CONVOCATION ADDRESS

by

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on

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Hon'ble Mr. Justice R.C. Lahoti, Former Chief Justice of India
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It gives me immense pleasure to be in the portals of this great centre of learning, Chitkara Institute of Engineering and Technology, and delivering the first convocation address to brilliant young scientists – Engineers and Technocrats of tomorrow.

Preliminary

I feel greatly inspired by the objective of this institute, which is 'to excel' i.e. to achieve excellence. An urge for excellence, motivates a man into winning over his weaknesses and leads him to perfection. The theme address coming from Dr. Madhu Chitkara, Director of the Institute, as printed in its brochure provides a glimpse into the aims, means and material which this institute has and provides. It aims at the youth of today fast moving towards attaining leadership. The means for achieving such aim are the outstanding faculty and a rich learning environment. The material is enduring commitment of the Institute towards achieving its aims. The Institute has been established by Chitkara Educational Trust, under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Ashok Chitkara, with a missionary zeal in pursuit of excellence in all fields of education and to adhere to the highest standards of academic rigour in all its work. I am deeply impressed to learn that the Institute believes in selecting those young boys and girls as students who believe in winning and achieving excellence in every walk of life. The institute supports them by providing strength and direction through the tutors who are of the highest quality, motivated and full of inspiration. This Institute is a society or a hub with a network, which enables collaboration of education with business and governance.

CHITKARA

Motto of Chitkara Institutions whilst engaged in 'educating for brilliant futures' is – 'Explore Your Potential', your own potential, which lies within you, dormant and latent, as gifted by God. Realise it, explore it and exploit it. An urdu couplet puts it artistically:

दूसरों से मुलाकात बहुत आसान है साक्षी।
हस्ती से मुलाकात बड़ी मुश्किल है।
It is easy to learn from others; it is difficult to know thyself, to light the lamp from the spark within. All great world leaders who have reached heights have done so by exploring their own potential. Parting message of Lord Buddha to his disciples was – 'apppa deepo bhava'. Be your own light and lead the way.

There is much hidden potential in each one of us. Such potential blossoms when you activate yourself and bring out all the strengths and talents that God has given you, all that is inherent in you, that is natural in you, something genuine and original. Create your own identity. When you do this, other people gravitate towards you. Activation leads to gravitation. Then, you don't imitate others. Instead, others might want to be like you.¹

Albert Einstein discovered the law of relativity in a flash of intuitive insight; it was only years later that he was able to justify his discovery logically to other scientists. First comes intuition, which conceives them. Only then comes the painstaking process of reasoning it all out persuasively for others.² It is this magic of intuitive insight which the motto 'Explore Your Potential' seeks to make alive.

Have you ever thought what CHITKARA in the context of education means? I think it is not just a name but a symbol, a message. I would like to put it in this way. In Chitkara, "C" stands for 'character' (culture and creativity included). Gandhi, Arvind, Vivekanand and all other great leaders have told us that an educational institution which does not build up qualities of character in its students may be a center of literacy, but cannot be called a centre of learning. India needs leaders of souls rather than of bodies. Education must train the minds of men to be happiest in themselves and also make them most serviceable to others. "H" stands for 'honesty'. Honesty begets integrity. Integrity has fundamental relationship with effective and successful leadership. I am told that US President George Bush has insisted on his personal staff taking a course in ethical behaviour. This reaffirms the need for persons holding responsible positions to function with integrity. Chitkara education believes in training students to set down ethics benchmarks for oneself as student, as teacher, as manager, as leader and in any career ahead. "I" stands for 'industry' i.e. hard work, untiring effort. The qualities of character, honesty and hard work may not be of adequate utility and

