

Education is the cornerstone in the foundation of our nation-building

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Srinagar,

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind urged upon the younger generation of Kashmir to learn from their rich legacy. He said that they have every reason to know that Kashmir has always been a beacon of hope for the rest of India. It's spiritual and cultural influence has its imprint all across India. He was addressing the 19th annual convocation of University of Kashmir in Srinagar today (July 27, 2021).

The President said that Kashmir is a place that defies descriptions. Many poets have tried to capture its beauty, calling it paradise on earth, but it is ultimately beyond words. It must be this bounty of nature that has also made this place a hub of ideas. This valley surrounded by snow-clad mountains provided an ideal setting for sages and seers a couple of millennia ago. It is impossible to write a history of Indian philosophy without referring to Kashmir's contributions to it. One of the oldest manuscripts of the Rigveda was written in Kashmir. This is the most conducive region for the philosophies to prosper. This is where great philosopher Abhinavagupta wrote his expositions on aesthetics and methods for realisation of God. Hinduism and Buddhism flourished in Kashmir, as did Islam and Sikhism after it arrived here in later centuries.

The President said that Kashmir is also the meeting point of various cultures. In medieval times, it was Lal Ded who showed the way to bring together various spiritual traditions. In the works of Lalleshwari, we can see how Kashmir provides the very template itself of communal harmony and peaceful coexistence. This is also reflected in all aspects of life here, in folk arts and festivals, in food and dress. The core nature of the place has always been inclusive. Almost all religions that came to this land embraced a unique feature of Kashmiriyat that shunned orthodoxy and encouraged tolerance and mutual acceptance among communities.

The President said that it was most unfortunate that this outstanding tradition of peaceful coexistence was broken. Violence, which was never part of 'Kashmiriyat', became the daily reality. It is alien to Kashmiri culture, and it can only be termed as an aberration - a temporary one, much like a virus that attacks the body and needs to be purged. Now there is a new beginning and determined efforts to regain this land's lost glory.

The President said that he firmly believed that democracy has within it a capacity to reconcile all differences and also a capacity to bring out the best of citizens' potential. Kashmir is already realizing this vision. Democracy lets Kashmiri people build their own future, a peaceful and prosperous tomorrow. The youth and women especially have high stakes in it, and he was confident that they would not let go of this opportunity to rebuild lives and rebuild Kashmir.

Pointing to the fact that about half of the students of University of Kashmir receiving degrees at the 19th convocation are women and 70 percent of gold medals winners are also women, the President said that it is not just a matter of satisfaction but also pride for us that our daughters are ready to perform at the same level as our sons and sometimes even better. It is this belief in equality and capabilities that needs to be nurtured among all women so that we can successfully build a New India - an India which is at the forefront of the comity of nations. Building our human resources and infrastructure are the stepping stones to this higher ideal.

The President said that education is the cornerstone in the foundation of our nation-building. India has always prided itself in placing knowledge above all. We had great traditions in learning, and Kashmir too has been home to some of them. A need was felt to align modern education with our rich heritage in such a way that it would help us respond better to the challenges of the 21st century. With that vision, a new National Education Policy was announced last year.

The President noted that some of the features of the new Education Policy have already been initiated at the University of Kashmir. Besides constituting a committee to devise a roadmap for the timely implementation of the policy, several academic courses have been realigned to meet the objectives of this policy.

Speaking about the issue of climate change, the President said that climate change is the most critical challenge before humanity in this century. Global warming is making its impact everywhere, but nowhere is it more felt than in the fragile eco-system of the Himalayas. He was happy to note that the University of Kashmir has set up two centres one is devoted to glaciology, and the other to Himalayan Biodiversity Documentation, Bio-prospection and Conservation. There is also the National Himalayan Ice-core Laboratory. He expressed confidence that these two Centres of Excellence and the laboratory would help Kashmir and also show the way to the world in combating climate challenges and nurturing nature.

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