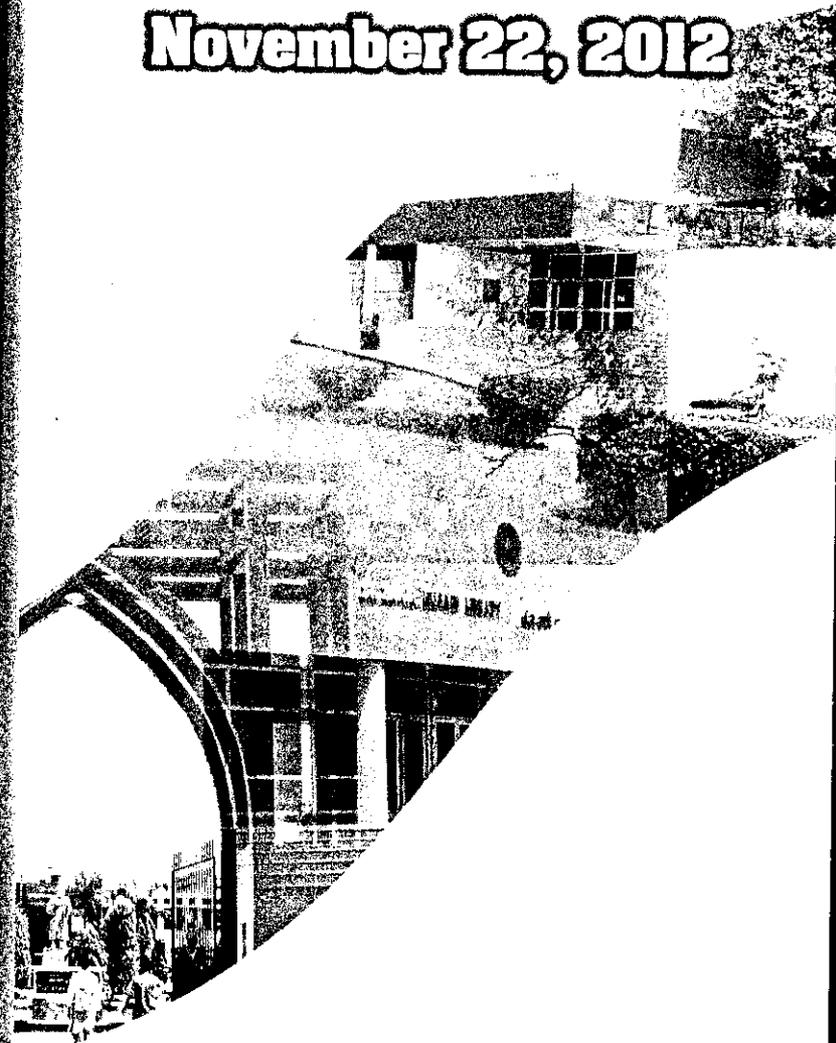




Vice-Chancellor's Address

**Annual Convocation
November 22, 2012**



Jonio Millio Tolentino

A university convocation is a time to formally acknowledge the academic achievement of its graduating student body. So we are here today to celebrate the fierce intelligence, the unremitting effort and the years of fun and togetherness that have helped you qualify for your hard-won degrees. All of you, every student here, should feel proud; I know that we feel very proud of you.

Just outside the building that houses the Vice-Chancellor's office stands a bust of Jamia's great founder, Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar. Himself a distinguished alumnus of two great educational institutions, the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh and the University of Oxford, I like to think that he would have been thrilled with the remarkable academic profile of the institution that he founded in makeshift tents some ninety years ago.

Jamia is no ordinary university. It is heir to the Indian nationalist movement, a university that counts Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as one of its earliest patrons, an institution that was sustained and kept alive in difficult times by men of extraordinary distinction: Dr M.A. Ansari, Dr Zakir Hussein, Prof. Muhammad Mujeeb amongst many, many others. I know that as the Vice-Chancellor I am constantly aware of the responsibility of leading a university that has been previously tended by such distinguished men. All universities have to answer to their stake-holders in the present; Jamia has the added challenge of living up to its past.

As a living, evolving institution, Jamia over the past year has tried to do build on three fronts: 1) diversify its academic and disciplinary infrastructure 2) expand its student facilities and 3) build its profile both in the Indian public sphere and abroad.

