

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE ON THE FOURTH
FOUNDATION DAY ,CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF ORISSA,
KORAPUT**

1. I am happy to address you on the occasion of the Fourth Foundation Day of your University. The first time I had the opportunity of interacting with this University was in 2011, in its First Convocation. I was the Finance Minister then. Today, as I speak to you through the Video Conferencing facility, it is a first for me – using the virtual media to address an institute of higher learning. A Conference of Vice Chancellors of Central Universities was held in the Rashtrapati Bhavan this year. A recommendation was made to facilitate technology-enabled interface. I compliment this University for responding to this call for innovative use of technology. This initiative will go a long way in bridging distances and bringing academic communities together.
2. The Central University of Orissa was established in 2009 in Koraput, an area with significant tribal population. It has constantly made efforts to enhance quality education. I am told that this University offers post graduate courses in languages, social sciences, basic sciences and development studies. I feel that this University is ideally placed to blend ancient thought in modern education. One of the ways to do this is to promote the study of older Indian

languages. The ongoing efforts to introduce emerging disciplines would provide the students wider professional options. This will result in productive transformation of students in the region. It is to the credit of the management and faculty that this University has developed remarkably in a short span of four years. It has received the Award for Best Emerging University in Tribal Areas this year. I congratulate all of you for this recognition. I am confident that you will continue to grow with the same spirit of dedication and commitment.

Dear Students:

3. India is a shining example of democratic polity and pluralistic society. Democracy not only gives rights but also entails responsibilities. Educated youth has to play a vital role in building a resurgent new India. The state and the community invest in the youth by providing facilities for education and self-development. The education you receive will bring you the opportunity to make a difference. This is the time to prepare yourself to engage with our beautiful, complex, and sometimes difficult and noisy democracy.
4. To build the country of our dreams, we need competent and committed individuals. Our universities must produce men and women of character and integrity. Without these values, it is impossible to achieve anything worthwhile in life. Along with

academic proficiency, our universities must lay great emphasis on character-building.

5. Mahatma Gandhi had said and I quote: "*Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity?*" (unquote)" Bapu's call to follow the book of humanity can resolve the moral dilemmas of today's youth. The value erosion in our society has to be arrested. Our academic institutions have a duty to mould the minds of our youth and inculcate in them the essential civilizational values of love for motherland; performance of duty; compassion for all; tolerance for pluralism; respect for women; honesty in life; self-restraint in conduct, responsibility in action and discipline.

Dear Students:

6. A high economic growth is an integral part of our development strategy. Achieving it will depend on our ability to mobilize the knowledge economy. It has to be built on the edifice of a sound higher education system. The Eleventh Five Year Plan period was a phase of unprecedented expansion. Sixty five Central Institutions including twenty one Central Universities were started. But good quality academic institutions are still few in number. As a result, many bright students go abroad for higher studies. We cannot lose this talent pool if we want to become a world power. An international survey has ranked not a single Indian university amongst the top

two hundred universities in the world. Our ancient academic system had world class universities like Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramashila, Valabhi, Somapura and Odantapuri. It ran on the strength of efficient management. There is no reason why we cannot regain our leadership position in higher education. A culture of excellence has to be created. A flexible approach and innovative strategies need to be adopted in our higher education system to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

7. Many bright students are prevented by geographic location or economic difficulty from seeking higher education. Our universities must use technology solutions like e-education to address the problems of accessibility, quality, affordability and faculty shortage. Accessibility and affordability will result in greater inclusion. It will improve the enrolment rate and enhance the quality of graduates produced.

Friends:

8. The Central Universities have been assigned a pioneering role in setting standards for higher education in the country. They should be a catalyst for strengthening other institutions of learning in the region. They should become the agent for mitigating regional academic imbalance. They should provide link between education and social development. It is gratifying to note that the Central

University of Orissa has created a model for education-led development. The Centre for Tribal Empowerment and Community Development, established in 2010, offers skill development programmes for local tribal youth. I am told that a Rajiv Gandhi Chair on Tribal Studies is being set up for research on the lives of the tribal people of the region.

9. Through extension work in adjoining areas, our Central Universities have enlisted the active participation of talented local youth. This has increased employability and ushered in upward mobility of the deprived. It will help us to realize the dream of an India which is progressive and equal. I would like to strike a note of caution here. At the altar of democratizing education, the pursuit of academic excellence should not be given lower priority. We must guard against any such tendency.

Dear Students:

10. Innovation will be a determining factor of growth in the future. Our academic system must encourage innovation activity. The Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, unveiled this year, calls for mentoring grassroots innovation. Our higher academic centres should act as key medium to pursue this policy. I call upon the Central University of Orissa to take concrete measures for encouraging an innovation culture.

11. Let me conclude by asking you to make truth, knowledge and hard work your constant companions in life. These will give you the confidence to overcome challenges and the means to succeed in life. Confucius had said and I quote: *“Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace”* (unquote). You must always have an open mind and a strong desire to learn. I wish you success in your endeavours. I also wish the management and faculty of the Central University of Orissa greater achievements in the years to come.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
