

Text of the Vice-President's address at Pondicherry University (excerpts)

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Shri K. Kailashnathan, Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Pondicherry. A man who works differently to achieve and accomplish the difference we need. This man will make his impact felt at this place also, as also in the entire Pondicherry. A bureaucrat of deep commitment, give him the mission, he knows how to execute smoothly, but effectively, with expedition and seamlessly. I am therefore greatly encouraged by the words he has spoken today and the crux of that is, the world is changing for us too fast. A challenge which you can make and convert into opportunities.

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Pondicherry, Shri N. Rangasamy Ji. Sir, your dress is your trademark and you can be a speech therapist. Your voice speaks of your huge experience. We must always get endorsement from the Hon'ble Speaker Shri Embalam Selvam. I was referring to him only, a name too familiar with me. I have received him at Uparastupati Niwas on multiple occasions. His smile is his trademark.

Shri A. Namassivayam, Hon'ble Home Minister, Government of Pondicherry. Whenever we remember Home Minister, our mind immediately goes in historical perspective. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, he brought about unification of princely states, merger into the Indian nation Bharat. We also remember another great person from Gujarat. Shri

Amit Shah, he brought about epochal change by successfully getting rid of Article 370. That had draconian Article 35A. Therefore, the presence of Home Minister and you can idolise and emulate your worthy people around and in history also.

Shri P. Prakash Babu was thoughtfully given a good name. Shakespeare said long back, I think 450 years back or 500 years back, there is a name 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.' He didn't know India. We have a country where not only name, even surname matters and matters rather effectively. But Professor P. Prakash has 'prakash', light as part of his name. Boys and girls, there is another very special personal reason why I look at him with great admiration and hope. I am the Vice-President, he is the Vice-Chancellor, rarely in history the word vice has been looked with such positivity and energy. Professor K Tharanikkarasu, Director of Studies of this University and Professor Clement Sagayaraja Lourdes, Director of Culture and Cultural Relations.

I must recognise presence of distinguished people in the audience. Shri Selvaganabathy, Member Parliament, Council of States, the House of Elders, the Upper House, popularly known as Rajya Sabha. Shri V. Vaithilingam, Member Parliament, Lok Sabha and a former Chief Minister of this state Shri Sai Saravanan Kumar, Hon'ble Minister. I had the occasion to discuss with him briefly yesterday over banquet. He is a very interesting man. Shri Kalyanasundaram, MLA, Kalapet, another distinguished person.

I must pay my deepest regard to the members of the faculty because you are final strength. You are that fulcrum that determines which way we are heading. You take care of headwinds, air pockets, difficult terrain to shape the future of Bharat and to give this university a great name. Distinguished audience, and of course, I am for whom? You boys and girls, I am for you.

Normally to be committed one must not wear two hats. I don't know, but my position, three hats. Chairman Council of States and Chancellor of this very prestigious university of which you will blossom as great citizens of Bharat and take us to the destination with respect to which the Hon'ble

Lieutenant Governor has indicated a while ago, which is Bharat.

As Chancellor of this university, I feel a deep sense of pride and satisfaction. On my first visit, I've been there earlier, but this is the first visit after the university got conferment of the prestigious A+ grade accreditation. A+ accreditation, a significant recognition for our institutional excellence and commitment. Congratulations, Vice Chancellor. The entire faculty, boys and girls who are students and alumni of this great institution. I have no doubt this is just a stepping stone for future laurels. We will create an ecosystem to be accoladed for a variety of reasons. And this institute will emerge as crucible of ideation and innovation.

It is always a privilege and honour to be in Puducherry, the land where Sri Aurobindo meditated and is a global centre on that count. Where French architecture meets Indian ethos, where intellectual curiosity, inquisitiveness blends with spiritual depth. The place is indeed unique, has an identity at a global level, recognisable in any part of the planet and at this place, boys and girls, you are lucky to be getting high quality, higher education. My best wishes to all of you.

My young friends, while we have taken note with great sense of positive feeling about A+ grade accreditation, India's educational geography and history have been dotted with great centres of learning. Takshashila, Nalanda, Mithila, Vallabhi, Vikramshila and many more. These institutions defined during that period of history of our Bharat to the entire world. Scholars thronged from all over to share their ideas and learn about our wisdom but something went wrong. Nalanda's nine-story library, and look at those times, 1300 years ago, nine-story library. Dharamganj, manuscripts that advanced then, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy.

