

Challenges before Education and Students as Future Leaders¹

I am thrilled to be here on the occasion of 50th Annual Convocation of DAV College, Amritsar, which I have been communicated to be a leading portal of learning with over 5000 students getting education in different faculties and programmes. This educational shrine has traversed fifty years of its inception with a glorious record of notable achievements in every field. This college which owes its origin to great legal luminary Justice Mehar Chand Mahajan, who was an illustrious son of India, a great philanthropist, an eminent administrator, renowned educationist and an ardent champion of national unity. I bow my head in reverence to this distinguished jurist for his vision and contribution in spreading education.

I consider it a matter of privilege and honour to have been invited to deliver the Convocation Address today in this distinguished Institution situated in the city of Amritsar which is no ordinary city. It is the city of “Amrit” - spiritual nectar. Amritsar has been a seat of learning with the Golden Temple at the centrifuge of attraction and reverence. It has been like an all-loving and protecting mother, showering blessings and providing protection and guidance, to one and all.

Convocation in an educational institution is a momentous occasion when it is useful to recall and remind ourselves-what is education, what is its purpose and what is the role of teachers and taught in any ideal educational institution. It is the years spent in academic shelters and the support provided by the educational institution where a man spends his formative years which go a long way in imbibing in him the skills, values and basic strength that enable him in measuring upto the challenges of life and shaping the destiny

¹ Convocation Address delivered by Hon’ble Mr. Justice R.C. Lahoti Former Chief Justice of India on the occasion of 50th annual convocation function of DAV College Amritsar on March 15, 2008.

Concept of education:

Education is not the volume of information that is stuffed into brain and runs riot there, undigested throughout the life. The prime object of education is formation of character and then overall development of physical and intellectual personality. Education survives when what has been learnt has also been forgotten. Plato put it at its best when he said – “The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life”. That education is ideal which enables the taught in equipping him best for the struggle of life, developing the strength of character along with spirit of philanthropy and courage of a lion to meet the challenges which the life is bound to throw. In a noble, well-equipped, modern educational institution the personality of a youth finds its identity. It is a place for acquiring knowledge, skills, competence and above-all the wisdom and vision. The extension in tradition is that all the reputed educational institutions are now enabling placement of their students in National and Multi-national inlets offering a wide range of career opportunities.

I am happy to note that this Institution has carved out a permanent place on the placement map of India wherefrom 78 computer suave cybrants were placed in Infosys, 119 in IBM, around 200 in WIPRO and 78 in Bank of America. I am told that this college has been placed as the nodal center of a reputed company like Infosys with Campus Ambassador selected and appointed by the Company every year. It is also heartening to note that this Institution is providing a platform to the students for getting placed in big companies with suitable packages ranging from 1.5 Lacs to 2.8 Lacs.

New Challenges before Higher Education

Dear Students! Challenges before Higher Education are becoming real with the faster growth of knowledge, information technology and internationalization of the higher education. These developments have also thrown several challenges for the college management. Though the impact of these challenges for individual institution and the country's over-all experience with regard of these developments may vary, yet there is a

common threat of compelling changes in structure and process of Higher Education.

Information Technology in Higher Education has made inflow of knowledge cutting across all the physical borders of the nations and states. International trade in education services has created a possibility of internationalization of Higher Education. Likewise the information technology, globalization, resource position and expectations of students have thrown several challenges to conventional systems of college management. A President/Principal of a college besides being a good academician is expected to deal with newer situations by updating himself with global advancements in the field of knowledge, technology and management.

It is heartening to note that the state of Punjab is progressing from an agrarian to an IT Economy and a knowledge based society. The education in the present times is taking a virtual flight and is set to go stellar and while at it, virtual. It is commendable that the nation is launching a new satellite christened Edusat solely for the purpose of schooling and higher education. Early nineties have witnessed breaking of several barriers. Satellites have facilitated easy international communication. Opening of economy and liberalization have facilitated exchange of goods/services among the countries all over the world. In the areas of higher education, many countries have entered into trans-national education by setting up centers, mostly in campuses for marketing the seats abroad.

A significant recent happening in the educational firmament has evoked huge response from the Indian students. The way foreign universities are marketing their higher education in India through information centres and by tying up with private organizations to maintain their commercial presence, they have generated a demand for themselves in India in the field of Higher Education. Limited number of seats in colleges and universities in professional as well as non-professional courses in India and increasing willingness of parents to send their children abroad for higher studies, irrespective of the heavy costs, have further increased the demand for foreign universities in India. A number of new, innovative and exciting

trends in Higher Education in view of widespread growth of knowledge, information technology and its internationalization are perceptible. They continue to contribute significantly to the refinement of perceptions and cultivation of scientific temper. Accordingly there is need for a change in the structure and process of higher education within India.

Gandhiji was not in favour of students going abroad for learning as, in his experience, on return the students find themselves to be square pegs in round holes. He had written in Harijan (8-9, 1946)² 'that experience is the richest and contributes most to growth which springs from the soil'. I strongly feel that our education entrepreneurs and administrators should so design their institutions, the environment therein and the courses and curriculum as will be an ideal mix with Indian culture, values and scientific pride at the base and the best of western knowledge, scientific and IT advancements as flavour. The emerging era cannot afford to ignore the technological tool in the application to Higher Education. IT based education concerning all the subjects is the need of the hour.

But there is need to preserve our own traditions and cultural values. Scientific and technological advancements, unprecedented and coming with super speed (as they are), have opened unlimited vistas for living with comfort and enjoying materialistic pleasures of life. A blind pursuit of these will be destructive of our cultural values and characteristic qualities.

