

**SPEECH OF THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE  
AT THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CONVOCATION OF LALIT NARAYAN MITHILA UNIVERSITY**

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It is indeed my privilege to be here at the convocation of the Lalit Narayan Mithila University. You are fortunate and privileged to have been educated at this University – which is the brainchild and result of the collective efforts of the eminent academicians of the time, Dr. Amarnatha Jha, Dr. R.C. Mazumdar, Dr. A.S. Altekar, Dr. Sunit Kumar Chaterjee.

Darbhanga is the heartland of Mithila and universally acknowledged as the centre of learning of ancient philosophy. It was from this region that saints and philosophers, men of art and craftsmen travelled out and inspired the world with their learning, wisdom and compassion. It is but natural that the Lalit Narayan Mithila University will imbibe and impart this legacy to its students.

I am glad to note that since it was founded in 1972, the University has come a long way. It has developed 23 teaching departments, 43 Constituent Colleges and 36 affiliated colleges and even provides distance learning. I am told that the University has a collection of nearly one lakh rare books and manuscripts.

As I glanced at the vision of the “Vision 2011” of the University , I was struck by its pragmatic choice of priorities: to establish a Women’s Institute of Technology imparting teaching in Bio-Technology and Information Technology, to promote export of Makhana, to promote the teaching of Mithila Art & Craft - especially Mithila painting, to establish an Institution of Disaster Management, to upgrade Distance Education, establish an Institute of Rural Technology and establish an Institute of Forensic Science. I was glad

to note that the University plans to build on regional specializations, provide students with the kind of knowledge and learning that would provide them a variety of opportunities.

Distinguished Guests,

Over 70 per cent of Indians will be of working age in 2025. Our young demography is an asset and we should prepare this population for their future role by giving them a solid foundation. For this, increasing the availability of accessible and affordable higher education and providing training in vocational skills is a key requirement.

Government has been providing special grants to recognise excellence in universities and academic institutions. A National Skill Development Council has been established and given a mandate to create 15 crore skilled workers by 2022. A National Innovation Council has been set up to prepare a roadmap for innovations in India. The process of setting up State Innovation Councils in each State and Sectoral Innovation Councils aligned to Central Ministries is underway. A National Knowledge Network (NKN) will link 1500 Institutes of Higher Learning and Research through an optical fibre backbone.

Government of India, in its Approach to the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, will continue with a threefold strategy of expansion, equity and excellence for higher education. It has identified revitalisation of the State Universities and Colleges as a critical component of the Plan.

Academic reforms will be prioritized and strengthening of research activity in Universities by establishing mutually-reinforcing linkages between teaching and research will be undertaken. Technology-enabled learning, and collaborative,

information and communication technologies (ICT) will be an area of focus. To improve the quality of education and learning, Government is proposing pilot projects of Innovation Universities giving them considerable autonomy and freedom and supplementing these with the creation of Centres of Excellence in existing universities. Resource constraints will make it difficult to meet the need of expanding higher education entirely through the public sector. Private investments in higher education, including through PPP- models will be encouraged.

Distinguished guests, while all these initiatives indicate that it is an opportune time for higher education in India, we have to be mindful that in the increasingly competitive international environment of today, it is necessary for our Universities to ensure that the curriculum is carefully crafted. They should ensure that the courses that they offer are relevant, modern and progressive. Government of India has prioritized the promotion of quality by focusing on performance, curricular reforms, better human resource management, promotion of quality research and the creation of conducive ambience in order to attract the best talent to its faculty.

It is equally important for Universities to give importance to autonomous research. It is necessary for Universities to build linkages and collaborations with premier institutions in Indian and abroad. Their governance, too, should be guided by flexibility and dynamism.

Finally, how does a University develop in our youth a well rounded intellect and a personality that is in harmony with society? An interdisciplinary approach will undoubtedly give a proper value orientation to our educational system. It is important to simultaneously develop moral values along with a scientific temper.

I am inspired by the words of Dr Rajendra Prasad who while addressing the Patna University Convocation in 1953 said - and I quote, *“education is in one sense a process of acquainting and enriching every new generation with the accumulated experiences and knowledge of a past generations and thereby enhancing the capacity and power of their reason”*.

I would only add that, there is, today, a real need for each and every student passing through the portals of this prestigious institution to remind himself, as he receives his degree, of the high expectations that society has of him and his generation. Each one of you should have a deep sense of purpose and commitment to make your individual contribution to the building of your State and our nation. Along with the accolades that you will enjoy should be a sobering thought - about what you will do to make a difference - and what will be your significant effort for the people around you. I call upon you all to individually and collectively think about this as a noble obligation.

I once again congratulate the scholars and students who have been awarded medals, certificates of merit and distinction and I hope that your training and education from this esteemed institution shall help you face challenges of the competitive world , that you will contribute in your own way towards the progress and prosperity of the nation.

God bless you all,

Jai Hind