As Indian universities move from the old annual examination

system to a semester structure, Jamia has been in the vanguard of this transition. After successfully introducing the semester system at the postgraduate level, Jamia embarked on the even more ambitious challenge of moving undergraduates to a semester system starting with the 2012-13 batch.

Following the logic of semester teaching, especially the emphasis on doing multi-disciplinary degrees, Jamia introduced credit transfers at the postgraduate level to encourage student mobility between departments and faculties. Even more ambitiously, Jamia has also attempted to leverage the advantage of being located in Delhi, home to several universities, by collaborating with the University of Delhi to offer a Masters degree in Mathematics Education. There are plans to offer a similarly collaborative degree in Public Health in the years to come.

Academically, Jamia strengthened all its departments and faculties but there are three areas that made special progress: 1) Area Studies and International Relations, 2) Language studies and 3) the Sciences.

Jamia has emerged as one of the academic leaders in Area Studies and International Relations and our strengths in these areas continued to grow. The Centre for North-East Studies won an additional grant of 14 crores from the UGC. Jamia's strengths in International Relations and area studies have traditionally been Asia-centric and we continued to build capacity in this area by establishing centres of Afghanistan Studies and China Studies last year. Given that the 21st century is generally regarded as the Asian Century, Jamia's focus on this diverse and dynamic continent is both timely and relevant to India's geopolitical concerns.

In the area of Language and Literature, Jamia began to offer an advanced diploma in Catalan from 2012 onwards.

Uniquely amongst Indian universities, Jamia now offers a B.A.(Hons) degree in Turkish Language & Literature under the aegis of the Faculty of Humanities & Languages. In an important initiative Jamia has also approved the teaching of compulsory Urdu for two years at the undergraduate level to give a fillip to the language. Again, in keeping with Jamia's tradition of linguistic diversity the university decided to reintroduce Examination Papers in three languages, namely Urdu, Hindi and English to ensure equal opportunities to students coming from different backgrounds.

The other area in which Jamia expanded its disciplinary capacity was science: the university established a Centre of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology which introduced an M.Tech. and a doctoral degree in these cutting edge subjects in 2012. The university also introduced an M.Phil. in Biophysics. A university's profile in the contemporary world is crucially dependent on its scientific credentials and Jamia's progress in this area is, therefore, particularly significant.

Apart from this academic expansion, the university also invested in new infrastructural facilities with the addition of new hostels for students, a fifty bed Medical Centre, a gymnasium in the hall of residence for girls and new buildings at the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Faculty of Education. In the university's continuing effort to widen its students' horizons as far as their careers are concerned, Jamia's Centre for Coaching and Career Planning continued to offer free instruction and counselling.

Another area to which a modern university has to pay special attention is its public profile. To this end Jamia invited a constellation of distinguished visitors to share their ideas with the university community. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki Moon, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Smt. Meira Kumar, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the

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Nobel laureate Prof Amartya Kumar Sen, the Australian High Commissioner, the Ambassadors of Brazil and Kazakhstan, the musical maestro Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Ustad Zila Khan, the distinguished activist Aruna Roy, the former Chief Election Commissioner Dr. S Y Quraishi were some of the luminaries who shared their time with us.

Jamia also strengthened its links with foreign institutions of higher learning by signing Memorandums of Understanding with universities in Great Britain, Italy, Canada, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and France.

But most importantly, Jamia's students past and present continued to do us proud by winning laurels in every field. One of our young students, R. Nithya, published a novel; Jamia alumni, Iram Ghufraan and Aparna Sanyal won National Film Awards this past year. Jamia's hockey team won the All-India Inter-University Hockey Tournament. Our students won scholarships to France, went on sponsored visits to the Great Britain and continued to find good placements in a depressed job market.

I would like to end by saying that Jamia today is a university whose campus, facilities, infrastructure and academic breadth compare favourably with any university in India. But the aspect of Jamia that gives me the greatest satisfaction is you: our student body. In your diversity you represent a microcosm of this great country and in your collective presence here today, you show us in miniature, what this country could be if it lives up to its extraordinary potential. I congratulate you once again on everything you have achieved and, on behalf of this great institution, wish you every happiness and success in the great adventure of life.