The advent of industrial economy has brought about a complete transformation of the social systems all over the world. Economic prosperity has become the main focus for growth and development. This, in turn, has affected the life style and social beliefs of the people. Values and concerns that man had cherished for generations are beginning to lose some of their relevance, meaning and acceptance. The attitudes and behaviour patterns of the young people have begun to be influenced more by the external society than by family ties. The increasing urbanization and the emergence of the working parents are depriving the children of the opportunity to grow up in

² M.K. Gandhi, *Towards New Education* (p. 96), Navjeevan Publishing House, Ahmedabad

the traditional mould of Indian ethos. I am happy to note that this Institution has not lost its roots in our culture and tradition but pursuing the same in the present scenario ideally mixing the tradition with modernity.

A Word to Teachers

The relationship between the students and teachers is in reality more intimate and exclusive than what it is theoretically thought of. The personality of a teacher creates more impact on his pupils than the parents. The teacher is, therefore, morally responsible for the character formation, personality development and over-all shaping of the students especially when they are in an impressionable age. The qualities of a good teacher are³:

- (i) He works on young minds, imbues them with principles, inculcates in them faith in God and love for all living creatures;
- (ii) He is a friend. He communicates. He teaches and also listens to his students. He teaches the principles by setting example. He stands out for qualities such as punctuality, accountability, civility, simplicity and humility.
- (iii) He understands value of time and does his duty with a missionary zeal. He prepares his lessons thoroughly and treats his all students with parental love and affection. He is just and impartial to all.
- (iv) A good teacher motivates the students who are weak. He believes that intellectual potential of every student is equal and if a student is dull or lagging behind then there must be a reason for it.
- (v) A noble Indian teacher is one who understands national and social issues and struggles for so shaping the personality of his student as would enable him to work for national integration and prosperity, develop cultural values, and respect and loyalty to the society, elders and the nation.

³ Source: An article '*Put Precept into Practice- Prerequisites of a Good Teacher*' by S.C. Anand, published in Times of India

If a teacher has done his duty well, his student will remember and fondly acknowledge throughout his life that his physical, social, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual development he owes to his teacher.

You are destined to be leaders

My dear young friends! India as a nation, rather the whole world, is looking at you - you the youth - as leaders of tomorrow. You are destined to hold the reins of all human activities and to lead and guide the world of tomorrow. How do you become the leaders? Have a few tips⁴:

- (i) Leaders do not count time; in fact, they make time count. They are not created by history, they create history.
- (ii) Leadership is not a 9-5 affair. It is 24x7 work for all the 365 days in a year. Why is that so? Leadership is an evolving process that embraces the whole of life. A leader cannot claim to be an Alexander at work and a chimpanzee at home! He has to be consistent in his personal evolution, whether at home or at work.
- (iii) Leadership is a disposition – a way of living in the world.
- (iv) One of the unfailing traits of great leadership is humility. Humility is the ability to be in learning mode all the time - 24 hours a day, 7 days in a week and 365 days in a year. A leader is one who constantly learns from others.

If you want to be a leader, the one who is not mediocre but heads and shoulders above the rest, make a beginning today. Remember what Shiv Khera, the most popular educator and motivator of these times says – “Winners do not do different things, they do the things differently.”

⁴ Source: Dr. Debashish Chatterjee, Professor at IIM, Lucknow, *24-Hour Leadership* (as published in Times of India).

My Message to you

You must have an aim and a vision in life. Have a purpose in life. Set out goals and targets and then dedicate yourself to achieve the same. 'First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to' - said Epictetus. Never be bogged down by trifles. Aim high. Remember – 'the ripest peach is highest on the tree'. Be strong, internally and externally. The responsibility of building a developed India by 2020 and a corruption free India at the earliest lies on your shoulders. Are you prepared to take oath:-

- (i) that you shall strive for excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so as to see a developed India-2020;
- (ii) that with your developed scientific temper, humanism and the sprit of inquiry and reform see a corruption free India at the earliest;
- (iii) that you shall not indulge in corruption, nor permit corruption; that you shall not tolerate corruption anywhere in any form.

My heartiest congratulations and good wishes to those of you who have obtained your degrees and distinctions today. As you leave the portals of this institution and enter the larger and the vast arena of life, I am sure that the education and training that you have received in this great institution will give you the strength and the courage to face the rough and tough that the life is. The life is full of challenges but it also offers you endless opportunities. In that great adventure of life in which thought and action play the crucial role, I am sure it will be your endeavour to stand up and be counted. In that endeavour I wish you all the success.

I express my deep sense of appreciation to the Management, the Principal and Staff of the College for according me a warm welcome and organizing this solemn function flawlessly. I wish greater success for the college in times to come. At the end of my address, let me remind you that we and our

nation have problems and challenges before us. I have faith in you. You are my hope. You are the hope of your parents and of the nation. You are the solution. You are the saviour. If you have confidence in yourself, the battle is almost won. Let me share a real life anecdote⁵ with you.

In Italy, once upon a time there lived a great Artist whose name was Domenichino (1581-1641). He used to work too long on his paintings. Once his friend tried to persuade him not to work that hard on his paintings. He wanted to know from him the reason for working that hard. Domenichino said, "My dear friend, you don't know that I have a master who is most difficult to please. Hence, I have to constantly work to please my master." The friend asked, "And who is he?" The reply of Domenichino was "Myself".

It is this self-confidence and sense of accountability to your own conscience which will give you core competence to achieve true success and greatness. I close by wishing you all the best.

May the Sun shine always for you;
Let the sky above be always blue;
May your dreams be all fulfilled
My good wishes shall always be with you.

⁵ Excellent Living, November 2006, edited by R N Lakhotia