designed and developed quality self learning materials. Large number of distinguished academics and practitioners were engaged in the development of self learning materials and staff of conventional colleges was engaged in providing learner services. The University has tried to reach to large numbers at minimum costs by extensively using the available educational resources of the conventional system. The internal staff and external resource persons' enthusiasm of participating in a new experiment of democratization of education helped the University to overcome many limitations of physical, financial and human resources. Another significant development in early years of the University is re-naming of the University as Dr. B.R Ambedkar Open University in 1991, on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar's birth centenary.

The Campus Years (1994 to Present): The Development Phase

The present campus location and subsequent developments have their own tipping points. Initially, Government allotted around 120 acres of land at Vanasthalipuram, the outskirts of eastern part of Hyderabad. Prof. C. Narayana Reddy, the then Vice Chancellor and Prof. V. Nagaraja Naidu, the then Registrar have used their contacts with the then Chief Minister Mr. N.T. Rama Rao and others who matter in Government for allotment of the 54 acres of Government land at Jubilee Hills to the University. Prof. C. Narayana Reddy rythemic style used to say that we have moved the University from **'Vanasthalipuram to Janasthalipuram'**. This is another tipping point in the evolving life of the institution. The foundation stone for the new campus was laid by Mr. N.T. Rama Rao on 1st June 1986. It took nearly 8 years for construction of new buildings in the campus. Prof. S. Bashiruddin the then Vice Chancellor (1992 - 95) ably assisted by Er. V. Raghavan, Consultant and technical advisor (retired Chief Engineer R&B, Govt. of AP) and internal engineering team led by Er. B. Lakshmi Prasad, gave a big push to the process of completion of construction of buildings and shifting to the new campus in 1994. The new campus was inaugurated on 31st August, 1994 by the then Prime Minister of India Mr. P.V, Narasimha Rao, heralding a new chapter in the life of the University.

The period from 1994 to present is a period of growth and consolidation. In 1994-95, the first academic year in the new campus started with the total enrolment of 55,018, an impressive increase in 11 years from 6231 in 1983-84. Around 15 academic programmes were offered with around 400 regular and contract teaching and non-teaching staff. Over the periods the enrolment increased and crossed the mark of one lakh (1,28,391) in 2002-03 becoming a mega Open University (as categorized by Sir John Daniel). Now the COL is advocating mega Universities to become giga Universities. The 2002, as a mark of 20 years of successful functioning, the University has celebrated Di-Decennial celebration. During that period many initiatives were taken for consolidation, quality improvement and

streamlining the operating system. In 2002, the University was offering around 30 programmes including post-graduation, professional and research programmes with around 500 academic and administrative staff, both regular and contractual. In 2002 – 03, the University has taken many steps to strengthen student support services (SSS) including the creation of 23 Regional Coordination Centres (RCCs), one at every district headquarters. In most of the places the University has constructed its own buildings in Government College Campuses to house the RCCs. The earlier two tier structure of student support system became a three tier system with middle type of RCC playing a very important coordination, monitoring and guidance function of Study Centres under their jurisdiction. This cost effective structural arrangement of SSS is an innovative arrangement for optimum use of available resources. From the beginning the University is focusing on having a well networked system of learner support services provided through a network of study centres, located in conventional colleges with tutorial and counseling services being provided by conventional college teachers as part-time Academic Counsellors. At present the University has a network around 180 Study Centres with around 4500 Academic Counsellors providing tutorial services to BRAOU learners.

During the last two decades from 2002 to 2022, the University has launched many new programmes in new areas and entered into collaboration with many agencies to offer new educational programmes to working population. The **Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA)** is in place since 2010 and is engaged in many quality related activities. Earlier the GRADE, under its Quality Assurance Cell has prepared many booklets on quality which are being used by different operating units to improve their quality. In 2017, the University has introduced Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) and semester system in B.A, B.Com and B.Sc. programmes. The annual enrolment reached the highest number of 1,91,367 in 2010-11 academic year. In current academic year 2022-23, the total enrolment is around 1,15,000 in 41 programmes, being offered by 5 faculties and 21 Departments. It may be noted that the academic and administrative staff, both permanent

and contractual have come-down to around 200. The depletion of human resources is a matter of concern. The total receipts of the University in 2021-22 financial year was around 76 crores, of which around 84 percent is from student fee, making it a student financed institution. During the same period 40 percent expenditure was on salaries and pensions and around 60 percent was on learning resources, student services and administration.

In last three decades after shifting to the new campus, there is an impressive development in the physical infrastructure of the University. In 1994, the new campus has buildings, with built-up areas of two lakhs square feet. During the last 30 years many new buildings were added and now it has build-up area of around four lakhs square feet. This good infrastructure and beautiful campus with natural boulders in a centrally located place is a great opportunity for the University to become an educational and cultural hub of Hyderabad. The good infrastructure itself can be a good stimulus for future growth of the University.

