I feel deeply honored to be invited to deliver the convocation address at this institute, in midst of young managers and an esteemed faculty.

For the students who are graduating, this is a wonderful day. You are about to be co-opted into the community of managers, so you must learn to survive and prosper before becoming effective members. For the last two years, your teachers have nurtured you professionally, as indeed your parents and elders have nurtured you personally over several years. These are acts to be grateful for. I recall a memorable metaphor from Nature.

Many species of animals undertake some form of protecting to help their young adjust to their new environment. But there are exceptions. Science writers say that unlike mammals and humans, reptiles have no emotion. They mate, drop their eggs and simply walk away. It is known to be true of many species of snakes, turtles and so on. However the crocodile is an interesting case.

When the eggs are ready for hatching, the mother crocodile digs them out of the nest and gently cracks the eggshell to let the young ones out. The young ones are very vulnerable to predators. The mother gathers the babies into the pouched floor of her mouth—not to eat them, as is erroneously assumed but to protect the young ones. She then heads for the river close-by. Upon entering the water, she opens her jaws to release the young into the water.

Your teachers have behaved like the mother crocodile: they have held you all in the protective environment of their pouches for two years and are about to release you into the swirling and threatening waters of the real world today.

Congratulations to you and always remember that you owe them a debt of gratitude.

Any institute provides you one I in the form of ‘instruction’. What you need in your professional life is another I for ‘intuition’ and a third I for ‘inspiration’.
I wish to share five lessons to support this point of view.

1. **Develop intuition by learning what cannot be taught**

It is good to always remember that your professional goal is not to be just knowledgeable, but to be wise.

Knowledge comes from learning what can be taught. Intuition is learning what cannot be taught. Wisdom is a combination of the two.

Anything that can be taught (like science, economics and management) can be learnt by studying at suitable institutions. When institutes teach management techniques and concepts, they appeal to the analytical part of the student’s brain. The graduating student feels that she knows a lot about management: but this is only partly true. Management practice is much more than the acquisition of such knowledge or an MBA diploma. Managers have to learn many other things—which cannot be taught.

The basic principles of management do not change, except for embellishments and insights. However the way the facts interlock and change color to make patterns is unique to each situation, indeed to each manager. In management, that is why new interpretations rarely displace old ones. Management principles are tenets, at best philosophies, but certainly not discoveries in any scientific sense.

A great manager realizes that the energy to manage actually comes from the dark side. It comes from everything that makes him suffer: difficult trade unions, unreasonable competitors, change-resistant middle managers, poor top teams and so on. As he struggles against these negative powers, he is forced to live more deeply, more fully.

*A great manager is a person who has realized that he is mortal i.e. he can make mistakes, that he will not be in that job or position in a few years. This is what makes him develop a compassion for others.*

A manager can develop to his full potential by learning to be intuitive, inclusive and humane—the kind of skills that are not taught. Intuition is not a substitute for analytics and formal learning; it is a winning overlay, it complements knowledge.

2. **Follow your compass, not your clock**

We live in the blackberry and internet age. Time is the most precious commodity and just about everyone is short of it. I call this act of living a time-challenged existence as the clock.

When we use our time, we do those things that we like to do and avoid the others. Some people have the time to read books but not to socialize. Others have the time to attend parties, but not to write letters to friends or have exercise to keep fit. All of them are busy.

In organizations, an atmosphere gets built up without anybody’s design or desire. This atmosphere pressures managers to give time to the organization—time becomes the surrogate measure for the employee’s
commitment. In reality, commitment is measured not by the time one gives to the company but by the energy and mind-space one gives.

Time is out of our control and anyway, we suffer from limitations on how much we give to the organization. Rather than try to control the time we give to the organization, we would achieve greater success if we tried to control the energy we give to the organization. You can control your energy by thinking about your ‘purpose.’

Each of us has a ‘purpose’, a compass. Each one’s purpose is uniquely personalized, unarticulated and internalized. Purpose is crucial in society for three reasons: it is a primary source of achievement; it is the core energy that fuels the human dynamic; purpose is what successful leaders try to keep activated.

There is, however, one dimension of purpose which is universal to all human beings—people want something out of their work so that their lives mean something, they want their lives to have a reason. Fulfillment and happiness come out of working to your potential, irrespective of whether you are a doorman or a chairman.

That is why purpose is a function of character because you notice it by its absence. To be effective, purpose must have be based on a moral idea by which I mean that it concerns itself with valuing some types of human activities over others.

It is this compass or purpose that makes a lawyer give up his successful practice and fight for the independence of his country as Gandhiji or Nehruji did. It is this compass or purpose that makes a government officer or soldier go beyond the call of his duty or a company to uplift the society around it through CSR. It is purpose that makes a GE a lean machine of efficiency or Google as an innovative outfit.

As you work in management, you will be under pressure to follow your clock. Stop and reflect occasionally to ask whether you are following your compass as well. That alone can provide meaning to your life.

3. **Immerse yourself in your profession**

The manifestation of ‘giving energy’ is to immerse yourself in your chosen profession. Immersion means experiencing emotions and involvement so deeply that the lessons enter your brain’s remote memory. When needed, these lessons pop up on your mental screen without your trying. Achieving total immersion is a key step in the management of your energy and the development of intuition. Traveling, talking to customers, staying rooted mentally and emotionally, are all ways of doing so.