In two waves of invasion, first the Islamic invasion, and then the British colonialism, India suffered blow to its knowledge heritage. Bakhtiyar Khalji, around 1190, demonstrated cruelty, barbarity, acted totally against a sense of civilisation and humanity then, the books alone did not burn. He slit the throat of monks, smashed stupas, and raised the soul of India in his assessment not realising soul of Bharat is indestructible. The fire is so fierce, it swallowed 9 million, 90 lakh books, texts. Our history turned to cinders. Nalanda was much beyond a school of thought, it was a living, vibrant temple of knowledge for the benefit of entire humanity.

Nine stories of libraries towered over the plains, filled with palm-leaf manuscripts. Look at those days, how hard they must have worked, with what commitment and diligence. For three months, flames aired through them, smoke so thick, which we see recently on account of global conflagrations. A funeral pyre, according to those engaging in barbarity of our ancient wisdom but remember, last ten years have been defining. We are getting back into the groove with greater impact, with greater determination from those ashes, and what we have seen thereafter for about nine to ten centuries.

Sanatana pride is rebuilding what was lost, is being rebuilt with stronger determination. In this context, therefore, boys and girls, as we march towards Viksit Bharat at 2047, it is attainable because we are being driven by a knowledge economy. Therefore, our goal and mission should be creating institutes of excellence, rivalling the best globally. I do hope, and I am full of optimism, this institution will be one such institution, thanks to your participation. It was rightly indicated, and I can say for myself, and without a fear of contradiction, for Shri K. Kailashnathan, we are a product only and only of education. There is no greater equaliser than education. Education brings about equality, decimates the iniquitous ecosystem.

I, therefore, appeal from this podium, appeal to corporates, industry and business to invest in India's educational ecosystem. There was a time when education and health were means by those who had enough resources to give back to the society. They never thought these to be profit-making ventures. Their ventures in health and education were dictated by our age-old philosophy that we must return to the society to exemplify its worthy citizens. Therefore, the endeavour should be, we should not be driven by commodification and commercialisation of education. Our education must align with India's traditional 'Gurukul System' that finds place in one amongst twenty-two miniatures in the Indian constitution, and precedence is given to it.

Boys and girls, apart from getting knowledge, character development, because only then knowledge

acquisition will get quality cutting edge. Education as service stands at odds in conflict with the current commercial model that is fast emerging. Therefore, I appeal a mindset change with the corporates.

India has been home to philanthropy, I appeal to those who are corporate leaders. Pool your CSR resources to create by converging institutes of global eminence as greenfield projects, much away from the concept of balance sheets. If you look around the world, the developed democracy of the world, you will find endowment fund of universities runs into billions of US dollars.

Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor make a beginning, let every alumni of this institute contribute to this fund. Boys and girls, the amount does not matter, the spirit matters. You will find how impactful it will be over the years. Not only the fund will go up, it will generate a risk amongst alumni class and with the alma mater. This will be a big step. Remember, the step taken is great and that is why on July 20, 1969, when Neil Armstrong, the first man to ever step on moon, he said, a small step by him, a giant leap for humanity. So for alumni, it will be a small step but cumulatively, the results will be geometric.

To my young friends, we have lived through your days. I come from a village. I know the change that has taken place in Bharat. I had good fortune to be Member of Parliament Lok Sabha in 1989 and a Minister. I knew the situation then and I know the situation now. Then the situation was, our Bharat, known as 'Sone Ki Chidiya', but our foreign exchange was around 1 billion US dollars. Our gold had to be shipped by air, placed to two banks in Switzerland to save our credibility. Look at now, fruits of a decade of development envied by the world. Our foreign exchange is around 700 billion US dollars, 700 billion, 700 times that was the time when I as a Minister went to the state of Jammu and Kashmir in Srinagar. And there was no occasion for us to see, except a few dozen people on the road and now, 20 million tourists every year recently have gone there.

Just imagine that at that point of time, the atmosphere was one of hopelessness. Now, for you, an air of optimism surrounds all around. That is why I say, boys and girls, our Bharat is no longer a nation with potential. It is a nation on the rise, the rise is incremental, continual envied by the world and accredited by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Viksit Bharat is not a dream, it is our certain destination as indicated by the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor when we attained the centenary of our independence. It is all the possibility of being realised before, because in this journey towards Viksit Bharat, boys and girls, you are the most vital stakeholders. You will have to drive the engine of growth, fire it in all cylinders. I have no doubt you will do it.

