

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
AT THE CONVOCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS**

Chennai, August 6, 2023

I am delighted to be present here today at the convocation of the University of Madras. I congratulate the medal winners and all students graduating today. I also congratulate the proud parents, guardians and faculty members on this occasion, which is a moment of joy for them also.

I appreciate the faculty, staff and officials, both past and present, of the University of Madras for their commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence.

This region has been a cradle of civilisation and culture. The rich tradition of Sangam literature is a precious heritage of India. The great wisdom preserved in Thirukkural has been guiding all of us for centuries. The great Bhakti tradition of poetry started in Tamil Nadu and it was taken to the north by the wandering saints. The temple architecture of Tamil Nadu, the statues and sculptures are a tribute to human excellence. With pride in the immensely rich cultural heritage that they have, the young students have to become important citizens of the global knowledge society of the 21st century.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am told that about 1,85,000 students are currently studying in this university and its affiliated colleges. Out of these students, more than 50 percent are girl students. I am delighted to note further that 70 percent of 105 students who received their gold medals today are girls. The University of Madras is a shining example of gender equality.

By investing in the education of girls, we are investing in the progress of our nation. Educated women can make greater contributions in the

economy, provide leadership in various sectors, and make a positive impact on the society.

Dear students,

Founded in the year 1857, your university has the distinction of being one of the oldest modern universities in India. This university has played a critical role in dissemination of knowledge. It has been a catalyst for social change and progress.

Throughout its journey of over 165 years, your university has adhered to high standards of academics, providing an environment that fosters intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. It has been a cradle of learning, producing countless scholars, leaders, and visionaries. They have also influenced the world of learning in the global context. Your university has also served as a lighthouse, playing a pivotal role in the establishment and growth of many reputed universities in the southern region of India.

Your university has a rich history and glorious legacy. It is indeed a matter of great pride that six former Presidents of India were students of this University and walked the same corridors that you walk through today.

I respectfully remember my illustrious predecessors from this University – Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Shri V.V. Giri, Shri Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, Shri R. Venkataraman, Shri K.R. Narayanan and Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. The eminent freedom fighter who also served as the first Governor General of India, Shri Chakravarti Rajagopalachari was a student of this university.

Sir C.V. Raman and Dr. S. Chandrasekar, Nobel Laureates and students of this university have made exceptional contribution to the world of science. Two Chief Justices of India, Justice M. Patanjali Shastri and Justice K. Subbarao have enriched the sphere of jurisprudence. The very idea that your university has produced such great people should make you strive hard for achieving excellence in pursuit of learning and nation building.

I feel proud to pay homage to the memories of the Nightingale of India Smt. Sarojini Naidu and the indomitable Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh. They were also students of this university. Those two great women were much ahead of their times. They were iconic women who have inspired several generations of Indians and will continue to inspire future generations. All the students of Madras University, specially the girl students should draw special inspiration from their exceptional stories.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last month, I interacted with a group of eminent Alumni from different academic institutions who have made major donations to educational institutions. I was happy to meet the prominent alumni and benefactors contributing to the cause of education and society. In this context, the alumni of the University of Madras can play a significant role in its growth as a global centre of excellence. The University has contributed to their success in many ways, therefore they should try to give back to their alma mater. The alumni can mentor the young students. The University should also reach out to the alumni to seek their cooperation for the betterment of the institution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The University of Madras has promoted a culture of research and academic rigor. This has enabled the development of skilled human resources which have been driving various industries and sectors.

I would urge the university to invest more in cutting-edge research, encourage inter-disciplinary studies, and promote international collaborations. Embracing emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analytics can strengthen this University as an institution that attracts global talent. The University of Madras should be at the forefront of finding learning-based solutions to the problems being faced by the nation and the world at large.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to re-emphasise an issue close to my heart which affects the well-being of our young students. In today's highly competitive environment, the pressure to excel in academics, the fear of not getting into good institutions, the anxiety of not landing a prestigious job, and the weight of expectations from the parents and the society are causing acute mental stress amongst our youth. It is important that we come together as a society to address this issue and create an environment that promotes holistic growth and well-being of our students. I appeal to all the students to never let any anxiety over-whelm you. There is always an opening or opportunity which may not be visible for some time. Have faith in your abilities and keep moving forward.

Parents, academic institutions and faculty members can come together to help the students navigate through the numerous challenges they face. Educational institutions should create an atmosphere that promotes two-way communication, where students feel comfortable discussing their fears, anxieties, and struggles without being afraid of judgment. We must strive to work collectively to create such an atmosphere where our youth feels loved, valued and empowered to face the challenges with confidence and courage.

Dear students,

As you embark on the next phase of your lives, I would urge you all to set your targets high, but at the same time, not to feel pressurised by your goals. Try to work hard to fulfil your dreams with determination and fearlessness.

To conclude my address, I will invoke some immortal lines from Mahakavi Subramania Bharati which are quoted very often because they always infuse new inspiration. [I QUOTE]

“मंदरम् कर्पोम्, विनय तंदरम् कर्पोम्

वानय अलप्पोम्, कडल मीनय अलप्पोम्

चंदिरअ मण्डलत्तु, इयल कण्डु तेलिवोम्

संदि, तेरुपेरुक्कुम् सात्तिरम् कर्पोम्” [UNQUOTE]

This can be interpreted as:

“We will learn both scripture and science

We will explore both heavens and oceans

We will unravel the mysteries of the moon

And we will sweep our streets clean too”

I am very happy that today in the evening, I will participate in a function to honour Mahakavi Bharathiyar.

Dear students,

I once again congratulate all of you on achieving a major milestone in your life and career. I am sure you are capable of building a very bright future for yourself and for the country. The future belongs to you. With this message, I bless you all.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!

Jai Bharat!