

**SPEECH BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL AWARDS TO
TEACHERS**

NEW DELHI: 05-09-2012

Distinguished Teachers and the proud recipients of the National Award, Union Minister for HRD, Shri Kapil Sibal,
Ministers of State for HRD, Shri E. Ahamed and Dr. D. Purandeswari,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

You represent the dedicated men and women from all over India, who have brought education and learning to our generations. It is indeed a pleasure to be here with you on Teachers' Day. I extend to you my hearty felicitations.

Teachers' Day is celebrated on the 5th of September, the birth anniversary of my pre-eminent predecessor, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who was one of the great scholars and philosophers of our country. When he became the President of India in 1962, his admirers requested him to allow them to celebrate his birthday. Dr. Radhakrishnan, who himself was an accomplished teacher, said, *"instead of celebrating my birthday separately, it would be my proud privilege if the 5th of September is observed as Teachers' Day"*. It is my privilege to join you in paying tribute to him and all teachers on this occasion.

Our gurus down the ages—from saints and seers of Vedic times to Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhiji—have bequeathed a unique legacy to us which has nourished our minds and intellect. In more recent times, among many others, scholars like Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar and Amartya Sen have contributed to the development of Physics and Economics and laid down theories that have been recognized, accepted and acclaimed throughout the academic world. I salute all these savants!

Friends,

To build India of our dreams, the first and foremost task before us is to improve the quality of Education. In a nation whose demography is young—both in age and spirit, teachers have the responsibility of providing education which is rich in values and modern in content. Having been a teacher myself, I have always drawn inspiration from these words of Swami Vivekananda “***Education is the process by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, and intellect is sharpened, as a result of which one can stand on one’s own feet. And that a teacher’s sacred duty is to invoke the spirit of inquiry in his pupils.***” I still cannot find better words of inspiration for the teaching fraternity.

Your sacred duty is to enable your pupils to construct knowledge, to discover their own talents, and to develop their physical and interpersonal skills, cognitive

abilities and subject-matter expertise. Education must enrich their minds, broaden their horizons and give them ever lasting hunger for exploring new ideas and vistas of opportunity.

As teachers, we all know that educational activities and learning processes are no longer confined to classroom-based curriculum. It is necessary to design appropriate learning experiences for the students. Development of a scientific temperament is essential. Adaptation to and application of new technology has to be an integral part of the curriculum development for all stages of education. New methods and teaching aids must equip the younger generations to learn more, explore more and contribute more to the society.

As I have said elsewhere, I firmly believe that Education is the true alchemy that can bring India to its next golden age. Our motto should be: All for Knowledge, and Knowledge for All.

With the Right to Education in position, our country has set itself the goal of Education for All by 2015. As teachers, you are critical to this endeavour. No person should be deprived of the precious opportunity to learn, broaden her thinking and explore new horizons. Every person must have a deep understanding of our country and its heritage and the capability to think about her responsibility and duty towards

the nation. As Gandhiji taught us, it is the “right education” rather than mere knowledge of facts that is really needed to make a democracy function.

This calls for the strengthening of our teaching cadres by well-trained, motivated teachers involved in continuously improving education programmes, fully responsive to the changing needs of the students.

Teachers should give themselves a new orientation and evolve an enhanced institutional capacity. Qualified and competent teachers, continuously renewing their capabilities and excellence through research, experimentation and innovation would be the nation’s strength. We must work for the long term goal of setting performance standards and creating top class institutional facilities for innovative training and professional development of teachers. I expect that the Government of India’s National Mission on Teachers and Training will address all these urgent priorities and the related issues in a holistic manner.

In this context, I take the opportunity to recognize the efforts of the private sector and of non-governmental organizations who have taken some excellent initiatives in extending education. They have demonstrated that so much is possible if the task is taken up with commitment and sincerity.

I also take this opportunity to recognize, with deep appreciation, the professional dedication with which you all have played a commendable role in making our nation a confident, vibrant and modern India, whose citizens are recognized for their scholarship and intellect and contribution to society. To those of you who are being recognized with awards, I offer my felicitations. To all of you, I wish success in your future endeavours. Through you, I extend my warm greetings to the entire teaching community in the country.

Before I conclude, let me share a thought with you.

When I think of a teacher, an image comes to my mind: I see a lighted lamp surrounded by a thousand unlit lamps. The lighted lamp ignites all those thousand lamps who in turn go away and ignite thousands of other lamps and I see the widening circle of light dispel all the darkness in our motherland.

You are those lamps.

Go and spread light.

I wish you God speed.

Jai Hind!