

**92nd Convocation Address of the
Banaras Hindu University**

By

**Shri. Kapil Sibal
Hon'ble Minister of
Human Resource Development**

On
7th March, 2010

Respected Dr Karan Singhji, Prof D P Singh, Prof. B.D. Singh, Dr K P Upadhyay, Faculty, students and distinguished guests,

1. I am truly privileged to be with you on this very joyous and solemn occasion. It is indeed a memorable day for those of you who have come to receive your degrees. This marks a major milestone in your careers and my wholehearted congratulations to you all for your signal achievements. I know only too well the time, effort and dedication that are required to obtain such a qualification from this prestigious and pioneering university of India. Being here reminds me of my days at Harvard. Dr Charles Eliot, the eminent educator, was often asked, "How had Harvard gained its reputation as the greatest store house of knowledge?" His sly reply used to be "it is because the freshmen bring in so much of it and that the seniors take away so little of it." Jokes apart, you all have toiled hard for this degree.

2. I am sure you will also agree with me when I say that there is yet another group in the audience who needs to be congratulated today, that is, all your family members who have sacrificed for your success in your academic ambitions. Your achievement today is the result of years of patience, support and love of your parents and family members and the dedication and commitment of your faculty, who too deserve to share in your success and glory. You must thank them too. But there is someone else too whom you must thank that is you founder, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. He had the foresight, vision and courage to initiate the setting up of this great institution at

a time when India was under the colonial yoke. It was a trying time then. Despite very difficult times he believed, in the power of the self. He believed that a person has many talents... many gifts that he can use not only to build a career... a family, a life but more importantly mould society and the world around him. He did just that and today you are the beneficiaries of that belief and conviction.

3. I am sure you will agree with me when I say that we are living in an era of unprecedented change: full of risks and yet replete with huge opportunities. We now live in a world characterized by what the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has termed '*emerging systemic risks*' that arise through interactions between complex social, technological, environmental and economic systems. This as most of you know is the result of the world economy undergoing a process of profound restructuring in recent times.

4. To my view, four basic developments have set the stage for the process. The first is a technological revolution, centering on IT, telecommunications and computing, resulting in the mushrooming of new industries and services, changing the methods that many an established business hitherto employed for production and distribution and delivering value to customers. The second has been a managerial revolution, initially associated with the diffusion of Japanese techniques for quality control and team production, later enlarged to embrace supplier and customer relations, but now extending to many innovative forms of production, delivery and services employed around the world including increasing customisation and diversification of working relationships. The third

development is the considerable and unhindered movement of capital flows across national boundaries accompanied by a decline in the influence of labour, in the normal context, as a factor of production. The fourth is the formation of the WTO and other international bodies leading to harmonization of all forms of trade and other policies across nations.

5. The conditions created by these developments have increasingly put nation-states under pressure to sustain competitiveness and thus uplift the economic welfare of their people. For a country of the size of India, with its religions and ethnic diversities, the key policy challenge has been to boost productivity and growth through increased knowledge-intensive economic activities while maintaining our social structure and cohesion. The unfolding scenario thus calls for instruments and policies that are responsive to the new global environment but are rooted in our rich local ethos.

6. As you all know we have rapidly leap frogged from an agrarian economy to a service economy. In the emerging global knowledge economy education has become a great leveler amongst individuals and nations. Accordingly we have no option but to shift from the earlier paradigm of education system that was linear, passive, hierarchical, non-participatory, to a system that is:

- i. dynamic, vigorous and bold,
- ii. inclusive and integrated,
- iii. focused on cultivating creativity and intellectual skills,
- iv. aligned to the needs of the sub-system of Indian society,
- v. geared to provide vocational or technical or professional education required in the global workplace.

Recognizing these challenges we are doing a revamp of the entire education system on a holistic and systematic basis. The Government is appreciative of these efforts and has accordingly committed to investing more, much more on education than ever before. The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007 – 12) is virtually a National Education Plan. The Plan allocation for education has been stepped up from around 7.7% of government budgetary support in the 10th Plan, to over 19% in the 11th Plan. In nominal terms there is going to be more than five-fold increase in spending on education.

