

**Speech of  
The Honourable Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, GCSK,  
Vice-Prime Minister,  
Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and  
Technology**

**OPEN UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS  
CONVOCATION CEREMONY  
Thursday, 9 May 2024, at 14:00  
Mahatma Gandhi Institute Auditorium, MOKA**

- **Mrs Sandrine Valere, Ag. SCE of my Ministry;**
- **H.E. Mr. Vimarsh Aryan, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of India to Mauritius;**
- **Dr Oomandra Nath Varma, Chairperson, Open University of Mauritius;**
- **Dr K S Sukon, Director-General and staff of the Open University of Mauritius;**
- **Members of the Board of the Open University of Mauritius;**
- **Faculty Heads, Academies & Staff of the Open University;**
- **Proud Graduates of the Open University of Mauritius;**
- **Distinguished guests;**
- **Members of the Press;**
- **Ladies and gentlemen.**

***Good afternoon to all of you!***

It is a great honour to address you today at this pivotal moment of your education journey, namely, your graduation soon-to-be alumni of the Open University of Mauritius. Today is not merely a culmination of years of rigorous study; it is also the dawn of boundless opportunities and the time to embrace new challenges armed with your knowledge and skills acquired at OU.

I'll seize this opportunity to congratulate the Open University for its consistency and success in systematically attracting ever-increasing cohorts

of students. I am appreciative of the drive behind your success, and I look forward to an enhanced and rigorous quality assurance and an ever-improving educational level at the Open University for even greater student enrolment, both in-country and from overseas.

What I think speaks very highly in favour of the Open University is its readiness to ensure that its programmes, all of them, whether new or existing, are being accredited by the Higher Education Commission. This is a sure way of giving even more credibility to the institution.

**Dear Graduates,** I am sure that your education at the Open University of Mauritius has endowed you with resilience, ethical integrity, and a broad global perspective – indispensable traits in today's interconnected world. These are in fact part of the whole package of graduate attributes that Universities are expected to instill in their graduates. These attributes, in fact, reinforce the potential and capacity of Education to sustain itself as a powerful force for change, the ultimate equaliser that unlocks doors to innovation and solves pressing challenges.

Today's ceremony is, however, not just a celebration of your past achievements but also a rallying cry for the great things you are destined to accomplish.

To all graduates who have attained their PhDs, you join a select club at the pinnacle of academic achievement. As PhD graduates, I am sure you have tirelessly pushed further the boundaries of your respective fields, enriching the scholarly body of knowledge and developing solutions that address real-world challenges. Equipped with your new-found research skills and knowledge, I am confident you are poised to make significant contributions to society.

What is even more interesting is that some of you have in spite of your numerous professional and other responsibilities have persevered and responded to your thirst not only for knowledge but also for the creation of knowledge.

I look forward to hearing more about your work in the future.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** this ceremony will also recognise the hard work of graduates of the Master of Public Health program. You are stepping into a world where your expertise is needed more than ever. The recent upheaval in the health domain provides ample evidence of that. Inevitably, then, your dedication to improving healthcare, shaping policies, and preventing diseases will undoubtedly impact many lives and make significant contributions to society.

**Dear first degree holders,** you all carry the responsibility of fostering a sustainable economic future. The skills and insights you have gained at University are crucial for addressing the many challenges facing our society today.

Indeed, some of you will focus on your ability to analyse complex data and understand market dynamics. Some others will embrace a pivotal role in promoting community well-being and advocating for social justice. While some others will use their knowledge and passion for nurturing our youngest learners and shaping their young minds by igniting their interest for learning as well as sustaining their in-born curiosity.

I have absolutely no doubt that each one of you will contribute positively and constructively to our society.

A word in particular for those graduating from the e-VBAB program. You will know, Ladies and Gentlemen, that e-VBAB is yet another joint project where Mauritius benefits from the support and generosity of the Government of India. While it allows the training of our youth in a wide range of courses, it also underscores the benefits of sharing knowledge across borders.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** no man is an island. We cannot fully enjoy the celebrations associated with a graduation ceremony without also recognising those who behind the curtains supported our stars of the day while remaining anonymous today. Thus, I would like to invite you to join me in congratulating and recognising the parents, partners, children, faculty members, and non-faculty members who contributed to each graduate's success.

You all deserve a huge round of applause.

**Dear Graduates,** remember that education is a lifelong journey. I urge you to continue challenging the status quo, and driving change. Keep learning, exploring, and seizing opportunities to make a difference—not only in your professional lives but also in your communities.

But I would also like you, once the glitz of the occasion would have worn off, to sit back and do some reflection.

Let me share with you some words of deep wisdom which go thus:

*“What lies behind you and what lies in front of you pale in comparison to what lies inside of you.”*

It is important that you develop the capacity to do some deep-dive into your own self and realize the genuine potential that lies within.

You recall how the first two years of this decade caught us all on the wrong foot, temporarily throwing us off balance because of the unpredictability and unexpectedness occasioned by the pandemic. But, together, we did come out of it relatively unscathed.

There are lessons to be drawn here. Life Lessons.

Exceptional circumstances call for exceptional measures. One simply cannot sit back in one’s comfort zone and not venture out. Comfort zones are typically liable to burst. One needs to move out and face the odds, the challenges and the risks of life. Therein lies one’s growth.

I believe Einstein got it spot on when he said ‘*A ship is always safe at the shore but that is not what it is built for*’.

Show your mettle.

In one way or another, there is a goal that each one of you will have set for yourself. That goal may not necessarily be ground-shaking or earth-shattering but it is your goal and it behoves you to gear yourselves up and go for it.

Tell yourselves that you can shine: you can do that through your thoughts and actions, through your active participation in the domain of your predilection.

**Graduands**, take it from me: today, you do not just celebrate the completion of your studies.

Today, you celebrate the potential you hold within.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Graduands,**

You are now well equipped with knowledge and skills for you to think critically.

However, remember that the most important ingredient for a successful and gainful life is character. Ensure that your personality reflect intelligence, values and character.

On these words, once again, heartfelt congratulations to the Graduands.

***I thank you for your attention.***