

G. Ram Reddy

1930-1995



G. Ram Reddy was a visionary who took the most radical educational idea of the 20th century, the idea of an open university, and shaped it for India. Later, he came up with the idea of making a record of living history, the first days of some open universities. The vision and commitment of those who were the first leaders was remarkable: Dr. Gottfried Leibbrant (Founding President of the Open University of the Netherlands) insisted that quality was non-negotiable; Prof. Otto Peters led a creative venture to establish German Fernuniversitat (Distance Teaching) and Prof. Reddy brought together personal integrity, vision and leadership in India's open university system.

Professor Reddy was born in the Nizam's Dominion where educational opportunities were fewer than those available in other parts of colonial India. He was one of the very few from his district to attend high school and college. Obtaining his MA from the Osmania University, Hyderabad. Professor Reddy did further graduate studies at the London School of Economics before joining Osmania as a lecturer in public administration in 1959. His devotion to teaching and research ensured him to full professorship within a decade.

In 1977, at the age of 48, he became the Vice-Chancellor of the Osmania University. He distinguished himself as a scholar in public policy studies and it placed him in commanding heights—the Chairmanship of University Grants Commission (UGC) and Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). As a Chairman of UGC, he took initiatives to establish and nurture many institutions and piloted the establishment of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) which was the first of its kind in the South Asian region. He founded India's first Open University, the Andhra Pradesh Open University (now, known as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

Open University) in 1982. The Government of India felt the need of the networking of open education system and requested him to prepare the groundwork for the establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University. He was the chairman of the Centre for Economic and Social Studies from 1989 to 1995.

Professor Reddy's role on the global distance education was significant. He was elected as the first Secretary General of the Association of Asian Open Universities and was an active member of the international Council for Distance Education .As an eminent educationist, planner and administrator, he was invited to be associated with the establishment of The Commonwealth of Learning (COL). He was a member of both the Briggs and Daniel committees and later, India's representative of COL's founding Board of Governors. He was so deeply associated with the COL that he was requested to join as its first Vice-President in 1989. He served the COL with his devotion and great missionary zeal.

In fact, the way Prof. Reddy brought about the ideal of greater access to education through wide acceptance of distance learning, had been recognized by the COL and International Council for Distance Education (ICDE). Thus, he became one of the first recipients of the COL-ICDE Award of Excellence at ICDE conference in Birmingham where he was also honoured as a life member of ICDE. But, it was indeed, an irony of fate that he, who received such honours just few days left to June 1995, was no more in the land of living within days of receiving these honours.

The deep relationship between UGC and ISI was further strengthened during the Chairmanship of Prof. Reddy. He came to deliver the 28th Annual Convocation Address of the institute on February 11, 1994. The theme of his topics was the nexus between development and education.

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