The Significant Contribution

There are many things, past and present, that makes the University proud. These include:

- **An Inspiring Example**

  The University through its open mission practices, programmed learning resources, strong network of learner support systems and reliable student evaluation systems became an inspiring example in ODL. The University, through its credible operations has contributed significantly to change the negative image of ODL, a result of unhealthy practices in correspondence education, which is in practice in India from 1962. Many Open Universities established after 1982, including Indira Gandhi National Open University (1985) have built their institutional systems and practices noting from the experience of first Open University. The University has a visible and credible national and international presence. The COL close association with this University during

the last forty years is an indication of its international reputation. The people associated with this University in various capacities, are playing important roles in national and international ODL institutions in various ways.

- **Innovative Practices**

  The University has the distinction of introducing many academic innovations during the last forty years. The University in 1983-84, has made multidisciplinary Foundation Courses in social science, science and languages, compulsory to all Undergraduate students. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is prominently advocating for multidisciplinary education. The University has allowed the students in 1983-84 itself to have flexible choice of subjects across the disciplines. The NEP 2020 has recommended this system under the scheme of Academic Bank of Credit (ABC). The University has pioneered the offering of science and professional programmes through ODL mode, which are subsequently followed by many other Open Universities and dual mode ODL institutions. Initially there was formidable resistance from conventional system for offering science programmes in OU mode. Prof. S. Brahmaji Rao, distinguished professor of Chemistry with wide experience in conventional system and good academic reputation, led the team of science faculty in the University and designed and developed a credible system of science teaching through ODL. In subsequent years the University has built multimedia science labs for development of lab kits and virtual labs for science practicals. The COVID-19 phase has legitamised the use of technology in education and NEP-2020 has recommended the use of ODL and online modes of education for providing all types of programmes, validating the initiatives of the University.

  Recently (2022) the UGC has advised Universities to engage persons with rich experience in professional areas as **'Professor of Practice'** to make the professional programmes more practice oriented. The University has adapted this practices in 1980s itself

and engaged reputed practitioners as consultants to design and develop professional programmes. In 1980s the University has launched Library Science and Public Relations programmes under the guidance of reputed practitioners like Mr. B.P. Shenoy (the then chief librarian of Osmania University) Dr. C.V. Narasimha Reddy, (retired Director, Public Relations, Govt. of AP) and a few others as professors of practice, though not named them as such. The NEP 2020 is strongly advocating for higher education including professional education in mother tongue. The University has started from the beginning offering undergraduate programmes and a few professional programmes in both regional language Telugu and English medium and a few programmes in Urdu medium. The University is also offering a few post-graduate programmes in Telugu medium. The University has also departed from the traditional way of teaching Telugu language at undergraduate level and introduced innovative pedagogy in developing communication skills of students.

The University has developed multimedia self-learning materials in both print and non-print form. The printed learning materials of the University were developed with great care by involving well reputed academics and practitioners. These learning materials are extensively used by conventional University students and teachers. The University has recently made them available to persons appearing for competitive examinations. In this way the University has made a significant contribution to the knowledge resources of the community. The University is also extensively using Audio-Visual programme in teaching-learning from the beginning. The University has the distinction of first University to have a dedicated Unit for audio-visual programmes. The All India Radio, Doordarshan, YouTube are being used for providing direct to home learning services. Technology is being used in teaching-learning, student support services, student evaluation and system management. The admissions are made online and web based learner support services are provided. Digital On Screen Evaluation

System (DOSES) is used for evaluation of answer scripts. The University has put in place the OER policy and OER repository (braouvidyaghani). The University is also engaged in development of MOOCs and e-learning portal. Recognizing the importance of online education, the University has established a dedicated unit **'Centre for Online Learning'**, for design, development and delivery of online education. These initiatives indicate that the University is aware of importance of new media and responding to the changing times. The University from the beginning is focusing on including vocational courses in the curriculum of various programmes. The University has established in 2016, **Centre for Skill Development and Career Planning** to drive the development of more skill oriented Courses / Programmes with collaborations and partnerships and to provide guidance in career planning.

The University, on the occasion of forty years celebrations has initiated many community engagements / outreach programmes under faculty forums. These include: Sarvathrika Samajika Vedika (Social Sciences); Vanijya Vahini (Commerce); Science Awareness and Extension (Sciences); Vignana Vedika (Education) and Language and Literary Forum (Arts)

- **Reaching the Unreached**

During the last four decades the University has the distinction of providing access to inclusive quality higher education to large numbers. The University is continuously striving to reach the unreached. The University adopted open admission policy for admissions to undergraduate programmes from the beginning mainly influenced by British Open University example. During the last 38 years (1983 to 2020), under the open admission scheme thousands of students were admitted, who were earlier not qualified for higher education. Those who successfully completed their graduation under this scheme are in important positions in public life, public services and pursuing higher studies. Many other Open Universities and other ODL institutions have followed the example

of the first Open University. Unfortunately, this socially useful innovative practice was discontinued by ODL institutions in India on the directions of University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC in this decision might have been guided by its desire to have parity in admission policy with conventional system. This requirement negates the OUs basic premise of openness to people.

