

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF THINKEDU CONCLAVE ORGANISED
BY THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS GROUP AT ITC GRAND CHOLA, GUINDY,
CHENNAI ON 08.01.2020 AT 11.00 A.M**

Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam

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Chairman and Managing Director,
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Thiru. Prabhu Chawla,
Editorial Director,
The New Indian Express Group

Teachers and Students

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to be here today, at the inauguration of the eighth edition of "THINKEDU" CONCLAVE being organised by the 'The New Indian Express' and other entities, having been started in 2013. I am happy that every important stakeholder in the education system is part of this two-day event.

The very title of this two-day festival should provoke us to travel in the right direction -- Thinkedu Conclave. It asks us to think about what education should be, and which direction our country's education should take and what our educational goals should be.

What a positive expression, this! In fact, our country has made sincere and rapid progress in mass education. Yet, there are countless goals to be attained. Yet, every child in India is yet to start attending school regularly as part of the national mission of learning. And because that goal is yet slightly out of bounds for us, there are critics harping on us being failures on this count. It is here that I recall a wonderful saying that motivates us to think properly: **It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.**

In other words, it encourages us to think positively about our achievement in terms of mass education and chart the course of future action. It is at this stage that my mind

darts back to what Mahatma Gandhi said about education in India. He said, and I quote, **“Education not only moulds the new generation but also reflects the society’s fundamental assumptions about itself and the individuals who comprise it”**.

When the India Vision 2020 document was first floated by former President of India Shri A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, one of the five key areas of development needed to transform India into a superpower was identified as education. The document spoke about India transforming into a nation where education with a good value system was not denied to any meritorious candidates because of social or economic discrimination. When it was floated, this was seen as a lofty ideal, but there was not even a smidgeon of doubt as to whether we can achieve it. It was only a question of when.

Today, as India is on the cusp of turning 75 — it may have seemed like a long way to get to 2022, when you look back at 1947, when we got Independence. Today, we are once again reconfirming that vision, a vision to educate every single child, instilling every single child with the right kind of values such as compassion, humanity, respect and love for our great nation.

Let me remind you, my dear friends, that India's growth has been nothing short of a superlative variety and power. So when the question is asked of us in 2022 whether we are a superpower, let there be no doubt in our minds when we tell the world 'yes'. India has been a superpower for many years now, because no other country in the world will have educated so many millions of young children, with such a high degree of learning and skilling, as India has been doing since Independence.

Today, my vision for the near future is that our education system transforms into one where every student is treated equally and educated equally. Because only then can we be certain that the future is in capable, well-educated Indian hands.

This brings us to a very positive view of our efforts in mass education against the backdrop of the saying **“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness”**. We have so many things in our favour of which we should be legitimately proud.

In fact, my dear friends, you and I have been fortunate to be blessed with the gift of good education. It is possibly the reason why we are in the position here today to be able to debate and discuss what can be done so that every person in this country, irrespective of economic status, caste, creed, geography or race, has access to the same

kind of education that every one of us has been blessed with. Is it really possible? Can this become a reality in a country as vast as India?

Yes. Of course, it can. I believe this strongly.

Today, the State of Tamil Nadu, according to the latest **Gross Enrolment Ratio** (GER) statistics, has one of the highest numbers of intakes at the primary, middle and secondary school levels. This is a very clear sign that the young in India have understood the value of education. They have begun to value education because they see that it is their route to having a better future. It is this aspiration and determination to study and be educated that we need to capitalise upon.

Aspiration often shapes **Will**. **Will** often shapes **Determination**. And **Determination** is the only prerequisite for **Success**. One may not have anything in life but must possess the will to succeed and rise, this is true of a large number of people in India and this will to survive and thrive should be directed towards education. If we want to eradicate hunger and poverty in society and make an India where no one ever goes hungry or is in need of sustenance, then the only answer is to educate this generation and all generations fully thereafter.

It is not merely enough if one educates the people in one's family, but it is also imperative for our **karma** and our **dharma**, call it social responsibility if you will, to bring more people to schools and colleges. Today, India has made every effort through the Central and State-funded schemes to raise and spread the level and quality of infrastructure and teaching at Government Schools and Colleges.

I am happy to see how wonderfully schools have come up in adopting modern technology and taking it to the poorest students in the remotest parts of the country. But one has to ensure that the kids from the deprived classes not only get enrolled in schools but actually continued to go to schools. For this, they need guidance and coaching and handholding, they need the support-structure, to ensure that they do not drop out.

For ages, India has harboured a beautiful chain of thought about what Guru actually is. That ancient wisdom says that the order of Guru should be: **Mata, Pita, Guru, Dheivam** (Mother, Father, Teacher, God).

This actually explains how a child begins his or her learning process right at the moment of birth. This ancient wisdom stands true even in these modern times:

Parents are the child's first and most influential teachers. It is not merely because the parents teach the child about the Physics of everything that surrounds us, the Biology that is within us, the Mathematics that governs our economics or the Technology that is transforming our lives. It is because you, and I stress, only you, will teach them the essential values of humanity, of how to be good people, how good human beings who care for one another and for the world we live in.

Dear young friends, in these times when people are concerned about their identities and their narrow concerns, when ethical questions are arising on a daily basis, always remember how you were raised, what your parents taught you, and how the lives of great personages shaped this great nation. These are the lessons that you will, in turn, impart to the leaders of a new India. I am certain that it will be a country that is rich in technology, skills, values and where everyone is proud to love one's neighbour because that is what Indians do, find the proverbial **unity in diversity**.

Dr. Radhakrishnan used to say, and I quote, “**One can shape national solidarity by using neither bricks and lime nor hammer and chisel. It should bloom in the heart of every human. For the flower to emit fragrance we need to water the plant in the form of education**”.

My dear students, to you all I leave one challenge: One aspiration, if you will. Create a country where every child is given the same treatment, where every child is given the same education and every youth is given the same chances and every single person is proud to be an Indian. If you can achieve this with measured kindness and prudent love, and also limitless commitment to combined good which you will be taught by our education system, then you will have made this world a better place. There can be no greater legacy for us. I wish you all the very best and hope that you exceed all our expectations.

Recently we had Vice-Chancellors' Conference in Ooty on ‘**Chancellor's Vision 2030: Innovating Education in the Era of Industry Four Point Zero**’. In the Conference, we discussed methods of improving higher education scenario in Tamil Nadu and methodologies for bridging the gap between the curriculum that is being offered by the Universities at present and the expectations of the industry from the students.

India has one of the largest networks of higher education institutions in the world

with 993 universities and 39,931 colleges. Tamil Nadu enjoys a covetous reputation for higher education in the country. The State has a gross enrollment ratio of 49% compared to a national average of 25.8%. The State of Tamil Nadu has 59 Universities and about 8.64 lakhs of students passing out every year.

When speaking about education, **Martin Luther King Jr.** once said, and I quote, **“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education”**. Hence besides encouraging the students to think, the goal of education should also be character-building.

At this juncture, I would like to stress specially the importance of character-building in education. Education in school and colleges should lay stress on inculcating moral values and a national spirit in the students. The teachers have extensive knowledge about their subjects and enormous experience in various facets of life. A society properly educated is always progressive, peaceful and prosperous.

The New Indian Express group has invited many eminent personalities of India to share their views on education. They are all men and women of high standing in society having achieved outstanding success in their respective fields. I am sure that the deliberations at the conclave will serve as the beacon light that can illuminate the way forward for the future.

I realise the power in this exercise. I have always believed that every time we take fresh look at our efforts, we find new energy.

Nandri Vanakkam.....

Jai Hind.....

Jai Tamil Nadu.....