

Emerging India: Opportunities and Challenges for Young Talents

B N Kalyani

It is a pleasure to be here this morning to deliver this Convocation Address. I would like to thank the Chairman, Board Members and Director of NIBM for having invited me here on this occasion.

It is an even greater honour to be speaking at a function over which a person of such rare eminence and distinction as Dr Y V Reddy, Honourable Governor of the Reserve Bank of India is presiding. Sir, thank you for this honour. My association with NIBM is relatively recent but I do look forward to learning more about the functioning of what is certainly a center of educational excellence for the country's banking industry.

We are living at a time when the Golden Age of growth has dawned for India. It is a time when we are winning our second freedom struggle – the struggle for economic independence. This is an era that is full of opportunities and challenges. We have the opportunity to transform our country into an economic powerhouse and achieve our Vision to become a fully developed country by 2020.

In the past year, India's engagement with the global economy has significantly increased. The several important agreements that we have recently signed with the US, Russia, France and Australia are clear indications of India's emergence as a major economic and geopolitical power of the 21st Century. We have come a long way in the past six decades since independence. Our economy is growing at over 8 per cent per annum, which makes us one of the fastest growing economies in the world. There is an overwhelming sense of confidence that is brimming in the country. For the first time Indians are daring to dream big and are also passionately chasing their dreams. There are a growing number of Indian success stories in every sphere – academic, science and technology, business and industry, sport – you name it and we have begun to dominate on the world stage. With this euphoria of success, it was perhaps the perfect setting for the Prime Minister to raise the bar and set a challenging economic target. I believe that the target of 10 per cent GDP growth is achievable and within reach. Double-digit growth will

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have another significant impact – it will help us to eliminate the scourge of unemployment within the next 5-6 years.

Students passing out of our "temples of learning" like NIBM have a crucial role to play in our country's unfolding growth story. I believe that a critical factor for success in the emerging global economic environment will be your ability to effect a radical change in traditional mind-sets. Each of you needs to ask yourself a question. "In what way can I contribute to the nation and bring about transformation?" The onus is on qualified people like you to assume the role of catalysts or agents of change and impress on others the need to think differently or as our Prime Minister puts it, we must learn to "think out of the box". As individuals we must begin to stop expecting others, including the Government, to change first. We must instead make ourselves the pivots of change. If we look around us there are so many areas where things need to be set right – availability of clean drinking water, air and river pollution, civic sense and discipline, the educational system, governance – there are so many areas in which your contributions can make a huge difference. At the same time we cannot wait for optimum conditions to begin our work. We have to act immediately, which means that we must begin with a dirty slate and not get intimidated by the enormity of the task. You must dare to be a drop in the ocean and thus contribute in building a new India.

Those of you who are passing out from this hallowed Institute today have been fortunate to receive a fine education. You have also enjoyed the luxury of having lived on this beautiful campus. I am sure that you recognize that this casts certain obligations and responsibilities on you, which you will need to fulfill.

There are certain factors that differentiate you from past generations and, therefore, place you in a vantage position. Permit me to highlight some of these factors. Yours is perhaps the first generation of Indians who will be treated with respect on the world stage and the first generation to enjoy the benefits of economic power that our country is fast acquiring. Yours is the first generation whose lives are being defined by technology. Thomas Friedman in his book, *The World is Flat* has said that technology and communications are the differentiators that are giving countries like India a once-in-a-generation opportunity to compete with the rest of the world on equal terms. Technology is helping to create a worldwide educational and knowledge network. Today, it is possible for you to sit in Pune and play a game of chess with someone in Pittsburgh. That is the power of technology and your challenge is to leverage it to your advantage.

Yours is the first generation of Indians that is free to fly but you also carry the responsibility of making India fly with you. You have a responsibility to work for and with people who may not be as fortunate as you are. If you have to be rich

and successful, you must also learn to do good for others. Your challenge is to converge wealth with welfare for which you have the opportunity to innovate from the bottom of the pyramid and leverage technology for profit and to improve the quality of life for all Indians. The benefits of growth must accrue to all sections of society. Our aim should be to see that the rising tide of growth lifts all boats and not just some. Rural and agricultural India must be brought into the mainstream and be made an integral part of the development process. We are a young country with half our population under the age of 35. About 60 crore Indians were born after 1980 and they are the ones who will shape the future of this great country. It is the emerging young population of India that must have access to education and opportunities not only for jobs and self-employment but also for professional and intellectual development.

