

3rd Convocation
6th January, 2007

Address of the Chief Guest

Realizing your Personal Potential

Mr. President, Members of the Board, Prof. Sahasrabudhe, distinguished guests, faculty and students of Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and Communication, thank you for inviting me to the Graduation of Class of January 2007.

Let me now turn to the students of the graduating class. It is a pleasure for me to be with you today: to share in your joy, your pride and your excitement as you embark on a new stage in the journey of your lives. I hope that when you look back, many years later, you will find that the words I say today have made a difference and have prepared you for your years of further education as well as for your careers ahead.

The one single message I wish to convey to you is that your most important task in life is to fulfill your own potential. You probably expect that I am going to talk to you about achieving success in your careers. Yes, indeed I will. But, I want you to remember that fulfilling your potential is much more than that. It includes your potential to meet challenges, but equally includes your potential for caring, your potential for learning, your potential for sharing and your potential for helping others.

Let me first start with achievement of success. My experience is that high achievement individuals have high aspirations, are accountable and action-oriented. High aspirations do not mean setting grandiose goals, but setting stretch targets and continuously raising the bar, Accountability means to hold yourself responsible with no excuses for meeting your commitments and being result-oriented. Action orientation requires being quick, decisive and proactive in anticipating problems.

I have used the word "stretch" in context of achievement. I see this as important and key in all you do. Recently, I came across the following from Sri. Sri Ravishankar:

"Stretching sound is music; stretching movement is dance; stretching smile is laughter; stretching mind is meditation; stretching life is celebration; stretching devotee is God; stretching feeling is ecstasy."

To which I may add, in a more mundane and down to earth plane, that "stretching goals is success". You must have Dreams. You may even build castles in the air. But give your dreams a foundation by using your dreams to define your goals.

At this stage, let me be somewhat negative and talk about failure. I give below 5 major reasons why managers fail.

The first, inevitably, pertains to "stretch". Paradoxically, there are quite as many failures due to overstretching as there are to under stretching. Remember, that life

is not just a marathon and neither is it a sprint race. It is a series of marathons interspersed with multiple sprint races. Prepare yourself for the same, one step at a time. Don't burn the candle at both ends and burn yourself out.

The second is fear of failure and, therefore, an inability to take appropriate risks. Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So sail away from the safe harbour. Explore. Discover, Mark Twain

The third, is the opposite: complacency due to early success and letting success go to one's head.

The fourth is putting "Self" before the team and the organization. Remember that it is not necessary for anyone to lose, for you to win and it is possible to be very nice and very successful. It is not necessary to claw your way to the top, but rather be like the cream which floats to the top.

The fourth reason for failure is that persons tend to be either good managers or good leaders, whereas you need to be both. Too many management gurus have knocked "management" to espouse the leadership cause. Leadership is about vision, motivation, empowerment and mentoring. Management is about planning, measuring, deciding and executing. They are not mutually exclusive and a pre-requisite for success is to be a good manager and a good leader.

Finally, the fifth and most important of reasons for failure is a mismatch between a person's skills and strengths and the requirements of the job. Too many personal decisions are made on the basis of where remuneration will be higher, the perquisites better. The right question to ask yourself is what will I enjoy more, where will I contribute more? I ask you to be true to yourself and you will succeed. When you make your personal decisions in life, do them with your head, your heart and your gut. The head will give you the pros and cons, the financial spreadsheets; the heart will answer where you will be happy and the gut will provide judgment and intuition.

I had mentioned in the beginning that fulfilling your potential is not just about financial success, but also about caring, learning, sharing and for helping others. Let me now address these aspects of fulfilling your potential.

Caring is about respect, about empathy, listening to the other side. Caring is about creating win- wins with people who impact our lives and our business as the foundation for sustaining, caring relationships.

Caring, in a business context, must include all the stakeholders: customers, the team, financial stakeholders and, indeed, the organization. Caring is not about being soft, but about fairness. More importantly, caring is about bringing joy into your life and those around you.

Let me now devote some time to the importance of Learning, particularly in this Knowledge era. Also, I would like to dwell on Learning because, I believe, that we are on the verge of a revolution which can effectively change management education. Continuous learning is now going to be a pre-requisite to prevent rapid obsolescence. And, with the vast amount of information, readily accessible through the Internet and other means, the onus for self-development and learning is going to shift to the individual. In MindTree, we provided last year 55,000 hours of formal, structured learning which was rated very highly. And yet, a recent MindPoll revealed that people were learning significantly more through self-study and being

part of knowledge communities. Other sources of learning included peers and mentors.

The message is clear: individuals have to take the responsibility for their ongoing continuous learning, including learning from unusual sources.

I mentioned in the beginning about achieving your potential for sharing. Remember that sharing enhances, rather than diminishes, your interests. It is not a parting with what you possess, not about dividing the pie, but increasing the size of the pie. This applies equally to sharing of knowledge, wealth, rewards and credit for success.

The fifth and last aspect of fulfilling your potential applies to helping others. This can be achieved through structured social responsibility programmes or even just by understanding the other person's needs and supporting that need. When you help others, you maximize your own potential while enabling others to realize theirs. You leave the world a better place than you found it.

I must share with you at this stage that, a Large part of what I have said to you is based on the Value System of MindTree for which we have an acronym called "CLASS". The letters stand for Caring, Learning, Achieving, Sharing and Social Responsibility. Ask yourself what are your values, assess whether you live by them and be passionate about them.

As you step out into the world, do so with self-confidence, do so with a belief that you can make a difference. In the words of one of my favorite authors, Anthony de Mello, a Jesuit priest, say to yourself:

"I am a treasure Someday, Somewhere, Someone, Discovered me "

....and discover yourself.

Finally, inspite of your best plans and your articulated goals, your future will be determined by circumstances and by forces outside your control. But, more than anything else, your future will be moulded by what you decide you want to be and your will to make it happen. So, let me conclude with another quotation, this time from the Upanishads:

"You are what your deep driving desire is

As is your desire, so is your will

As is your will, so is your act As is your act

As is your act, so is your Destiny"

I wish you success, happiness and wish that each one of you will fulfill your own potential.

Shri Ashok Soota
Chairman and Managing Director,
MindTree Consulting