7. This unprecedented investment in education is to ensure that we can avail of a critical mass of educated human resource to provide us with the necessary advantage. Education is now considered to be a national priority. Until recently, out of every one hundred children who passed high school, only twelve became graduates. Such a high rate of attrition is not conducive for generating a critical mass of qualified people necessary for the nation to flourish. Our numbers must swell to at least 30 graduates out of 100 high school passouts. Our quality must also improve. Easy and increased access to all must be provided coupled with improved educational standards. High quality education arises from two main factors – firstly the quality of the infrastructure, which is greatly dependent on investments and to which the government is committed and secondly and more importantly, the quality of the faculty and teachers. We have taken steps on all these fronts.

8. You are fortunate to be in a Central university, for in several private sector institutions there has been litigation involving students, management of the institutes and in a few cases even teachers. We are proposing to establish educational tribunals to adjudicate on such

disputes. Also several professional institutions have been resorting to unfair practices by charging capitation fees and donations – we are seeking to curb these practices by an appropriate enactment to prohibit such practices. We have also envisaged the setting up of an overarching body for overseeing Higher Education, which while preparing and implementing norms for setting up institutions in this sector will monitor quality as well. We are also proposing to bring in legislation to regulate foreign education providers in the country, so that students are not duped by fly by night operators, and established universities keen to set up units in India get a legitimate platform to do so.

9. A process of academic reforms has also been initiated in higher education which includes the introduction of the semester system, regular up gradation and updating of syllabi, introduction of a choice-based credit system, which allows students to pick and choose courses to earn credit, mandatory assessment and accreditation, etc. My vision is that India should become a knowledge power in the coming decade.

10. I am told that in a convocation address, I am supposed to give you some advice. But I am a blunt person not given to sermonizing. The only thing that I can say to you is that the future is not fixed, it is fluid. You can build your own building or penthouse or apartment or even a hut, whatever. But my simple point is that the world is more malleable than you think and it is waiting for you to hammer it into shape. That is what this degree of yours is, an effective instrument to shape the world. So go forth and build something with it. It is a great time to be in India and to be of your generation.

11. Today, the country needs young people like you who are willing to take on the responsibility of hard work to make India a still better place for all of us. For, it is in times like these... when there is turmoil in many parts of the country... when there is tremendous inequity among our people... when the challenges seem truly insurmountable... it's tempting to plead helplessness and ask oneself, what can one person possibly do? My belief... and this is borne out of personal experience... is that you can do a lot. Today, I want to encourage you also to believe, as I do, in the power of the self. You are one person but you have many talents... many gifts that you can use to build a career... a family, a life and more importantly mould our society and the world around you.

12. My own belief is that each of us must take responsibility for the management, governance, and improvement of our society. If we leave this mission only to elected politicians like me, they may lead you in directions that compromise your cherished principles. In other words, what's the use of a dream, if it must depend for its realization on elected representatives? Have a worthy dream and translate it to reality by your own actions.

13. I also sincerely believe that an intelligent person can do just about anything. Yes, there are only some activities, at which any one of us can excel. But I assure you that there are hundreds of others at which each one of us can be very, very good. And there are only very few activities at which our results will be poor, as long as we make a genuine effort. So, don't wait for that perfect job to come your way.

14. Young minds like you, who are graduating today, have a great responsibility on their shoulders. I would like all of you to see yourself as agents of change for a New India. The goal of knowledge leadership for India in an era of creativity is realizable in your lifetime. You are graduating at the most appropriate time for shaping such a knowledge-driven India. You can make this dream a reality. You can be leaders in a knowledge-driven new India. To achieve this, you have to follow a few simple, but profound principles. That is, never compromise on excellence. Never give up. And convert every adversity into opportunity.

15. My friends let me assure you that it is a great time to be an Indian. Even more, it is a great time to be in India. Enjoy being part of the action in a country with a proud past and destined for a great future. So good luck in shaping the world and your life, tomorrow is a new day... and a new life awaits you beyond the classrooms of this wonderful institution.