The University has the distinction of providing higher education to larger number of socially disadvantaged groups. In 2021-22, academic year out of total annual enrolment of 125463 students, 86.7 percent belong to SC, ST and OBC groups, 62.9 percent are from rural areas and 45.6 percent are women. Broadly this represents the social group representation in student enrolment during the last five years. This is a commendable achievement. The University is also providing educational opportunities to specially targeted groups like prisoners, security forces, persons with disabilities and transgender learners.

A Few Steps into The Future

The four decades of University celebration is an opportunity not only to reflect on our experience, but also is an occasion to plan for our future. Deep thinking and planning is necessary to identify the pathways of forward journey. These may include:

- **Understanding the Changing Context**

  Understanding the changing context is empowerment. When we are looking to past experiences to understand the present, we should be equally aware of the **'emerging context'**. We are living in a world of unprecedented transformations. We should be able to contextualize our experience with national and international development with 'open mind' open-to new ways of looking at things. The University is an institutional learning activity and the COL is rightly focusing on ODL institutional role in learning for development, leading to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.

In the Post COVID-19 and Post NEP 2020, many changes have been taking place in the world of education in India. Technology use has become a more legitimate activity in education. It is a happy development for Open University system. But a word of caution is also necessary. Y.N. Herari, rightly warns that if we are not clear of purpose of technology use, we, may find ourselves more in serving the technology instead of technology serving us. He further, perceptively observes that, '**humans are always far better in inventing tools than in using them wisely'.** Experts are rightly warning the commercial interests of technology firms directing the world of education. The technology can provide right answers only if we understand the education problems and requirements correctly. The Open Universities (OUs) in future may have to compete with the online commercial education platforms and ventures in the provision of online education. Interestingly out of 18 OUs in India, 17 Open Universities are in public sector. In public universities the education is a public good and technology is a tool for promotion of public good. The OUs may be caught in the two competing worlds of technology for public good and technology for profit. In addition the Government is planning to establish 'Digital University'. I am not sure of its implications to the OUs. The world of education is moving from physical space to cyber space. Not everything is going to be good. We must be able to learn and adapt what is good in these developments and also develop skills and capabilities to survive and grow in the new context.

The NEP 2020, has suggested a new regulatory framework of **'light but tight'** to ensure integrity, transparency and resource efficiency of the educational system. A great ideal, but the ground experience of OUs is different. In many ways the regulatory systems are becoming more centralized and discriminatory to ODL systems. We are in the framework of **'not to do anything unless permitted'** in contrast to a liberal frame of **'doing everything unless restricted'**. The OUs distinction is its flexibility and the

regulatory parameters are to be tested from their appropriateness to ensure the flexibility of the system. Now the regulatory systems focus is more on ensuring uniformity and accountability. There is a need to ensure balance in multiple goals of regulations, keeping the interest of diverse institutional systems and objectives. The universities have a dual function of adapting to changing conditions and also working for change of circumstances. They are presently mostly struggling to adapt to circumstances and lost their will and capacity to struggle for change of circumstances.

- **Access with Success and Relevance of Programmes**

  The University, as mentioned earlier, has an impressive record in ensuring access to higher education to a large number of socially disadvantaged groups and special categories of learners. The same cannot be said of successful completion of programmes by them. Out of millions of students enrolled in last forty years, only 499036 got degrees in last 24 convocations, the latest being held on 06.08.2022. The success rate is very low. Though the ODL is cost-effective from access perspective, it may be costly from the perspective of the costs of degrees. Increasing efforts should be made to increase the success rate of students enrolled in University. The focus now has to be shifted **from access to access with success**. The student success is viewed as successful completion of programme, leading to award of degrees resulting in student acquiring the knowledge, skills and competencies which are personally, professionally and socially useful. We are not sure whether all our programmes are resulting in student success from this perspective. Programmes relevance is another concern. The University popular programmes are undergraduate programmes in Arts, Commerce and Science constituting 80 percent of learners in 2022-23. The University may have to diversify its programmes by adding new age demand driven programmes for employability and livelihoods. The general education programmes may have to be redesigned to make them more employable and life skills development programmes. The University may also offer more

short duration and add on courses to upgrade the knowledge and skills of working population. The University, with its rich experience in provision of undergraduate education, may examine the feasibility of offering four year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme for the holistic multidisciplinary education. The teaching-learning strategies need to be strengthened by integration of Pedagogy (teacher-centric) Andragogy (learner focused) and Heutagogy (independent learning) and synergy of multiple modes with more flexibility in practices. The learner support services needs further strengthening by using new technologies to improve the success rate of learners. More sustainable practices of quality assurance should be in place to make the system more resilient and socially relevant.

