English rendering of PM's address during participation in Kaushal Deekshant Samaroh in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

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Uttar Pradesh's energetic Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ji, my senior colleague in the Union Cabinet and representative from this very parliamentary constituency Shri Rajnath Singh ji, Shri Jayant Chaudhary ji, my colleague in Parliament Pankaj Chaudhary ji, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya ji and Brajesh Pathak ji, other public representatives, and my young friends,

I am happy that our friend Jayant Chaudhary ji chose Lucknow for such a major skill development programme. You have already applauded, but I have not yet told you why I am happy. I am happy because, as a Member of Parliament from Uttar Pradesh, it is a matter of pride and good fortune for me that today I have the opportunity to welcome my young friends who have come here from across the country.

Friends,

Today, you have crossed an important milestone in your lives. You are now about to become directly connected with the process of nation-building. And today is a very important day for me as well. This morning, I left Delhi and went to Bengal, and my first programme of the day was at an IIT. The country's first IIT was established at Kharagpur, and it was celebrating its 75th anniversary. With the same energy, the same dreams, the same hopes and aspirations with which I went to meet the IIT students, I have come to meet the ITI students with equal enthusiasm and excitement. Whether it is an IIT or an ITI, for me they are equally the treasures of my country, the strength of my nation, and the future of India. The skills and expertise that you have gained while studying at ITIs are now a major source of energy for a Viksit Bharat. This Viksit Bharat will be built by your hands and by your skills. Every nation progresses through the skills of its youth, and our country has always respected skill and craftsmanship. Just look at Lucknow itself. How much Chikan embroidery work is done here. For a long time, India was known across the world through such skills. Fine muslin, the silk of Banaras and Kanchipuram, the Pashmina of Kashmir, our cotton fabrics, Kalamkari, the steel used to create some of the world's finest swords, bronze and Panchdhatu sculptures, and hundreds of countless such crafts. No one person could probably list them all together. These were once the pillars of our society.

Friends,

Earlier, our social system itself was built around skills. My birth took place in Gujarat, and I would like to share an experience from Gujarat. In Gujarat, there is a term called Vasvaya. This tradition meant that wherever a village was established, skilled people whose work sustained village life would also settle there. Only then could a village truly exist. These were people whose skills were so essential that village life could not even be imagined without them.

Friends,

Since ancient times, similar systems existed across every region of the country. But unfortunately, over time this system gradually lost its importance. When I was Chief Minister of Gujarat, a question once arose before me: how many types of skills are there without which our lives would become very difficult? I gave this assignment to my officers, and they came back with 30–35 categories. I told them not to approach it that way and suggested another method. I asked them to think from the moment a person wakes up in the morning until they go to sleep at night, and from birth until death. What kinds of services does an individual, a family, and society require? What services are absolutely essential? I told them to make a list using their own experience. Earlier, they had come back with only 30–35 categories. A week later, after thinking deeply about it, they returned with a list of nearly one thousand occupations. They realised that we need people who make bouquets, people who make toys, people who apply mehendi, and countless other service providers. These were the skills and craftsmanship that kept our society moving. I asked the officers to focus on this, and that eventually led to the creation of a modern skill development ecosystem in Gujarat.

Friends,

There is another reason behind the destruction of India’s skill ecosystem. When invaders came to our country, India was a golden civilisation, admired by the world and envied by many. What did those invaders do? Their first attack was on skill and craftsmanship. Many of you must have read in history how the thumbs of our master craftsmen were cut off whenever they created products of exceptional quality. Why? Because those invaders understood that India’s prosperity and greatness came from the skills in the hands of its people. They knew that if they destroyed those skills, they would weaken India itself. Later, the British came. They were more sophisticated in their methods. Through Macaulay’s education system, they imposed a model in which our skill-based traditions were reduced to producing clerks on paper. An entire system emerged that focused on producing clerks. The British destroyed India’s skills and advanced their own industries. They took our resources and expanded their manufacturing. Over time, becoming a paper-based clerk came to be regarded as prestigious. Even today, if a child joins an ITI, many parents do not proudly tell friends and relatives. They hide it. They feel embarrassed because the child is not going to a university or college. The child is wearing blue overalls and working with his or her hands. This mindset developed over time. I have resolved to change it. The respect given to IIT graduates should equally be given to my ITI students. Even in the largest company, there may be only two or three people walking around with degrees and certificates, but the company runs only because there are 200 to 300 ITI-trained workers supporting it.

And therefore, friends,

There is a great need for a psychological transformation in our social life. I congratulate Jayant Chaudhary ji and all the officers associated with this initiative. I was observing the sons and daughters who came to receive their certificates today. I saw their style and their attire. Convocations at universities do not have the kind of pride and dignity that I see among my ITI students. This confidence, this pride, is something special. The Prime Minister of India has come running from a programme in Bengal to stand here in Lucknow and proudly present certificates to ITI students.

