

NO COUNTRY CAN MAKE PROGRESS IF THE WOMEN LAG BEHIND: VICE PRESIDENT

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Vice President's Secretariat

No country can make progress if the women lag behind: Vice President

Education is an instrument of social transformation;

Education forms the foundation for empowering women;

**Political participation of women crucial for strengthening
democracy;**

Delivers XIV Convocation address at University College for Women

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that education is an instrument of social transformation adding that it forms the foundation for empowering women, especially in a country like India.

Delivering the Convocation address at the University College for Women in Hyderabad today, he said that no country can make progress if women lag behind. Educating a woman would not only empower an individual but an entire family. Expressing his concern over gender inequality, he warned that subordination of women in various spheres would have serious negative consequences.

Calling for breaking down walls and defying stereotypes, he emphasized that women, who constitute more than half the population, need to be given voice and space. "Empowering women is empowering entire humanity", he asserted.

Education is not only for employment, it leads to enhancement of knowledge, enlightenment and empowerment of individuals, he said.

Observing that we need women at all levels, the Vice President called for strengthening social, economic, political and legal avenues to ensure equal rights for women. Political participation of women was extremely crucial in strengthening the democratic process in the country, he added.

Shri Naidu quoted Swami Vivekananda, who had said: “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing”.

Quoting a World Bank report on the positive effects of educating women, Shri Naidu said that rise in female education levels will help in reducing infant and child mortality rates. He further said that increased earning capacity of women will also have a positive effect on children's nutrition, health and educational prospects.

He advised the graduating students to leave their mark of excellence wherever they go. He told them not to remain mediocre and always try to push their boundaries of performance.

Saying that Indian universities and Indian colleges have not made much progress in terms of becoming centres of innovation in the areas of Science and Technology, the Vice President said “we have become good knowledge consumers but we are not able to become knowledge producers”

“We can become innovators and knowledge producers only when we bring about a paradigm shift in our education system and evolve an education system that provokes young minds into thinking; that combines pursuit of knowledge with creativity, critical thinking and skills”, he added.

To achieve this, Shri Naidu called upon the teachers to rededicate themselves to the cause of education and transform this college into a centre of excellence for innovations.

During his interactions with students, the Vice President stressed on five aspects that students must never forget in their life. “Never neglect or forget your mother tongue, parents, native place, motherland and the Guru (teacher). Learn other languages, but be proficient in your mother tongue,” he told them.

The Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana, Shri Mohammad Mehmood Ali, the Vice Chancellor of Osmania University, Prof S. Rama Chandram, and Principal, University College for Women, Prof. Roja Rani, members of the faculty, students and parents were present on the occasion.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

“I am indeed happy to be here to be part of your celebration of an academic achievement. At the outset, let me congratulate all the girls who are graduating today. My compliments to their parents and teachers too on this momentous occasion!

I hope the girls will excel in their chosen fields and bring laurels to the country, their alma mater and their families.

Convocation is a momentous occasion marking a new beginning in your career. It is not only an occasion to celebrate, but also to introspect and plan your future. All of you must reflect upon what you have achieved so far and what you aspire to do in future. You need to have clear-cut goals and strive hard to reach those goals.

Dear students,

I have a couple reasons for accepting this invitation from your college to be the Chief Guest at this Convocation. I have inherent penchant to interact with youth of the country to motivate them and share my insights on various issues.

The other reason for my coming to this college is that my daughter Smt. Deepa Venkat was an alumnus of this college.

I fondly recall the days when I used to come to this college to drop my daughter. My daughter is now an independent and successful entrepreneur. She runs an NGO which is dedicated to imparting skills to thousands of youth, especially women to enable them to be self-reliant. I strongly believe that education must transform us and empower us to transform the society. Swarna Bharath trust led by my daughter precisely does this.

I am aware that this college was started in the year 1924 and is going to celebrate its centenary soon. There is an interesting anecdote in regard to the starting of this college. I am told that Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore came all the way to Hyderabad to meet the then Nizam and requested him to start a college for girls. The Nizam immediately accepted the request. Understand this. Why should Tagore travel all the way to promote women's education? Did he have any selfish agenda? No. It was his nation-first conviction — it reflects his innate concern for women's education in India. Tagore was not alone. Others with similar zeal for women's empowerment were Dr. B R Ambedkar, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Jyothiba Phule, Savitri Phule, the list is endless. I salute their vision and commend their efforts.