Our demographic dividend with median age of 28 years, your age, median age that 10 years younger to US and China. Boys and girls, I can say, our DNA is very strong when it comes to intellect. There was a time when we were students and young, we couldn't see an Indian mind at a global corporate, even at a lower level. Now there is no global corporate in the world where an Indian genius, a man or a woman is not at the top.

You no longer have to be belonging to privileged pedigree because the country has realised on ground right of equality. There was a time when people thought we are above law, law cannot touch us, we have immunity from law, we are beyond the reach of law. Now they are equal before law. Equality before law is a democratic assurance and assurance of dignity of the individual also. So the field is wide open for you and I am sure you will make most of it.

The affirmative governance by the government, hand-holding policies allow you to start your ventures. As was hinted by the only Lieutenant Governor — startups. India takes great pride in being a global leader in unicorns. I can tell you boys and girls, people of your age or around that age, they started startups and corporate giants invested in them because you have a gift which is difficult for them at that age. Therefore, think very positively.

It is high time, boys and girls, you come out of silos. Our silos define through coaching classes or otherwise, how to get government jobs. In the process, we are ignoring something very significant. Enormous vistas of opportunities, basket for our young people when it comes to opportunities is

ballooning every day. From blue economy to space economy, to innovation, to research, you only have to think about it. I can tell you silos restrict your vision to limited opportunities, we need to be extremely careful about it.

Your journey, once you leave this place, because I am told convocations for several years are lined up. Learning never stops, you have to be a lifelong learner. You will not be walking out of the place with just degrees. You will be walking out of this place with something, a nectar that will last forever, as being citizens of this great country at the same age and therefore, always keep the nation first. Have a larger purpose in your life, much beyond getting a job that is essential, I don't run it down or giving jobs to others by starting an enterprise. But you must contribute by using your knowledge to India's growth story and humanity's betterment.

I have reiterated on a number of occasions. It's my personal experience also. A failure is a myth, it is blown out of proportion. It puts us into despondent mechanisms — No, it's a myth. I don't take failure in a setback, a failure is nothing but a step towards success. Therefore, because of fear of failure, you should never hesitate to experiment with the idea that comes to your mind.

I appeal to all of you boys and girls, an idea in your mind is meant for ideation and execution, not to be parked in your mind. I am before you today, I am a product of education. I have faced great hardships in my life. Life was never easy, very, very difficult. Facing the ordinary challenges, even of scarcity. When I wanted to be a lawyer with good credentials, thankfully, a bank gave me six thousand rupees as loan, I remember that.

Now you have a system where the Prime Minister got banking inclusion for five hundred million people. Therefore, you have to go ahead. I don't assure there will be no hiccups. You will think somehow succeeded, which is not justified. You are not getting success, you will not be able to rationalise. Boys and girls take it in routine, this is part of life. It will happen. The terrain is never going to be smooth. It will be uphill, sometimes challenging and difficult but you must continue, pursue, undaunted, that will define your success.

Friends, there is need for change of national mindset also. Let me first come to the political system. We have picked up the habit of not making a difference, but differing with one another. Any good idea coming from someone else and not from me is wrong because I believe in the supremacy of my own idea. In the process, I am sacrificing our Vedic philosophy of 'Anantavada'. There has to be a 'abhivyakti', there has to be 'Vaad-vivad', there has to be expression, there has to be dialogue. The two are complementary. We have to move ahead in that direction.

We are too keen to raise the political temperature. Climate change is doing that for us, we all are concerned. Why should we melt the glaciers of our patience? Why should we act impatiently, getting away from our civilisational, spirit and essence? I appeal to the political firmament, the leadership in politics. Please moderate the temperature of politics. There is no room for confrontation, there has to be dialogue.

Disruption and disturbance are not the mechanism which framers of the constitution in Constituent Assembly taught us. It is high time when India is on the rise and the world is looking at us. There are bound to be challenges because India at the moment is the most aspirational nation in the world as a result of the phenomenal development of the last decade. Those challenges to us will get complexed if our politicians do not mature up to the requirement of always listening to national interest and national development.

How can we be divided on languages? No country in the world is as rich when it comes to languages as our Bharat. Just imagine Sanskrit, its importance globally, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Pali, Prakriti, Bengali, Assamese. I name these eleven because these are our classical languages. In Parliament, discourse is allowed by the members in 22 languages. Boys and girls, our languages indicate inclusivity. Sanatan teaches us nothing but to be in togetherness for the same sublime purpose. So what has flown out of inclusivity? What is responsible for inclusivity? Can it be a premise of divisiveness? I appeal to everyone, to soul search, be reflective, rise to the occasion, marvel at our great accomplishments, look at our destination.

