

**38th Convocation Address of  
H.E. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the President of India  
at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad  
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**When can I sing the song of India?**

I am indeed delighted to participate in the thirty eighth Convocation of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad which is one of the foremost management institutions of our country. What I can say at this great institution which has generated many managers, leaders and academic researchers in different fields. When I see the young graduates here with all hopes and dreams in their eyes, can I share my experience of working with my Guru, Prof. Vikram Sarabhai, a great visionary of our time; or can I discuss with you the valuable lesson I learnt from Prof. Satish Dhawan on how to handle failures in a project and transform them into success; or Can I narrate the experience of building institutions by Dr. Homi Bhabha, making the country advanced in nuclear energy; or Can I share my experiences in building strategic missiles and building critical technologies inspite of technology denial regimes; or can I talk to you the story of how the ship to mouth food situation got transformed to self sufficiency in food; or can I discuss the success story of Dr. V.Kurien who led India to become number one in milk production; or can I talk about the success story of our young entrepreneurs, who placed India in the IT world map through their innovations in the software technology; or can I talk to you how our life expectancy in this country has increased to 60 plus; above all can I talk to you how our freedom movement fuelled the creation of the best of leaders? NO! I am not going to talk about any of them since you may have heard about these from many speakers including me. They are also available in my website.

The graduates of this convocation have got a unique responsibility, towards yourself, towards your family and our Nation. What is that unique responsibility? I would like to share with you about those thoughts. It happened in Ahmedabad seven years ago. There was a gathering of about 10000 students, which I addressed. After my address on our civilisational heritage, freedom movement and current progress, as usual there was an interactive session. A barrage of questions came from those eager and enthusiastic students. One girl asked me, "Mr. Kalam, I heard you. I have a problem in my mind and I want to share with you. My brother, studying in America comes regularly to India during his vacation. Every time he comes here he proudly and loudly sings the song of America". I asked her, " Young lady, can you tell me what is that song?" She said, "He sings a song that kindles the national pride and its power makes one proud of the nation's achievement and to be an American". Then the tough question came from that girl. **"Sir, When can I sing the song of India?"** My friends, I have chosen that young girl's thought provoking question as the title of this address.

Did you listen to the national anthem in the beginning of this program? What did you observe? The best artistes of our nation were giving their best symbiotically converging with each other. I was moved; we were moved and the whole nation moved. Can we give the best in our field, like them? If we, the billion people, give our best in each one's task, no one on this planet can stop India from achieving its developed nation status - with economic prosperity, peace and happiness - a state that will make every Indian sing the song of India.

Friends, I would like to share my thoughts with you on the following.

1. Our Civilisational Heritage and Dynamics of warfare,
2. Evolution of different societies and economic development.
3. Roadmap to make India a prosperous, peaceful and safe Nation.

### **Dynamics of Warfare**

For a decade I was studying the dynamics of warfare on the planet earth. It is evident that man lives on wars. We distinctly see that warfare has three parts : upto 1920, 1920-1990, after 1990. The first part was human warfare period. Motivation for human warfare was either territorial greediness or wealth ambitions or religious domination which in combination later led to the First World War. The second period- 1920-1990 - was a mechanical warfare period. During this period the world graduated to use of new mechanized weapons and platforms - battle tanks, fighter aircrafts and submarines. The motivation was ideological conflicts between two societies. Second World War also witnessed the disaster by the deployment of nuclear bombs on two cities of Japan. During the third period from 1990 we see market warfare and globalisation. The tool used is the supremacy of the technology which led to technology denials and control regimes separating the nations as "Developed", "Developing" and " Under Developed". In 2003, the world is facing a new kind of warfare, due to integrated situation of religious conflicts, ideological differences and market warfare. We have witnessed always that war adds to wars, of course there will be a time gap. We are witnessing today an unilateral war waged against Iraq. This situation has weakened the world body United Nations. This situation need to be properly analysed for remedial action. How do we combat these complex integrated phenomena of conventional warfare threat, cross border terrorism, insurgency and threat of nuclear attacks? In the next few minutes I would like to discuss some possible solutions.

