

Takshashila Convocation 2018
Director's Speech

The first thing I said to you when you started at Takshashila is: **Changing India is a Marathon.**

It is not a 100m sprint. It is a long race. We need to have the right mindset, right temperament, stamina, endurance, and the right partners to run it.

We will come to grief if we expect overnight changes, whether by electing a great leader or by enacting a great law. There are no silver bullets, no miracle weight-loss pills.

Real change will only come when we change **the minds of people** and **norms of society.**

We are talking about 1.2 billion people and hundreds of thousands of communities. This will take time.

We have to be patient but not complacent.

We have to be impatient but not hasty.

Paradoxes like these will be numerous, and we must negotiate them as we run this marathon.

Congratulations! You have begun running.

As you run, you must uphold the values that Takshashila imparted to you:

- freedom and individual liberty
- pluralism and a culture of tolerance
- employing Reason
- upholding the national interest

Indian nationalism has always been Liberal in nature.

During the freedom movement, our national leaders wanted Independence for our People; the objective was to Expel the British, not hate the British. **This is unprecedented in human history.**

Similarly, the Indian Constitution too enshrines Enlightenment values in its role as the vanguard of a social revolution.

The nationalist Founding Fathers did not take the narrow view that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were Western ideas and somehow irrelevant to us in India.

They embraced these values because they believed good ideas are universally applicable.

India showed the world that **Liberal Nationalism is not only possible but presents us with the best hope** of creating a shared future for a highly diverse country.

Indeed, as the formation of the European Union five decades later showed, it can be a model for the whole world.

Graduates, you should uphold these ideals.

There will be times when these values will not be considered fashionable.

There will be temptations to give up liberty for the promise of material prosperity.

There will be pressures to trade off pluralism for the promise of a homogenous society.

You should stand steadfast in such times, keeping your mind open to new ideas, while standing firm on the foundation of the values of the Indian Republic. **You should always calibrate your moral compass to the True North of Liberty.**

Now, during the Freedom movement, not everyone was on the frontline

Not everyone went to jail

Not everyone attended political rallies and protests

Some built businesses that would strengthen the Indian economy

Some engaged in scientific research that India needed

Some created universities and schools and spread education

Some started printing presses and newspapers, some made films and music

Some let their art speak

Some wrote books

Some donated money

Some sat at home and spun the charkha, not because it would make enough homespun to clothe a nation, but because they could provide moral support to the freedom struggle.

Just as there were many ways to contribute to the Freedom Struggle then, there are many ways to contribute to India's transformation now.

You can choose your own path. Every path, when undertaken in the right way, takes us forward in our grand marathon.

Your friends and family are here today. Let me remind you again that their support is perhaps the most valuable resource that you have. We are here today because our family and our friends have made it possible for us to be here.

Takshashila is deeply grateful to our families, friends and well wishers. This institution stands on the foundation of your goodwill.

Finally, I want to reiterate another point we have frequently made at Takshashila:

always put your humanity ahead of your politics.

Graduates, I hereby welcome you into the Takshashila Community. With tireless striving you should stretch your arms towards perfection. And you should lead others into ever-widening thought and action.

Before we leave I wish to thank all of you for being here and demonstrating your support

High Commissioner Sidhu for gracing our Function

Ms Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw for her resolute support and encouragement

Members of the Council, Members of the Faculty

The Takshashila Team and our hosts at St Joseph's Institute of Management

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have come to the end of the formal ceremony.

Please Arise.

Madam Presiding Officer, Councillors & Members of the Faculty, **I call upon you to lead our Guest and new Graduates out to strive for yogakshema.**