National education policy 2020. Governors of the states were those whose opinions were sought. I was fortunate to be governor of the state of West Bengal, a great place when it comes to education, excellence, culture, heritage. After more than three decades, we had this policy, national education policy. I appeal to everyone, twofold. One, implement the position reflected in the policy. It is not policy of any government. It is national education policy that is game changer and epochal development. I appeal to the states that have not so adopted it. And those that have adopted, I call upon universities, academic institutions to realise what is given in the policy. Let our boys and girls be fully aware the benefits of the policy. Please have workshops. Once they will come to know for the first time, they will realise our national education policy is the best in the world because it allows you to distance from degrees. It allows you to fully exploit your talent and potential. It allows you when it gives premium to your attitude. It allows you multi-courses. It allows optimal utilisation of time because the world is changing too fast for us.

We never thought there will be something as dramatic as industrial revolution, but disruptive technologies have shaken us. Artificial intelligence, internet of things, machine learning, blockchain and the kind. India has been quick to be amongst front-running nations in the world. We have launched quantum computing, green hydrogen mission that has huge potential for boys and girls but we have to realise artificial intelligence has entered our workspace, entered our home, entered our mind. We have to convert this challenge into opportunities and I'm sure you will grab this. It has enormous potential for you.

Well, I think there has been slight suggestion like this, which means, Vice-President, take care of the time. But I'm slightly going a little more because I will never get audience of this kind, boys and girls. What matters to me is when you are hearing me, well, I will grow very old in 90s. Do you know where you will be? You will be driving the engines of growth so if you lend your ears to me, I think it's a great achievement for me. But I have to conclude and therefore, I will call upon you that education is fine, getting good jobs, starting business, giving employment is fine. But what has our civilisation told us, imparted to us, I'll share with you five principles and conclude.

Our philosophy of civilisation tells us five things we must practise and these have to be done by individuals. The first is social harmony, that converts diversity into national unity. Love your family members, be in good connect with your neighbours. Know about your society, be caring. It will teach you tolerance, patience, giving back to society.

Second, family and enlightenment. The good values have to be taught to the toddler, you must learn those good values. They are in our scriptures. Those good values will take you a long way. They will give you strength of character and morality. That is impregnable. Please care for environment. How can we bleed Mother Earth? We don't have another planet to cohabit. Let's do it.

Let us believe in self-reliance. Mahatma Gandhi said, our Prime Minister Modi has given it a practical version also be 'vocal for local'. If you look around, we are importing in billions of US dollars items that are made in this country. We are creating a huge void in our foreign exchange. You will be saving billions of dollars if you look at the clothes you wear, just make sure they are made in India. Furniture, curtains, carpets, even toys, small electronic items. We are taking work from the hands of our own people — Why?. Swadeshi will take us to Atmanirbhar Bharat, which is fundamental.

We have seen what Atmanirbharta means. If we did not have Atmanirbharta in defence, if we did not have our Brahmos and Akash, Brahmos to strike terror hideouts and Akash to burn them in the sky, where would have we been? We have to be Atmanirbhar.

Last, civic duties. How in a country like ours we can suffer public disorder, people doing vandalism on roads, public property being burnt, we not being disciplined on roads. These are things you must adopt and I am sure you will.

Be my guest as interns at Rajya Sabha. I said in the first batch, five girls and five boys. The batches can keep on coming, like the kind of drones and missiles we sent across the border to Pakistan to kill the terrorists — Do it. Take care of it, my office is in touch with you.

Secondly, I said we will have looking to the very special position this university has an MoU with the Indian Council of World Affairs. We are having vacancy in the director's post. The moment that post is occupied by a worthy man, we will have the MoU formalised at the earliest. You will have the occasion to share your thoughts with those coming to this country in search of knowledge and share ideation with them. We will have it.

While I was extremely careful about everyone in the dais, the most important person comes to be missed on occasions — Dr. Sharat Chauhan, your Chief Secretary and those who are senior people, sometimes we forget the most important man at a marriage and he's helping all through the marriage. He is very instrumental in shaping this university alongside the Lieutenant Governor. I have his fullest assurance. It has been a delight for me, an absolute delight to share my thoughts with young minds.

Thank you for your patience.

JK/RC/SM

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