### **Our Civilisational Heritage**

I have also looked at the thought process in our country. Sometimes I feel, we as a nation of billion people thinking like nation of million people. Why is it so? Whereas Indians are natural born leaders in critical situations and challenging environments for the reason they live in a society of multi religious and multi ethnical groups. I consider no other nation like India, has got the civilisational heritage to live near peaceful life. Indian minds were capable of absorbing the best of cultures from the successive invasions. We have also evolved the great qualities of leadership to manage the nation of billion people with various dimensions in every aspect of life. Now we should not allow any religion or any individual fanaticism to endanger our nation. Because, nation is very important compared to any individual or party or religion.

### **India through Ages**

India had its glory during early civilization and agricultural age. Successive invasions and foreign rules and rise in population brought down India's prosperity to a lower level. India also could not participate in the Industrial revolution which led the western countries to take a lead, increasing the gap between the west and India. India went through famine, starvation in many parts and national calamities and looked for ships to come to our ports with wheat from western countries. After Independence, India looked forward in

development through Five Year Plans. The green revolution and the technology growth enabled India to prosper with self sufficiency in food and achievement in many technological frontiers particularly during the last two decades. A major transformation came during the information age where India established its position with its strong core competence in Information Technology. Today India is in the knowledge age which will provides an opportunity to become a developed nation with strong economy.

### **Economic Growth in different societies**

During the last century, the world has undergone a change from agriculture society, where manual labour was the critical factor, to industrial society where the management of technology, capital and labour provided the competitive advantage. Then the information era was born in the last decade, where connectivity and software products are driving the economy of a few nations. In the 21st century, a new society is emerging where knowledge is the primary production resource instead of capital and labour. Efficient utilisation of this existing knowledge can create comprehensive wealth of the nation and also improve the quality of life - in the form of better health, education, infrastructure and other social indicators. Ability to create and maintain the knowledge infrastructure, develop knowledge workers and enhance their productivity through creation, growth and exploitation of new knowledge will be the key factors in deciding the prosperity of this Knowledge Society. Whether a nation has arrived at a stage of knowledge society is judged by the way the country effectively deals with knowledge creation and knowledge deployment in all sectors like IT, Industries, Agriculture, Health Care etc.,

### **Changes in employment, agriculture, Industry and Service - Knowledge Industries**

In 1980, agriculture areas employed in parts or in full 76% of people of the country and it reduced to 65% in 1994 and expected to further fall to 60% of people in agriculture by 2012. Whereas, the demand of agricultural products will double in quantity, productivity using technology and post harvest management will have to compensate the manpower reduction in farming and agricultural products sector. In the case of industry, in 1980, 13% of the population was employed in small scale and large scale industries. The trend continued during 1994. However, it has to increase in 2010, as the GDP growth with high technology in the situation of opening up of the economy under WTO regime. The pattern of employment will take a new shape. Service with knowledge industry component from 11% employability in 1980 has increased to 20% in 1994. And further it will increase to 54% in 2012 in view of infrastructure, maintenance areas, financial sector, IT sector and entertainment demands. This big change will demand in all areas more trained skilled human power and technology personnel. Our industrialists, commercial chiefs and technologists may have to get ready for such transformation in agriculture, industries and service - knowledge industries for which human manpower with knowledge and skills has to be evolved in a mission mode. And also evolution of knowledge management has been presented linking vision for the nation.

### **Knowledge powered PURA (Providing Urban amenities in Rural Areas)**

Providing Urban amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) is another example for creating rural wealth and prosperity. The model envisages a habitat designed to improve the quality of life in rural places and makes special suggestions to remove urban congestion also. Naturally our most demanding urban problem is that of congestion removal and efficient supply of water and effective waste disposal in every locality are the paramount civic

needs. There is a minimum size below which a habitat is not viable and not competitive with the existing congested city. At the same time, the existing congested city is not economical compared to a new town once a minimum size of expansion is crossed. As against a conventional city say, rectangular in shape

and measuring approximately 10 km by 6 km, the model considers an annular ring-shaped town integrating minimum 8 to 10 villages of the same 60 km<sup>2</sup> area. This model provides easy access to villages, saves transportation time and cuts costs substantially and is more convenient for general public. Knowledge powered rural development is an essential need for transforming India into a knowledge power and high bandwidth rural connectivity is the minimum requirement to take education, health care and economic activities to the rural areas. Knowledge society leading to knowledge super power can prosper and survive only in the environment of economic security and internal security. Physical connectivity by providing roads, electronic connectivity by providing reliable communication network and knowledge connectivity by establishing professional institutions and vocational training centers will have to be done in an integrated way so that economic connectivity will emanate. Such Model of establishing a circular connectivity among the rural village complexes will accelerate rural development process by empowerment.

