

**SPEECH OF THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI
PRANAB MUKHERJEE AT THE 18TH CONVOCATION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR**

September 27, 2012

I am delighted to be here at the 18th Convocation of the University of Kashmir. This is a long awaited and proud moment for those who will receive their degrees. Some of you will receive awards for your meritorious work. I offer you all my felicitations and congratulations.

Although you will leave the portals of this Institution, you will henceforth be bound to it as the Alumni of a very prestigious University – the University of Kashmir with a glorious tradition of intellectual and literary activity. I am told that this University, with 13 faculties in 38 teaching departments and 15 research and extension centres, offers about 150 academic programmes today. It has come a long way from its modest start in 1948.

Distinguished Guests,

I am deeply conscious of the great standing of Kashmir as the *Sharda Peeth* - the 'Seat of Learning' - in ancient times. This beautiful valley has nursed in its lap great men of letters, poets and patrons of learning. It has also attracted philosophers and scholars from diverse cultures and foreign civilizations who contributed to its rich heritage. I am sure that students and faculty of the University have a sense of the rich legacy that they have inherited and will derive inspiration and benefit from it.

Distinguished guests, the academic environment in India and, indeed, across the world is more exciting than ever for students of today. The IT revolution has brought infinite opportunities. It has greatly facilitated us in offering a more modern, progressive and relevant education to our students.

Government of India, in its 12th Five Year Plan has a well defined strategy to achieve this. It includes expansion of infrastructure with regional equity, focus on performance, better human resource management, reform of the curriculum,

promotion of quality research and creation of an environment that will attract the best talent. In Jammu and Kashmir, Government has established two Central Universities recently.

I am aware that University of Kashmir is electronically linked with knowledge banks and information offered by reputed Institutions across the world. This needs to be disseminated with optimal efficiency. This is the time to shift towards increasingly interactive, and collaborative learning experiences.

New technologies need to be adopted which have useful applications for teaching, learning and professional growth. This will bring a significant improvement in the quality of our teaching and research. Universities must promote creativity and innovation. Creation of a knowledge society requires that Universities encourage autonomous research.

It is equally important to have collaborations and linkages between premier institutions of higher learning in India and abroad for cross fertilization of ideas and advancement of knowledge.

Distinguished guests, as I take in the beauty of Kashmir, I am compelled to prioritise the preservation of its ecology and environment in the minds of our students and researchers. This is as an area where Universities such as yours could make a great contribution for your own benefit and that of future generations. There is an urgent need to make students duly cognizant of the visible effects of climate change and the general degradation of our land, freshwater and marine resources. In Kashmir itself, a lot needs to be done to safeguard the immediate environs – and to evolve an academic curriculum and research to address the challenges.

I would also like to take this opportunity, while I am among the bright young people here today, to highlight the relevance – and the urgent need for greater tolerance in our society. No problems are ever resolved by violence. It only aggravates the pain and the hurt on every side. The healing process must be nurtured with love, compassion and patience.

Institutions of higher education, with their emphasis on sound value systems and character building can play an effective role in developing a greater sense of responsibility and a rational approach to all issues. In this context, the duty of

teachers is to inculcate in their students a balance – of knowledge and skills with the moral and aesthetic values.

Distinguished Guests, I call upon the youth of Kashmir to take the lead in forging the future of our nation. In every field of activity – be it business, industry, trade, education or culture, India is a nation on the move. A billion people marching forward led by the ideas, enterprise and energy of its predominantly young population.

I am confident that the young people of India will build a strong and powerful nation - a nation that is politically mature and economically strong, a nation whose people enjoy both a high quality of life as well as justice, fundamental rights and equality.

This India of tomorrow, achieved through inclusive growth, offers enormous opportunities for the youth of Kashmir if they only seize them. Do not lose any more time. The whole world is rapidly transforming itself. We in India should not be left behind. The contributions of young Kashmiris are critical for India's advancement to progress. Let the dark days of violence and conflict be left behind. Let a new dawn emerge. It is the time to move ahead with faith in our collective future and confidence in the largest democracy in the world, where rule of law prevails, robust institutions function and the Constitution serves as the Supreme Law.

I am aware that there are grievances. Many important issues need deft handling and speedy resolution. The Government of India and the State Government of J&K are determined and duty bound to ensure that every Kashmiri lives with dignity having equal rights and equal opportunities.

Let Jammu & Kashmir lead the way in the building of a new future for India. Let it set an example to the rest of India and the world by showing how the entire region can be transformed into a zone of peace, stability and prosperity.

Let Jammu and Kashmir regain its historical role as a center of learning, a place frequented by saints and religious scholars, a land known for its diversity and harmony, a fulcrum of trade and commerce with our neighbours.

With these few words, I once again congratulate the scholars and students of the University of Kashmir on this important occasion as you enter a new chapter of life's lessons and experiences. May it be pleasant and rewarding.

May you proceed to achieve greater distinctions and higher levels of achievement for yourselves, your proud parents and your society. I look forward to your contribution – each one of you - to the building of our great nation.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!