- **Capacity – Building of Institution and Staff**

  It is said that in conventional system teacher teaches and in ODL the institution teaches. The institutional efficiency is the defining element of institutional success in ODL. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015-2030, Goal 16) advocates the necessity of building **effective, accountable and inclusive** institutions to achieve the sustainable goals. There is a need to enhance the institutional capacities of OUs to realize their vision and mission. The OUs administrative systems also are suffering from some of the common ailments of Indian administration. Some critics characterize of Indian administration model as **'Khumbakarna Governance Model'** - most of the time sleeping over problems. What we require in ODL is **'Ram Governance Model'** - a model practiced by Prof. G. Ram Reddy and Prof. Ram G. Takwale as Vice Chancellors of Open Universities. This is a tested model in Open University governance. The important features of the model include: leading by example, identifying, nurturing and encouraging talent, enabling and recognizing performance and networking for institutional development. The

operating systems, in this model, are driven by **integrity**, **sense of purpose** and **pragmatic wisdom**.

The **'Ram Governance Model'**, empowers the staff to contribute their best to the realization of institutional goals. During the last forty years the University has had its quota of internal conflicts, maladjustment of roles, ego clashes and work shirking. These are common ailments of institutions, integral of group activities. The wisdom of leadership lies in converting the clashes over positions and powers to **'constructive conflicts'** over institutional development paths. Results base management systems, continuous upgradation of skills and capacities of staff and putting in place systems of performance recognition and rewards may result in staff engagement in constructive institution building activities. The experience shows that if the governance model is good, everything falls in place.

Concluding Observations

Institutional history is the study of change over time, to free from the past burdens and embark on a new path through the culture of innovations. The past experience should help us to build a more resilient institutional systems and practices appropriate to **emerging context**. In Indian distance education we have passed through stages of Correspondence Education (1962-1982), Open University / Open Distance Learning (1982 – to present) and entering into the phase of Digital University / Online Learning / Blended Learning. The distinct feature of our system is the co-existence of all forms of distance education in practice. The Open Universities are becoming multimodal and increasing convergence between distance and campus learning. In this fast changing context we have to **'reimagine our experience'** and engage in **'intelligent action'**. The University has an **'institutional dharma'** of realization of social transformative vision of education. We have

to continuously strive to reduce the gap between our **Dharma** (goals) and our **Karma** (actions). Let us resolve to move forward to realize our Dharma with **'Ram Governance Model'**. This is the best way to pay our tributes to Prof. G. Ram Reddy and realize the educational vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

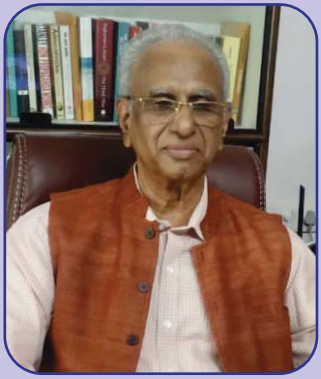
"Open Universities must refresh, rethink and redesign their policies and processes to embark on a new path through a culture of innovation"

- Prof. Asha Kanwar, President COL

Thanking you all

PROFESSOR V.S.PRASAD

Brief Bio-Data



- Professor V. S. Prasad was born in 1943 in a small village, Mahadevapuram in Khammam District of Telangana, India. He obtained his Masters and Ph.D in Public Administration from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India
- Prof V. S. Prasad is known for his contribution to Open and Distance Learning and Quality Assurance. During his more than four decades of academic life, held many academic and educational leadership positions which include Professor of Public Administration; Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Acting Vice-Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University; Vice-Chancellor of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University and Director of National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
- Prof. Prasad is an internationally recognized expert in the field of Open and Distance Learning. The Commonwealth of Learning, in recognition of his services to ODL honoured him with the award of "Fellow of Commonwealth of Learning". Prof. Prasad headed the Project of Government of Mauritius as Project Director, Open University of Mauritius from January 2009 to June 2010, for the establishment of Open University in Mauritius.
- Prof. Prasad as a Quality Assurance Professional, headed India's premier Quality Assurance Agency i.e., National Assessment and Accreditation Council(NAAC) as Director(2003-2008) and also actively associated with the activities of International Quality Assurance Agencies.
- Presently, Prof. Prasad is engaged in the study and advocacy activities in Higher Education, particularly in areas of Open and Distance Learning and Quality Assurance.
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