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Professor Dr. M. M. Salunkhe, Vice Chancellor, Shivaji University, Excellencies and honoured guests, Faculty and staff of Shivaji University, Dear graduands, and family members. Namaskar !!

I would like to first of all express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Vice Chancellor Professor Salunkhe and members of the Shivaji University community for inviting me to deliver today's convocation address in this historic city of Kolhapur. This is indeed a great honour and privilege. It also serves as testimony to the close and burgeoning relationship between our two institutions.

Today's graduation ceremony marks a significant milestone in the lives of the members of the graduating class, and hence I encourage you, the graduands, to savour and treasure this momentous event. It is a celebration of your accomplishment during your student years.

**Reflections on the Charge to the Graduates**

The theme of my thoughts for the graduands this evening is centred on the promise your education has afforded you. I will share some reflections on the changing role of universities in the context of the knowledge society,

- sustainable development from the education perspective,
- the importance of managing diversity and change,
- and a profile of graduates.

I will also briefly touch upon AIT and our collaboration with Shivaji University.

As graduands, you have been prepared for a purpose to fulfil for yourself and for the society. You finally made it; you have successfully completed your studies at Shivaji University. You have accomplished a feat that not many have had the opportunity of mastering, overcoming obstacles that you yourselves may have not imagined when you first came to Shivaji University,

This celebration of achievement is rightly to be shared with your families and friends, whose loving support and encouragement have carried you through the fulfilment of your goals as a student. The degree you receive not only signifies the knowledge, skills and competencies you possess but also the unique experience you have gained, elements that will serve you well, as you take on with confidence the challenges of the real world.

I believe your time here at Shivaji University has deepened and broadened your understanding of yourself and others. You have been prepared for what lies

ahead. As you leave Shivaji University, value the people and relationships you have developed, for such will endure, while possessions and activities will be easily forgotten.

The earning environment at Shivaji University has prepared you to cooperate productively with others, for one who relates to himself and to others is a useful and fruitful addition to society. As you set to pursue your professional careers, pursue them with passion, purpose and responsibility. However, you will soon realize that there is still so much to learn, relearn or even unlearn it is therefore wise to remain open-minded and continue to learn beyond the knowledge you have gained so far.

Now, please let me share some thoughts on some of the other points which I have highlighted earlier.

**Role of Universities, New Knowledge Creation, Entrepreneurship and Leadership**

India has a long history of organized education and one of the oldest education systems, 'Gurukul' existed in India thousands of years ago. The first millennium and the few centuries preceding it saw the flourishing of higher education at Nalanda and other universities. Nalanda being the biggest centre, handled all branches of knowledge, and housed up to 10,000 students at its peak. India has been a major seat of learning for centuries, if not millennia. The literacy level in India is one the highest in the world. In keeping with its billion-plus population and in particular the high proportion of the young generation, India has established a large number of formal education systems. Its target group which comprised of children and young adults in the 6-24 years age group numbered around 411 million in 2003, or about 40% of the country's population. As of March 2005, there were 342 universities including 18 central universities, 211 state universities, 95 deemed universities and 5 institutions established under state legislation and 13 institutes of national importance. There are 17,625 colleges of which 5,386 are recognised by the University Grants Commission. I am glad to know that Shivaji University is among the most recognized state universities in the country. Nothing on Earth is static - particularly not thoughts and knowledge. Globalization and technological advancements have made the pace of change in terms of knowledge, process and product exponentially faster. This has been experienced especially by developing economies in the last 15 years.

A nation's economic survival and competitive power are now determined by its knowledge content, for which life-long learning is essential. Demands by society and industry on knowledge and competence change in pace with the transformations that occur outside our walls, and monitoring and analysis of the surroundings become ever more important.

Cultures, habits and socio-economic systems have undergone a sort of reevolution, putting tremendous pressure on organizations like ours as well as business and government enterprises. Today, the brand image is based on innovations in offering new and better services and products to ever-aspiring populations, at an affordable price. Renewing oneself is the need of the hour in a knowledge economy, where one must know how to produce what is best for well-informed users.

