

CONVOCATION – 2010

Address of Shri S Sridhar, Chairman & Managing Director, Central Bank of India and Chief Guest at the Convocation Ceremony of Mukesh Patel School of Technology Management & Engineering (MPSTME), Mumbai

At the onset, let me take this opportunity to thank Mr Amrish Patel, Chancellor, Dr Ranjan Saxena, Vice Chancellor and faculties and staff of Mukesh Patel School of Technology Management & Engineering (MPSTME) for giving me this opportunity to be present among the young, bright minds of India.

All of you graduating students must consider yourselves lucky to be able to receive your degree in person. It is a rare privilege. For instance, I have been singularly unlucky in that the three occasions I had, I could not attend the Convocation Ceremony.

Again, all of you must consider yourself lucky that you are entering the real world at a time when India is on the ascendant. It is a far cry, a different paradigm from the time when my generation joined the job market in the 70s. You are in an India, which is considered as the 2nd fastest growing country in the world, with an average GDP growth rate of 8.5% over the last 5 years. You are in an India, which is a Young India—by 2020 average age of Indians will be 29 years and universally acknowledged to reap the benefit of the demographic dividend compared with an already aged Japan, fast ageing Europe, a US which is losing the battle against ageing and even China, which will age faster than India. You are in an India, which is widely acknowledged for its intellect, its technical prowess. You are in an India which is home to emerging multinationals as our corporates, including medium size companies, are scouring the world for acquisitions in order to expand their market. Finally, you are in an India, which is increasingly accepted and admired for its democratic system that has yielded results encompassing bewildering plurality and yet exhibiting energy, dynamism and vitality.

So my dear young friends, you are fortunate that you have a platform that, for instance, your parents did not have. You have to make the most of it.

Many of you graduating today would start their careers right away and others would enroll for further education. For both the set of students, India offers immense opportunities to realise your dreams and perform to your full potential.

Yet we have some serious problems.

Social exclusion—A major challenge

- The absolute number of poor in India is estimated at 456 million, accounting for a third of the global poor and 41.6% of the Indian population. A separate study by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative shows that the number of poor living in 8 states of Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal is higher than the number of poor people in 26 poorest African nations.
- This is because of uneven distribution of income. As per one estimate, .00001% of India's population account for a full quarter of its GDP. At state level, per capital net state domestic product of state such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh does not even compare to the areas of Chandigarh, Pondicherry and Haryana.

- The growth of slums in a fast urbanising India is disturbing. So much so, the number of people living in slums in India has more than doubled in the past two decades and now exceeds the entire population of Britain. Mumbai, which is the financial capital is also the home to the largest number of slum dwellers in the country. As much as 60% of Mumbai's population i.e approximately 7 million people are slum dwellers.
- Instance of illiteracy is high in India. About 35% of the world's illiterate people live in India. Children do not get enrolled in primary schools and of those who do, 46% drop out before they get to middle school. Only 12.4% of school children enter into higher secondary education.

Financial inclusion

- About 40% i.e. 400 mln of the population in the country has bank accounts. 59% of the total adult population in India has bank accounts, but the ratio is very much skewed against rural population as only 39% of adult rural population has bank accounts. Only 5.2% of India's 6,50,000 villages have bank branches even though 39.7% of the overall branch network of Indian banks, or 31,727, are in rural India. 51.4% of farmer households are financially excluded from both formal/informal sources.
- Nearly 80% of the Indian population is without life, health and non-life insurance coverage. While life insurance penetration is 4%, non-life cover is even lower at 0.6%.
- 45 million Indians invest in mutual funds. This is about 4% of India's population. The comparable figure for the US is 31%.

Indian banks have been focusing a lot on enhancing financial inclusion in the country through various innovative measures and I am confident that in a few years, the face of Indian banks and India would change.

My dear young friends, this is also the India that you are entering—one of immense possibilities, vast opportunities yet of serious challenges to our system, grave social and economic inequalities, adequate growth prospects, relative deprivation, private affluence contrasted with public penury.

The stage is all set for you to go out and prove your mettle. I would like to share some conventional wisdom, which is traditional in a Convocation Address.

Do dream: You are at that stage of your life where you will lay the foundation stone of your careers. What you do in your day to day activities would be a part of your ultimate objective. So everyday, take some time out of your schedule to reflect and to dream—daydream. I believe dreams lead to vision and then to action.

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

Know yourself: The moment you entered the doors of this Institute, it was proved that you have something special in you. Having said that, it is also important to realise what is special. Often, there is a wide gap in what we are doing and what we like doing. Onus is on you to realise this and act on it. It is said that teachers open the doors; you have to enter by yourself.

Be genuine: Remember that one person you will never be able to fool is yourself and you cannot be true to anyone else until you are true to yourself. Self-respect comes from being true to who you really are and from acting in accordance with your fundamental nature. I urge you to be true to the very best that is in you and live your life consistent with your highest values and aspirations.

Have a clear long term vision in life: You must have heard this many a time in your journey till now, but this is a trait whose importance can never be overstated. Remember the words of Michaelangelo-

“The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.”

Keep in mind that in your way to achieve your vision, there will be many impediments by the name of failures. But fear of failure must never be a reason not to try something. It always is a learning experience and helps you to build your character.

Have a strong domain knowledge: All of you are graduating in different fields viz IT, Telecommunication, Computer, Electronics, Mechanical and Civil. Those who have done MBA would have had exposure to a few more areas like finance, marketing, operations among others. These specializations may or may not become your core functional work space. Whatever may be the discipline, it is absolutely necessary that you develop domain expertise. This is the platform on which the super structures of management, efficiency, public relations etc., are built.

Please remember **“In youth we learn, in age we understand”**

Conclusion

At the end, it is important to realize that whatever success you achieve at the end would be a function of your hard work and a silent contribution from the society at large. Thus, you would always be indebted to the society, and remember to pay back. You can contribute through money or sweat by working full time or part time in mind or person for the society. Always stand up for transparency and fairness, honesty and integrity.

Your alma mater’s vision statement ends with, **“.....to develop a cadre of socially responsive managers, technocrats, entrepreneurs and professionals, thereby fulfilling the contemporary needs of the industry, business, government, voluntary service organisations and the community at large both nationally and internationally”**.

I hope you all will perform up to the vision of your institute.

I wish you all the very best as you chart your own distinctive paths of glory.

Thank you. Jai HIND.