### **Prosperous, happy and peaceful India**

The nation's strengths predominantly reside in its natural and human resources. In natural resources, India is endowed with a vast coast-line with marine resources and also oil wealth. In minerals, apart from conventional material resources, it is well-known that India has the largest deposits of titanium, beryllium and tungsten. India ranks among the top few nations having a rich bio-diversity. Knowledge-based value addition for these natural resources would mean exporting value-added products rather than merely the raw materials. Use of IT for commercialisation and marketing can increase our outreach and speed enormously. Ancient knowledge is a unique resource of India for it has the treasure of a minimum of 5000 years of civilisation. It is essential to leverage this wealth for national well being as well as to seek global presence for the nation. Civilisation that does not have the knowledge of technology or the technological nations without experience of civilization, cannot innovate newer economy. Human resources, particularly with large young population, are unique core strength of the nation. This resource can be transformed through various educational and training programmes. Skilled, unskilled and creative manpower can be transformed into wealth generators particularly in the service sectors, agro industries etc. Knowledge-intensive industries can be generated out of our existing industries by injecting demand for high-level software/hardware, which would bring tremendous value addition. It is said, "the precious asset for a company or a country is the skill, ingenuity and imagination of its people. With globalisation, this will become more important because everybody will have access to world class technology and the key distinguishing feature will be the ability of people in different countries to use their imagination to make the best use of the technology". Indeed development and innovative use of multiple technologies with mission projects and transparent management structure will catapult India into a 'developed nation'.

### **Creative Leadership**

For building the developed India, what are needed? We have natural resources and we have human power. There are 700 million people below 35 years in the population of a billion people. The nation needs young leaders who can command the change for transformation of India into a developed nation embedded with knowledge society from now to twenty years. The leaders are the creators of new organizations of excellence.

Quality leaders are like magnets that will attract the best of persons to build the team for the organization and give inspiring leadership even during failures of missions as they are not afraid of risks. I have seen and worked with creators of vision and missions. The vision ignites particularly the young mind.

One of the very important ingredients for success of the vision of transforming India into a developed nation by 2020 is the evolution of creative leaders. I am giving a connectivity between developed India, economic prosperity, technology, production, productivity, employee role and management quality, all of which linked to the creative leader. Who is that creative leader? What are the qualities of a creative leader? The creative leadership is exercising the task to change the traditional role from commander to coach, manager to mentor, from director to delegator and from one who demands respect to one who facilitate self respect. The higher the proportion of creative leaders in a nation, the higher the potential of success of visions like "developed India."

### **Conclusion**

India has demonstrated its immense capabilities and core-competence to the world with large talented manpower. It is a nuclear weapon state, self sufficient in space efforts and defense research, could able to combat technology denial regimes, largest producer of milk, self sufficient in food, leading in pharmaceuticals, competent in Information technology and has large natural resources. What else we need?

When we have such capabilities and strengths in individual domains, when one looks at India's per capita income we stand in the 105th place in the world. Why? what is pulling us down? This is because we lack great leaders and managers. Will you fill up the vacuum in India and make India collectively and selectively reach the best place?

What can be the purpose of management education? I think, management education should transform a person to a leader. Who is a leader? A leader is one who thinks what he can give to others instead of asking what others can do for him.

The second most important thing is that the management education need to give the ability to manage and lead the change. What type of change we mean here? Indian entrepreneurs should not be just an home grown industrialist but they should also become leading MNCs.

May I ask you my friends have you acquired these leadership qualities? Can you go and lead the change? Leadership with nobility and change management are the two important elements needed from you to the nation..

Let us join together in building India as a developed Nation and get the rightful place for India in this planet.

We will then sing the song of India.

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