Friends,

This was a colonial mindset from which the country never fully emerged, even after Independence. After Independence too, clerical jobs continued to be prioritised and skills gradually fell behind. Once, I read a book by Dada Dharmadhikari ji. A postgraduate youth came to him looking for a job and asked him to help find one. Dada Dharmadhikari asked him, “What do you know how to do?” The man replied, “I am a postgraduate.” Dada ji asked again, “But what can you actually do?” The young man said, “I have a gold medal. I have certificates. I am a postgraduate.” Dada ji asked again, “Can you drive a vehicle?” “No.” “Can you cook food?” “No.” Then what can you do? The young man kept repeating that he was a postgraduate. There was a period when paper certificates alone carried value. But times are changing, and today I want to tell you something. You must have seen discussions today in the media and on social media. People are saying that in 2023 I had suggested in Parliament that people invest in Government of India PSUs and become prosperous. At that time people mocked me. But history has shown that those who invested benefited significantly. I said another thing a year ago. I requested the people of the country not to buy gold for a year unless absolutely necessary. I am happy because just as people once followed Lal Bahadur Shastri ji’s request to skip one meal for the nation, our citizens listened. Such is the character of this nation. An ordinary person like me requested that people buy less gold, and they did. Gold prices fell. Today people tell me that they followed my advice and saved money. Today I want to say one more thing. Write it down. Times are changing. The demand for people with skills and craftsmanship is going to grow beyond those carrying only paper certificates and wearing coats, trousers, and ties. Those who possess real skills will be in greater demand. Whenever I visit Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, or Kuwait, members of the royal families tell me one thing. They say that the magnificent modern cities seen there were built not merely with their money, but with the hard work and skills of Indian workers. The splendour of Dubai, the shining skyline of Abu Dhabi, and the development of Saudi Arabia are all results of the skill and labour of Indian craftsmen. Every royal family praises India's human talent. Today, governments around the world entering agreements with us repeatedly tell us that they need 90,000 people every year, or 150,000 people, or 100,000 people. The whole world is asking for Indian talent. And they are not asking for graduates coming out of universities alone; they are asking for people coming out of ITIs. Those who possess skill and expertise are seeing growing demand across the world. That is why I say, friends, the next twenty years... and I am not referring to the movie... the next twenty years belong to a Viksit Bharat.

Friends,

India in the 21st century can move forward only by honouring skills. Therefore, in recent years our government has taken several steps inspired by the spirit of Shramev Jayate. We began by creating a separate Ministry for Skill Development. Earlier, convocation ceremonies were held only for college and university graduates. People wore large caps and gowns. I said no. If there should be grand convocation ceremonies, they should also be for my ITI students. I see India's future in their fingers. I see India's strength in their skills. And when we formulated the New National Education Policy, we placed special emphasis on skill development.

Friends,

In today's modern age, a great deal is being said about AI. People say AI will do this and AI will do that. AI will take away one person's job and another person's livelihood. But understand this carefully. No one can take away the livelihood of a skilled person. During COVID, we saw how difficult conditions became. People were helpless. Those whose services society depended on returned to their villages out of fear of death. And then people realised that no matter how wealthy they were, they could not manage without skilled manpower. It was skilled workers who sustained many aspects of life during that period.

Friends,

When you learn a skill, you are not merely working with machines. You are making people's lives easier. You are increasing the strength of the nation. There was a time when India imported mobile phones. Today, the sons and daughters of India manufacture those phones, and Indian-made mobile phones are being sent to countries around the world. It is because of you that India's manufacturing capacity is increasing. That is why ITIs are receiving so much importance today. Since 2014, our government has established nearly 5,000 new ITIs within a decade. The number of students enrolled in ITIs has increased by more than five lakh. Among them, the number of girls has increased by more than two and a half times.

Friends,

Training quality, faculty, and infrastructure in ITIs have also been very important priorities for us. Earlier, the ITI network was lagging behind. The same old trades were being taught under the label of skill and vocational education. Today, more than 30 new-age trades are being taught in ITIs. As was mentioned by Gen Z representatives, courses now include aeronautical structures, AI assistants, cyber security assistants, drone technicians, green hydrogen technicians, industrial robotics, electric vehicles, animation and special effects, semiconductor technicians, and many more. All these courses have been introduced keeping current and future needs in mind. No matter how big a hospital may be, no matter how highly educated the doctors are, if there are no ITI-trained technicians to operate the machines, not a single patient can be cured. That is the strength you possess. I have come here to make you realise your strength. I have come to honour your capability. Because I know that ITIs are going to write a glorious chapter in the future.

And friends,

All this is being done not only for India's requirements, but also keeping the needs of the whole world in mind. Every day you hear that India is signing trade agreements with one country or discussing FTAs with another. All of this is creating new opportunities for young people like you.