Successfully competing in the global economy requires the ability to innovate and to take calculated risks. To sustain economic development and provide sufficient quality jobs for the next generation, Asian economies must provide better conditions for new technology business creation. In this regard, universities must motivate and support new entrepreneurs and leaders who can capitalize on the opportunities of new technologies and who can reinvent the way Asian firms develop new products and services, go to market, connect with customers and collaborate with their suppliers and share knowledge.

Moreover, bright young engineers and scientists from countries in the region that do not have the financial infrastructure to reward profitable business innovation have started up their companies abroad - often in the West. There, they find business incubators and venture capital firms that offer them a complete package of management skills and networking capabilities in addition to start-up capital.

Universities are key players in the generation of entrepreneurs who form start-ups and expanded businesses, thus creating new jobs and new income streams that catalyze further investment in the economy. That in turn generates still more jobs, personal income and capital investment. In order to better address the needs of the private and public sector and students alike, a new orientation directed toward” professions will encourage practical knowledge, experience, fieldwork, internships and a focus on entrepreneurship, leadership and employability.

Entrepreneurial and leadership education is the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and the insight, self-esteem, knowledge and the skills to act on them. It includes instruction in opportunity recognition, commercializing a concept, marshalling resources in the face of risk and initiating a business venture. Although it also includes instruction in traditional business disciplines such as management, marketing, information systems and finance, entrepreneurship and leadership are sets of skills and attitudes that cut across disciplines and as such should be integrated into all programs.

Entrepreneurial and leadership education should provide opportunities for students to experience entrepreneurship and leadership first-hand by working

alongside practicing entrepreneurs and leaders. This will require universities to be entrepreneurial universities that foster interaction and networking and that embed entrepreneurship and leadership in academic and management culture. It is important to integrate the concept of entrepreneurship and leadership across curricula and to tailor entrepreneurial and leadership education to local needs and marry the concepts of Asian entrepreneurship and leadership to those of the West.

Here, I would like to also share my own thoughts on how I perceive leadership. Leadership in my opinion must be distributional to be effective. By that, I mean it must be executed at all levels. Leadership is also a very personal issue and multidimensional in nature and certain weaknesses can be compensated by other essential factors. Leadership is also developmental, where in an individual continuously develops himself or herself based on interactions with people, feedback and evolving environment, and in essence is subject to change processes. In this regard, a leader creates and is able to effectively manage change.

- Good leadership must encompass the following characteristics:
- competency
- honesty
- a forward-looking nature
- an energetic and inspiring nature
- optimism
- self-confidence
- adaptability and transformation
- and, charisma among others.

Elements that make for a successful leader can be attributed to people who “make sense of” something - that is, they must

- understand the context;
- have a feeling for reality;
- be visionary.

In other words, leaders are those who have the ability to see into the future and identify elements needed to succeed, the elements that are lacking and the means to attain them. Leaders are innovative; they are “relational,” that is, they always relate actions or initiatives to people. And leaders must have a strong sense of values - they are always upgrading the environment and those working around them.

### **University of Professions**

Developments in the “Knowledge Society” call for approaches that do not fit

easily into traditional academic structures of scientific disciplines. It is in the border areas between various areas of knowledge that developments are most likely and most progressive. Knowledge is created not only in universities but also in the community by people working in professions.

While traditionally it may have been the role of a university to take a didactic role in development, telling society what is right and what is wrong and providing science and technology based upon research done within the ivory tower, that role is changing. Society, with its ever-increasing number of knowledge centres, has begun to talk back. Therefore, higher education is undergoing fundamental changes. More and more, universities are becoming neutral platforms on which to build collaboration between the public and private sectors and between those who conduct research and those who use it. Universities are becoming the facilitators of dialogue.

The university plays a vital role in the development of its immediate region, and in promoting it internationally. Thus, co-operation with local and regional business and industry is essential in the very idea of the modern university. University staff are committed, together with students and with outside interested parties, to produce future employees, employment opportunity creators, innovators and ideagenerators.