The mobile phone revolution is a live example of how technology is transforming the lives of ordinary Indians. Today, it has become possible for small entrepreneurs to access new customers and markets and make their businesses more profitable. Farmers and fishermen can use the Internet to get better prices for their products. Information Technology is contributing to the spread of education to the extent that it is now possible for an illiterate woman in a remote part of the country to become literate in 8-10 weeks. Access to new forms of energy has the potential to free village children from the chore of collecting wood and water and makes it possible for them to go to school.

While on the one hand, technology can create opportunities, on the other it can also generate challenges. Perhaps the biggest challenge of "The Flat Earth" phenomenon is that of competition. Let me put this in perspective. Ten years ago, your competitors would have been your classmates or students from similar educational institutions in India. Today things are quite different. Your competitors are equally talented young people in Beijing, Boston or Birmingham. Therefore, on the one hand if the world is your oyster, it is also your source of competition.

Those of us in business have recognized the strength of the phenomenon, which is commonly referred to as "globalization". Globalization is impacting countries in various forms all over the world. India is no exception. In 1991 we consciously decided to follow the path of globalization and since then our engagement with the global economy has gradually strengthened. Production of goods and services in India has since increasingly acquired a global dimension. For most Indian companies, their market is no longer in their own neighbourhood or country but the whole world has become their market and competition could come from anywhere in the world. Today, it is a matter of great pride that several Indian companies led by visionary managers and driven by a passion to be truly world class have emerged as globally significant players in their respective fields. Infosys, Wipro and TCS rank along side global giants in terms of software capability and

technological sophistication. Reliance ranks among the top ten global producers for most of its major products, and is widely regarded as among the most competitive and profitable petrochemical companies globally. A number of Silicon Valley ventures led by Indians are competing with and winning against leading multinationals. As a result, the traditional stereotype of Indian companies as "unreliable" and "poor quality" is giving way to recognition of their global vision, quality and ability. And India as a nation can no longer be casually brushed aside but has become a potential leader in the global information technology revolution, a key player in the new knowledge age and an emerging power in manufacturing industry.

Importantly for the young generation of Indians, the knowledge age emphasizes the resources and skill sets that India is uniquely positioned to leverage. We have the world's largest pool of trained professionals – 5.5 million in number and comparable to the best globally. Over 200 million young people will join the Indian workforce over the next 20 years. India has a large intelligent and English speaking population, strong educational orientation, a demonstrated ability to create best-in-league educational institutions and a tradition of producing world class leaders in business, finance, management, science and technology. Add to this the strong entrepreneurial spirit of the Indian people and it becomes apparent that India has what it takes to achieve global leadership in the next 1-2 decades. The Vision of India as a global leader can be transformed into reality and it is the responsibility of people like you to contribute in realizing this national Vision.

I would like to recount a real life incident that happened in a company that Bharat Forge took over in Germany last year. This is a facility that is located in a small town called Daun near the Austrian border. After we took over the company, we hoisted the Indian flag at the factory gate. This is a normal practice at all our overseas facilities. An Indian gentleman who has been living in Daun for the past 23 years was so overwhelmed on seeing the Indian tri-colour that he stopped his car, got out and saluted the flag. Later he told us that in his entire stay of 23 years in Germany this was the first time that he had seen the Indian flag flying in that foreign land. For him and for all of us it will always be a matter of great pride and satisfaction to see India attaining a place in the global sun. It is young people like you who are our future torch bearers and who will make the Indian flag fly high in many more global capitals and in doing so, make yourselves and the country proud.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing five specific points for your consideration.

- (a) Take pride in your work and do things with a sense of nationalism.
- (b) Even the best of ideas and plans have little value unless implemented effectively and on time. Therefore, work hard and work to a plan.

- (c) Never forget the value of time – there is a strong economic dimension to it.
- (d) Integrity including intellectual honesty is the key to reach the top in whatever you do. Do not be lured by short-term gains.
- (e) While adopting new ideas and ways of life, which are a must, give a lot of value to our traditional values and culture. Never forget your moorings – they are your strongest foundation for success.

I would like to again congratulate all students who have passed out of NIBM today and wish them a bright and successful future and a great professional career.

I would like to once again thank the Chairman, NIBM and the Governing Board for this opportunity to participate in this convocation ceremony. I wish the Institute continued success in creating high quality professional managers who are the future of our great country.

Thank You!