

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER PRESIDENT
OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF DIAMOND JUBILEE
CELEBRATION OF RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SHILPAPITHA**

1. I am happy to be here on this landmark occasion of Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Ramakrishna Mission Shippapitha, Belgharia, Kolkata. Started in 1958, this Institution has completed 60 years of its glorious existence.

2. I am delighted to know that this government-sponsored polytechnic has been serving economically backward students for six decades and turning them into technically proficient professionals, as well as, responsible citizens of the country.

Friends, ladies and gentlemen,

3. Long back Swami Vivekananda cautioned, and I quote, ***“India can never rise until and unless the poor masses are once more well-educated, well-fed and well-cared for”***. He emphatically said: ***“A nation is advanced in proportion as education and knowledge spread among***

the masses". It is in the fitness of things that Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Students' Home, Belgharia, has been serving the cause of the masses by providing practical education to students that makes them stand on their own feet.

4. Swami Vivekananda wanted, and I quote, ***"that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's own feet."*** It is a joy to learn that, far back in 1919-1920, Swami Brahmananda Maharaj, a worthy successor of Swami Vivekananda, realized the importance of technical education in India and asked Swami Nirvedananda ji, the founder Secretary of this centre, to start a vocational college.

Friends, ladies and gentlemen,

5. Today's India is in the process of rapid industrialization and urbanization, accompanied by fast economic growth. Hence there is a need of skilled labour force to continue on this path of development. In India, we have enough talent. With the largest population of the young, we are poised to

leverage a low dependency ratio. But that depends on the productivity of the population in the working age bracket. If there will be skilled and trained workforce in the country that is employable as per the requirements of the Industry, the problems of unemployment will be addressed. An opposite scenario can spell disaster. The restlessness and frustration of youth manifests in unrest and upheaval. Let us not allow such a situation to appear on our horizon. We must turn our evolving demographic configuration into strength.

6. It is very encouraging to know that Ramakrishna Mission Shilpapitha is providing its students with the required training and skills to be a part of productive workforce of the nation. I hope that the Shilpapitha would continue to nurture its students with the values of honesty, dedication and efficiency.
7. In the fast changing world of today where new ideas, values and concepts are rapidly replacing the old ones. Education has to liberate a person from narrow world view and the

boundaries of caste, community, race and gender. I believe, more than ever, today we need institutions built with this vision to instill in our students the civilization values of sacrifice, tolerance, plurality, understanding, compassion, performance of duty, and respect for women. The mission and vision of the Shilpapitha to groom the students to develop a spirit of service and sacrifice by mobilizing donations for poor students, organization of Blood Donation Drives, helping the destitute and the inmates in reformatories etc, is commendable. By sincerely fulfilling this responsibility you can contribute to the creation of responsible citizenry for the nation.

Friends, ladies, and gentlemen,

8. Our students must be strong in both technical skills and human values. Education is not just gathering of information and training in breadwinning skills. Our teaching-learning process must be geared up to meet the challenges of this new age. By 2030, our country is expected to reach a stage where one-third of the global work force could be Indians. Are we prepared for it? Our students must develop critical thinking, innovation,

creative imagination and communication skills. But at the same time they must learn to feel for others.

9. Swami Vivekananda said and I quote, ***“I hold every man a traitor who having been educated at the expense of the poor masses pays not the least heed to them.”*** Our students cannot be traitors. They must rise above such petty weaknesses as jealousy, selfishness and greed. A blind chase for consumerism and completely materialistic outlook of life have landed many educated Indians in a crisis of character. Hence, Ramakrishna Mission Institutions rightly put much stress on development of moral character of their students. I congratulate Ramakrishna Mission for its efforts in this direction.

10. I once again congratulate Ramakrishna Mission Shilpapitha on its completion of 60 years of achievements and success. May it grow from strength to strength and achieve still greater glory is my sincere hope and prayer on this happy occasion.

Thank You

Jai Hind!