Some of the characteristics of a university of professions include:

- Integration of scientific knowledge and knowledge from the professions
- Research questions generated from practical application
- Encouragement to solve inter- and transdisciplinary problems
- Collaboration with stakeholders in the private and public sectors
- Diversity of students, staff, choice of research problems and methods
- And university core values

**Some important considerations include:**

- recognizing the validity of vocational experience based knowledge
- engaging professions in partnership
- emphasizing the criterion of relevance
- forming strategic alliances
- implementing new models of doctoral studies
- and implementing an appropriate organizational structure

Issues of relevance are often raised in academic discourse, such as the relevance of particular education or research, or the relevance of the university as a societal institution. The concept of a university of professions rests on the conviction that

partnership between the university and the private and public sectors will improve the relevance of both research and education. Co-operation with different sectors of society and the new university could create a win-win situation. There is great potential to improve praxis in different ways through the strategy of co-operation. Put simply, partnership is about forming strategic alliances and sharing power and responsibilities.

### **Education for Sustainable Development**

At this juncture of human development, it is clear that the world cannot go on a consumption agenda. And as you are well aware, we have a rapidly growing population and expanding development in this region. That means how we harmonize economic development with the environment in the region is one of the issues critical to global sustainability.

Of the many objectives for a university, the ultimate is to contribute actively to the sustainable development of society through knowledge generation and mediation. Education and research in a university give society the competencies needed to solve present and future global tasks and challenges.

“Sustainability” has been a central tenet for all of us after it was used in “Our Common Future” by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. However, this word includes ambiguity — we are still discussing how to define, measure and achieve it.

I think that “Sustainability Science” is a form of science systematically organized from many traditional disciplines: natural sciences, engineering and social sciences - all applied to the purpose of achieving regional and global sustainability. Among various efforts toward sustainability, education is one of the most important in the long-term.

The goal of achieving sustainable development and health improvement of populations can be attained through the collective efforts of the international, national and private sectors. Since qualified human resources are obviously needed to implement the required tasks, sustainability education becomes a very important component in curriculum development at all education levels.

We are, in fact, still at the start of the decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005), and following are some of the questions that require some reflection:

- Do our current teaching methods foster such holistic approach?
- Don't we need specialists? What needs to be inculcated in them to be responsible members of future society?
- Should this be initiated at the university level or in primary schools? How many such initiatives are there?
- What are the indicators of sustainable development?

### **Managing Diversity and Change intercultural**

In a global economy composed of multicultural organizations, the ability to manage inter-cultural relations is the key to success in many settings, and managing diversity is about maximizing the ability of all employees to contribute to organizational goals.

When people think of diversity, they may think first of ethnicity and race, and then gender; however, diversity is much broader than that. Diversity is those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong.

Dimensions of diversity include: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities and qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, social background, political background, religious beliefs and work experience, to name a few.

Given all these elements, we realize that there is no easy recipe to follow for managing diversity. Strategies given for one situation may not work given the same situation in another context. But it is very important to understand how these various dimensions affect work performance, work motivation, outcome success and interactions with others.

For me, diversity is an integral part of management. Managing diversity means acknowledging people's differences and recognizing these differences as valuable; it is about promoting inclusiveness.

However, good management alone will not necessarily help us work effectively with a diverse workforce since it is/often difficult to see what part diversity plays in a specific area of management.

I strongly believe that we need to develop people who are culturally aware in order to manage diversity in teams. A diverse workforce also can improve organizational productivity and creativity. Managing a diverse workforce can be a challenge. When people from different backgrounds come together in the workplace, there is potential for great accomplishment, but also for great conflict. Ignoring diversity issues costs time, money and efficiency. Some of the consequences can include unhealthy tensions between people, loss of productivity, inability to attract and retain talented people of all kinds and even complaints and legal actions.

Today's leadership is mainly about how to manage change. For this one needs to build trust, to drive out fear of failure and to develop team culture - a culture of partnerships - in which everyone offers unique knowledge and talents. Another key point, I think, is that dealing with change is about understanding that change is never over. This is simply today's reality. In order to cope with an unpredictable world one must be flexible and able to react positively to needed changes. Most

people do not like change - maybe because we do not like being changed, or maybe because change generates uncertainty and reduces predictability.

Let me ask all of you to take a minute of self reflection by asking yourself the following question: What kind of person am I?

- Am I the one who makes things happen?
- or am I the one who watches things happen?
- or am I the one who wonders: “What in the hell just happened?”

