

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
ON THE OCCASION OF MAHASHIVRATRI CELEBRATIONS  
AT ISHA YOGA CENTER**

**Coimbatore, March 4, 2019**

1. Namaskaram, Vanakkam and Good Evening to all of you present here in such large numbers, from across the country and from so many nations. I am very happy to be among you on this pious day.
2. Our country is a land of faith and spiritualism. Probably no other nation has as many diverse festivals and celebrations. Faith and spiritualism also give India a certain determination and an inner resolve. Among our festivals, Mahashivaratri is one of the most endearing, enduring and significant. Millions of devotees celebrate this festival as a day to introspect and reflect upon the values synonymous with Lord Shiva.
3. Today, I am reminded of few lines penned by the great Hindi poet, Rashtra Kavi Maithilisharan Gupt.

मनुज दुग्ध से, दनुज रुधिर से  
अमर सुधा से जीते हैं  
किन्तु हलाहल भव-सागर का  
शिव-शंकर ही पीते हैं।

These lines imply that ordinary human beings lead an honest life, seeking only what rightfully belongs to them. Those who are depraved, live by snatching from others. And the truly immortal ones, like the gods in heaven, have access to nectar -- that is, they live with the best of everything available to them. But Shiva, the all-pervasive and benevolent one, takes upon himself to clear away the poison - that is, sorrow, suffering, negativity, grief, etc. present in the world. Literally, these lines refer to the act of Shiva consuming poison that emerged during the Samudra Manthan in order to save creation. Consuming that poison made his throat turn blue, giving him the name Neelkanth. At the very basic level, these lines give the message:

जीना उसी का जीना है, जो औरों की खातिर जीते हैं।

That is, a worthy life is one that is lived in the service of others. That was the message of Neelkanth. Consistent with his message, each one of us should strive to serve humanity in whatever way it is possible. I am aware that Sadhguru and the Isha Foundation are making laudable contribution in this regard, with several initiatives to promote human well-being.

4. Shiva has many forms, and one of these is his form as Ardhanareeshwar. In this form one half is a man's body and one half a woman's. This indicates that both masculine and feminine aspects need to be in balance for a human personality and for a society to prosper. Today the entire world talks of women empowerment. But emphasising it has always been a part of our cultural ethos.
5. Historically, the qualities of Shiva have attracted devotees across the world. A few months ago, I had the opportunity to visit the ancient My Son temple complex in Vietnam. This temple complex is a reminder of the unique culture that developed on the coast of present day Vietnam thousands of years ago, a culture that drew from the spiritual depth of Hinduism in India. It was truly remarkable to see the Shiva Linga and the many sculptures of Shiva adorning this ancient temple complex built by the Champa kings.
6. There are many more examples from the ancient world. From Afghanistan to China and Japan, devotees have built temples for Shiva in the past. This evening, all across India, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Somnath in Gujarat to Kamakhya in Assam, we shall hear the chants of Aum Namah Shivaya.
7. I have been told that in yogic culture, Shiva is considered the First Yogi or Adiyogi – the originator of yoga. Sadhguru says that Shiva as Adiyogi brought the possibility for human beings to evolve beyond their present limitations by doing the necessary work upon themselves. It brings great joy to me to be here with you today in the presence of the magnificent 112-foot statue of Adiyogi.
8. We are at the foothills of the Velliangiri Mountains, the Dakshin Kailash or Kailash of the South. Legends say that Adiyogi stayed here for some

time. I had the privilege to visit Kailash Mansarovar in 2006 and today I am in the presence of the Kailash of the South. Personally, the visit here today completes a spiritual cycle for me. I am experiencing the very same feelings that I had experienced on my visit to Kailash Mansarovar.

9. This event that Sadhguru has conceived is an opportunity to experience the grace of Mahashivaratri. There is another connection that comes to mind. It is believed that Lord Shiva helped bring the mighty Ganga to us, and Sadhguru has been among those who are rallying to rejuvenate our rivers. Protection of our rivers and environment is a very noble and worthy objective. I am glad that Sadhguru has made this objective a part of his mission.
10. I am extremely happy to see so many young faces here today. It is heartening to that you are imbibing yoga at an early age. I compliment you for investing your time in your well-being early in life. I am confident that our youth will play a crucial role in shaping the future of not only India but of humanity itself.
11. The presence of so many young people here says a lot about the work of Sadhguru and the Isha Foundation. Sadhguru has ensured that the age-old spiritualism and values of India are made accessible to the youth, both in India and elsewhere. Sadhguru has emerged as a spiritual bridge that brings our long-cherished values, wisdom and knowledge to the youth of today in a language that they understand.
12. As I conclude, I congratulate Sadhguru and all the volunteers of Isha Foundation who would have worked for making this event so grand. I wish all of you the very best for Mahashivratri as well as for all future endeavours.

Thank You,  
Jai Hind!