

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF CONVOCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI

Mumbai: 30-12-2012

It gives me great pleasure to be present at this Convocation ceremony of the University of Mumbai. This institution is truly the fountainhead of higher education in India. It was founded in 1857 along with the Universities of erstwhile Madras and Kolkata, and had a key role in nurturing a number of leaders who led India to its independence.

2. This University has been the alma mater of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Mangesh Wagle, Waman Abaji Modak and the matriculating institution for the Father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi. Today, each one of you students who are graduating join a band of great leaders and academicians who have graduated from this prestigious University. My heartiest congratulations to all of you. You fulfill this day not just your dreams but also the dreams of your parents, your family and your teachers.

3. The University of Mumbai has been blessed by various philanthropists and benefactors who contributed to this Heritage Convocation Hall with its remarkable and ageless grandeur. Its

stained glass work and its arches mutely exude beauty and enhance the awe that knowledge should rightly evoke amongst all of us present. I believe the Fort Campus is amongst the world's most beautiful campuses of its kind. This exemplifies the University's dedication to history and tradition in all its forms.

4. Over the years the University has shown deep commitment to being a mother institution to its hundreds of affiliated institutions and colleges. It has shown remarkable ability to help found and develop and even grant autonomy to illustrious institutions such as Veermata Jijabai Technological Institute, St Xavier's College, S.P. College of Engineering and a group of Colleges under Somaiya Trust. Its own department, the Institute of Chemical Technology is now a deemed university.

5. As the City of Mumbai sought to create learning environments in neighbourhoods, the University of Mumbai has reached out and done its duty with poise and alacrity.

6. Today there are over 667 affiliated colleges and institutions it oversees and over 6.5 lakh students on its rolls. It also has 57 Departments covering a breadth of subjects ranging from Humanities, Technology, Management, Commerce, Law and more.

7. As Mumbai has grown, so has the University of Mumbai. It has campuses and sub-campuses from the Konkan coast to the teeming Mumbai Metropolitan expanse and reaching hinterland Thane district. This has enabled the University of Mumbai enroll and provide access to both urban and rural citizens.

8. University of Mumbai has a glorious history and must rededicate itself to the building of India's future. With India's youth seeking education and productive roles in society, it is even more critical that Universities reinvent themselves to deliver relevant knowledge and actionable skills.

9. The father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi has said, "Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity?" Today when our youth face moral dilemmas, caught as they are between traditional values and western culture, Bapu's exhortation to follow the book of humanity can set many doubts at rest. Once we imbibe the book of humanity, many of the divisions and conflicts in society will meet their end.

10. For India to sit at the high table of global powers, it has to prepare its youth for an ever-shrinking world that shares resources as well as responsibilities through being knowledgeable, capable and sensitive to environmental and social issues.

11. Universities will need to reinvent themselves as enablers of society rather than gatekeepers of higher education. The youth of our nation should be empowered to take our great nation, forward in leaps and bounds.

12. I am happy to note that the University of Mumbai has maintained a focus on new technologies and cutting edge thinking. It has started new centres such as the Centre for Nanotechnology and also new international collaborations in the area of sustainable development technologies and approaches. More and more such initiatives are needed for the developing world to understand each other and their special capabilities, creating space for new thinking in climate change and sustainability.

13. As you stand here after being granted degrees and honours, I would like to remind you that the purpose of education is not a good job or income but using the knowledge you have acquired in the service of the nation and mankind. I sincerely hope that all of you will

show the utmost zeal and love for humankind so that a better world can be gifted to our future generations.

14. In the age of smart phones and tablet computers, ideas now travel at the speed of thought. It is important for us to remain up to date with what is happening in the world. I am very happy to know that the University of Mumbai has introduced far-reaching changes in its examination technology through bar coding and use of communication technology to improve the processes.

15. The day is not far when we will see the emergence of a higher education system based on a seamless network of knowledge and learning as well as assessments of skill. This will mean the teaching and learning environment will have to radically change.

16. Delivering lectures and presenting thought through written material is going to be ancillary to creating learning environments. Professors, Lecturers and Teachers will emerge as facilitators of thought through multiple technology platforms and pathways. This means even the teaching fraternity will have relearn, reengage and retrain themselves for the immediate future.

17. At the same time, they must keep in mind the words of Mahatma Gandhi, while speaking to students at Sevagram in 1942 “A teacher who establishes rapport with the taught, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. A true teacher regards himself as a student of his students. If you will teach your pupils with this attitude, you will benefit much from them.”

18. I call upon the City of Mumbai and the Government of Maharashtra to be more proactive in preparing and providing for this new future. Just as a few good men stepped up and helped build this university by supporting its construction and development in its early years, the State of Maharashtra and citizens of Mumbai will need to come up with ways and means to enable greater funding and partnerships with industry houses, other universities and central government bodies.

19. India has shown itself to be a secular, diverse and pluralistic society which is able to deal with change, challenges and aspirations over the last few decades. This is only due to its abiding faith and belief in education. India’s future and that of the world it hopes to lead, as a great and powerful nation, is in the hands of its youth. The demographic dividend of its youth can only be reaped through universities and institutions that commit themselves to delivering

distributed learning environments. Every aspiring student should find the university reaching him and not the other way around!!!

20. In conclusion, let me remind you of what Swami Vivekananda said on the role and relevance of education. He said, “The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle of life, which does not bring out the strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion -- is it worth the name?” We need to reflect on his profound words and re-orient our thinking and approach towards education.

21. All of you graduates of the University of Mumbai are a living tribute to the faculty, staff and students who have, over the years, worked selflessly to bring the University to its present position of pre-eminence. I congratulate all the students on whom the University has conferred diplomas, degrees and certificates. This occasion is a reaffirmation that you have imbibed the knowledge and skills to face the world outside.

22. I urge you to stride onto your paths in life with a positive attitude and strong spirit. Besides training and education, what will keep you in good stead is strength of character, strength of mind and strength of purpose. I would like you to remember that what you do

with knowledge is always up to you, but knowledge used in the service of the nation and mankind is always closer to God's intention.

23. I wish the University of Mumbai all the best in its endeavors and urge it to do its utmost to become a world class institution.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.