

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE OCCASION OF VALEDICTORY FUNCTION OF THE
PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF ST. THOMAS
COLLEGE**

Palai, October 23, 2025

I am happy to participate in this function celebrating 75 years of St. Thomas College, Palai. This college has grown to become one of the leading institutions of higher education in Kerala. I congratulate everyone associated with the long and impressive journey of the college.

Educational institutions like this college are workshops where destinies are shaped. I am happy to note that with its emphasis on holistic learning and social justice, the college promotes values of sustainability and inclusivity.

The college has been promoting intellectual pursuits with a moral compass. I was shown an image of the college emblem. The motto on the crest has words of Latin-origin for 'Life', 'Light' and 'Love'. Sanctity of all forms of life, light of wisdom and love for entire humanity are universal and eternal values.

Earlier today, I had the privilege of participating in the sacred observance of Sree Narayana Guru's Mahasamadhi Centenary at Sivagiri. The great sage, social reformer and poet has left many inspiring messages for us. He had said 'Vidya-kondu prabuddha ravuka' which means 'get enlightened through education'. An area that lacks education may remain an area of darkness. The light of education illuminates the path to individual and collective progress. I appreciate the efforts of this college in spreading the light of education. Holistic education inculcates the values of universal compassion and love. I praise the college for highlighting these values.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Kottayam has witnessed glorious chapters of social and educational transformations. The great movement for eradication of untouchability, famous as 'Vaikom Satyagrah', took place in Kottayam a hundred years ago.

Kottayam is known as 'Akshara-nagari' because it has been a fountain-head of literacy and education. The first printing press in Kerala, and one of the earliest in India, was established in Kottayam.

The 'Sakshara Keralam' movement was strengthened by efforts in which people of this area played a very active role. Shri P.N. Panicker's great initiative to promote learning through the library movement was inspired by a very simple but powerful message of 'Vayichu Valaruga' which means 'Read and Grow'. This college has been a contributor to and beneficiary of the learning oriented eco-system of Kerala.

The 21st century is described as 'knowledge century'. Knowledge that drives innovation takes a society forward and makes it self-reliant. The power of literacy, education and knowledge has enabled Kerala to be among the leading states on several human development parameters.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Civilisations have thrived on the banks of rivers, big and small. This college is located on the banks of Meenachil river, the lifeline of this place. I am sure that the environmentally conscious people of this area, especially members of the college community, will keep the river clean through sustained efforts.

This college has produced illustrious alumni including former Chief Justice of India, Shri K.G. Balakrishnan and other eminent jurists, Union Ministers, people's representatives, civil servants, diplomats, academics and many more who have excelled in several fields.

The college deserves special appreciation for promoting excellence in sports. I hope that the youth of India, especially students of this college, will seek inspiration from the example of the legendary volleyball player Jimmy George. He achieved

international eminence in such a small life span. He was an extremely popular alumnus of this college. India will remain forever proud of Jimmy George.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The late Shri K.R. Narayanan, one of my illustrious predecessors in Rashtrapati Bhavan, was a son of Kottayam. He was born in the village Uzhavoor which is only a few kilometres from here. His journey from humble beginnings to the highest office in the land showcases his exceptional calibre and also the democratic spirit of India. Today, in the morning, at Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram, I had the privilege of unveiling his bust. Now, I again humbly salute his memory from near his birthplace.

The life journey of Shri K.R. Narayanan inspires all of us. It also reminds us that the greatest service we can render to our fellow human beings, specially to those who are less privileged, is to help them realise their true potential. Education is the key to exploring opportunities of development and growth. This college was established with the objective of providing education to students mainly from rural areas. The college has been fulfilling this laudable objective for 75 years. I am sure that the college will continue to promote quality education and thereby contribute to building a more equitable society and Viksit Bharat by 2047. I wish this college, and everyone associated with it, a very bright future.

Ellaa-varkkum Ende Aasham-sagal.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!
Jai Bharat!