**SPEECH – DAV SCHOOL- Aug 12th 2016**

Good Morning to everyone. I am very happy to be here. It is always a pleasure to meet young children and teachers-who I believe are the most powerful influencing force that shapes our society. I thank the school authorities for this opportunity.

I see students from different grades gathered here. Some of you are still adjusting to being in school. For some of you, in a matter of months, you will complete school education and enter college. I’m here today because I have something important to discuss with you. I’m here because I want to talk to you about your education and what’s expected of all of you.

We have all heard a lot about responsibilities- responsibility of the teachers’ to inspire and push you to learn, responsibility about your parents’ for making sure you stay on track, and get your homework done, and don’t spend every waking hour in front of the TV or with that Xbox, Responsibility of the government’s for setting high standards, supporting teachers and principals, and turning around schools that aren’t working.

But at the end of the day, we can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, and the best schools in the world – and none of it will matter unless all of you as students fulfil your responsibilities. Unless you show up in those schools; pay attention to those teachers; listen to your parents, grandparents and other adults; and put in the hard work it takes to succeed.

And that’s what I want to focus on today: the responsibility each of you has for your own education. I want to start with the responsibility you have to yourself.

Every single one of you has something you’re good at. Every single one of you has something to offer. And you have a responsibility to yourself to discover what that is. That’s the opportunity an education can provide. Maybe you could be a good writer – maybe even good enough to write a book or articles in a newspaper – but you might not know it until you write a paper for your English class. Maybe you could be an innovator or an inventor – maybe even good enough to come up with the next iPhone or a new medicine or vaccine – but you might not know it until you do a project for your science class. Maybe you could be a mayor or a Senator or a Supreme Court Justice, but you might not know that until you join student government or the debate team.

And no matter what you want to do with your life – I guarantee that you’ll need an education to do it. You want to be a doctor, or a teacher, or a police officer? You want to be a nurse or an architect, a lawyer or a member of our military? You’re going to need a good education for every single one of those careers. You can’t drop out of school and just drop into a good job. You’ve got to work for it and train for it and learn for it.

And this isn’t just important for your own life and your own future. What you make of your education will decide nothing less than the future of this country. What you’re learning in school today will determine whether we as a nation can meet our greatest challenges in the future.

You’ll need the knowledge and problem-solving skills you learn in science and math to cure diseases like cancer and AIDS, and to develop new energy technologies and protect our environment. You’ll need the insights and critical thinking skills you gain in history and social studies to fight poverty and homelessness, crime and discrimination, and make our nation more fair and more free. You’ll need the creativity and ingenuity you develop in all your classes to build new companies that will create new jobs and boost our economy.

We need every single one of you to develop your talents, skills and intellect so you can help solve our most difficult problems. If you don’t do that – if you quit on school – you’re not just quitting on yourself, you’re quitting on your country.

Now I know it’s not always easy to do well in school. I know a lot of you have challenges in your lives right now that can make it hard to focus on your schoolwork.

But at the end of the day, the circumstances of your life – what you look like, where you come from, how much money you have, what you’ve got going on at home – that’s no excuse for neglecting your homework or having a bad attitude. That’s no excuse for talking back to your teacher, or cutting class, or dropping out of school. That’s no excuse for not trying.

Where you are right now doesn’t have to determine where you’ll end up. No one’s written your destiny for you... You make your own future.  
Young people like Sania Mirza, Dipa Karmikar – are all there at the Olympics today! They have all worked very hard to get where they are. And they have invested a lot of education in terms of sharpening their skills. They aren’t any different from any of you. They faced challenges in their lives just like you do. But they refused to give up. They chose to take responsibility for their education and set goals for themselves. And you should all do the same.

SET A GOAL. Your goal can be something as simple as doing all your homework, paying attention in class, or spending time each day reading a book. Maybe you’ll decide to get involved in an extracurricular activity, or volunteer in your community. Maybe you’ll decide to stand up for kids who are being teased or bullied because of who they are or how they look, because you believe, like I do, that all kids deserve a safe environment to study and learn. Maybe you’ll decide to take better care of yourself so you can be more ready to learn.

And along those lines, I hope you’ll all wash your hands a lot, and stay home from school when you don’t feel well, so we can keep other people from falling sick when we are ill.   
Whatever you resolve to do, I want you to commit to it. I want you to really work at it.  
I know that sometimes, you get the sense from TV that you can be rich and successful without any hard work - that your ticket to success is through rapping or basketball or being a reality TV star, when chances are, you’re not going to be any of those things.

But the truth is, being successful is hard. VERY HARD. You won’t love every subject you study. You won’t click with every teacher. Not every homework assignment will seem completely relevant to your life right this minute. And you won’t necessarily succeed at everything the first time you try.

That’s OK. Some of the most successful people in the world are the ones who’ve had the most failures. JK Rowling’s first Harry Potter book was rejected twelve times before it was finally published. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team, and he lost hundreds of games and missed thousands of shots during his career. But he once said, "I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

No one’s born being good at things, you become good at things through hard work. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Don’t be afraid to ask for help when you need it. I do that every day. As a Professor even today, I am far from feeling I know my subject very well. I still learn- From students, from books, from friends, from media … Asking for help isn’t a sign of weakness, it’s a sign of strength. It shows you have the courage to admit when you don’t know something, and to learn something new. And even when you’re struggling, even when you’re discouraged, and you feel like other people have given up on you – don’t ever give up on yourself. Because when you give up on yourself, you give up on your country. Students like you who sat where you sit 20 years ago who founded Google, Twitter and Facebook and changed the way we communicate with each other.

So today, I want to ask you, what’s your contribution going to be? WHAT IS THE GOAL THAT YOU WANT TO SET FOR YOURSELF ?What problems are you going to solve? What discoveries will you make? If our Prime Minister visits your school in in twenty or fifty or one hundred years ,what will he say about what all of you did for this country?

Your families, your teachers, and the school are doing everything they can to make sure you have the education that you need to answer these questions. But you’ve got to do your part too. Put your best effort into everything you do. So don’t let us down – don’t let your family or your country or yourself down. Make us all proud. I know you can do it.  
Thank you, Happy Independence Day and JAI HIND!.