

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE OCCASSION OF THE  
INAUGURATION OF 'KRISHNA HOSTEL' &  
FOUNDER'S DAY CELEBRATION AT JANKI DEVI  
MEMORIAL COLLEGE**

I am happy to be present amidst you on the occasion of the 59<sup>th</sup> Founder's Day of Janki Devi Memorial College. I am also happy to be inaugurating another landmark today, the College's first residence – the **Krishna Hostel**. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Principal, Members of the Staff and Administration, and the students on this occasion.

2. Founded in 1959, Janki Devi Memorial College was established to provide education to girls and empower them into becoming socially capable and responsible citizens. Almost six decades back, this was indeed a great goal to have been set and I am glad that the college has successfully lived up to it through the years.

Dear Students,

3. **Education** is a **fundamental right** of every child. And I firmly believe that education of a girl child is the first step towards the wholesome development of a country. However, it cannot be denied that this an area that offers some of the clearest examples of discrimination that women have to suffer, especially in our patriarchal society. In my opinion, Education is the most certain way of enabling our girls to make genuine choices over the kinds

of lives they wish to lead. And this, my friends, is not a luxury. This is a basic human right of every child on this globe, especially the girls, as also stated in The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

4. You are privileged to have had the opportunity to receive education from a fine college like this. You, the young minds of today, are our social assets and resources of New India. Let your ambitions and aspirations be your guide. No matter what profession you are in – civil services, corporate management, writing, law or even as a house maker – always remember that you are all product of a social investment. The society expects a dividend from you. And I am positive about your future contributions

to the society and nation-building. Remember, it is not what the world holds for you, it is what you bring to it.

Friends, Ladies & Gentlemen,

5. On this day, I am reminded of the esteemed Founder of this College, Shri Brij Krishan Chandiwala, fondly known as Bhaiji. He was a great visionary who joined our struggle for freedom under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. One can see the influence Mahatma Gandhi had on his life. Bhaiji was so involved in the movement to break the Salt Law that he vowed to give up salt and sugar for his entire life. This seemingly small incident alone is epitome of how strongly resolved a man he was.

6. I am informed that he built a prayer temple for the Harijans at the behest of Gandhiji. At a time when Harijans were outcast from every sphere of the society, this step

was revolutionary. He even started the Delhi Chapter of the Bharat Sewak Samaj, an organisation for the upliftment of the downtrodden. When the then Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University, Shri VKRV Rao, appealed to the wealthy philanthropists of the city to come forward to open girls colleges in Delhi, Shri Brij Krishan Chandiwala was one of the first ones to take initiatives in this direction. I am told that he donated all his wealth to the family trust Shri Banarsidas Chandiwala Sewa Smarak Society which in turn funded the establishment of Janki Devi Memorial College in memory of his late mother Shrimati Janki Devi.

Friends,

7. This College and its family should indeed be proud to be part of the legacy of such a missionary. He was an

exemplary Gandhian who not simply followed the Mahatma's footsteps but lived by those principles throughout his life. I came to know this anecdote which I would like to share with you. When Nathuram Godse fired that fatal shot, Mahatma Gandhi fell into the arms of Shri Brij Krishanji, who was sitting right behind him. I can only imagine how devastating that must have been. Today, we are gathered here to celebrate this man's legacy and strive to fill in his steps.

Dear Friends,

8. I am told that this College was envisioned to make education empowering as well as inclusive. Today, close to 60 years since the College was founded, it is clear that education is the only way which will lead to empowerment and emancipation of women. And I am proud that students

of this college, many of whom, I am told, come from humble backgrounds, have gone on to make their mark in various fields and contributed meaning fully to the nation as good citizens. The institution has thus succeeded in its mission of providing quality education to its 3000 plus students for almost six decades. Indeed this is a commendable feat.

9. Janki Devi Memorial has reached another milestone today with the Krishna Hostel getting inaugurated. I have no doubt in my mind that with this initiative, not only will the hostel provide a safe haven to its residents in the heart of a busy city, but the college will also take greater strides in self development. Moreover, the provision of Hostels ensure that the students coming from marginalized backgrounds and remote areas do not have to worry about

adjusting to the chaos of a new city and can concentrate on their academics. Furthermore, hostels provide a multicultural diverse and harmonious ecosystem to the students. It teaches them to live together as a family, build self reliance and strengthen their bonds with the college. I am positive that the boarder students would cherish this opportunity immensely.

Dear Students,

10. Mahatma Gandhi said and I quote, ***'The future depends on what you do today (Unquote)'***". The seeds sown by the Founder of the College have borne fruit in the growth of this college and the construction of the hostel. It is also a moment for retrospection. An institution must continually evolve. For this, you can play a very active and crucial role in integrating technology in the activities of this



College. We are entering a world where the knowledge of technology marks the level of progress. It will go a long way if you, along with your teachers, initiate efforts to improve the digital literacy of your staff and students and eventually the society at large.

Friends,

11. I was also given the annual publication '*Janki*' and I wish to praise the efforts of the college administration to give space to such beautiful forms of expressions. It is heartening and delightful to read the fresh and youthful perspectives on life. After all, creativity is what makes life beautiful and envisions ideas that can bring us happiness.

12. Towards the end, I would like to remind us all of another Gandhian belief that, "***Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable***

*will*". (Unquote) I pray that everyone at Janki Devi Memorial College has the will to succeed against all odds. I wish the very best to you in all your future endeavours.

Thank You

Jai Hind