

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE CONVOCATION CEREMONY OF THIRUVALLUVAR
UNIVERSITY**

Vellore, March 10, 2021

Vanakkam!

திருவள்ளுவர் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் பதினாராவது வருடாந்திர பட்டமளிப்பு விழாவில் உங்கள் அனைவருடன் இருப்பதில் பெருமகிழ்ச்சி அடைகிறேன். [I feel happy to be with you all in the 16th annual convocation of the Thiruvalluvar University.] It has always been my pleasure to come amid young scholars like you all. My heartiest congratulations to all students being awarded degrees today.

This university is named after one of the greatest saint-poets and thinkers who is revered for his eternal messages for the welfare of entire humanity. Let us salute the memory of Thiruvalluvar. Let us also resolve to imbibe his noble teachings. Let his kurals be integral parts of your education and life.

I feel proud to stand on this soil that witnessed one of the first challenges to the might of the East India Company. The Vellore Sepoy uprising of 1806 was one of the precursors to our Independence movement. It is my great privilege to be the chief guest of the 16th annual convocation of the Thiruvalluvar University.

Each time I visit Tamil Nadu, I find myself connected to the great tradition of excellence achieved here. As fertile in agriculture as in Literature, Tamil Nadu is a unique place where one of the earliest engineering marvels, the Grand Anicut, one of the most ancient dams and irrigation systems in the world exists. The dam constructed by the great Cholas on Kaveri River in Thanjavur, is a testimony to the

engineering excellence in our society during those ancient times. Knowledge and scientific temper appear to be intrinsic traits of people in this region. That is why great mathematicians and scientists like S. Ramanujan, the Nobel Laureates C.V. Raman and S. Chandrashekhar came from this region. The list of luminaries from this region is endless.

It is worth mentioning that the only Indian Governor General, C. Rajgopalachari and two of my illustrious predecessors R. Venkataraman and Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam are great sons of this soil.

Dear Students,

The wise words of Thiruvalluvar serve as your motto: “கண்ணுடையர் என்பவர் கற்றோர்” which means, “The learned alone have eyes on face, whereas the ignorant have two sores of disgrace.”

In a short span of about two decades since it was established, your university has emerged as one of the prestigious universities in the country. It has blossomed into a premier institution, imparting quality education to students, many of whom are from economically and educationally backward regions. This also includes women who come from socially challenged sections.

I am happy to know that 65 percent of the students in this university are women. Our daughters and sisters are breaking barriers and achieving success in all fields. This is clear from the fact that today out of 66 students conferred with gold medals for academic excellence, 55 of them are women students. Similarly, doctorate degree has been conferred upon 217 scholars today of which 100 are women candidates. Out of the 10 students who came on the stage to receive their medals and degrees, I observed that nine were girls i.e. 90 percent of medals given today. This reflects bright future of India. When the women of our country are educated, it not only secures their own future but also of the entire country. I am sure that under the mentorship of Vice Chancellor Dr. Thamarai Selvi Somasundaram, this university will achieve greater heights.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that India's higher education system has expanded to reach out to serve the rural and marginalised sections. In the process, it has become the third largest education system in the world. However, there is no room for complacency, and we have to catch up for the lost time if we aspire to scale greater heights.

India had a rich system of education prior to the British rule. Gandhiji described it as a "beautiful tree" that was cut down by what the British rulers called reforms. We are yet to fully recover from those drastic changes and recover our legacy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The National Education Policy 2020 is a well-planned and decisive step in that direction. It has a holistic vision of transforming the way children and youth will be educated to make learning a part of personal development while also serving the needs of society. To this end, it brings together the best of our ancient heritage and the best of the modern learning. It gives emphasis on moral education and awareness of Indian culture. A student coming out of such a system will have a higher degree of self-confidence and will also be better equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

Moreover, the new policy also takes into account what is needed to build a prosperous and self-reliant nation. For this, the higher education system must enable equity, expertise and empowerment. The National Education Policy seeks to achieve these objectives. As Sir C.V. Raman had put it, higher education institutions should lead the nation towards knowledge expansion and economic growth. That precisely is the thrust of the new policy.

Dear Students,

It's a proud moment in your life today. You are receiving your hard-earned degrees. My congratulations to you all – and also to your parents and teachers who have made this journey possible for you. Indeed, it is an auspicious beginning of your life in society. Hereafter you have to climb up the ladder of success in your life on the strength of your own choices, efforts and wisdom. Your education will open up plenty of opportunities for you. Many of you will pursue higher studies. Learning is, of course, a life-long process. The more we learn, the more we realise the extent of our ignorance. There is a Tamil saying which puts it beautifully:

கற்றது கைமண் அளவு கல்லாதது உலகளவு

Our learning is akin to a hand full of sand while that we need to learn is as wide as the world.

Also, please remember that educational qualifications alone will not make you a good son or daughter, or a good neighbour. Your good deeds will fetch you a good name in the society. You should keep in mind an important difference: What we learn from books is learning, while what we learn from life is wisdom.

Your choices in the career ahead should be guided by your skills and aptitude. I will also urge you to keep our Motherland in mind. You should strive to contribute to the growth and development of our nation as a token of gratitude not only to your alma-mater but also to our Motherland. I am confident that you will excel as duty-conscious citizens of India.

We all have the solemn responsibility to do our part in making India shine on the world stage. More importantly, we also have the opportunity to do so. Our country is in a unique position to offer crucial lessons to the world in how to live together peacefully and how to nurture nature. As India achieves more economic growth and more equity, the world is eagerly turning to us to learn more. Each of you has

the capacity to write the next chapter in this India saga. All that is needed is the right aspiration. When you find yourself confused in that regard, Gandhiji's advice will brighten your path. He had said: "Emphasis laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this occasion, I also convey my appreciation to all the family members of the students present here. I also appreciate the faculty members and non-teaching staff of the university, for their important role and major contribution in shaping these young minds to attain excellence in their respective fields.

I wish all of you a bright future. My best wishes are with you in all your future endeavours.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!