

We must focus on how science and technology can foster greater “happiness” and better quality of life: Vice President

Vice President's Secretariat

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Adi Shankara was not only a great philosopher but an extraordinary poet;

Posted On: 21 MAY 2018 1:48PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that along with “gross national income”, we must focus on how science and technology can foster greater “happiness” and better quality of life as well as harmonious inclusive societies. He was addressing the gathering after conferring Adi Shankara Young Scientist Awards 2018 at the Adi Shankara Institute of Engineering & Technology, in Kochi, Kerala today. The Governor of Kerala, Justice (Retd) P. Sathasivam and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that the Adi Shankara Young Scientist Awards 2018 is an eloquent testimony to the inquisitiveness, ingenuity, and innovative initiative inherent in our young India. He further said that this is what gives us hope and optimism that India will be able to regain its rightful place in the comity of nations. Advancement of human knowledge has occurred in our country because of the “spirit of enquiry”, the ability to question, the ability to research and the ability to arrive at the truth, he added.

The Vice President mentioned three qualities to achieve excellence: First is the willingness to learn from each and every person, institution and learning resource we can access; The second is the ability to probe, analyse and synthesize; The third quality is to search for a completely out of the box solution that answers the problem at hand.

The Vice President said that Adi Shankara was not only a great philosopher but an extraordinary poet. He expounded the “Advaita” philosophy as per which, human beings can become divine through knowledge and the ultimate goal is to experience the Sat-chit-Ananda, the state of bliss consciousness that emanates from truth and higher consciousness, he added.

The Vice President said that knowledge must lead us to become wise and we must have the wisdom to use the knowledge we acquire for improving our lives. He further said that ultimately, it is the Ananda we are all seeking and this is what we are talking about when we talk of “gross

national happiness". We should draw inspiration from the best in the Indian tradition, remove the deadwood that has also been accumulated over many years and revitalize our country, he added.

The Vice President said that we should not be insular but be ever receptive and we should not only be proud of good ideas that we have inherited but also be willing to listen to wise words from others. He further said that we should shun complacency, we should abhor mediocrity, we should set our sights higher and a new India beckons all of us. We should and can make it happen, he added.

The Vice President congratulated the Award winners and said that these kind of Awards become a part of our education system where, in each of our millions of classrooms of our country, scientific temper is fostered and creativity is carefully nurtured and therein lies the future of our country.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am happy to be here with all of you today at a special event that celebrates the achievements of some exceptionally talented youngsters.

I am happy to learn of the Shankara ASIANET NEWS Young Scientists Award, a six-level-mentored evaluation-based competition launched in 2016. I congratulate the winners of this competition and also those who competed in it.

It is indeed very heartening that nearly 300 teams consisting of students from six countries and twelve states in India participated in this competition. I congratulate the top 3 Performing Teams who have won a 10-day trip to NASA and Silicon Valley in the US.

This award is an eloquent testimony to the inquisitiveness, ingenuity, and innovative initiative inherent in our young India.

This is what gives us hope and optimism that India will be able to regain its rightful place in the comity of nations.

Nearly two thirds of our country's population is below the age of 35 years. If the youth of our country can acquire the right mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the 21st century world, the dividends to our country's growth and development can be enormous.

I have decided to come to this Institute today because you seem to respect the best traditions of the past and are at the same time forward looking and proactive.

Indian history is replete with a number of scientists, mathematicians, physicians, chemists, metallurgists, surgeons, astronomers and a number of innovators who have significantly advanced human knowledge. One recalls a number of such illustrious names like Aryabhata, Pingala, Brahmagupta, Bhaskara, Varahamihira, Charaka and Sushruta. India gave the concept of "zero" and the "binary system" to the world. We knew how to make steel alloys and smelt zinc. Our ancient surgeons could conduct many complicated surgeries including plastic surgery and cataract surgery.

Sisters and brothers,

Advancement of human knowledge has occurred in our country because of the "spirit of enquiry", the ability to question, the ability to research and the ability to arrive at the truth.

This requires three qualities.

First is the willingness to learn from each and every person, institution and learning resource we can access. That is what the ancient Indian sages had advised us: "Let noble thoughts come to us from all over the globe".

The second is the ability to probe, analyse and synthesize. We should sharpen our skills to analyse, think rationally, logically and be able to segregate fact from fiction. At the same time, we should be able to put different pieces of information together and synthesize diverse facts into a coherent idea.

The third quality is to search for a completely out of the box solution that answers the problem at hand. Innovations enable us to "leap frog", take the giant leaps rather grow in a linear, sequential mode.

I am sure this Institute provides the congenial atmosphere required for inculcating these qualities in the students and there is the facilitative faculty that is willing to go the extra mile to shape young minds and hearts in the best possible manner.

Your Institute is named after one of the most brilliant philosophers the world has ever known. Adi Shankara was not only a great philosopher but an extraordinary poet. He expounded the “Advaita” philosophy as per which, human beings can become divine through knowledge and the ultimate goal is to experience the Sat- chit- Ananda, the state of bliss consciousness that emanates from truth and higher consciousness.

Sisters and brothers,

That has been the constant message of India. Knowledge must lead us to become wise. We must have the wisdom to use the knowledge we acquire for improving our lives on this planet.

Ultimately, it is the Ananda we are all seeking. This is what we are talking about when we talk of “gross national happiness”. Along with “gross national income”, we must focus on how science and technology can foster greater “happiness” and better quality of life as well as harmonious inclusive societies.

I think we should draw inspiration from the best in the Indian tradition, remove the deadwood that has also been accumulated over many years and revitalize our country.

We should not be insular but be ever receptive.

We should not only be proud of good ideas that we have inherited but also be willing to listen to wise words from others.

We should shun complacency. We should abhor mediocrity. We should set our sights higher. A new India beckons all of us. We should and can make it happen.

Let me conclude with a favourite quotation I love to recall very often as to what our father of the nation, Gandhiji had said:

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any”

I once again congratulate the Principal and staff of this institution for conducting this excellent event and giving a big boost to creative energies of our young students.

I fervently hope that these kind of events become a part of our education system where, in each of our millions of classrooms of our country, scientific temper is fostered and creativity is carefully nurtured. Therein lies the future of our country.

Jai Hind!"

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(Release ID: 1532907) Visitor Counter : 211

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