

ADDRESS & ANSWERS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, DR. APJ ABDUL KALAM

(to preserve the love and intimacy of the President for the children his original words have been transcribed from his address at the Suvarna Balmahotsav of BAPS Children Activities on 8.02.04, at Akshardham, Gandhinagar)

Introduction

“Good evening all the children. I remember a famous kirtana of Swami Tyagraja. He said, *Entharu Mahanu Bhavulu, antharike Vandanamulu.*” It means whoever is great in this gathering, I salute with God’s grace. So I salute all of you, as the great saint did. I salute all the *Mahanu Bhavulu* - all the children, I greet you.

“My friends, when I am in this place of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s temple and presided over by Pramukh Swamiji here, Maha Pramukh Swamiji, what an environment! I am seeing here a beautiful environment, a divine environment! How does this beautiful environment come? Whenever any thing is beautiful - a beautiful environment creates creativity. The creativity I saw just for an hour when I was sitting here and seeing the people and children: how creative they are! I greet all the 25,000 children here and also half a million children, wherever they are. My greetings and God’s grace with you.

“Friends, I see a beautiful thing has happened. Fifty years of BAPS and the service it has done to the children and I have also seen how it has blossomed in the great human beings it has created. So I would like to greet Maha Pramukh Swamiji for such a great event. He has been responsible for such a great event in this divine environment.

The President’s experience with HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

“You know, on 13th June 2001, I happened to meet Swamiji. It was a beautiful meeting with Maha Pramukh Swamiji. More than about 90 minutes we were together. That is a time I, we were formulating India 2020. What is India 2020? What is the meaning of India 2020? That is when you all grow, 25 years old, 30 years old, you should see a beautiful India, you should see a happy India, you should see a prosperous India, you must see a safe India.

“I had a roadmap, prepared by 500 experts of our country. With that roadmap, I was with Maha Pramukh Swamiji for about two hours. And I was telling him that for India to get transformed into developed nation, the 260 million people below the poverty line, we have to lift them up. And our GDP growth – Gross Domestic Product – rate of growth has to increase to 10 % and sustained for 10 years.

“He heard me, Maha Pramukh Swamiji. He heard me patiently. Then he asked me, what are the tools, what are the instruments, which will lead to bring prosperity throughout the nation? I told him the

prosperity will come, only in an integrated way in five areas simultaneously. The five areas are: education and healthcare coupled, agriculture and food processing coupled, information and communication technology coupled, and then the most important infrastructure and power generation - 300,000 MW power generation and also networking of rivers. These are the areas of importance and then fifth is the self reliance in critical technology.

“He heard me patiently, Maha Pramukh Swamiji. For nearly 30 minutes, I presented with all my books, graphs and computer outputs. With all of these, I was discussing with him. And then, he asked me one question. That one question he asked, really even now, it is reverberating.

He said, “Kalam, there is something missing in these five areas of development.”

I asked Swamiji, “What is it that is missing?”

He said, “You should include a spiritual component in that, with the five areas.”

“Now, how do you make the spiritual component? Today, we are all working for a developed India. How do you make a developed India? We have to have 3 components. After meeting Maha Pramukh Swamiji, I have come to the conclusion. One of the great heritage, the civilization heritage that India has, is a certain value system. That value system has to be built in, in all our development process. How do you build a development process with the value system. It looks to me that the most important thing is a beautiful citizen, an enlightened citizen. If you want a billion enlightened citizens in our country, we have to have 3 important things. When I am here in this divine environment, I am convinced we need to have 3 important components - a 3-Dimensional approach for the creation of not only peace in India, development in India, but for the whole planet - peace and development. How can we do that? There are 3 areas. I call it a 3-Dimensional approach, a 3 component system which we have to have. The first and foremost component is education with value system. Education with value system, I am witnessing, whichever place I go, wherever a spiritual human being is there, the spiritual system and service there, I have found that even without teaching in the classes, the environment itself educates our children with value system.

