

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF
THE MAHATMA GANDHI INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES,
SEVAGRAM**

Sevagram, August 17, 2019

1. Let me begin by offering my deepest condolences for the precious lives lost in the devastating floods that have occurred in various parts of the country including Maharashtra. My prayers are with the families who have lost their near and dear ones. I hope and wish that those affected are able to get back to normal life soon. I commend the services of the Central Government and respective State Governments to bring relief in flood affected areas. I am told that your Institute has also contributed to flood relief work, particularly in adjoining States.

2. I am delighted to participate in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences. In these 50 years, this hallowed institution has made stellar contribution to our nation's progress, earning immense appreciation and respect for its academic excellence and as much for its service to people. An institution inspired by the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi could have only prospered in the manner.

3. The veritable connect between you and the Father of our Nation assumes a special meaning this year, when we are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of

Bapu and the 50th year of the founding of your Institute, which itself was created to mark Mahatma Gandhi Centenary in 1969. On this occasion, I wish to recall the selfless service of Dr. Sushila Nayar, the founder of this Institute - a staunch Gandhian, a relentless freedom fighter and a visionary medical practitioner. She was a close associate of Gandhiji and spent considerable time at the Sevagram Ashram. I congratulate each one of you and the entire Mahatma Gandhi Institute family, spread across India and the world, on achieving the golden jubilee milestone.

4. Before coming here, I had the privilege to visit Gandhiji's ashram located close by. The four walls of the humble hermitage have much to teach and inspire us. As I walked through its courtyard, my mind ran through Gandhiji's struggles and his sacrifice, trying to fathom how much we as a nation owe him. Sevagram Ashram was the centre of many of his experiments with satya, ahimsa and emancipation of humanity. The place has a deep imprint of his attachment to cleanliness and health. He began his Leprosy programme at the ashram. It was here that he pioneered community work on sanitation – an idea that continues to inspire us as we work for Swachh Bharat and for Open Defecation Free India.

Dear Students,

5. Sevagram, Wardha and Vidarbha have had a glorious past. It was in these surroundings that Acharya Vinoba Bhave ignited his Bhoodan Andolan. And not

far from here, Baba Amte anchored his social reform movement, to provide care to leprosy patients and hope to the underprivileged. You have taken this rich legacy of service and social justice to greater heights. This medical college has many credits to itself, each more illuminating than the other. It is the first medical college to be established in rural India and as such marks a place for itself in the annals of India's development history. Your institution was born with the noble idea of serving our people living in villages. It counts among the top medical schools in India. Your alumni occupy leadership positions in the country and elsewhere, designing national programmes and developing innovative health interventions. Some have served our country with rare distinction – your illustrious alumni Dr. K. K. Aggrawal was honoured by Padma Shri, and several others by the Dr. B.C. Roy award.

6. As doctors and medical scholars, you have an important role to play in shaping our society and in ensuring the well-being of our people. You are a beacon of hope for many and millions. I am told that before you start your studies, each one of you has to undergo an orientation programme at the Sevagram Ashram. It is a rare privilege accorded to you. You live and learn the life of Mahatma Gandhi - of ethics, empathy, dignity of labour and of serving humanity. Your Village Adoption Scheme, where you look after rural families and continue your association with them throughout your stay in Sevagram, have further instilled a high sense of service in you. These features of the education ecosystem at your Institute present a

template of value-based learning, which many can emulate and follow. Your rural training and your community empowerment approach is helping us bridge the gap in health service in rural and urban areas. Similarly, your innovative rural health insurance scheme has brought well-being to many.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. Health remains a key development challenge for India. As a country with 18 per cent of world population, we carry 20 per cent of the prevalence of global diseases. We are challenged by the triple burden of communicable, non-communicable and new and emerging diseases. Lack of access to health services, malnutrition and neglected tropical diseases place severe constraints on us. Our Government remains committed to tackle these through the flagship Ayushman Bharat programme and other health missions. Our problems are complex and intertwined with our larger socio-economic challenges. I am, therefore, happy that you are following a multidisciplinary approach to health – from prevention, wellness, cure, community empowerment to research and innovation. Mahatma Gandhi believed in nature cure for healthy living. In your efforts to integrate health and community, you must also pay heed to alternative therapies enriched by nature and traditional knowledge, and more so, since you serve the rural people who are culturally attuned to such practices.
8. Your commitment to academic pursuits and to healthcare delivery deserves appreciation. The

Kasturba Hospital, to which you owe your inspiration and founding, caters to rural population not just from Vidarbha but from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh as well. Your service of affordable and state-of-the-art healthcare has won you wishes and goodwill from millions, especially the poor and the needy. Your work among the tribal population through the Dr. Sushila Nayar Hospital is equally commendable.

Dear faculty members and students,

9. I am delighted to learn of your research and innovation. Your ongoing research on Cancer, Tuberculosis and Leprosy is yielding good results. You must also intensify your engagement with the World Health Organization and other international agencies so that you can draw upon a large pool of knowledge and experience and benchmark yourself against the best in the world. Your multi-stakeholder approach and connection with Industry, medical schools and scientific establishments are serving you well. The world of artificial intelligence and cyber space offers limitless opportunities for you. I am sure you will expand your knowledge and innovation network further and deeper.

10. Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, just as Bapu's Sevagram Ashram, is known far and wide. I am happy to learn that students from abroad come here for education. As you have contributed to sharing knowledge with the global community, so have we as a country. In Africa, we have taken the

lead to offer tele-medicine courses to doctors and paramedics through our E-Arogyabharati programme. India today is considered the pharmacy of the world. Our affordable and high quality drugs are bringing hope and joy to many. Our efforts to share the fruits of science and technology will go a long way in countries meeting the Sustainable Development Goals agreed at the United Nations by the global fraternity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. Your profession is a unique blend of science and humanity. Our people repose tremendous faith in you. It is our collective responsibility that this bond of trust and respect sustains and strengthens further. We have a vision of creating a New India, an India where each one of us will have a life of dignity and well-being, an India where Bapu's dream of "wiping every tear from every eye" is fulfilled. You as medical professionals have an important role to play in this journey. The people of India count on your compassion and your healing touch. I once again congratulate you on your Golden Jubilee milestone. And I wish each one of you and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences even greater success in future.

Thank you. Jai Hind!