

Text of the Vice-President's address at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Kumaun University, Nainital (Excerpts)

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Good afternoon,

Distinguished members of the faculty and most important, my dear students.

I'm here for two particular reasons — One is Golden Jubilee celebration is not an ordinary milestone. Golden Jubilee celebration gives us an

occasion to look back, take a stroke and then structure a strategy how we will negotiate the coming years and decades. Part of the agenda has been unfolded by the enormously talented Governor of the state but then every individual counts.

I therefore thought it will be a befitting occasion to be at the initiation or in the midst of it the Golden Jubilee and to indicate it is much beyond celebration. Since its inception in 1973, Kumaun University has justified the ecosystem all around, the passion of people of the state and has emerged as a centre of learning, discipline and academic excellence.

I must congratulate the university management, faculty in particular and the students for having secured in 2015, not secured, earned the hard way the prestigious 'A' grade from NAAC reflecting commitment, absolute commitment to quality. From a regional institution to begin with, it has emerged as an institution that I'm sure will ever be on the rise.

The second aspect which is important for this day and my dear friend Mahendra Singh Pal would make it more important. 50 years ago, this day, the oldest, the largest and now the most vibrant democracy went through difficult air pocket, unexpected hazard in the shape of headwinds, nothing short of earthquake to destroy democracy. It was imposition of emergency, the night was dark, the cabinet was sidelined, the beleaguered Prime Minister then facing an adverse High Court order yielded to personal gain, ignoring the entire nation and the president trampled constitutionalism, signed a declaration of emergency. What followed for 21-22 months was turbulent period for our democracy, never imagined.

The darkest period of democracy we had the occasion to see, lakh and 40,000 people were put behind bars, they had no access to justice system, they could not vindicate their fundamental rights. Nine High Courts fortunately stood the ground when they held emergency or no emergency. Fundamental rights cannot be put on hold. Ruling firmly that every citizen of the country has a right which can be fructified by judicial intervention.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court, the highest court of the land got eclipsed; it overturned the verdict of nine High Courts. It ruled, it decided, two things, emergency declaration thereof is a decision of the executive, not open to judicial review and it is a decision also on the time for how long it will last and that citizens do not have fundamental rights while there is emergency. It was a major setback to the people at large. They never knew for how long it will last and just reflect, young boys and girls because you will have to learn about it, unless you do it, you will not know it. What happened to the press? Who were the people put behind the bars? They became Prime Ministers of this country, they became presidents of this country. That was a scenario and that is why to make aware our youth as indicated by the Hon'ble Governor, our median age, youth demographic

dividend, the age is 28 years. We are a decade younger than China and US.

You are the most vital stakeholders in governance, in democracy. You therefore cannot forget or cannot afford not to learn about that darkest period. Very thoughtfully, the government of the day decided that this day will be celebrated as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas.' The celebration will be that it will never happen again, the celebration will be that those guilty, those who allowed such kind of transgression of humanity's rights, spirit and essence of the Constitution, who they were, why they did it. In the Supreme Court also, my friend will bear me out, one judge dissented H.R. Khanna and it was commented by a reading newspaper in the US that if ever democracy returns to Bharat, a monument will surely be built for H.R. Khanna who held his ground.

I therefore call upon the students of this great university, pen down an essay on 25th June 1975. Pen down essay around 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas.' My office will share the email-id where you can send the essay and we will receive first 100 entries. I am sure 100 will surely write it. We will not decide whose essay is better, but we will pick up 50 out of them. Just pick up and invite all those 50 to be my guest at the Parliament of Bharat.

I invite you and I am sure this will happen over a period of a month. You will be my guests, the chosen ones and second lot will be the remaining participants. So, I am inviting 100 students of this university to be my guests, to see the new building of Parliament that came up during Covid. Less than 30 months and you will see our civilisational journey of 5000 years being reflected therein.

Let me on this day reflect on the role of Vice Chancellors. Vice Chancellors and faculty define the institution. You all know Takshila but Takshila became Takshila because of Panini and Chanakya were affiliated with it. Nalanda earned its fame because Shilabhadra was at the head of it. We had a great institute, Indian Institute of Science, Homi Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai led but defined by Sir C.V. Raman, famously known for Raman effect. Those of you who are interested in science.

Friends, India's diverse educational landscape, these positions now demand visionaries. They need to have passion, they need to have a mission. The mission must correlate with the concept that we are a unique nation with 5,000 years of civilisational history. We had ancient institutions, Nalanda, Takshila, Odantapuri, any number of them and that we must be a developed nation by 2047 but let me share it with you, my young friends. You have not lived the times my generation has lived. Now you are in an atmosphere of hope and possibility.