“This I have witnessed today in this campus, in this place, how half a million children are benefiting with all the education, wherever they study, but they are imbibing the value system. So I would like to congratulate the Swaminarayan temple authorities for such an excellent component they are giving to the children. And for us, especially for India, as you Swamiji will know, we have got 540 million young people in this country. Nowhere, no democratic nation has got 540 million young people below 25 years. Now this is a big resource for India because this powerful resource, if ignited, it is the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth and under the earth. And definitely for a developed India these are the foundations, which have to come from the young people. I would like to say that whatever work is done in this divine places is very important and for national development.

The Story of Reconstruction of the Earth

“And finally, the children when they came, they acted two stories. Story of Maha Pramukh Swamiji’s life and they also started telling me about my life. But I would like to tell you a story for all the children, for all the 25,000 children who are here.

“You know God wanted to create a universe and a planet. You know the universe has got millions and millions of galaxies. Each galaxy has got millions and millions of stars and each star has got a few planets. And we belong to one of the smallest stars, that is the sun. And we belong to that sun’s nine planets. We are one of the insignificant planets, this earth, we belong to that. You know, the earth is rotating on its axis. How many hours does it take? 24 hours. So you get day and night. The earth orbits around the sun. How many days does it take? 365 days. Now, can you tell me, the sun orbits around which galaxy? We belong to which galaxy? Milky way. That is our sun, our star orbits around the Milky way galaxy. It takes How much time does it take the sun to orbit around the Milky way galaxy? How much time? A difficult question! Ok! It’s difficult question. It takes 250 million years. That is the sun orbits around the galaxy in 250 million years. So imagine, God has created the earth, God has created the sun, God has created the galaxies and galaxies. Now after millions and millions of years of creating the galaxies, He wanted to see, visit the planet earth. Ok. So one day he landed. God arrived on the earth. And He didn’t come to this great divine place. He went to some other place... He landed. Then when He landed, with him there were two people – on one side an angel and on another side a *shaytan*. You know *shaytan*? What is *shaytan*? The devil. On one side devil, another side angel. So when He saw the earth, the planets what He had created for millions and millions of years, He got discouraged.

“He said, “Why does the earth look like that?” If He would have come to this place, He would not have a thought like that. But anyway, He landed at some other place. He felt that the earth had been damaged. Generally, the whole earth, where nearly six billion people live, He felt the earth had been damaged.

“So he asked the angel, “Can you bring back the earth in the original creation that I had created?” The angel said, “No, it will take more time. I will not comment now.” Then he asked devil, “Can you do something about the repair of the earth?” Devil said, “Immediately, my lord I will create a beautiful earth.”

But you know after all, God knows who is devil and who is angel. He said, “O devil, I will give you three tests. If you do the three tests successfully, I will give you the job of reconstruction of the earth.”

“One was: He asked the devil, “*Shaytan*, you go to all the galaxies and count how many stars there are.” You know each galaxy has got millions and millions of stars. So he went and counted. The devil counted all the numbers, all the millions of galaxies, all the millions of stars. He landed here, and gave the exact number of how many stars there are in the all galaxies. God was pleased then he gave the second test.

“The second test was: “You go to earth, planet earth and count how many sand particles are there.” The devil went, and counted the sand particles. Exactly within a week he gave the number. Now God was stuck with a problem. The third test He gave.

“The third test: God said, “Go to India and count how many political parties are there?” Ok. How many political parties? He asked that, I’m sorry sir, He asked that. But he has not come back. Still, he is counting.

“But, you know children I thought of telling you this because this story is not mine. This story was given by a tenth class student when I visited Ramakrishna Mission High School in one village. He told me this story which I am repeating. But the message is very important. The message is: God has created a beautiful earth. On this beautiful earth, every citizen, we have got a responsibility to be a beautiful citizen. How do you make a beautiful citizen? How do you create an enlightened citizen? Enlightened citizen comes out of a good value system and education. And the most important is valued education. I am sure that this institution - BAPS institution is doing a great job. Dear children, this should spread everywhere, whatever you do the message that you can be a good human being. If you give the value system in young age you can be a beautiful citizen.

