



# **CONVOCATION ADDRESS**

**BY**

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**AT**

**THE 6th CONVOCATION OF  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI  
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# **Address of Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat at the Sixth Convocation of Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati on 29 May 2004**

*Namaskar, Good Morning*

I am happy to be amidst you this morning. Situated in a location of astounding beauty, surrounded by the beautiful Blue Hills on one side and the mighty Brahmaputra river on the other and blessed by the divine Kamakhya Devi Shrine, IIT is the symbol of aspirations of the people of the North East region, producing scientists and technologists contributing to the growth of the region and to the might of the nation. This region enjoys a pride of place with its rich and unique cultural heritage and as India's gateway to the South-East Asia.

2. I feel honoured to address the Sixth Convocation of this premier Institute. It is a day of pride for the graduating students, their parents and the faculty members who helped in their goal to success. I offer my felicitations to all of you on your wonderful achievement. I greet the Members of the Board of Governors, the Director, the Members of the Faculty and staff for their valuable contribution to the distinctions and achievements of the Institute.

3. Convocation is an important milestone in the educational journey of the student. It is an occasion when new batch of qualified professionals is placed in the hands of the society for its development, enrichment and well being. It is a matter of pride that in our country every year we add 3 lakhs professionals, 4 lakhs post-graduates and 11000 doctorate-degree-holders to our rich reservoir of qualified human resource. Indeed, India's biggest strength is its young group of qualified professionals who make India proud with the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest reservoir of qualified and professional human resource in the world. The credit for this distinction goes to our universities and educational institutions.

4. The hallmark of academic excellence is the high standard of teaching, an environment conducive to learning and a culture of single-minded pursuit of knowledge and passion for achievement of excellence. These attributes can be imbibed only through dedication, discipline and determination that the students, teachers and the administration, all together bring to bear on their output. Here in this IIT, I see these attributes significantly visible. My compliments to all of you on this distinction.



5. The brand name '**IIT (B. Tech)**' is the finest brand name that India has produced. This brand name is recognised all over the professional world for quality and excellence. It is no wonder that a graduate of IIT is recognised today throughout the world as International Indian Talent. We should strive hard to ensure that distinctive features of the IIT system, that have enabled it to be a jewel in Indian crown, are safely protected.

6. Once addressing the students, Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, had said, I quote: **"You are the hope of the future. You will be called upon, when you are discharged from your colleges, to enter upon public life to lead the poor people of this country. I would, therefore, like you students to have a sense of your responsibility and show it in a much tangible manner"**. Today, there are clear signals of an upsurge in the youth power. Looking at you I am refilled with a new hope and reassured about India's bright future. We have vast human resource, more than 500 million strong, below the age of 25, the largest in the world. The achievements of the Indian youth have given India a pride of place in the scientific and technological world. It is on this unique strength that we are today on the IT super highway. It is on the solid strength of you, my young friends, that India will progress on the fast track and be a fully prosperous, developed, united and strong nation by the year 2020. I am reminded of the clarion call by the famous Assamese poet, Binandachandra Barua who in his powerful patriotic verse, wrote:

**"You youths of my country,  
Awake from your sleep.  
Let hot blood race through your veins,  
Let you dazzle the whole world."**

7. Today, we have the satisfaction that a solid foundation of democracy and development has already been laid in our country. Thanks to our agriculture scientists, technologists and our farmers we have not only achieved self-sufficiency in food, but we are also now exporter of foodgrains. Our achievements in industry, defence, space and atomic energy have been spectacular. Our economy is stable and resilient; GDP growth is now more than 8 per cent. We have foreign exchange reserves of more than 118 billion US dollars. On this strength, India is now ready for take off and be on high growth trajectory.

8. Dear graduating students, in building a new India of tomorrow, you are going to be a major player as also a big stakeholder. The task ahead is going to be full of challenges. It would require improving public governance and providing healthy environment conducive to development and growth. We need hassle-

free and corruption-free governance for the common man. We need rid-dance from poverty and unemployment. We need to address, with a sense of urgency, key issues such as population stabilisation, reforms in adminis-tration, judiciary and electoral system and also meet various concerns relat-ing to growth and development of the country.

