

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CONCLUDING CEREMONY OF DIAMOND JUBILEE
YEAR (1958 – 2018) OF THE “INDIAN NATIONAL
BIBLIOGRAPHY”**

1. I am happy to be present amongst you on the occasion of the concluding ceremony of the Diamond Jubilee year celebrations of the '*Indian National Bibliography*'.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Central Reference Library, Kolkata, a subsidiary office of the Ministry of Culture, for compiling and publishing Indian language Bibliographies. I am informed that The Indian National Bibliography has been conceived as an accurate, comprehensive and authoritative bibliographical record of current publications in the 14 major languages of India including English. I would also

like to congratulate everyone on the release of '**A selected Bibliography on Mahatma Gandhi in Indian Languages**'.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. The information catered by the Indian National Bibliography is very valuable to scholars and Librarians of our country and abroad. And I am happy to note that the prestigious institution, National Library, Kolkata, right since its foundation, became a centre of learning for library science and bibliographic compilation in India. Today, it has developed a high reputation as a centre of compiling bibliography.

3. In his autobiography, *The Words*, Jean Paul Sartre has said and I quote, "***I had found my religion: nothing seemed more important to me than a book. I saw the library as a temple.***" (Unquote) Being a book-

lover and a reader myself, I cannot agree more with that statement. Dear Friends, it is through my engagement with words, authors and images that I say with certainty that readership itself is a gift. It not only edifies the mind but also questions the spirit. It is where we can concentrate, think, let our imaginations take an affirmative shape and get immersed in the vast knowledge that is around us to create, innovate and evolve constantly.

4. I am happy to note that even in the present day, the Central Reference Library extends its functioning to train library science students, from various Indian universities who have completed Master's degree in Library and information science, to compile and edit bibliographies. I have been informed that apart from the compiling of Indian National Bibliography and language bibliographies, the Central Reference

Library publishes subject bibliographies from time to time.

Dear Friends, Ladies & Gentlemen,

5. The Central Reference Library exemplifies the ideals that represent India. I am informed that the editorial staff and officers of this organization come from different parts of our country having a variety of cultural backgrounds. It symbolises that The Indian National Bibliography works in almost all the major languages known and spoken across India under one roof and truly institutionalizes the dictum of '***Unity in Diversity***'. It is a great feat that the Central Reference Library has library science professionals from various states of the nation who consistently provide new lifeblood to the spirit of confluence and syncretism. To my mind, it will not

be wrong to say that the Indian National Bibliography reflects the literary heritage of India.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

6. I firmly believe that the strength of a nation and its quality is reflected by its written materials, manuscripts and literature – their creation and consumption. French philosopher, Rene Descartes has rightly said, and I quote, “***The reading of all good books is like conversation with the finest people of the past centuries.***” (Unquote)

However, the reading culture today often bothers me. With the many benefits of technology, some ills have surfaced too; social media being one of them. To a large extent, the passion for reading and visiting libraries has deteriorated and has been replaced by time spent on social media platforms.

Dear Friends,

7. What the generation of today fails to understand and appreciate is that reading generates imagination. It sharpens the mind and builds the capacity to concentrate. **“Patience pays”** a saying that has withstood the test of time and the virtue of patience is effectively taught by reading and writing. Since, to turn the leaves of a page requires patience. To carry forth a story takes patience. To remember meanings takes patience. Dear Friends, the turn of the leaf, the structure of the story and the meaning it prescribes integrate to build literature. It is as much your task, people of this noble profession as it is theirs, as an author to make literature and literary works memorable. If the culture of reading and visiting libraries dies so will the mark of the author.

8. Noted author and feminist Germaine Greer has said, and I quote, “***Libraries are reservoirs of strength, grace and wit, reminders of order, calm and continuity, lakes of mental energy, neither warm nor cold, light nor dark... In any library in the world, I am at home, unselfconscious, still and absorbed.***” Unquote.

Thus, my dear friends, the onus of encouraging people to see and explore this sanctuary lies much more on your shoulders.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

9. Literary works are not merely a means of communication. Our languages, scriptures, manuscripts, literature and books are our heritage. They define and reflect the roots of our society. The promotion of literature cannot take place on the

basis of Government support alone. I urge all stakeholders to contribute meaningfully toward preserving, encouraging and promoting Indian languages and literature through reviving the art of reading and visiting libraries.

10. I remember, when I was in Rashtrapati Bhavan, we had a conference on **Education for Inclusive Innovation & Development** wherein Chancellors and Vice Chancellors of Indian universities had participated. An interesting insight was given by Dr Kuldeep Singh, VC of Vinoba Bhave varsity who said that they had overcome the problem of students not using the library facility by offering coffee to every student who spends 2 hours in the library and dinner to every student who uses the facility for four hours, and the results were

miraculous. Therefore, we must come up with simple solutions to these problems.

Dear Friends, Ladies & Gentlemen,

11. I would like to conclude with words of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore wherein the synchronicity of library is beautifully elucidated from his 'Ideal of Education' and I quote, ***“Libraries are more important to the education system than the institutions such as schools, colleges and universities.”...“The extent of use to which the reading material of a library is put, should determine its importance rather than the staggering number of volumes...The worth of a librarian should be gauged by his power of attracting and looking after such circles by acting as the intermediary of an intimacy of relationship between reader and the library.” “On him (librarian) is cost the burden not only of books, but of their readers as well and in the maintaining of both***

proper discharge of his trust and efficiency.”

(Unquote)

I once again congratulate you all on the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of this prestigious Indian National Bibliography.

Thank You

Jai Hind