

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
ON THE OCCASION OF INAUGURATION OF  
CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF ST. THOMAS' COLLEGE**

**Thrissur, August 7, 2018**

1. I am happy to be here for the inauguration of the sathyaprayan or the centenary celebrations of St Thomas' College. This is a moment of great pride and satisfaction for this institution, which is cherished for its scholarship and contributions not just in Kerala but across the country. I offer my congratulations to the St Thomas' College family – the students and teachers and professors, the College administration, the galaxy of former students and professors, and the community associated with the College. The past century has been one of enormous accomplishment. I am confident that it has only laid the foundation for the next 100 years.
2. The story of the origins of this College is truly inspiring. In 1887, the Reverend Dr Adolphus Edwin Medlycott took charge as the first Bishop of Thrissur. Shortly afterwards, he wrote a letter to the Pope in the Vatican listing five priorities. His first two priorities were schools for boys and girls. Building a Bishop's House for himself was only his third priority. At the time, he was living in a small rented house.
3. The school for boys started in 1889. Thirty years later, it was given the status of a college – and today this institution is 100 years old. In this period, the College has both educated and been visited by some very eminent people. In October 1927, I am told that Mahatma Gandhi had come and spoken of the role of St Thomas' College in the national movement. He had addressed a gathering on the campus and the students had collected five hundred and one rupees in support of the freedom struggle. This may seem a small sum today but it was a princely amount in 1927.

4. In coming here today, I am following in the illustrious footsteps of at least two of my predecessors as President of India. In 1980, President Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy had graced the diamond jubilee commemoration of the College. In 2008, the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary saw the presence of President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. In between, in 1994, the platinum jubilee event hosted the then Prime Minister, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, as chief guest. I understand that in that year Mother Teresa, a saint of our times and acknowledged with the Bharat Ratna, also visited and blessed the College.
5. Visits by such stalwarts were not a coincidence. They were a recognition of the participation of St Thomas' College in the public and intellectual life of Kerala and the rest of the country. Two of the earliest and best known chief ministers of the state, Shri E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Sri C. Achutha Menon, studied here. So did the veteran of the Lok Sabha Shri C.M. Stephen, and many other political figures of Kerala. Swamy Chinmayananda, who founded the Chinmaya Mission, was once a student in this College. The Bishops Mar George Alapatt and Mar Eprem are also among the alumni. The list of achievers who have studied here is a very long one. It ranges from scientists to academics, lawyers to diplomats.

Ladies and Gentlemen, and Dear Students

6. Every resident of Kerala, irrespective of background, is a stakeholder in the sustained success and the march of St Thomas' College. Nevertheless it is important here to appreciate the role of the Church in founding and administering this College, and in taking it to such heights. The Christian community in Kerala is one of the oldest not only in India but anywhere in the world. Its heritage and history are a matter of immense pride for the entire country – and a symbol of India's non-negotiable commitment to its diversity and pluralism.

7. The community, much like the rest of Kerala I would say, has attained landmarks in many areas. However, it has made two vocations special to itself – education and healing. To many Indians, the linking of the community with medicine and nursing, and with teaching and education seems natural. Such warm emotions are also prevalent in other countries. In 2017, I had travelled to Ethiopia, as part of my first state visit after becoming President of India. It was very moving to see Ethiopians remember the efforts of Indian teachers who had ventured into the interiors of that country as far back as 50 years ago. They educated generations of Ethiopian children and are still remembered gratefully. Many of those teachers were from Kerala and in fact from this region and community.
  
8. The motto of St Thomas' College – Veritas vos Liberabit or Truth will set you Free – is extremely appropriate. It reminds us that the real value of education lies not in examinations and in degrees – but in how we learn to help fellow human beings and care for those who are less well-off or in need of what we have and can share with them. I have always believed that the greatest service to God is to help another person, to heal another person and to spread the light of knowledge to another person. Your College is part of this noble tradition.
  
9. It is this mission that must continue to guide us as we strive to educate and build our society, and fashion the Kerala and India of our dreams. Educational institutions like St Thomas' College are critical to that journey. As you advance further into your second century, I once again congratulate you and wish you many, many more milestones.

Thank you  
Jai Hind!