The Question & Answer Session

“You know one of you has asked me a question, Mr. President, please tell me in the corrupt world, is it possible to have a beautiful India. Repeat the question.

1. “Namaskar Mr. President, why is there so much corruption in India? What should be done to stop it? And what can we children do to help stop the corruption?” (Arsh Patel, Mumbai, Age 11, Std. 5, Chandulal Vidya Mandir)

“Well, my dear friend, I have seen your question and definitely I would like to answer that question. You know we can make hundreds of laws to eliminate corruption. We may succeed only in the peripheral way. You feel you have to remove corruption, my dear friend. It is in the hands of only three people. Only three can remove corruption. That is father, mother and the elementary school teacher. These three people can give a value system and a home. That means the message is only home can create an enlightened citizen. So the home has got the responsibility to create a beautiful citizen. So every one of you assembled here, the children you are an ambassador, you have to see that the home becomes beautiful. It becomes beautiful if you are corruption-free. Ok. So you should start a movement. All of you start a movement that I will make a beautiful India. Beautiful India, I can make. A corruption-free India can be made. I will start it my in my home.”

2. “Namaskar, Mr. President, what is the secret behind your success?” (Pankaj Rathwa, Vadodara, Age 13, Std. 7, Don Bosco School)

3. “Namaskar Rashtrapatiji, if we want to become like you what should we do?” (Arsh Patel, Mumbai, Age 11, Std. 5, Chandulal Vidya Mandir)

“Well both of you have asked similar questions. My answer is like this: First and foremost you must have, when you are young, when you are in the sixth class, seventh class, eighth class.... for example when I was studying in the fifth class, age 10, I had a teacher. His name was Sivasubramania Iyer in Rameshwaram, my island. And one day he was teaching how birds fly? That day he taught me, not only how birds fly, but what should be my future career. That is I must do something to fly. Then I became a rocket engineer, space technologist and all sorts of things and finally, I landed into the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The message is you must have an aim, you must have a goal, and see what teachers say, what father-mother say. Build the goal that I will become great - I will become a doctor, become an engineer, I'll be a great leader... like that you should think, then you will achieve. That is number one. Number two, you have to sweat for it. Once you have a goal, you have to sweat for it. You have to work hard for it. And the third thing is there will be a problem. You should not get frightened with the problem. Any work you do, there will be a problem. You should not be frightened. You should defeat the problem. At no time, the problem should be your master. You defeat the problem. So there are three things you have to do: You must have a goal, you must sweat. And when the problem comes, defeat the problem.”

4. “Namaste Rashtrapatiji, what are your future plans for the country?” (Raja Brahmhatt, Vadodara, Age 12, Std. 6, Bright High School)

“Well, the country's future plan as you all know, my dear children, we have a billion people population. That is about a 100 crore people. Out of which, 260 million people are below the poverty line. So, we have to...the country's plan, mission is to lift them up by 2020. That means the smile should come on a billion people that is our dream. That is, smiles on the faces of a billion people. That's our dream!”

5. “Namaskar Rashtrapatiji, why do you think that by 2020 India will be a developed country?” (Arsh Mehta, Vadodara, Age 12, Std. 6, Tejas High School)

“This comes from, my dear friend, three basic aspects. Number one, India has large natural resources. You see, on all the three sides of India, we have got the sea. She has got resources of life, she has got all the resources below, and she has got resources above. Then we have mountains and rivers. And then if we go deep into the ground, there are a lot of minerals, very precious minerals like Titanium... and some of the nuclear materials like Uranium, Thorium.... So, this is our great asset. And we also have a resource of a billion people. That's another resource. By the combination of these two, that is people - human resource and natural resource and the mighty power of the young, like you, of 560 million youths and a plan that 2020 will achieve That's how it gives me confidence.”

6. “Sir, Namaskar sir, how can we stop terrorism?” (Rishi Patel, Rajkot, Age 13, Std. 8, Kendriya Vidyalaya)

“I think this question should be directed to Advaniji. But anyway, I will attempt to answer because you are a young fellow, you are studying in 8th class, isn't it? But you have asked a good question.