9. Degrading environment is a matter of serious concern. Indian ethos has always been looking at the entire cosmos as one family. Nature for us is something to be worshipped and not indiscriminately exploited. Unfortunately, we have indulged in indiscriminate exploitation of nature beyond the sustain-able limit, polluting our rivers and degrading our forest wealth. We ought to correct our developmental strategy and planning process. It is important that we build and nurture sustainable communities in which needs and aspira-tions of the present generation are satisfied without diminishing the resources for the future generation. We need to watch not only our consumption but also the saving for the future. This requires adherence to values of care and concern for others and not just being concerned with our self-interest – a value system which Fritjof Capra, in his book titled '**The Web of Life**', de-scribes as learning the basic principles of ecology.

10. I am also concerned about the digital divide in our country. Yes, we are doing extremely well in information technology, as our proficiency in En-glish is our added advantage. However, for achieving full potential of our vast human resource, it is necessary to promote use of computers through the medium of Indian languages. For making the use of computer mass-based, we need computers that can interact with users in their mother tongue. Our IITs should endeavour to develop technologies that can display, translate and understand all Indian languages.



11. Friends, I am greatly concerned about the twin issues of poverty alleviation and fast track development that I believe are of critical importance. In my long public life of over 50 years I have seen from hand shaking distance, the acute misery and severe pain caused by the curse of poverty and under-development. I have, therefore, been a strong votary of the **Antyodaya** concept, that means having one's focus on the poorest amongst the poor for priority in any programme of poverty alleviation. It was with this conviction that I had launched the **Antyodaya** scheme for upliftment of the poor in the year 1977 when I became the Chief Minister of Rajasthan for the first time. We still have 26 crores people living below the poverty line with hardly any access to literacy, education and healthcare.

12. Dear students, I, therefore, believe that a scientific or technological innovation has relevance and value to our people if it provides effective, affordable and sustainable solutions to the problems of under-development, drought, drinking water, poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy. We need appropriate technologies to address these real problems of the common man. I can assure you, nothing will be more satisfying than finding solutions to the basic problems of the common man. Let this noble thought be always your motivation, inspiration and a guiding force in your life ahead.

13. Young technologists, I believe development and application of technology should be guided by ethical and moral approaches. Science and technology should grow and contribute to a creative and convivial social order in combination with wisdom of our rich reservoirs of ancient spiritual knowledge and insights. Through synthesis, we should endeavour to create a new scientific world-view, or a new 'common sense' as described by the great scientist, Werner Heisenberg, who said, **"In the West, we have built a large beautiful ship. It has all the comforts in it, but one thing is missing: it has no compass and does not know where to go. Men like Tagore and Gandhi and their spiritual forebears found the compass. Why can this compass not be put in the ship, so that both can realise their purpose"?**

14. Indeed, India can provide a new holistic paradigm of Indian philosophy and ethos that can assist the world in establishing a balance between the power of science and technology on the one hand, and humane values on the other hand; an integration of modern thinking with spiritualism which is guided by *Dharma*, with every individual pursuing the path of duty.

With this integrated and balanced ethos, let us make India a confluence of modern nation and ancient culture; an India of scientific mind with the spiritual heart, and soul of our rich culture and heritage.

15. My young friends, ours is a land of diversities; the rich diversities providing unique ecological stability, all co-existing in harmony and lending strength and cohesion to one another. Also, the diverse social groups co-exist in harmony, always guided by most secular ethos embodied in our ancient axiom of **Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam**, which means the whole humanity is one single family. It is the contemporary relevance of this noble ethos, which goes far beyond the narrow considerations of caste, colour, creed, community or religion, it is this nationalist outlook that we need to promote in all our educational institutions. It is this message of universal peace and harmony that we need to actively promote and weave into our social fabric. Let everyone share this thought and say:

**There is only one caste, the caste of humanity;**

**There is only one religion, religion of love;**

**There is only one language, the language of the heart;**

**There is only one God; He is omnipresent.**

16. Dear graduating students, I once again congratulate you and wish you a bright and rewarding future in whatever career you choose. You are bound to succeed, flourish and prosper; for you are among the brightest and the best of our land. Leadership will, therefore, come naturally to you. Let everyone of you lead our great country on to the path of glory, occupying the rightful place in the comity of nations. Wherever you are, always follow the path of righteousness, piety, honesty and commitment in pursuit of excellence. And above all, be a good human being, doing your best to establish humane values comprising attributes of care, compassion and fellow feeling, and weaving a web of life full of happiness, peace and prosperity, with everyone contributing to maximise our gross national happiness.

17. May the Almighty always bless with success your noble aspirations and fond ambitions. Success and achievement of every one of you will be the matter of pride to your alma mater and ultimately be the success of India. I wish you Godspeed.

Thank you, **Jai Hind**