¹ Nimishananda, Think Hard Before You Become A Copycat, Speaking Tree, TOI.
² Swami Kriyanand, Stilling the Waves with Intuition & Insight, Speaking Tree, TOI
bring results in practical life unless one has tact. "T" stands for 'tact'. It is the tact, which enables the theoretical learning being utilised to maximum advantage in practice. "K" stands for knowledge. Learn and be knowledgeable. Knowledge itself is power. The only good is knowledge; and the only evil ignorance, said Diogenes. Knowledge lets you know what you are and what you can be. Aim high. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the Learned President of India and a great visionary says - "always aim high; to aim low is a crime". "A" stands for 'aim', aim high. "R" signifies rededicate and reassure. It is difficult to tread the path without missing the direction and the balance. It is therefore necessary to remind oneself again and again of dedicating oneself to achieving the set goals and assuring oneself again and again that tireless striving enables achieving of the goal, though, it may take time. "A", the last letter of Chitkara, indicates 'act' so as to achieve. A is action.

CHITKARA is thus 'character', 'honesty', 'industry', 'tact', 'knowledge', 'aim', 'rededicate' and 'action'. CHITKARA, if you have rightly received the message which every letter of alphabet therein carries, would fire you into 'action' at the end. Remember what the great poet Longfellow said in Psalm of Life:

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Having learnt about the means, methods and motto of this institute, I am reminded of the results of a recently concluded study conducted by researchers at Vandervilt University. The question posed was: What are the innate talents of a child which go into making him the next Albert Einstein? What does it take to produce an absolute genius? The researchers for a period of 35 years tracked 5,000 mathematically gifted individuals throughout their lives beginning at the age of 12 yrs. They found that mathematical gifts and a variety of aptitudes have a significant impact, but that special educational opportunities and commitment can dramatically increase this impact. The intellectual gifts of the students are best fully realised when they have the full support and understanding of their teachers, their parents and their social network. It was also found that even amongst the cognitive elite, individual abilities vary. Though, the gifted individuals learn at rapid rates but they need their educational curriculum so structured as to match with their learning rates to avoid boredom and enhance
their maximum development. The echo and reflection of this very recent research is found in the objects, means and methodology of Chitkara Educational Trust founded in the year 1998 and the prospectus of this Institute established in 2002. The Trust and the Institute deserve to be complimented and applauded.

**Face the challenge; never quit**

Today is the day of those brilliant boys and girls who have come out with flying colours and are being conferred with degrees. Some of them have been decorated with honours such as medals in this glittering ceremony. A convocation literally means an assembly or coming together of the persons belonging to the same order. In the context of educational institutions, the meaning of convocation is best projected by Hindi expression *Deekshant Samaroh*. The word *Deeksha* connotes the learning imparted at the institution. *Deekshant* is suggestive of a day when a course of learning having been accomplished by the student, he is consecrated and initiated into practical world by the teacher whispering a *mantra* (incantation) into his ears, some secret or principle which would enable him becoming a person useful and instrumental to the welfare of the society, making use of his learning for the betterment and welfare of his fellow beings alongwith himself. I will be candid enough to confess that I do not have any secret mantra or formula or incantation to whisper into your ears. But I do have a few messages to be delivered and I take this opportunity for doing so.

Twenty-first century is full of challenges. The preceding century has made remarkable achievements in the field of engineering and technology. All these achievements could not have been made but for the learning accompanied by sincerity, devotion, hard work and united effort of those who believe in survival of humanity and excellence in life. You must have indomitable courage and indefatigable determination for achieving what you aim in life. You must have a vision. According to Mr. Shiv Khera, the Educationist and Motivator of international repute, "today's problems are the results of yesterday's short sighted solutions". Only those achieve success who exploit their imagination to think ahead of times and create a mental picture of their aim to be filled in by their courage, determination and dedication. Never underestimate yourself. Realise your potentials and put them to maximum use. God

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cannot be unkind to his children. Have firm faith that you are a child of the God and like a parent he is bound to fulfil your all reasonable desires and to give you what you want.

Let me share with you a few inspiring real life anecdotes which will help building a confidence in you that you can be what you want to be.