Friends,

Our effort is to transform ITI curricula, upgrade machinery, ensure that trainers learn new technologies, and build direct connections between training and industry. That is why ₹60,000 crore is being invested through the PM Setu Scheme. This is going to benefit all of you young people significantly.

Friends,

As India grows rapidly, new opportunities are emerging for skilled workers. You heard earlier that 50 crore people have emerged from poverty in the last 12–13 years. This is a historic achievement. In my view, one of the greatest achievements of India after Independence is precisely these 50 crore people coming out of poverty. And the path to a Viksit Bharat passes through this achievement. The government provided facilities, empowered the poor, and gave them confidence that they could rise above poverty. In this grand campaign, lakhs and lakhs of opportunities were also created for skilled workers. When four crore homes were built for poor families, electricians and carpenters found work. When pipelines were laid and when electricity reached villages for the first time, it was young people like you who made those initiatives successful.

Friends,

Today, demand for different skills is increasing in many new sectors. Let me give you another example. A few months ago, when war began in West Asia, gas supplies were disrupted. Questions arose about LPG availability. Clouds of uncertainty appeared. Those who love spreading panic became excited. They began saying that gas would disappear, stoves would stop working, people would go hungry, and queues would form at petrol stations. You can look at old newspaper reports and see what all was predicted. But none of it happened. At the same time, when the Strait of Hormuz crisis emerged, we also could not simply sit idle. We had to act. The government decided that at least one lakh PNG gas connections should be provided every day in urban areas. We wanted to ensure that gas reached households through pipelines so that we could withstand any future disruptions. I personally reviewed the programme because my objective was one lakh connections per day. Whenever I held review meetings, however, the numbers were only fifteen thousand, twenty thousand, twenty-two thousand, twenty-three thousand. We were unable to reach one lakh. The government was ready to spend the money. Do you know what answer I received? Officials told me that they had done everything possible, but they could not find enough plumbers. There was a shortage of plumbers. Just look at your strength. The country was searching desperately for plumbers. This shows that if you have skills, you have employment opportunities. Today we need huge numbers of skilled workers in solar energy. A completely new sports economy is emerging in India. We need manufacturers of sports equipment and many other products connected to sports and fitness. In other words, opportunities for you are expanding as wide as the sky itself. Our youth must take full advantage of these opportunities.

Friends,

Today, India is moving towards becoming the Skill Capital of the world, and all of you are at the heart of that vision. I am not speaking only about India; I am speaking about the world, and I say this with confidence because of you. And I have good news for all young people and for Uttar Pradesh. Next year, in 2027, India will host the World Skills Asia competition. Young people from across Asia will come here. And this event will take place in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh. Youth from many countries will be hosted by Uttar Pradesh. I extend my advance best wishes to Uttar Pradesh for this as well.

Friends,

Today, Uttar Pradesh is driving the country's development. There was a time when opportunities for young people here were very limited. Under the leadership of Yogi ji, Maurya ji, Brajesh ji, Pankaj Chaudhary ji, and others, and through the double-engine government, this situation has changed completely. Today people of Uttar Pradesh proudly say that UP is an expressway state. UP has numerous international airports. Major universities are being established here. Tourism is flourishing. Large mobile manufacturing facilities are operating here. A semiconductor plant is being built in Uttar Pradesh. And the BrahMos missile, which has gained great attention through Operation Sindoor and has disrupted the sleep of our enemies, is also being manufactured in Uttar Pradesh. All these development activities are creating new opportunities for young people like you.

Friends,

We must also remember what Uttar Pradesh used to be like. A few days ago, I was in my parliamentary constituency, Kashi. During the inauguration of a factory there, a young woman told me that she now works until 11 at night and returns home safely by herself. This is not an ordinary thing. People of Uttar Pradesh understand what it once meant for a daughter to be outside after sunset. She told me that after finishing work at the factory at 11 p.m., she goes home alone. Under the leadership of Yogi ji, the BJP government has created this environment of safety. A feeling of security and confidence in prosperity is what will build a Viksit Bharat. Therefore, I tell every young person in the country that the whole sky lies before you. Dream big. Develop your skills. Put all your energy into achieving your dreams. And never feel that you are alone. Whenever you think you are alone, remember that I stand with you. With this confidence, as all of you move forward into a new phase of life, fulfil all the dreams of your parents. Dedicate whatever you have gained to strengthening society. You will progress, the nation will progress, and your families will be filled with pride. With this spirit, I congratulate all of you on this special occasion. Just now, I was watching on television the many young people gathered in ITIs across the country. I congratulate all of them and extend my very best wishes.

Repeat after me:

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

Thank you very much!

DISCLAIMER: This is the approximate translation of Prime Minister's address. Original address was delivered in Hindi.

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