No one says Bharat is a nation that has potential because the nation is on the rise. The rise is recognised globally and by institutions of repute, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund. Viksit Bharat as reflected by the Hon'ble Governor is not our dream. It is our certain destination. Maybe earlier and why not during your times. Not my time, your times. Foreign exchange reserve was 1 billion US dollars when me and Dr. Mahendra Pal were in Parliament. We saw the spectacle of our gold being shipped by air to Switzerland to be placed in two banks. Now it is more than 700 billion US dollars.

Our economy was fragile five, we were the weakest economies at one point of time, even a decade ago, we were not in single digit. Now we are inching towards third number. We are already at number four. We are the fastest rising economy of that size. Bharat today has seen last decade as the most developed decade for any country in the world. So our youth has become now most aspirational. You have three choices, you can be restless, you can be resting or you can be catalyst to bring about the big change. I would wish and hope you will be there in that category.

I must also reflect if I'm not mistaken and the Vice Chancellor can take note of it and correct me if I'm wrong. Over 50 years, you have had I think large number of alumni. Is the number around 100,000?. Now alumni of an institution is a very important component. You look to social media and Google, you'll find some institutions in the developed world have alumni fund corpus more than 10 billion US dollars. One has a corpus of more than 50 billion US dollars. This comes not as a deluge, it comes by the tickle effect.

Let me for instance give an illustration. If these 100,000 alumni of this great institution decide to make a contribution only of 10,000 rupees a year, the annual amount will be 100 crores. Have I

made a mistake of a digit? No, 100 crores. And just imagine if the year after year, then you'll not be looking here and there, you'll be self-sustaining.

Secondly, the alumni will have the occasion to connect with the alma mater. So, you will have an easy route. Oh, an alumnus of this institution is in that institution, we can connect with him. He will handhold you, she will handhold you. I strongly urge that let there be initiation from Dev Bhoomi about alumni association with this direction.

Dear boys and girls, academic institutions are much beyond just learning centres for degrees and credentials, much beyond. Otherwise, why there is difference between virtual learning and campus learning? You immediately know the time you spend amongst your colleagues on the campus defines your mindset. These places are meant to catalyse the change needed, the change you want, the nation you want. These are natural organic crucibles of ideation and innovation. Ideas come, but there must be ideation of idea.

If an idea comes and out of fear of failure, you don't engage in innovation or try, our progress will come to a standstill. These are places where world's envy, our demographic youth has the occasion to script not only their own career, but script the destiny of Bharat and therefore, please get going. There is a tagline of one of the corporate products which you must have come across, just do it. Am I right? I would add one more, do it now.

You therefore have to take a lead in pledging yourself, indicating your resolve as indicated by the Hon'ble Governor, to always believe the nation is first. I appeal to the political landscape of the country, do not please look national issues, issues of national security, issues of development from a political partisan prism. That is not part of our ethos. There has to be absolute one page, same page for such kind of assessments. I am not for a moment suggesting how political parties handle political situations, do it but, when national interest, national development is the issue, we have no option but to be on the same page.

My dear young friends, you have had a system at the moment which is my envy. I lived in a village, there was no toilet in the house. I lived in a village where there was no electricity, no gas connection, no internet, no immediate road connectivity, no health centre and no school around and now, 180 degree change.

Therefore, you can play in the joints. Do not be in silos, do not be in the groove that only option is to find a government job. The Governor had stressed the point. I wouldn't elaborate much but let me tell you, your opportunity basket is getting enlarged day by day. You just have to look around. You have to look at the affirmative policies of the government that handle you. You have to know that our background of startups, our background of unicorns, the role of youth in that direction is done by you.

Right now, we have, as is provided by education, equality before law, inequities have been decimated. Privileged pedigree is no longer in existence, all are equal. Patronage is password no longer for a job, contract or employment. Patronage is password for jail. These are the good times you are seeing and therefore, I appeal to you, without taking more time, you have to define yourselves.

The engine of development of this nation, our journey, your mind has to fire on all cylinders with hope and optimism. I have no doubt, India's intellect DNA is unrivalled in the world. During our time, the global corporates did not have any Indian presence, even at the lower level. Now there is no global institute or corporate that does not have an Indian mind at the peak.

Therefore, you are no longer governed by succession of lineage. You have to define your course and that's why I often say, I'll take just a minute for that. National Education Policy 2020, I'm sure the Vice Chancellor will take steps to make you fully aware how it is a game changer for you and through you, for the entire nation and humanity.

My young friends, let it be known, your University that brought the world to the Himalayas and the look the Himalayas give to the entire world. Let me indicate what Swami Vivekananda and mind

you, Swami Vivekananda left, if I go by my own age, more than 35 years ago, my age. He barely touched 40. What did he say? "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in men." the perfection is in you. He exhorted "Awake, Arise, stop not till the goal is achieved".

I am extremely grateful to the Chancellor, the Governor the Vice Chancellor for giving me this great opportunity to share my thoughts because when India will be having centenary of its independence achieving the status of Viksit Bharat, you will be also celebrating not only these two events but your own where you will be around that time.

Thank you so much.

JK/RC/SM

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