When I start to reflect on this question, I start to realize that change is all around us, in many forms and shapes. We can bring it about ourselves or it can come in ways that give us little choice about its what, when and how. The saying, “change is the window through which the future enters your life,” is indeed very true.

Ladies and gentlemen, the key to success in today’s world is about finding ways to be different, to radically change the way of doing things and to develop ways to respond quickly to all kinds of changes. As Steven Kerr has said: “the future is coming so fast, we can not possibly predict it; we can only learn to respond quickly.”

#### **Profile of Graduates**

In the above context I think employers today look for “transferable skills” and often provide specialized inhouse training. We therefore have to build such skills into our degree programmes. This ensures that our students are suitably prepared for the work market. For these the subject of your degree is less important than how your practical, social and intellectual skills have developed under the stimulus of the university’s academic and social life. Since the problems encountered in working life are seldom classified with in single discipline, it is important that the institutes of higher education have structures that facilitate cross-disciplinary and cross-professional focus on problems. The bridging of academic subjects and scientific disciplines encourages creativity.

At the end, i believe students are usually well placed in the job market, largely because of a university’s close links with business and emphasis on work placements. It is important that students get the chance to experience the world of work while they study. This will give the<sup>1</sup> m a distinct advantage when applying for jobs in their final year. Also courses are enriched”by the close partnerships with industry and’commerce.

In all jobs, we use a combination of knowledge, skills and personal qualities we call this combination “competences.” Absolutely central to employability is realizing that knowledge, skills and personal qualities acquired from one situation



can be, used in others.

Knowledge, for graduates, is usually related to the subjects studied in their degree, but any knowledge that you have acquired through your life experiences can be relevant in a job. Skills are sometimes more difficult to appreciate, partly because many people interpret the word only in a hand craft sense. But for graduates, intellectual and “key” skills are important, and they are often less obvious when undertaking study or work. Intellectual skills are central to being a graduate; they are what you use every day in making sense of the knowledge presented to you in your degree study. Examples are:

- critical evaluation and interpretation of evidence
- analysis and synthesis of information
- comparing and contrasting different models.

The term “key skills” is applied to a number of more general skills regarded as being important in most jobs, such as written and oral communication, team working and IT.

The knowledge and intellectual skills gained from a degree make graduates distinctive and of great interest to employers. Key skills and personal qualities developed through all your activities are required in some measure by every job. Personal qualities refer to characteristics such as adaptability, creativity, the ability to work under pressure and initiative.

In summary, you should recognize that to be successful in a graduate job, you will have to demonstrate combinations of knowledge, intellectual skills, key skills and personal qualities. The combination will, of course, be different for each career.

Employers are therefore looking for graduates who not only have discipline knowledge but also skills and qualities which come from active involvement in their:

- academic studies
- university clubs, SU/societies/sports, cultural activities
- community based activities
- vacation work, internships - even travel.

**Remarks on AIT**

As the president of the Asian Institute of Technology, i am pleased to take a few minutes to share with you some words about our unique institution. As many of you are aware, AIT is an international academic institution based in Bangkok,

Thailand, with a mission to assist in sustainable development initiatives in this region. Our primary focus is on human resources through our graduate degree and short-term professional development programs.

AIT considers the Government of India a very valuable partner and resource and we have enjoyed close relations since 1974. The Government of India has seconded more than 125 Faculty members to AIT over the years. In addition we also have a special grant for equipment as well as cash support. The Government of India is part of the governance of the Institute and has been represented in the AIT Board of Trustees since 1973. We have to date 843 alumni from India who are successfully working in and outside India occupying positions of influence in the public and private sectors, as well as academic and research institutions. There are 83 students currently enrolled at AIT and 12 faculty members from India teaching at AIT

Students, partners and graduates of AIT are valued for their leadership and commitment in supporting the mission of the institute and helping not only to respond to the needs of the region but to anticipate them. From its founding in 1959 by the southeast Asia Treaty Organization, AIT has always fostered an international, multicultural environment that reaches beyond political boundaries. It has produced more than 14,500 graduates from 79 countries.

At any given time, natives of about 50 countries comprise its 2,000-strong student body and 120 member faculty. Additionally, through AIT extension, which offers non-degree continuing education courses to practicing professionals, the institute has trained more than 20,000 professionals from the region. More than 90 percent of AITs alumni remain in the region and hold positions of influence in government, education, industry and other international organizations such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the United Nations.

