

# PROF. N.S. GOVINDA RAO MEMORIAL LECTURE 2017

## “CITIES AS CRUCIBLES OF HUMAN SPIRIT”

**ANURAG BEHAR**  
CEO, AZIM PREMJI FOUNDATION

**MONDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2017, 4 PM**

**FACULTY HALL  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE**



**Abstract:** From the earliest urban settlements to today's megalopolises, cities have had a magnetic pull on people. Some historians and thinkers go to the extent of saying that most of the essential elements of human civilization have emerged from the crucible of diverse people, ideas and modes of living that are typical of urban cities. As evidence, they point to the fact that almost all great centers of education, art, culture, science and other expressions of the human spirit are to be found in and around cities. Technology has had a key role to play in the development and progress of urbanization. Today, nearly 60% of the human population live in cities, a figure that is estimated to increase to 75% in the next four to five decades. As we look at a predominantly urban future therefore, a fundamental question to ask is "Can we use technology to make cities more livable, more inclusive and more sustainable?" In other words, technology cannot be value neutral when it comes to designing and running our cities. If our cities have to therefore truly become crucibles of the human spirit, many things need to come together in collective resonance. Technology is one of them but only if used as an ethical tool for fostering and strengthening the best values of our civilization and what it means to be human. Then one crucial question is: how do we get there? While there can be no definitive answers to such a question, the role that education must play, would perhaps be crucial – and then the question becomes – what kind of education might that be?

**Anurag Behar** is currently the CEO of Azim Premji Foundation. The Foundation runs institutions and programs in India for improving school education and in other fields of human development. Anurag also serves as the Vice Chancellor of the not-for-profit Azim Premji University. Anurag has been engaged with efforts to improve education in India for the past fourteen years. He has been a vocal advocate for the critical importance of public systems, in particular the public education system. For the past few years he has also been engaged with environmental and ecological issues. As the CEO of Wipro Infrastructure Engineering, he led the business from being No. 20 in the world to being the No. 1 in 5 years. He led Wipro's investments in two strategic diversifications - in the Clean Energy and Water sectors. He continues to be associated with Wipro, providing oversight to the social and ecological initiatives of the Wipro Group, as its Chief Sustainability Officer. He serves on various government & industry councils, such as the National Mission on Teachers and Teacher Education, the Government of India implementation committee for the Justice Verma Commission, and with the CII's National Climate Change Council. He is on the board of the Institute of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences and Technology. He was elected as a 'Young Global Leader', by the World Economic Forum in 2008. He has an MBA from XLRI, Jamshedpur and a BE in Electrical & Electronics Engineering from National Institute of Technology, Trichy. Both institutions have honored him with their Distinguished Alumnus award.



6th February 1907-1995

**Professor N S Govinda Rao** joined IISc in 1950 as a Professor and the Head of the Department of Civil and Hydraulic Engineering. He served IISc in these capacities till 1967, and in the intervening period, he established vibrant research programs in the streams of water resources, structural and geotechnical engineering. He was a leader in the area of hydraulics research in our country and was the principal adviser to national river valley projects. He distinguished himself as a teacher, researcher and consultant. He was a fellow of Indian Academy of Sciences, Indian National Science Academy, and American Society of Civil Engineers. He received the Alumni Award from IISc in 1987.



**Department of Civil Engineering,  
Indian Institute of Science**