

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF PRESENTATION OF DR.
A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM IGNITE AWARDS FUNCTION**

Auditorium, RBCC: November 7, 2016

1. I am indeed very happy to join you for the Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam IGNITE Awards function and present the awards to this group of creative young children of our society. My congratulations to all the awardees and their families and teachers! It is heartening to see so many creative minds trying to tackle the challenges faced by our society at such a young age.

2. Creative children are the nursery of our society. Many future leaders of our society are being nurtured in the healthy and happy soil of our institutions like the ones set up by Honey Bee Network. However, here I want to share with the parents and teachers about a concern I have had for a very long time. We often scold or accost our children when they ask an absurd question or dream a utopia. But have not the most remarkable progress been made by minds that could think ahead, dream big and make what seemed impossible at one time fully realizable? I am happy that National Innovation Foundation also promotes unlimited flight of imagination apart

from what seems probable. I strongly believe it must continue doing so to unfetter the imagination of young dreamers.

Friends:

3. I have been meeting innovative children at the Festival of Innovations organized at Rashtrapati Bhavan every year. What gives me real pleasure is to host some of them as innovation scholars in-residence at Rashtrapati Bhavan. I meet them off and on, listen to their ideas and share memories from my own childhood.

4. Having grown up in a small village, I am acutely aware of what hardships many children have to go through at an early age. Implementation of many of the ideas of the children can make the lives of not only elderly, women and youth better but also improve the learning environment. I am happy to hear that some of the leading publishers abroad are incorporating stories of innovative children awarded here in their school text books. Educational boards at the centre and in different states will do well to do the same in our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

5. I am told that for the IGNITE Awards this year, there were over 55,000 applicants from 458 districts of the country. For the awardees, it must be a very special feeling to be one among the chosen few. However, those not in the list must not lose heart. What matters most is to make the pool of ideas rich, diverse and fertile. No one can say when any such idea can make a significant difference to our society.

6. In the same vein, I would suggest that we should not judge the value of ideas merely in terms of their business or commerce potential. The very act of empathetic thinking - *samavedansheel bhavana* - is a reward in itself. The seeds of sensing innovative solutions to social, ecological and industrial problems have to be sown early. These awards named after Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam are a rich tribute to his contribution in promoting social sensitivity among children. Inviting some of these children to the creativity workshop at the Festival of Innovations will help foster self-respect and solidarity among the privileged and under-privileged children

alike. The idea of India that we must work towards is of a socially equitable, institutionally tolerant and futuristically inclusive society.

Friends:

7. I was delighted to witness the range of creative ideas and innovations displayed at the exhibition prior to this award giving function. To my mind, these exhibits not only promise to preserve our diversity but also benefit various sections of the society. I could very well envision that some of these are meant for including the excluded ones in the development process. They augment the potential for unaided grassroots innovation.

8. We should allow the children to develop the habit of thinking on their own. Spoon-feeding at every step should be avoided. Well intentioned grooming by elders sometimes restricts the creative impulse of the child. Such minds will not add to the start-up revolution which requires unleashing the entrepreneurial potential of our youth. In science and technology, a lot of the progress has been made by

questioning prior explanations and connections, and forging new ones.

9. I compliment NIF for successfully identifying, recognizing and nurturing the young talent, including those from the rural, tribal and other far flung areas. The plans of Department of Science and Technology to partner with NIF in INSPIRE MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge) scheme will boost the IGNITE model developed by NIF and Honey Bee Network in the last decade. Let every idea recognised by us here spawn million more ideas.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

10. There is a need to create an innovation eco-system in our country. The Atal Innovation Mission is a very important initiative of the government aimed at promoting innovations and start-ups all over the country. The idea of unleashing the creativity of children is a valuable step in that direction. Tinkering labs being set up in schools are going to add renewed energy to the restless young minds. I call upon

educationists, corporate and community leaders to explore ways of extending recognition to creative and innovative children and other such minds. Our collective efforts, I am sure, will have far-reaching effect on the inclusive innovation eco-system of the country. I have been urging higher educational institutions to set up innovation clubs to search, spread, celebrate innovations and sense the unmet social needs. There are innovation clubs in 86 central institutes of higher learning today. The time has come to set up similar innovation clubs in every school as well.

My young friends:

11. I call upon you to intensify your quest to identify social problems. Be impatient and persistent to find solutions for these problems. 'Impatient India, Innovative India and Inclusive India' has to be the *mantra* for future. This *mantra* you must chant and internalize.

12. I wish you a very happy, healthy and successful future.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
