

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU ON THE CONFERMENT OF HONORIS
CAUSA DEGREE AT CONSTANTINE UNIVERSITY**

Nitra, April 10, 2025

I am deeply honoured to be here in the historic city of Nitra, and to receive this prestigious Honorary Doctorate from Constantine The Philosopher University. I extend my sincere gratitude to the Rector and the University for this recognition, which I accept on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India. This is an honour that is being bestowed upon a country and civilization that has been a beacon of peace and learning since time immemorial.

Receiving this degree from an institution named after the philosopher Saint Constantine Cyril, is especially meaningful. His contributions to language, education and philosophy continue to inspire.

As someone who has worked for the preservation of India's linguistic and cultural diversity, including the constitutional recognition of the Santhali language and codification of its Ol Chiki script, I appreciate the power of language in shaping identities and fostering knowledge. In India, we honour the legacies of visionaries such as Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who believed that education is the foundation of an enlightened society.

Friends,

Education has been the single most transformative force in my own life. Coming from a small, underprivileged tribal village, I was the first woman in my community to receive a college education. This experience instilled in me an unshakable belief in education as a tool for empowerment, a belief that has guided my journey from teacher to public servant to the highest office in my country.

As a teacher, I saw the profound impact of education for human development, social upliftment and economic development. It neutralizes societal inequities, ensuring that the benefits of growth reach even the most marginalized. Education is a means not only for individual empowerment but for national development as well.

Recognizing this, India has placed education at the heart of its national development strategy. With half of its population below the age of 25, India is investing in its youth to drive the knowledge economy of tomorrow. The new National Education Policy is a visionary initiative designed to harness this demographic dividend, fostering a culture of innovation, research, and global collaboration.

Friends

In recent years, India has made remarkable strides in education. Our literacy rates have risen significantly, and India now boasts one of the world's largest higher education systems, with over 58,000 institutions and more than 43 million students. In the last decade alone, we have established 400 new universities, 5300 new colleges, and hundreds of institutes of national importance, and medical and technical institutions, ensuring that education reaches every corner of the country, including rural areas.

Friends

India's rapid economic growth is driven by a spirit of innovation, digital transformation, and inclusivity. India stands today as the world's fifth-largest economy and the fastest-growing among major economies, poised to soon become the third largest. A crucial driver of this growth is the twin focus on technology-driven and women-led development.

The digital revolution has transformed millions of lives, particularly in rural areas, where women have emerged as key contributors to India's progress. Women constitute 36 percent of the 4.4 million professionals in our IT sector, and financial inclusion through technology has uplifted countless

lives. However, even as India embraces modernity and technology, our progress remains deeply rooted in the wisdom of our ancient philosophical traditions.

Just as Saint Constantine Cyril's work laid the foundation for Slavic linguistic and cultural identity, Indian philosophical traditions have long shaped the intellectual and spiritual fabric of our society. Indian classical philosophy offers a rich and diverse exploration of reality, emphasizing introspection and ethical conduct. It highlights multiple perspectives, and the importance of self knowledge and inner experience. These are not merely academic subjects for us—they form a living heritage that continues to guide our way of life.

The profound tenet, सत्यमेव जयते —"Truth alone triumphs"—from the Mundaka Upanishad is not just a philosophical ideal but India's national motto, enshrined in our official emblem. Similarly, the ancient Indian concept of वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्—"the world is one family" — from the Maha Upanishad — reflects our belief in collective responsibility and shared destiny. This ethos shapes India's commitment to sustainable living and serves as the guiding principle of our engagement with the global community.

I am delighted to see that this timeless wisdom of the Upanishads resonates here in Slovakia too. Last year in November, many of us India learnt through Prime Minister Modi's monthly radio programme 'Mann ki Baat', about the first ever translation of the Upanishads into the Slovak language, a most commendable initiative.

Friends

India and Slovakia share a strong and growing partnership, even in the education sector. About 600 Indian students are currently studying in Slovakia. There remains immense potential for deeper collaboration in education, research, and technology. By fostering stronger academic and

technological exchanges, we can open new pathways for innovation, shared progress, and greater mutual understanding.

In conclusion, I once again express my deep appreciation to Constantine University for this honour. I extend my best wishes to the Rector, faculty, researchers, and students for continued success in their academic endeavours. May the bond between India and Slovakia flourish, and may education continue to be a beacon of hope, progress, and global harmony.

Thank you.