“See, terrorism, if you look at it, it comes from many reasons. One, it can come from across the border. Another is within the country, some dissatisfied people, they can initiate, set a course of action. Third thing, it is possible that poverty may drive. So if we want to come out of terrorism, we have to have a multi-pronged attack. That is education with value system and economic prosperity. And above all, we should build as our Vajpayee, Prime Minister has done. Nation-to-nation friendship. You know, we have to build nation-to-nation friendship. And we have to remove poverty. That means economic development, a good value system in our education system. With the combination of these three, we may eliminate terrorism.”

7. “Namaskar Rashtrapatiji, we say that India is one country. But why is there no unity between all the states?” (Yash Dave, Ahmedabad, Age 13, Std. 8, Jivkorba High School)

“Now, Mr. Dave, I want to tell you, about two weeks back one American Professor came to me. And he asked me a question just like you are asking. ‘Mr. President, can you tell me what is India's core competence?’ But you know what is core competence? I told him, ‘Professor, I can think of only one core competence of India that is we have in our country a billion people, of many religions, of many cultures and many languages, but a democratic management. A leading democratic country of a billion people on this planet that is the core competence India has got. So, what it means is, we may have problems. When you manage a billion people certainly there is a problem somewhere, some disturbances will start, but we should not be frightened. We have to find a solution and a good compassionate leader. We need a leader to remove such types of differences, a compassionate leader in our country. In every part of our country, a lot of compassionate leaders we need, who can love people irrespective of which religion, which language, which culture they are. That means we need leaders of compassion, leaders of love, who can, and will be the bridges, connecting people to people. Then you will find a beautiful nation and beauty will add to our nation. Ok, you asked a fantastic question.”

“Now, I have got hundreds of questions. I can't answer all. There's no time. Maha Pramukh Swamiji is here and in his presence I can't go on talking to you but definitely I have got a website www.presidentofindia.nic.in. You come to my website. Ok. There's a children's gallery. You ask questions and within 48 hours you will get the answer. Ok. And now the last question, Umang Dave. Dear children I am not in a position to answer all your questions.”

8. “Namaskar Rashtrapatiji, what should we place more faith in, Science or God?” (Umang Dave, Mumbai, Age 13, Std. 9, Silikan Academy)

“You know, I personally believe, you just look at the sky. You know, you see stars. Sometimes, you will see our galaxy. There are millions and millions of galaxies we don’t see. We have to use, the Einstein telescope to see that. But what is the meaning? It means that creation is so complex. There’s a Creator. There’s a God. That God, definitely gives. If you believe in God, you have a beautiful faith and happiness will come to your life. Second thing is we need wealth. You have to generate the wealth. Science and technology help you create the wealth. So you need wealth generation and you need happiness. Spiritually, you will get happiness. The combination gets a good human life.”

9. “Namaskar Rashtrapatiji, we want to visit your home, when can we come?” (Hardik Modi, Surat, Age 12, Std. 7, Experimental School)

“See, I have got a home where I was born. That home is Rameshwaram. Definitely, you can visit any time, Rameshwaram. And, then another home I have is in Delhi, that is the Rashtrapati Bhavan. And, everyday I see at least hundreds of children who visit me. I will be very happy to see you. And anyone of you, any time.”

10. “Rashtrapatiji, Namaskar, to make your dream for India come true, what do you expect from the children of India and in particular from the children of BAPS to do?” (Parth Patel, Ahmedabad, Age 12, Std. 8, Delhi Public School)

“I expect three things. Number one: since you are studying, you should excel in your education. Excel in the education with value system. Number two: wherever you are, you move 5 km to 10 km away, you will find, certain people who cannot read and write. You should help them. Go on Saturday and Sunday. Each one of you, should help them read and write. Can you do that? Third thing: in your house or in the school, plant 5 trees, each one of you, before 10th and 12th. That means you are improving the environment, you are given the education, and the third thing, you are preparing yourself as a good citizen.”