MF Husain, the great artist, winner of a Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival and awardee of the Padma Vibhushan for his outstanding contribution to Indian art, started his life as a wall painter in 1937. This life of struggle did not stop him from winning an award of the Bombay Art Society in the year 1947. Within 10 years, his paintings moved from street walls to art galleries. Today he is India's most celebrated painter. Surdas and Tulsidas did not hold any doctorate degrees, but their lectures are topics of research for Ph D students. Saint Kabir was an uneducated person but his simple and easy couplets in Hindi have caused great social and religious reforms. Lord Alva Edison did not pass out even the fourth standard but he was the one who discovered wireless. Newton did not qualify his masters or doctorate in physics but was a great scientist who has come to be known as Father of Science. Einstein was refused admission in many schools but was able to discover the principle of relativity which proved to be helpful for inventing atomic energy. Srinivasa Ramanujam could not pass out intermediate but Cambridge University made him the Fellow of Royle Society because of his strong mathematics.

It is not just the degrees but the knowledge, thinking, hard work and blessings of divine power which enable a man to achieve what he wishes to do. I am confident that the students of this institute have all these attributes.

During his early career in schools, Sir Walter Scott was considered as a very dull boy. He was not good in studies. In the classroom he was given a corner and a back seat. He was also forced to put on a high pointed paper cap of shame on his head.

Once when he was about 12 years old, he happened to be in a house where the famous literary guests of his time were being entertained. At that time, the great Scottish poet, Robert Burns was standing admiring a picture under which was written one stanza of a celebrated poem. He inquired about the author of the poem from the persons standing near him. However, none seemed to know the answer. Then a boy timidly crept up to his side, named
the author and quoted the rest of the poem. Robert Burns was pleasantly surprised and delighted.

Then, he lay his hand on the head of the boy and exclaimed, "Ah, I am very happy to get the answer from you. I can predict that you will be a great man in Scotland some day". These words of encouragement changed the boy and from that day set the young Walter Scott on the road to greatness and he became Sir Walter Scott.

This anecdote has a few significant messages. Never hesitate. Never be overawed. Never feel small. Wait for the opportunity and grasp it when it comes. And in turn, always encourage those who look up at you. Discover the spark which is always within you and let it kindle into light. Thomas Jefferson beautifully said it – "I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it".

**Science and Spirituality**

Engineering and technology, the two subjects which are taught in this institute, are both branches of science. In that sense you have been students of science. I appeal to you as upcoming leaders of the society to imbibe spirituality into science. There is reason for what I say.

Engineering and technology have contributed in improving the quality of life by providing more and more comforts and means of convenience. But science cannot provide humanity with eternal bliss and joy which religion can. Science without spirituality may prove to be tyranny while religion without science is prone to lead to superstition. Science and religion both aim at and are engaged in search for truth, the ultimate knowledge. Yet, it cannot be denied that science provides comfort to body while religion and spirituality provide solace to soul. The two must come together to cater to the needs of body and soul both. A human being is body, mind and soul taken together. It is the mind where the body and the soul meet, and interact. It is the mind where the science and religion both emerge, dwell and rise. Some of the greatest scientists Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein were great believers. Science is not an anathema to belief in God.

There is an interesting anecdote from the life of Newton.
Isaac Newton had invited a scientist-friend of his, a man who professed atheism, to dine with him. Seeking to corner his friend with his own arguments, Newton placed a model of the solar system on his table and invited his friend to view it. Upon examining it, Newton's friend exclaimed, "What marvellous craftsmanship! Who fashioned this exquisite model?" Newton replied casually, "This model has no maker; it materialized from nothing". Disbelief writ large on his face, the friend asked, "What do you mean?" To this Newton smilingly replied, "How can you, my friend, insist that this model has to have a maker, while vehemently denying the existence of a divine Creator?"  

