

Speech by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at the 29th Convocation of Goa University

Panaji, April 25, 2017

1. At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude and deep appreciation for conferring on me the Honorary D. Litt. Degree. I deeply appreciate this gesture shown to me and accept this distinction with all humility. I take this opportunity to congratulate degree holders and award winners for their hard work and toil over the years.

2. Convocation is always an important landmark in the life of students and their parents. It recognizes their hard work. Dear students, when you leave the portals of your alma mater, you may feel a little nervous as you would no longer have the support of your guides and friends. But, you have no reason to be nervous, since I know that the skills you have acquired will help you in facing all troubles and challenges. I wish you all success.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

3. Goa University was set up in 1985 in this lush environment, which is conducive to the pursuit of knowledge and research. Over the last three decades, Goa University has grown from strength to strength to make its mark in the national and global landscape. This, it has been able to do so without losing sight of its local ethos, is a notable achievement. To my mind, it is a model worth emulating for any knowledge hub set in a distinctive environment.

4. Goa has a unique position in India's unfolding tryst with destiny. It is a shining example of our cultural pluralism and co-existence, and a symbol of a Cosmopolitanism which is essential for a modernizing society. While writing on the objectives of university in a free country Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru once observed and I quote: *"A university stands for humanism; for tolerance; for reason; for the adventure of ideas, and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards ever higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people"* (unquote). I am happy to note that Goa University has imbibed this basic principle and is in consonance with the heritage of our country. In ancient times, India was the leader in education. Universities like Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila etc. attracted mighty minds in the form of students, teachers and researchers. A university should be a laboratory of various ideas.

Friends:

5. It is heartening to know that Goa University has taken unique initiatives to provide a platform for interaction between achievers in different fields like classical music, history, language, political economy, arts, and its students. The Visiting Research Professorship Programme of this university has brought some of India's brightest minds here during its last four years. It has made the knowledge and wisdom of these experts available to the students as well as members of the public. I wish the programme great success in the years ahead.

6. I am also happy to learn that women comprise a high percentage of the student population in Goa University. I was also happy to see that girl students outshone the boys when prizes were being distributed. It is important that young women particularly those belonging to marginal sections gain increased access to the portals of colleges and universities. Women's empowerment through education will have a positive impact on our future generation. It is rightly said that if we educate a man, we educate an individual but if we educate a women, we educate an entire family.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

7. India is presently at a very challenging phase of its socio-economic transition. We are in the midst of global changes that are both complex and unpredictable. Indian expertise and talent has much demand worldwide. The prospects in a liberal economic environment are immense. Yet, to take advantage of the unfolding opportunities in a globalized market, we have to galvanize our demographic strength.

8. The youthful character of our nation - 600 million people in the age group of 25 years and below - has to become our asset in our surge for advancement. For that, we need to provide sound training to our youth to build capacity for undertaking skilled work. It will help prepare them for challenging job roles in the global economic community. They have to be inculcated with the aptitude to think ahead. For, lot of ideas capable of making an impact transmits faster than ever before today.

9. Universities, no doubt, have to take the lead in this regard. But this is a task that can hardly be accomplished by the public institutions alone. It will require a new paradigm of partnership between the various stakeholders such as industry, voluntary sector, central and state agencies. All stakeholders have to be involved in these efforts.

10. To prepare graduates for a competitive global economy, we have to impart quality education in our institutions. This will call for adoption of global best practices for world-class academic management. Our institutions have to work relentlessly towards excellence. They have to provide the best of amenities to their academic community. Models of teaching have to be adaptive to the latest trends and also the changing learner profile. There has to be an alliance between the IT-enabled platforms like MOOCs and knowledge networks, and pedagogy. As concepts and understanding evolve, our faculty has to be better prepared with updated knowledge. A strong research eco-system has to be built on the plank of institutional collaborations, research parks, and talented researchers. There also have to be close link between Indian universities and industries.

Dear friends:

11. Recognizing that no institution can excel in isolation, they have to provide students and faculty international exposure, introduce industry relevant matter in course work, and share academic resources. A mechanism is needed in our higher education system that promotes competitiveness. NIRF is a valuable initiative, and I

am sure, with greater and more involved participation, this indicator will provide impetus to our institutions to do better in the coming years.

12. Our centers of higher learning are social institutions too. They have to carry out their responsibilities as a social entity. A strong connection with the society will provide the edifice for value-oriented learning in them. This will instill in the students a sensitivity that will inspire them to search for solutions to vexed socio-economic problems in the environment in which they are living. The onus is on our institutions to produce men and women of substance and character, not merely competent professionals.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

13. The first university education commission, headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, nearly seven decades ago had made some vital recommendations. Many of them were accepted. University Grant Commission was established. Over the years, many recommendations bore good results. They are relevant even today.

14. I call upon the academic leadership of Goa University to rededicate themselves to the ideals which the makers of our nation had espoused. The learning environment in our educational institutions should nurture scholarship in the students in a way that the aspirations of their self, family, society, nation and the world are met with a seamless endeavour. It should facilitate the acquisition of greater knowledge and the application of that knowledge in solving the riddles facing our times like environmental degradation, resource conflict and identity crisis.

Friends:

15. India is uniquely placed to offer its own symbol of peace, democracy and concord to the world. I am confident that the graduates and researchers who will leave the portals of this august institution after obtaining their degrees today will contribute brilliantly to realize the potential of this nation.

16. I wish you every success and an exciting journey ahead in future. Go ahead. Whole world is yours. Be confident and you will be able to conquer the world.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.