

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE TWENTY THIRD ANNUAL CONVOCATION
PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY**

Puducherry: 25-09-2013

1. It is my pleasure to be here today for the twenty third Convocation of the Pondicherry University and see the exuberance and excitement in the students who have come for this venerable occasion.

2. I am also glad to have made use of this opportunity to visit Puducherry. It is a beautiful city, which evokes instant appreciation for the grand mansions, beautiful boulevards and placid promenades. It is the birthplace of the great Tamil poet, Bharathidasan. Another illustrious Tamil poet, Subramania Bharathiar, chose this place to write some of his memorable poems. Sri Aurobindo came here to establish a globally revered Ashram.

Friends:

3. The Pondicherry University was established in 1985. While going through the profile of this University and the Report of the Vice-Chancellor, I could not help but admire the remarkable way in which this seat of higher learning has developed over the years. In three campuses, fifteen schools, thirty seven departments and ten centres, over four hundred faculty members today teach over 6,100 students, courses in 175 post-graduate and research disciplines. It also has 87 affiliated colleges that enroll over forty five thousand students. It has truly emerged as an educational hub in the Southern region. The state-of-the-art facilities in the University have paved the way for a student-friendly and result-oriented academic environment. This University has pursued an education-led development in the region. I am happy to note that it has adopted villages and initiated interactive programmes with local communities and bodies.

Friends:

4. Convocation is a red-letter day in the academic calendar of a University. It marks the culmination of a phase of learning. I congratulate all the

students who have received their degrees and diplomas today. Graduation symbolizes the beginning of a new journey - where knowledge and skills acquired will be put to test. There will be times when you will find success easily and times when you will face adversity. The trying moments will test your true mettle. Your hard work, discipline, commitment and determination will help you navigate through the rough terrains. Prepare well for meeting the life's challenges. Do not leave any chance for regret.

5. The role of a university in the life of a student has been eloquently described by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. I quote: "*A university is or should be an artist's studio where not clay or stone or wood has to be moulded or cut or chiseled into shape, but where human beings with different temperaments, varying capacities, changing moods, and limitless variety of what may be called hereditary tendencies or sanskaras have to be put not only into beautiful shape, but also rendered into useful instruments that can serve others, and what is more, serve themselves well. The product has to be not only accomplished gentlemen, but also truly useful and serviceable members of society, and loyal, helpful and sacrificing citizens of a country*" (unquote). As students, you have had the benefit of a progressive education system. As you now enter a stage where you can give back to the society, make your contribution and make it count. India is an aspiring nation. We can reach the zenith but it requires the sacrifices of all. You are all capable and intelligent minds. It is your duty to take our country forward. Do all that is necessary to realize our country's goal.

Friends:

6. We have made 'Right to Education' a reality in our country. We have to now stress on 'Right Education'. A university has to be a temple of learning; of humanism, tolerance and balanced reasoning. Through the intellectual pursuits and knowledge sharing of scholars, academicians and scientists, it has to contribute to the progress of our society and the nation. Education has to create responsible, innovative, analytical and compassionate citizens. It has to respond positively to the change in society. Every youth aims at becoming intellectually competent and

technically skilled. But knowledge generation without value formation counts for little. Education without values is like a flower without fragrance. Education has to impart values to the youth to make them sensitive to fellow human beings. It has to be a process that completes an individual in all respects.

7. I was a teacher before I joined public life. I know how satisfying it is for a teacher to give students the joy of learning; to make them appreciate, reflect and differentiate the strands of thinking; to make them worthy and willing to shoulder responsibility. The faculty is the lifeblood of a university. They must continuously renew their understanding of the subject. They must be able to transfer knowledge to their students with dedication and commitment. They must act as friend and guide to the students, ever willing to counsel and show them how best they can gear themselves to face the world. I take a moment here to compliment the entire academic fraternity of the Pondicherry University for their selfless labour at preparing the students to face the test of life.

Friends:

8. The central importance of higher education in a country's development is well recognized. If we are to grow as a nation, the education system has to figure prominently in the template of progress. There is a dearth of quality academic institutions to prepare our next generation. Indian universities are not counted amongst the top-ranked universities in the world. If we peek into our past, we find our ancient education system dominating the world for about eighteen hundred years beginning Sixth Century BC. Let me remind you that Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramashila, Valabhi, Somapura and Odantapuri were the seats of world class universities. Let us together bring the changes required to make our present higher education system shine brightly once again.
9. We have to keep pace with change. It is gratifying to note that during the Twelfth Plan period, we have focused on expansion, equity, excellence, governance, funding and monitoring. These aspects have to be implemented in the right spirit for the higher education sector to see far-reaching changes. The academic curriculum has to be updated

regularly. The assessment system has to be made more reliable and objective.

Friends:

10. Science and Technology have greatly influenced the course of human civilization. It holds the key to future economic growth and social development. Our universities have to create an environment supportive of innovation. Teaching and research are the two eyes of a University. While high standards in teaching have to be achieved, high quality research that will push knowledge frontiers and evolve technologies for development has to be promoted. The quality of our research has to be comparable with the best in the world. Our researchers have to cooperate with one another to find solutions to critical problems. New products have to be designed that are useful to the common man. Our innovations have to create livelihood and improve the quality of life in rural areas. Local technological needs have to be addressed by our universities by creating research and development centres for such technologies in their campuses. Research campuses also have to be set up in rural areas to act as fountain heads for innovation and technology-led growth in these regions.

Dear Students:

11. In the end, I only want to say that you are ready now after years of toiling hard. You have acquired capabilities here, which you must generously put to use in the nation-building process. I wish you all a successful career and a purposeful life ahead. May all your dreams come true. I also wish the Pondicherry University and all those associated with it, the very best in the years ahead.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
