

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT FIRST CONVOCATION OF SWAMI RAMA
HIMALAYAN UNIVERSITY**

Dehradun, Uttarakhand: April 1, 2016

1. I am happy to be here this afternoon for the first convocation of Swami Rama Himalayan University. From my brief observation, I find that this campus represents a clean, green and serene setting for imparting higher education. This University was set up three years ago by the Himalayan Institute Hospital Trust (HIHT) that has been rendering yeoman service in Uttarakhand for the last twenty seven years. The Trust was set up by Shri Swami Rama, who was a great philosopher, teacher, yogi and humanitarian.

2. Swami Rama, when he was young, trekked the peaks and valleys of the Himalayas. It was then that he became acutely aware of the lack of development, limited access to affordable healthcare and shortage of livelihood opportunities in the region. He decided to return one day and make a difference in the lives of the inhabitants. He founded the Himalayan Institute Hospital Trust in order to provide education, healthcare and livelihood skills. He was of the firm opinion that a human frame is a form of the Divine and that serving one's fellow beings selflessly and lovingly is the highest form of worship. Swamiji had said and I quote: "*If I cannot serve the God within you, then going to temples, churches and masjids is all hypocrisy*" (unquote). This conviction led him to make "Love, Serve, Remember" the motto of HIHT, inspiring students, faculty and staff towards selfless service of fellow beings.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

3. Swami Rama was a multi-faceted personality with great love for his motherland and the place of his birth. Though anointed as the Shankaracharya of Karvirpitham at a young age, he renounced this high spiritual post in order to pursue his yogic-meditative lifestyle. After intense yogic disciplines, he went to Japan and the US to create a bridge between science and spirituality. It is said that under controlled laboratory conditions, he demonstrated voluntary control over involuntary functions such as blood flow, body temperature, heart rate and brain waves. His revelation laid the foundation for acceptance of the psychosomatic origins of disease and the ability

of the mind to bring about healing. He established holistic health as a new discipline that had much to offer to allopathic medicine. At HIHT, he stressed upon the importance of amalgamating the wisdom of the East with the modern technologies of the West. As he so succinctly said and I quote: "*The fragrance of Eastern wisdom combined with the beautiful form of Western science and technology creates a perfect flower for humanity*" (unquote).

4. Swami Rama had penned a widely-acclaimed book titled, "Living with the Himalayan Masters", which dealt with his life in the Himalayan caves and monasteries. I am told that the royalties from this book were used by Swamiji to procure land and create infrastructure for this beautiful two hundred acre university campus. The bridge that Swamiji created between science and spirituality will have far reaching consequences for the evolution of mankind and for the betterment of healthcare systems throughout the world. I, therefore, feel privileged to be amidst you in this temple of education, compassion and love.

Friends:

5. It is heartening to note that what started twenty five years ago - with an OPD in a tin shed and a small house for rural development - has bloomed into a beautiful township and a university. Today, this institute provides quality higher education in medicine, para-medical sciences, nursing, engineering and management. It serves the rural masses comprising more than 1,200 villages of Uttarakhand. It focuses on health, education, and income generation programmes. It provides tertiary care services through its 750 bedded multi-specialty hospital and state-of-the-art 250 bedded Cancer centre.
6. Students and new faculty joining this institution are trained in the Science of Joyful Living, a programme with lectures and practices based on the teachings of the Swamiji. This University is developing integrated and cost-effective approaches to healthcare and development. This will address the needs of the local population. It will also serve as a model for replication in areas with under-served populations. SRHU is taking all steps necessary to align itself to international standards in the delivery of quality education. Its Department of Medical Education was designated in 2014 as a Regional Medical Education Training Centre by the Medical Council of India. This unit is involved in faculty development programmes and the development of innovative teaching and assessment tools.

Friends:

7. A university is the apex of the education system. It is therefore incumbent on higher educational institutions to provide quality education to transform the entire education system. The demographic dividend that we talk about will fructify if we can provide the growing number of our youth good education, knowledge and skills. Mere expansion of higher education by establishing more centres of higher learning is not enough. Unless we take care of quality, the objective of preparing young minds into capable, confident and committed individuals will not be met. An all-out effort to maintain good standards in our higher academic institutions is required, be it in developing the faculty, nurturing core competencies, establishing linkages with other institutions, networking with the industry, or focusing on research and innovation. The research areas should be prioritized so as to solve specific socio-economic problems. It is the duty of our institutions to instill in their students core civilizational values - love for their motherland, a sense of responsibility towards their society, and a compassion for all. The higher education system should produce sound professionals with a strong social sensitivity.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

8. I congratulate the medical, nursing and management students receiving their degrees from SRHU today. You are the future and the hope of our nation. You are equipped to serve our country with the education and training you have received at SRHU. Remember what Mother Teresa once observed and I quote: *"The greatest disease today is not tuberculosis or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love"* (unquote). Healing and healthcare system in our country must always stand on moral high ground. The prime focus of such a system should be the welfare of patients only. We need dedicated nurses, doctors and managers to make healthcare more scientific and efficient. On your shoulders rests the future of this noble profession.

9. Convocation is the biggest day in your life as you graduate from formal education and leave the portals of your *alma mater*. You may do well to bear in mind some suggestions that I have for you:
- a) Don't be anxious about your future: Learn to live in the present. Past is history; future is mysterious; so, focus on your present. Your future will be the outcome of your actions in the present.
 - b) Don't brood over the past: You cannot undo what has already taken place. Counter-factual thinking should find no place in your present and future endeavours.
 - c) Do not be afraid of failures; let failure be a source of learning.
 - d) Trust yourself: We do not need magic to change the world. We carry all the power we need inside ourselves already; we have the power to imagine and create a better future.
 - e) Be a life-long learner: Remember that graduation is a concept. In real life, you graduate every day. It is a never ending process as you learn new things from your occupation and imbibe other qualities from your life experiences. Remember that change is the law of nature. Like old foliage that drops off in autumn, to be replaced by new foliage in the spring, try to adapt to change and become an agent for change. Old ideas and approaches that no longer serve any purpose should give way to better ideas. It is your creativity that can usher in change. So, proceed in the journey of life with an attitude to learn and an aptitude to think new.
10. Before I conclude, young students, I wish you by saying that:
I hope your dreams take you...
To the corners of your smiles,
To the highest of your hopes,
To the windows of your opportunities,
And to the most special places your heart has ever known.
11. Always remember that all our dreams can come true; only, if we have the courage to pursue them. Spread your fragrance and judge yourself not by your accomplishments, but by the happiness of the people around you. Wish you godspeed in your endeavours!

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
