

## **Convocation Address at IIT Mandi**

**October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015**

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**Director, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali**

Mr. Natarajan, Chairman, Board of Governors; Prof. Gonsalves, Director, IIT Mandi; distinguished guests, dear graduates and friends:

It is a privilege for me to stand in front of you and say a few words. First of all, I want to congratulate all the graduates of the day and their parents and families. I know it is a proud moment for each one of you. The Convocation in which I received my first degree was a controversial one. My father managed to use his official ID and got-in to witness it. Later, I was delighted to see my daughter receive her M.Sc. degree from IIT Kanpur. I can imagine how excited each one of you and your parents must be at this moment.

Coming from IISER Mohali, I know what IIT Mandi has gone through in setting up a temporary campus and moving into the permanent campus, and the job is still not done. Your job was much more difficult than ours. You are still one of the pioneer batches. You put your trust in the Director and his team when you joined IIT Mandi, and today you stand vindicated.

I still remember the day I took charge as the Director of IISER Mohali on June 18, 2007. There was nothing. After two days, I got a dark room in the basement of a library in the MGSIPAP Complex, Chandigarh. I used to joke that IISER Mohali was delivered in a dark room. Today, we have a sprawling campus with hostels, residences, lecture hall complex, teaching labs, research labs, library, computer centre and all that. Four batches of students have graduated. Our students have gone places. My faculty colleagues have also started publishing in top journals.

The reason I talked about IISER Mohali at IIT Mandi is to tell you how I am in a position to understand and appreciate what you and your teachers and the Director and the rest of the team at IIT Mandi have gone through in the last few years to make sure that you get a good training at IIT Mandi. I can imagine how many sleepless nights Prof. Gonsalves and his team must have gone through to make sure that you sleep well, eat well, and study well. It is like parenting.

At the end of the day, what matters is that you are all graduates: Graduates worthy of the degree that you have received from IIT Mandi. It is a culmination of your efforts and that of your parents and your teachers. The journey is NOT over. The journey actually begins now, after you toss your cap off after the function is over. The protected life you enjoyed at home or at IIT Mandi is over. It is time for you to face the world, the real world with all its attractions and realities.

What you learned in your classes was only a training to learn. You are yet to acquire real knowledge. That will come by experimenting with your life. Experimenting with what you have learned. You have to earn a livelihood. Since you are all bright students, you will look for challenges. That is where you will discover yourselves. Some of you will go on to higher studies, some of you will take up a job and some of you will try to figure out what you want to do with your life.

I spent nearly three decades at IIT Kanpur. I have some idea of how the mind of an IITian works. Most of the IITians think too much of themselves. They don't think too much about the teachers or anybody around. It is only years later that you will look back and realise what a great time you had when you were a student at IIT Mandi. All the difficulties you have faced in the last few years will get a romantic aura around them. You will realise what a sacrifice your teachers made for you just like your parents. Your respect for them will grow with years.

Why did the government invest so much in you? Why did Prof. Gonsalves and his team put in so much effort to set up IIT Mandi and to see that you graduate with flying colors? They didn't do it for the salary that they received. They did it for a greater cause. It is part of nation-building. Creating IIT Mandi out of nothing is a magic that they have done. Actually, you were a part of it. But for you, there is no IIT Mandi. It is like raising children. You go through hell raising children only to realise that the birds will fly out of the nest. But you still do it. Because that is the way it works. I know the difficulties my parents faced in raising us.

When you leave the portals of IIT Mandi, the next batch will get ready to graduate and the show goes on!

What is expected of you, the graduates of the day? To be good citizens of the country! The country has invested heavily in you. You must give it a good return on its investment. But how? By being good in whatever you are good at. Some of you will become engineers, some will become managers and some will become teachers and some will become researchers. Some will hopefully become entrepreneurs too. It doesn't matter what you do. You must become the best. If you decide to become a painter, become a famous painter. Put your body, mind and soul into it. Everything else will follow!

I have no special ability to give you any advice. This much I know. I have received a lot from my country and I have tried to give back as much as I could. The rest of it is mere details. I expect the same from you. It is a difficult path ahead. But you must traverse it. Life is a long journey and it is worth undertaking. As they say, the journey of 1000 miles starts with the first step. You are about to take your first step, the baby step. I want to wish each one of you all the best in your journey, wherever you go, whatever you do.

Jai Hind!