

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF CHRIST
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)**

I am happy to be present amidst you all today at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of CHRIST University, Bengaluru. At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor, the Camelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) management, the Administrative Staff, Teachers and most importantly, my dear students on achieving this momentous feat.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

2. Fifty years, in the life of a human being is a long period of time. But in the life of an institution, 50 years is only a tiny speck, a small beginning of what is to follow, and perhaps an indication of the long future that is in store, awaited with hope, with positive anticipation and possibly with some uneasy trepidation as well; anticipation for the progress, growth and development of the institution;

trepidation about overcoming the challenges that it is bound to encounter during that journey.

3. “***Men go and come but the Earth abides***” remarked George R Stewart, an American writer. The same is true of great institutions - if not forever, they last, at least for several hundred years, especially if they are good, service minded and value based. Such institutions will always stay relevant as the future of that society is largely entwined with the institution’s future.

4. I am happy to note that CHRIST University is one such institution which has been rendering yeomen service to the student body and the society at large for the last 50 years. I am informed that the educational service with a strong foundation that is rendered here is built on values espoused by St Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the 19th Century educationist and social reformer from Kerala, and the Founder of the (CMI) Order that runs CHRIST University. I am happy to note that Saint Chavara’s unfulfilled dream during his life time, of catering to the requirements of

tertiary level students has been fulfilled by this institution. It is heartening to see thousands of young aspirants armed with a deep sense of enthusiasm and commitment negotiate their way into it only to exit into the world fully equipped with not just knowledge and skills but with a stronger resolve to be a change agent, to be a catalyst in the ever changing globalized world.

Dear Friends,

5. CHRIST University, I am told, is a living example of our **unity in diversity**. I am informed that with a huge 22,000 student population from all the Indian States and with a robust 1000 member academic community, hailing from across the country, it also has 650 international students. This makes you a conglomeration of the several cultures, languages, religions and communities of the world. It reminds me of the great Poet of the Sangam Age, Kavian Poongundranar, who said and I quote, “**Yaadhum Oore, Yaavarum Kelir**” which means, “***To us all towns are our own, everyone our own.***”

6. Dear Friends, that is the essence of our core civilizational values of “***Vasudaiva Kudumbakam***” that we all strive for in order to preserve the diversities and multiplicities that are abound in this land. Ours is a civilization that does not have an enemy. Over millennial it has never needed to identify an adversary to survive itself. Not only do we tolerate the pluralities but also respect and celebrate them. Here lies India’s rich heritage and tradition and I am happy to note that CHRIST campus reflects that rich culture. I would also like to applaud the efforts of this institution for sensitizing students to the local and rural issues through introduction of rural sensitization programmes, service learning and social responsibility as a part of their curriculum.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

7. You are celebrating an important milestone. I’m positive that there will be more milestones achieved in the years to come. On this momentous occasion I want you to ask yourself two questions. As a university, where do you want to reach in the next 50 years? The next important question

is how do you get there? What means, measures, mechanisms and tools are you going to use to reach there? Are your goals realistic, tools reasonable and effective, strategies practical and workable? The long term strategy of a university is crucial for further growth. It has to be interspersing with responsiveness to societal needs and empathy for its stakeholders, if it has to succeed.

Dear Students and Members of the Faculty,

8. Research is the backbone of any university. But, research devoid of human interests, severed by apathy or indifference is futile. On the other hand, cutting edge research solidly linked with societal commitments, requirements and compulsions will augment the physical and the mental wellbeing of our citizens. Knowledge generation is the key to your recognition and sustenance both as individuals and as an institution. For that to happen, critical thinking of your students and faculty must be encouraged and the spirit of inquiry must thrive on your campus. Unless questions are asked answers will not come by. Let the spirit of inquiry permeate this temple of

learning from where novel and original solutions may emerge to all the problems we are faced with. That, to my mind, is the sole and real purpose of a University.

9. At a time when the system of higher education in our country is severely criticized for lack of quality, private institutions such as yours must take the lead in infusing it with renewed energy and vigour. Only a few days back the prestigious Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings were released. And 23 Indian Institutions found a place in the top 1000 rankings, out of which 5 were private institutions/universities. However, it is my belief that the standards of Indian universities is higher than what is suggested by the rankings. Perhaps, it is the lack of importance given to the rankings process that stands in the way of our institutions being projected the way they should be.

10. In ancient times, we had renowned seats of higher learning – Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramashila, Valabhi, Somapura and Odantapuri that dominated the world of higher education system for eighteen hundred years

beginning sixth century BC. Scholars from around the globe flocked to these centres of learning in search of knowledge. A reverse scenario exists today. Many meritorious Indian students pursue their higher studies from foreign universities. It is my firm belief that even now, our higher learning institutions are capable of producing world-class scholars. Hence, I exhort you all, especially the Vice Chancellor and the Staff & Management of CHRIST University, to strive harder to meet the requirements and secure positions within the world's best rankings.

A high rank can boost the morale of the academic and student communities, open greater avenues of growth and placement for students, help attract the best faculty from across the world and provide a benchmark for continuous quality enhancement. Embark on that journey confidently and as your university anthem exhorts, March on with your heads held high and hearts so strong for the world awaits to be influenced and inspired by your motto, “**Excellence and Service**”. Once again, heartiest congratulations to

each of you and my good wishes for your future endeavours.

Thank You

Jai Hind!