

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF INDIA AT THE ALL INDIA
CONFERENCE ON 'SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,
HUMANITY IN SANSKRIT EDUCATION' ORGANIZED
BY HOWRAH SANSKRIT SAHITYA SAMAJ**

It gives me great pleasure to address today's All India conference on '**Science, Technology and Humanity in Sanskrit Education**'. I would like to congratulate the organisers - Howrah Sanksrit Sahitya Samaj which has been working hard for preservation, propagation and research in Sanskrit since 1937.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. Today we are celebrating a language which is not only deeply rooted in the heritage of India, but also is one of the oldest languages of the world. Sanskrit can be

found to be the origin of most of the tongues we speak today. Over the ages Sanskrit has traversed the mountainous paths of the Himalayas. It has swept across the Sapta Sindhu, and has in the process, shaped our *sanskriti*.

3. It is my firm belief that language is a true embodiment of knowledge. Nineteenth century Bengal was nurtured in the spirit of Sanskrit through the words of Bankim Chandra and the Vedantic tradition of Swami Vivekananda. They had envisaged a re-invigorated nation humbled by its traditions and enamored by the call of Science. Today the western world terms Sanskrit as a language closest to the computerized algorithms. This speaks tonnes about the logical clarity of this language. The efforts of the Howrah

Sanskrit Sahitya Samaj, in keeping this language alive, are highly commendable.

4. I am told that this institution has been graced by many eminent personalities like Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and others. They have given it the impetus it required for its growth. In fact, the topic for today's conference is ***Science, Technology and Humanity in Sanskrit Education***. It is a very relevant topic today. We need to go back to our traditions and heritage and re-acquaint ourselves with the ideals of progress and tolerance that we have espoused, for centuries.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. Professor of Columbia University, Vyasa Houston has rightly said and I quote, ***"The extraordinary thing about Sanskrit is that it offers direct accessibility to anyone***

to that elevated plane where the two —mathematics and music, brain and heart, analytical and intuitive, scientific and spiritual— become one.” Unquote. In terms of science and technology, the Sanskrit tradition has immense to offer. **Vedic mathematics**, a part of the Sanskrit culture, includes trigonometry, algebra and science of astronomy. It is the source of what we today call the Arabic system of numerals. **Aryabhata’s concept of zero** has been an invention of Vedic mathematics. Ancient Indian mathematics also gave us the formula for determining the shape of earth and other celestial bodies.

6. **Medicine** was a part of Sanskrit literature much before the renaissance of Europe. We are blessed to have had names like *Sushruta* and *Charaka* who are internationally reckoned with. Sciences have been known

to be patronized by several kings as much as beautiful works of art, and all forms of performance and visual arts. Our philosophies have forged the links and filled the gaps in our scientific narrative. Science and philosophy have always complemented and supplemented each other for centuries.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

7. The logic of Indian philosophy is inspiring. The Upanishads speak of the bond between the *Atman* and *Samsara*. The *Atman* is that which is ever-present, yet untraceable. *Samsara* is the material world we see around us. Technology though fruitful for progress sometimes invades the *Atman*. Over indulgence in Technology leads to alienation of individuals from inner self. Especially, in today's world of the world wide web, Internet, Artificial Intelligence, and information overload due to social media, the attention and retention of its users has increasingly

become momentary and flickering. This has led to a situation when the profoundness expressed by great poets like Kalidas, Rabindranath Thakur or William Wordsworth, hold no meaning, since the reader would neither have the time, patience or depth to read and understand them. The Sanskrit language has always taught and inspired the delicate balance between logic and emotion.

8. I speak to you not only from experience in the Public sphere but as an ordinary citizen who is deeply inspired by literature and language alike. The Sankhya philosophy speaks of three stages-

- Pratyaksha or Perception,
- Anuman or inference and
- Shabda or words of a reliable scholar.

Your journey in this modern age must encapsulate these three principles. Perceive or observe each and every detail of life, make your inferences based on your own observation. Finally listen to your ancient cannon of knowledge as they have in-store vast oceans of wisdom. This philosophy shall strengthen your everyday and empower you in your times of struggle.

Dear Friends,

9. The idea of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** is a philosophy that inculcates an understanding that the whole world is one family. Diversity of culture and tradition is our pride. Respecting and celebrating cultures is the beauty of diversity. This is what comprises respecting the humanity and being human. The six-thousand odd manuscripts you

have in-store exemplify the need to nurture and preserve this very oneness of humanity. Gurudev Rabindranath Thakur's idea of nationality is that of One World, One Humanity. We must not forget these values, rather revitalise them in our understanding of the world today. Forgetting is relatively easy, it is remembrance and preservation that is enormous and intimidating.

10 I congratulate you for taking this task of propagating these values of our Sanskritic Traditions and wish you all the success in your future endeavours.

Thank you

Jai Hind.