

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF ADDRESSING THE
STUDENTS OF SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF
EDUCATION**

Puducherry: 25-09-2013

It is a joy for me to be here – the confluence of an extra-ordinary past, a promising present and a significant future. Ancient Puducherry is believed to have been the abode of Sage Agastya who, coming from the North made the South his abode, thereby symbolising the unity of India's quest for the purpose of life.

If that is the glorious past, at present, Puducherry is a wonderful example of cultural assimilation. Apart from its efforts to preserve elements of French culture, language and architecture amidst rapid growth, this city is home to people from almost every state of India and many foreign countries. This has been possible to a large extent because of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which stands as an example of national and international harmony.

This city also hosts an ever-growing number of visitors. I say visitors instead of tourists because a great number of them come here with a purpose, more serious than simply enjoying a holiday. They come in quest of both peace and knowledge from the spiritual ambience of the place.

This is the place where Sri Aurobindo visualised the future of man. The first phase of the life of this great Master was devoted to the liberation of our Motherland from the British. The second phase of his life was devoted to the liberation of humanity from its enslavement to ignorance.

Just as Sri Aurobindo realised that India's liberation was a certainty he was also confident of mankind's liberation. He further recognized that liberation need not be an escape of the soul from this physical world. Instead, it can be an active life free from all imperfections that affect us. In his view, this world we live in is not a thing to be spurned but to be transformed through our collective aspiration.

Sri Aurobindo believed that man as he is today - full of conflicting traits, steeped in ignorance, often unpredictable in his conduct and even a stranger to himself, is not the last achievement of the process of evolution. There is a much brighter tomorrow awaiting the world. Man will evolve into a new being; his ignorance will change into knowledge and his weaknesses will be metamorphosed into strength.

Among the sad maladies of our time are cynicism and despair. They lead to insincerity in whatever work one does. And insincerity is the mother of numerous other ills. I hope those like you who are followers of Sri Aurobindo will contribute towards the materialisation of a better future through your attitude and your action.

I am happy to learn that the students of Sri Aurobindo international Centre of Education learn from a very small age a set of languages comprised of English, French and Sanskrit apart from your mother-tongues. You succeed in learning even more languages such as Tamil, Hindi, Bengali, Odia, and Gujarati spontaneously because of your living, studying and playing together. Further, some of you also choose to learn foreign languages such as German, Italian, Spanish, and Russian!

You children and your teachers – who I believe are all inmates of the Ashram – are to be congratulated for proving that a child has unlimited capacity for imbibing languages and that too without tears if taught in a loving atmosphere and by dedicated teachers. This is indeed a testimony to the international character of this institution and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. This liberality of approach and vision so unique to Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram stands as a symbol of hope for our conflict-ridden world and must be preserved and protected.

The system of your education, as has been put into practice by the Mother based on the Master's vision, the Integral Education, calls for a balanced emphasis on all aspects of the human personality – the physical, the mental, the vital and the spiritual. As a nation, we should aspire to follow this ideal. And you, as forerunners, must pave the way.

The youth of our country are not lagging behind any other in matters of intelligence or talent; but what our country needs is sincerity and dedication. It is only a broad outlook, unhampered by regionalism, unencumbered by parochialism, unhindered by prejudices that can make this nation great and ideal enough to lead the world. It is this role which Sri Aurobindo expected India to play during both the phases of his life.

Today mankind is facing a multitude of crises. What all human beings need are a world safe from violence and a world where one can pursue one's legitimate dreams. If there is no dispute over this common goal, why should so much conflict, so much hatred and intolerance continue?

The real malady seems to lie at some deeper level. Sri Aurobindo diagnoses it as an Evolutionary Crisis. On one hand mankind is in command of colossal technological, scientific and other material powers, but on the other hand, he is not in full command of his own consciousness. There are elements of inconscience deep within him which distort and even pervert all his fine intentions.

However, Sri Aurobindo also assures us that the solution to the crisis remains hidden in the crisis itself. We have to discover and develop the secret splendours of our consciousness, we have to call down and activate a transforming power which he terms the Supramental.

We must be increasingly mindful of the sensitivities of those around us and how they may be affected by our words and deeds. While we endeavour to eliminate the problems that distort our social development, and as we address imbalances, we must collectively identify the values that have over the centuries, served to safeguard the pluralistic and secular fabric of our society. And we must reinforce these ethics so that as we go forth into a globalised world, we as Indians remain faithful to these unique traditions. Similarly, we must strive to continuously generate greater tolerance and understanding among all sections of our democratic society.

As Sri Aurobindo once said and I quote and conclude, "An aimless life is always troubled life. Every individual should have an aim. But not to forget that the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life. Your aim

should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to others. Whatever your ideal, it cannot be perfectly realized unless you have realized perfection in yourself'.

Let us hope that man will not fail to stand up to the Master's expectation; man need not be surpassed; he will be transformed.

My best wishes are with you.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