11. “Namaskar Rashtrapatiji, if god granted you one wish, what would you ask for?” (Kirtan Patel, Ahmedabad, Age 14, Std. 9, Girdharnagar-Shahibaug High School)

“I will ask for only one thing. That is ‘O Almighty God, give smiles to the billion people of my nation.’”

12. “What was your first thought when you met Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the first time?” (Kirtan Patel, Ahmedabad, Age 14, Std. 9, Girdharnagar-Shahibaug High School)

“My friend, you have asked a beautiful question. It is the last question I’m going to answer. You know, I want to share with all the young people. For the last three years, I was going through various religious

places, (and meeting) various religious heads. I had met (and visited) in India almost all the religious places and religious leaders, including Swaminarayan temple leaders. One feeling I got, every religion when I visited, I found it looked like a beautiful orchard. You know an orchard, beautiful orchard! Flowers are there, and fruits are there. Beautiful birds are there. Everywhere beautiful! But you know when I came out of the religion, from the orchard, I found that the whole orchards are all like islands. It becomes an island. You know, each orchard, each religion is beautiful but is an island. But, how do we connect the religions? Compassion and love, a bridge you need. Compassion, love you need. When I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj...when I was with him for two hours, I got a feeling, here is a Swamiji, a spiritual soul, who has got compassion and love and spiritual force he was radiating from himself to others.”

(the above questions and answers from 1 to 12 were asked by the children and answered by the President, live in the actual programme on the stage, while the remaining from 13 to 31 were answered by the President through his website)

13. “How can we control our mind?” (Soham Brahmhatt, Std. VIII, A.S. Chaudhary High School, Rajkot)

By fixing a higher goal with indomitable spirit to achieve something beyond us will enable to control our minds and contribute towards a larger cause. Societal missions of bringing happiness to the helpless also enable us to control our minds. Continuous work and right type of thinking is a means of controlling minds. Also failure and problems should not derail a person. We should defeat the problem instead of problem defeating us.

14. “What do you like most?” (Kirtan Patel, Std. IX, Girdharnagar-Shahibaug High School, Ahmedabad)

Discussing with children and understanding their dreams. Smile on the faces of one billion people.

15. “Which has been the happiest day of your life?” (Umang Dave, Std. IX, Silken Academy, Mumbai)

Once I was working with Doctors to get light weight Floor Reaction Orthosis (FROs) for polio affected persons. After taking the measurements when the children were fitted with light weight FROs weighing 1/10th of the original weight which they were carrying, the children started running, walking and pedaling cycles. Their mobility brought tears of joy in the eyes of their parents. The sight of happiness on their faces brought bliss to me.

16. “You are the first President who loves children so much. Why do you love us so much?”

(Yogesh Patel, Std. VII, Kerala People Education School, Bhavnagar)

Because, you have dreams and questioning mind. And also your innocence, curiosity, commitment, sincerity and concern for making the country great.

17. “When will India make a spaceship that will take children to the moon?” (Sunny Kanabar, Std. VII, St. Mary Vidyalaya, Rajkot)

Presently there is a moon mission – Chandrayana-1. This mission has the objective of putting a spacecraft closer to the moon orbit and carrying out experiments. This mission is planned in 2007. This can further lead to manned missions in the subsequent years and establishment of factories in the moon. You get ready.

18. “I have heard that one poor mother sold her child for Rs. 10. Is this the price of the Indian child? If not, what is the value of the Indian child?” (Tushar Pahurkar, Std. VI, Vidyakunj High School, Vadodara)

Poverty is a curse. Our mission is to fight to remove the poverty. Children are invaluable asset to the nation.

19. “Everybody has something to tell us. Some say we should be disciplined, some say we should study, we should be honest, hardworking and so on. All these are important – but what is the most important quality for a child?” (Dharma Mehta, Std. IX, St. Francis School, Mumbai)

The most important quality for a child is to be honest to himself or herself and compassion to others. This will lead you to become an enlightened citizen.