An elderly person was telling his grandchild about life. "A terrible fight is going on inside me.....between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, greed, lies, ego. The other stands for peace, love, hope, sharing, kindness, and friendship. They are inside every one of us". The child asked: "Which wolf will win?" The elder replied: "The one you feed". Science discovers and invents but cannot control which way its discoveries and inventions will be made use of. It is spiritualism which discriminates between human values and vices and can canalize the use of scientific gains towards feeding the virtues and values.

Science, in spite of all its advancements, research and inventions in the field of engineering and technology fails in providing answers to a few questions which spirituality can. Science provides comforts and yet leaves the man troubled, restless and fearful for uncertainties of future. It is the spirituality which provides even the poorest and resource less with peace of mind, faith and hope. One caters to the need of the body; other caters to the need of soul. If the human mind can inspire the approach of science with the outlook of religion, the humanity would achieve boundless heights. There will be peace in the world and order in the society. This day I call upon you, the young students of Chitkara Institute, to take upon your shoulders this responsibility because I feel that your minds in this Institute are so trained that you are most eminently suited to set an example which others can follow.

**Fight Against corruption**

My dear young friends, I am much inclined to invite your attention towards a great malaise which is eating into the roots of the society and posing a great threat to the progress and

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4 *The Best of Speaking Tree*, Vol. 2, pp 83-84
prosperity of our nation and its independence. Without mincing words, let me tell you that I am referring to corruption which is spreading its tentacles like cancer and gripping the people of India. I have seen the country from the highest judicial seat and I feel gravely concerned about what I have perceived. It is said that India used to be a golden bird. I believe it is still so. Meritorious educational institutions like this Institute and men of science, engineering and technology are doing their best to advance the nation and make it a world leader. We have progressed. We have earned prosperity. But alas! the fruits of progress and prosperity are not shared by all. The deprived are being denied of what they deserve. This is because of corruption. Corruption weakens good governance and deprives the distribution of equality. Materialistic attitude shorn of spiritualism, in life, commercialism and consumerism have added fuel to the fire of corruption. We forget the message of Bible – "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?" (Mark 8: 36). Scientists and technocrats are least prone to corruption; they are the persons who are best suited to fight against corruption by setting examples and devising such systems assisted by engineering and technology that would eliminate that part of human discretion wherein the corruption thrives. You must, armed with knowledge and strength of character, fight against corruption and eradicate it. The least you can do is to take a vow that when you take up any career for earning your livelihood, you will not indulge in corruption. Neither shall you take bribe nor give any. Be it politics, bureaucracy or any other system of governance, it is a sad story that corruption is rampant. The present seems to be incurable as the people of this country have started accepting graft as a part of ordinary dealings. Our hopes are riveted on those who are our future i.e. young persons like you.

Epilogue

Friends! I am thankful to you for listening to me with patience. I end with a parting anecdote.  

Every one wants to be a winner. Every one wants to succeed. But few know the secret which is so simple.

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The motivation to succeed comes from the burning desire to achieve a purpose! This eternal truth propounded in these golden words of Napoleon Hill, needs to be etched in our minds and hearts, "Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve!"

A young man asked Socrates the secret of success. Socrates told the young man to meet him near the river the next morning. They met. Socrates asked the young man to walk with him into the river. When the water got up their neck, Socrates took the young man by surprise and dunked him into the water.

The boy struggled to get out, but Socrates was strong and kept him there until the boy started turning blue. Socrates pulled his head out of the water and the first thing the young man did was to gasp and take a deep breath of air.

Socrates asked him, "What did you want the most when you were there?"

The boy replied, "Air."

Socrates said, "That is the Secret of Success. When you want success as badly as you wanted air when your head was under water, then you will get it!

There is no failure, except no longer trying. There is no defeat except from within. There are no insurmountable barriers. All that is needed is an urge, a strong urge and complete surrender to materialize your urge. Success will be yours.

I wish you all good luck, prosperity and success in your life, Happy Christmas and a Very Happy New Year – 2007.