I am glad to know that the erstwhile British Residency has been converted into women's college. Today it has about 4000 students 14 PG and 28 UG departments. I am also happy to know that this is the only college in the entire Telangana State in public sector with on campus hostel facility. I am glad that the college has students from all 31 districts of Telangana, from across the nation and foreign countries.

Dear students, please remember that there is no short-cut to success. With hard work, dedication, sincerity and by following ethical and moral values, you can realize your goals.

Education is an instrument of social transformation. Education is not only for employment. It leads to enlightenment and empowerment of an individual. No country can make progress if the women lag behind.

India has a rich tradition of women's education right from the early Vedic period. *Rig Veda* and *Upanishads* make unequivocal assertions about the efficacy of women's education; many women sages themselves were engaged in pursuit of knowledge. We have examples of sage-scholars like Maitreyi and Gargi.

Further, in ancient India, we used to have *Guru Sishya Parampara*, where the *Guru* trains the *Sishya* to gain insights into life that would make him a complete person.

However, during the colonial period somehow we lost this tradition and we have inherited the present education system. Although, India has made tremendous progress in various fields, I feel that we have not achieved to our full potential.

Notwithstanding the fact that women's literacy rate in India is still less than the world average (65.46 as against the world average of 79.6), there is huge awareness among the people on the importance of women's education in India.

It is needless to say that education forms the foundation for empowering women, especially in a country like India. As had been most aptly said educating a woman means educating an entire family.

According to the report by UN World Survey on Role of Women in Development, women's active participation in decision-making has a positive impact on education, health, nutrition, employment and social protection.

For example, as female education levels rise, infant and child mortality rates fall and family health improves. Women's increased earning capacity has a positive effect on children's nutrition, health and educational prospects.

As Vivekananda said: 'Our right of interference is limited to giving education to women. Women may just be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are capable of doing it as any in the world.'

This vision of Vivekananda has come true today as we see Indian women making strides in all fields. Today the women of India are more confident than their counterparts in the world. They are leaders of many fortune 500 companies. They are also excelling as entrepreneurs, scientists, sportspersons, politicians and even as combat pilots. They are making the entire nation proud with their achievements.

Students who are graduating today must bear in mind that their future will be shaped by their education and the values inherited from their family and society. They should strive to leave their mark of excellence wherever they go. Never remain mediocre and always try to push your boundaries of performance.

In 1947 when India became free, there were only 20 Universities and 500 colleges. Of these, exclusive Women's colleges were not more than 10. Today we have 864 universities, 42,000 colleges and 3.7 crore students. Today we have exclusive women universities and thousands of colleges for women.

Indian universities and Indian colleges have not made much progress in terms of becoming centres of innovation in the areas of Science and Technology. Although boys and girls are able to acquire latest skills and are able to adapt themselves to meet the technical requirements of the industry, we are somehow lagging behind in unleashing innovations.

In other words, we have become good knowledge consumers but we are not able to become knowledge producers. We can become innovators and knowledge producers only when we bring about a paradigm shift in our education system and evolve an education system that provokes young minds into thinking; that combines pursuit of knowledge with creativity, critical thinking and skills.

If there is a new software programme, we quickly learn it but we are not able to create a new one. We should not be imitators but creators.

During my interactions with students, I have been stressing on five aspects—never neglect or forget your mother tongue, parents, native place, motherland and the Guru (teacher). Learn other languages, but be proficient in your mother tongue.

I call upon the teachers on the occasion of this convocation to rededicate themselves to the cause of education and transform this college into a centre of excellence for innovations.

As I look at you dear students, I feel happy. You are bright, you are energetic, you are enthusiastic and you all look purposeful and look motivated. You will certainly make tremendous impact in your chosen careers and contribute to the progress of the nation.

I wish you great success, tremendous happiness and a life filled with learning and bliss.

JAI HIND!"

AKT/BK/RK

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