AIT has established centres in Vietnam and Indonesia and plans to open centres in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and possibly China and India. AIT places great value on strengthening, regional and global institutional bonds, collaboration and research,. Currently, there are more than 200 sponsored projects with more than 1,000 research and support staff from 30 countries.

AIT's mission To develop highly qualified and committed professionals who will play a leading role in the sustainable development of the region and its integration into the global economy is one that is most relevant today than at any time in the institute's half-century history. Yet because of the very integration of the region into the global economy that we all are currently witnessing, keeping pace with this integration requires an educational and research institution to adapt its methods to fulfil such a mission.

Consequently, AIT stands poised to embark on an exciting new phase in its

development. In the next five years, the institute proposes bold steps that will enable it to continue carrying out its mission.

AIT is strengthening its Asian orientation and will use this to attract an increasing number of students from non-Asian countries. We are forging a forward-looking curricula that tears down the walls of traditional disciplines and introducing an administrative academic structure that allows academic programs to adapt quickly to newly arising demands.

At the same time, AIT is introducing a rigorous system of continuous quality control of our academic programs, including formal international accreditation. In order to better address the needs of the private and public sector and students alike, a new orientation directed toward professions which will encourage practical knowledge, experience, fieldwork, internships, and a focus on entrepreneurship, leadership and employability is being emphasized.

Research focal areas are being defined to develop greater depth of knowledge in select areas and to attract the most talented faculty and students. We are entering into new partnerships and closer collaboration with the public and private sectors.

In short, the next five years will see the emergence of a new AIT. As it has done for the last half century, the institute will never sway from its broad internationality and fundamental commitment to moulding leaders in the sustainable development of the region. In the decades to come, however, we will carry this out in a way that is stronger and better suited to the requirements of the present and future.

#### **Importance of Institutional Collaboration and Partnership with Shivaji University**

In line with the goals outlined earlier, this year we have launched a number of innovative academic programs at AIT in collaboration with our partners. One such unique program has been that between Shivaji University and AIT in a unified bachelor's-master's degree in the newly established International School of Engineering and Technology at Shivaji, University.

I have had the opportunity to visit your wonderful campus on a couple of earlier occasions and had close interactions with Vice Chancellor Professor Salunkhe and faculty members from Shivaji University to discuss the co-operation. My colleague, Professor Vilas Salokhe, who is here with me today, and is the coordinator for this initiative from the AIT side, has played an instrumental role in bringing this partnership to fruition and I wish to thank him for all his efforts and commitment.

This initiative has been very well received both at Shivaji University and AIT and is targeted for launch in August 2007. This is the first program of its kind for

AIT and will also serve as role model for similar such ventures in our other partner countries who have already expressed interest in similar cooperation. We have also adopted the same model in a recently signed partnership agreement with Singhanian University at Udaipur, Rajasthan as well. We greatly value our friendship and partnership with Shivaji University, and I am confident it will be further strengthened.

**Concluding Remarks**

It is my hope that as graduates your future endeavours will resonate with commitment to developing yourselves further in every respect as a person, to making the quality of lives of your people and of the world better, and to helping people less fortunate than yourselves to realize their potential. It is for these worthy purposes you have been prepared and equipped.

You will soon cease being students and will become part of the well respected body of alumni. I request you to become advocates for the university, and you can do this by being excellent examples for the type of individuals Shivaji University educates. Take to heart not only the pride your degree brings you but also the responsibility of fulfilling the promise of contributing in your respective fields or across fields, which will affect the lives of people in society. And last but not least, your responsibility to this university which is to represent it honourably and give it much cause for pride.

Therefore I challenge you to live up to the highest standards. The key to success in today’s world is about finding ways to be different, to radically change the way of doing things, in addition to developing ways to respond quickly to all kinds of changes.

I hope Shivaji University has helped you to find the direction of that change. For as we like to say, “Why not change the world?” And so, I challenge you, change your world. The whole Shivaji University community looks forward to see the remarkable difference that all of you will make in this world.

Once again, congratulations to each one of you not only for your accomplishments, but also for the enormous promise your future holds.

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