20. What goal did you aim to achieve in your life? So, what should we children aim for from now?” (Parth Padhya, Std. VII, New Vidyavihar School, Ahmedabad)

When I was 10 year boy, studying fifth class, my teacher Shri Siva Subramania Iyer, has put into me the dream of my life. Similarly you can also choose an area in which you have intense interest and pursue it with full enthusiasm and vigour. Aim what you like to become: teacher, artist, fashion designer, doctor, engineer, good social worker and combination of a good human being.

21. “Who will you make the next President?” (Neelkanth Patel, Std. VI, Tejas Vidyalaya, Vadodara)

YOU, and you get ready.

22. “Why do you wear a blue shirt?” (Harsh Bhatt, Std. VII, Fatima Convent School, Bhavnagar)

I like the sky and its marvels.

23. "When you do difficult job, do you remember God?" (Hardik Zala, Std. VIII, Seventh Day Adventist High School, Ahmedabad)

We must remember that success is the result of our sincere efforts supported by divine intervention. It is said that God helps those who work hard.

24. "What was your first thought when you became President?" (Sunny Kanabar, Std. VII, St. Mary Vidyalaya, Rajkot)

My first thought was, a beautiful Thiagarajaswamigal's Keerthana in Sri Raga echoed from my heart - "Endaro Mahaanubhavalu andhariggi vandanamulu" which means, "I salute all the great noble hearted human beings".

25. "Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, how would you like to be remembered?" (Arsh Mehta, Std. VI, Tejas High School, Vadodara)

He brought smiles on millions of faces. I will work for it.

26. "You were from a poor family, so why did you choose not to work and study instead?" (Rishi Patel, Std. VIII, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Rajkot)

My parents and teachers were supportive and I was encouraged to pursue my studies.

27. "You are on such a high post, but how are you able to live such a simple life?" (Parth Patel, Std. VIII, Delhi Public School, Ahmedabad)

My needs are very few.

28. "What are the special qualities of the children from your time and today's children?" (Yogesh Patel, Std. VII, Kerala People Education School, Bhavnagar)

I find that today's children are more inquisitive and they want fast results. They have great ambitions and aspirations. Present day children are more intelligent.

29. "In our country, even with a good degree why is it difficult to get a job? So, is it worth

studying?” (Dharma Mehta, Std. IX, St. Francis School, Mumbai)

Number of jobs are limited, hence it is competitive. For succeeding in the competition, you have to work hard. If you persistently work hard, I am sure you will succeed in getting a job. Alternatively, you must equip yourself to become an entrepreneur. Then instead of seeking job you will be able to provide jobs to others. For both, employment and entrepreneurship, education is essential. Problem starts in thinking when the completion of the education leads to government job. A system is getting evolved to built in the educational system – with entrepreneurship and employment

Questions from BAPS children living outside India

30. “How can we as foreign Indian children help the needy children in India?” (Tushar Shah, Std. IX, Aylesbury Grammar School, Milton Keynes, UK)

There are number of Non-government agencies working towards this mission. You can participate in helping the children through good agencies.

31. “You have a strong passion for India. How can we as foreign Indians also develop this pride for our Motherland?” (Tarun Patel, Std. VIII, Swaminarayan Independent School, London, UK)

Anyone of Indian origin forms part of the large Indian family, which is proud of the civilizational heritage of our country. Hence, you are in a position to develop this pride for our motherland. You all have umbilical connectivity to the mother India.

The President Announces Ten Pledges For Children

1. I will pursue my education or the work with the dedication and I will excel in it.
2. From now onwards, I will teach at least 10 persons to read and write.
3. I will plant at least 10 saplings and shall ensure their growth through constant care.
4. I will visit rural and urban areas and permanently wean away at least 5 persons from addiction and gambling.
5. I will constantly endeavour to remove the pain of my suffering brethrens.
6. I will not support any religious, caste or language differentiation.
7. I will be honest and set an example for others to follow.
8. I will work for becoming an enlightened citizen, make my family righteous.
9. I will always be a friend of mentally and physically challenged and will work hard to make them feel normal like the rest of us.
10. I will proudly celebrate the success of my country and my people.