

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE 27TH CONVOCATION OF THE PONDICHERRY
UNIVERSITY**

Puducherry, December 23, 2019

1. It gives me immense pleasure to participate in the 27th Convocation of Pondicherry University.
2. Puducherry is the land of poets, patriots and pious souls. It has a blend of spirituality and a uniquely rich heritage – a confluence of the best of French and Tamil cultures. There is a strong French influence on this beautiful town, which is visible in its buildings and streets, as a result of the centuries-old relations it has maintained with France. Puducherry is known around the world thanks to Maharshi Aurobindo and the Mother. The great poet, freedom fighter and spiritual leader chose this peaceful place to make his abode and remained here until his death. The Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville continue to attract from around the globe people who are in search of peace and inner happiness. Puducherry is also where Tamil revolutionary poets like Bharathiar and Bharathidasan wrote their immortal verses.
3. When I visit this land, my memory goes back to the journey I had undertaken as Member of Parliament to Puducherry. My friend and fellow member in the Rajya Sabha and an eminent leader MOH Farooq then invited me to his home for tea. We had a lively interaction. Since then my affection for Puducherry continues to grow with the passage of time.
4. Pondicherry University was established as a Central University in 1985 by an Act of Parliament to provide instructional and research facilities to encourage inter-disciplinary studies. This student-friendly institution of higher learning has been emerging as a world-class university with a praiseworthy

increase in students' intake as well as in various rankings and overall performance.

5. It is heartening to learn that there are about 6,500 enrolled students for the academic year of 2019-20, and close to half of them, are female students. A majority of students are from other states, and the student-teacher ratio is a healthy 16.7 to 1.

Ladies and gentleman,

6. Whether it is a university or any other entity, finally we all are part of society, and we all have our responsibility towards society. The government has encouraged corporate firms to spend a part of their profits for society, via 'corporate social responsibility'. I appreciate this concept and I believe it should be expanded. I have often spoken about the need to extend the concept to our universities. I call it "From Corporate Social Responsibility to University Social Responsibility". Since I am passionate about it, I am especially happy to learn that the Lt. Governor of Puducherry and Chief Rector of Pondicherry University, Dr Kiran Bedi, launched that project here in July last year. I also commend the contribution of my good friend and a colleague from my Rajya Sabha days, Chief Minister, Shri V. Narayanasamy, in creating a conducive environment for growth of education in the state.
7. I am glad that the social responsibility projects of the University have already registered remarkable achievements including the inauguration of community services such as blood donation, organ donation, eye-checkup, photo exhibition and health check-up in Pondicherry University Community College.
8. Another heartening development that has pleased me is on the cleanliness front. Pondicherry University is on the way to become the first university to implement Swachh Bharat in the campus. It has prepared a detailed project report and submitted it to the Ministry of Urban Development, the

Government of India. Moreover, the university and its affiliated colleges in and around the campus have adopted 103 villages. Efforts are on to develop them as 'model villages'.

9. The University's move to open a community college to help rural youth is commendable. The motto of Pondicherry University Community College is "Education for Employment through Skills Formation". Educational activities are designed in line with the needs and demands of the local community. More specifically, the main objective of this College is to offer job-oriented courses based on the community demand for specific manpower. In short, community college is 'for' the community and 'of' the community.
10. The University has indeed set its bar high and its ambition is to provide that quality of education which can match the best in the world. For this purpose, it has joined hands with several prestigious institutions from Taiwan, Korea, France, and Switzerland. Another issue that is close to my heart is setting up of an Endowment Fund with the help of its alumni. A generous donation by ex-students would create a high level of motivation for the University to aspire for the best.
11. I am sure the students have made the best use of the great opportunities offered by the university. As many as 335 Ph.D. scholars, 26 M. Phil. researchers, and a large number of postgraduate, undergraduate and distance-education students are obtaining their degrees in this convocation. Also, 189 bright minds are going to be honored with gold medals. This is a memorable day for you; and it is a matter of pride for your parents too. Let me congratulate you again on receiving the degrees you rightly deserve. Some of you will now pursue further studies and some will bid goodbye to the campus life and begin a new life. To all of you, I wish all the best. In its competitive rush, the world can often be less kind, less generous. But it will surely find balance if you try to be more kind and more generous.

12. In no small measure, this day also belongs to the faculty. You have not only taught these wonderful students, you have also brought laurels for the university by winning prestigious national and international awards and prizes, and publishing your research outcomes in journals of high repute. Scholarly pursuits are always joint endeavours, and for supporting the students and teachers, the administration and the non-teaching staff too must be complimented.

13. In conclusion, I turn to the university's anthem, with its words so uplifting and inspiring. It pays homage to Bharathi, Bharathidasan and Aurobindo. It begins with the famous ancient mantra from Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad:

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय।

From darkness unto light, lead us!

14. In the spirit of the anthem, I extend my best wishes to the whole university community, and wish "That the University grow evermore" and "May you prosper forever".

Thank you all.

Jai Hind!