

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE CONVOCATION OF THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF
KERALA**

Kasargod, December 21, 2021

It gives me immense pleasure to be among you today on the occasion of the fifth convocation of the Central University of Kerala. At the outset, let me congratulate the graduating students, and also the teachers and the staff of the university.

I always feel glad to be among students, especially on an occasion like this, which is a major milestone in your life's journey. Indeed, it is a memorable day not only for you but also for your family. You have completed a programme of higher education, and that has empowered not only you but your family too. When you realise that the whole nation is your family, your achievement today invariably contributes to the nation-building mission. Some of you will pursue further education and some may take to professional career. I wish you all success and hope that you will keep in mind the interest of the nation in whatever you do.

When I am in an educational campus, I experience a vibrancy which is rare to find in any other place. Education, as Sri Narayan Guru reminded us, could uplift the quality of the student's life and thus also of society. The great sage and social reformer used to inspire people with his lines like "Vidyakondu Prabuddha Ravuka" which signifies, "Get enlightened through education". The lives of great men and women, especially the leaders of our freedom movement, highlight the simple truth that schools and colleges are the most important sites of personal and social transformation. These are the workshops where the destiny of a nation is shaped.

The liveliness and energy that I experience in educational places like this beautiful campus come from the possibilities of social

empowerment. Here is a place where ideas are nurtured, taught and learnt. In this process, the atmosphere gets energised with the vitality of thoughts to give birth to new ideas. This unbroken cycle of knowledge is essential to empower the society and the nation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the promotion of education, then, the task of the government is to help create the right environment in which the young minds will be fired with creativity. The National Education Policy of 2020 is a well-planned roadmap to develop an eco-system that will nurture the talent of our young generation. The NEP aims to prepare them for the world of tomorrow, while also equipping them with the best of our own traditions. India is, after all, the land of Nalanda and Takshshila, of Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya and Panini. Gandhiji compared the indigenous educational system with a beautiful tree that perished under colonialism. An effort is being made to rediscover its best aspects so that India makes a contribution to the world that it alone is destined to make.

At our annual conferences, I have had the occasion to discuss the implementation of the NEP with vice-chancellors of central universities and directors of other educational institutions. The consensus is that this reorientation of our educational policy was long needed, and that it has the potential to turn India into a hub of knowledge. I believe that the most outstanding feature of the NEP is that it aims to promote both inclusion and excellence. Through its varied curricula, NEP promotes liberal as well as professional education, because each stream of knowledge has a role to play in society and in nation-building.

That way, the NEP can become instrumental for India to harness and reap the demographic dividend. The growing population of our country makes it incumbent upon us to nurture the next generation talent. When the younger generation is provided with skills and knowledge required for success in the world of the twenty-first century, they can do miracles.

The 21st century is described as knowledge century. Knowledge power will determine the place of a nation in the global community. In India, Kerala has led the other states on the critical parameters of literacy and education. This has enabled Kerala to be a leading state on several other parameters of excellence too. As you all know, Shri P. N. Panicker had worked tirelessly to increase literacy in Kerala which has the highest literacy rate in the country. I will be unveiling the statue of the Late P.N. Panicker on the coming Thursday, December 23. Shri Panicker is an icon whose commitment to education should inspire everyone, especially the youth.

In the context of Kerala being a leading state in the area of learning and education, let me share with you a recent development about which some of you may be already informed. The Union Government has recommended names of three cities from the entire country for being listed in UNESCO's Global Network of Learning. Out of them two cities are from Kerala. These two cities are Thrissur and Nilambur. Being part of this Global Network supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all.

As far as gender equity is concerned, Kerala not only has favourable sex ratio, it has also been on the forefront of women empowerment. I am not surprised at all that all the three gold medal winners in today's convocation happen to be our daughters. I am also glad to note that the number of daughters who have received degree is nearly thrice the number of boys. I have been told that our daughters constitute 64 per cent of the total number of students in the university. I have been observing this growing empowerment of daughters through education in other parts of the country also. In this empowerment-through-education of our daughters, I see the India of the future which will become a knowledge power with rich contribution from our daughters.

Dear Students,

This convocation day takes place amid an extraordinary global crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic has been unprecedented in the modern era. As the virus keeps mutating and throwing up new variants, scientists are grappling with the situation and trying to find a cure to come out of these troubled times. But every crisis comes with opportunities. Your education was affected early last year, but technological solutions were put in place in no time and now you have successfully completed your courses. In the process, you must have learnt many lessons beyond your syllabus. You have learnt better ways to respond to difficulties and challenges.

It has been an extraordinary crisis for the nation too. So many lives have been cut short that it will take a long time for us to come out of this collective grief. Yet, there has been a lot to be grateful for. Many lives have been saved too. Our 'Corona Warriors' exemplified the best human values. Our doctors and scientists rose to the challenge. Our Government has been efficiently overseeing the largest vaccination exercise in history.

Dear Students,

I love visiting Kerala because of its incomparable natural beauty and the warmth of the people here. The lush green fields, the beaches and back-waters, hills and woods, the ocean and other fascinating aspects of nature in Kerala have attracted people since ancient times. The beauty of Kerala has inspired rich poetry over the centuries. Mathruvandanam is among more popular poems written by Vallathol who is respected as one of the greatest poets of India. The poem is remarkable for the description of Mother Nature and for its patriotic sentiments. In the beginning of the long poem, Vallathol inspires us to salute the Motherland who is revered and who showers her blessings upon us:

Bow to the mother, bow to the mother,

Bow to her who is great,

Bow to her who grants boons.

This great poem by Vallathol also reminds me of our National Song 'Vande-Mataram'.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Kasargod is the very crown of 'God's Own Country' as it is the northern-most part of the state. Your campus too is a beautiful site. The richness of this environment comes not only from such physical features, but also from the life in it. That is what makes Kasargod rich in biodiversity. Kasargod also has multiplicity of rich and diverse languages and dialects. Did you ever wonder about the link between the two? Experts tell us that the two kinds of diversity, of species and of languages, go hand in hand. The 'linguistic harmony' and the pristine natural beauty that Kasargod takes pride in are connected.

This is a priceless heritage the previous generations conserved and protected for you. It is now your responsibility to ensure that the generation after you will be able to rest their eyes on this beauty. How will you do it? If you carefully listen, nature will show you the way. Its advice, in one word, is harmony. Live in harmony with the environment, just as the seven languages are living in harmony with one another.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I again congratulate the students and scholars for their achievements. I also congratulate teachers and the non-teaching staff to make this possible for the students. The vice-chancellor and his team deserve to be congratulated too. My best wishes are always with you in all your endeavours. I wish you all Merry Christmas and a very happy new year.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!