You may enjoy listening to this true story about a famous film star of the 1940s and 1950s—Leela Chitnis.

Leela was the antithesis of a film-star. She was the skinny and gawky daughter of a professor; she wore thick glasses. She fell in love with Dr Gajanand Chitnis, who was 14 years older, and a Marathi editor and playwright by occupation. They had a couple of children, but the family income needed augmenting. So Leela started to accompany her husband to rehearsals, and helped with the costumes and sets in order to earn a bit of money. She observed all the going-on evening after evening in a complete emotional involvement. One
evening the lead female star failed to turn up. Leela was thrust on the stage only because she had attended endless rehearsals.

Now from the recesses of her brain, she dredged up the dialogues. She became a star overnight. In 1940, when LUX soap sought Indian girls as models for the first time, Leela was chosen. Thereafter there was no looking back.

Such is the value of immersion—and chance!

4. Work incessantly on managing your de-rafters

I will narrate the situation of a very pure and old monkey species called the vervet—perhaps Hanuman was a vervet. These vervets act exceptionally cleverly under some circumstances: for example, vervets can give three different signals to communicate three different types of predators. Yet in another circumstance, they act very stupidly: if they see a carcass, they will not suspect that a predator may be around and they will approach the carcass with all the mischief and curiosity of a monkey.

Managers are like vervet monkeys.

Business books and magazines are full of stories about highly intelligent and extremely successful CEOs, who suddenly seem to act in a silly way. In management, we are taught about talent management, performance appraisals and accelerating top performers. If such systems work quite well, why do we see CEOs being fired? After all, they have been appraised and watched for several years and must be having excellent reports to their credit if they have reached the position of CEO. And one fine day, he is worthy of being fired?

In my experience, there are three reasons that account for this strange occurrence. First is that a manager’s intelligence is contextual, which means that signals that she picks up in one situation may not be picked up in another situation. Second is that power reduces a person’s ability to reflect. Third is that she overestimates the value of her own solutions due to insularity or arrogance.

As you develop your career, you will realize that you are prone to some weaknesses that are uniquely personal to you e.g. short temper, arrogance, garrulousness, insensitivity and so on. These are called de-rafters. It is very difficult to completely remove such weaknesses, but you can push yourself to a heightened awareness of your de-rafters. In this way, you can reduce their damage potential.

It is not so well known that the Ramayana character, Ravana, was a well read and learned person. In fact, Ravana had undertaken such severe austerities that the gods appeared before him and granted him a special boon. He desired immortality from being killed by anybody. But who could kill him? He asked that his death should not come from a god, demon or animal. He did not include a human being in his wish-list as he just could not imagine that a frail human could ever kill him. Ultimately he was slain by a human.

In Mexico, the Aztecs ruled successfully during the 16th century. They were much advanced in arts and sciences, but they were blind to a deeply religious belief that one day, their founding god would re-appear in a strange form. When the Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortes appeared in 1519 at their border, the Aztecs thought that he was the returning founding god. In spite of a number of contrary signals, Cortes was received
with gifts and warmth right up to the emperor, Montezuma. On 13th August, 1519, the Aztecs surrendered and the Spanish ruled them for over 300 years.

How could such an intelligent Ravana or such a successful emperor as Montezuma do such stupid things to cause their own downfall?

They forgot to manage their de-railers.

5. Success is a thief

Success is a thief. That is why success is not something to be pursued. This thief brings only unhappiness to those who pursue it. The best chance of capturing this elusive thing called success is to look within us. It may be hiding, but its right there! However, almost all of the 6.5 billion people on earth try looking for success outside of them.

The problem is that they think of success in others’ context. That is why they relentlessly pursue the acquisition of things that others can readily see—wealth, status, and recognition. Such success is a thief.

A thief has three characteristics: first, a thief is not recognized by you as being a thief; second, he robs you of what you have without your realizing it at that time; third, a thief leaves you feeling very foolish after you have been robbed.

So it is with success. You assume that visible symbols of success makes you happy, but such success increases the chances that you will be robbed of your happiness, and further, after losing your happiness, you feel foolish that you have lost your success.

Consider the reality around us. A consulting and accounting firm called KPMG conducted a Fraud Survey in 2008 among the largest private and public companies. An incredible 80% opined that fraud is a problem. To those who doubt the concerns about ubiquitous fraud, further evidence comes from the Satyam episode which has hogged newsprint and airwaves for the last several weeks.

Charles Michael Schwab was born in 1862. At age 35, he became President of US Steel, later Carnegie Steel. He was big, rich and famous. He built an ambitious 75-roomed private house, Riverside, for $7 million. He lost all his wealth in the 1929 crash and died in 1939 with a debt of $300,000.

Howard Hopson was born in 1882. By the early 1920s, he put together AGECO, an association of electric and gas companies in New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania. He then indulged in what turned out to be shenanigans. He faced trial in 1940 and died in Brooklyn sanatorium.

All of these ‘successful’ people lost the perspective of context.

The plain fact is that success has to be seen within a context, and that context is your own self, not outside of your self. Strip away the context, and you see it completely differently.
To most of mankind, success means having wealth and status which others can be impressed with. But the trick of showing something is not to retain it. The blue object looks blue because the object sends back the blue wavelength of light and retains none of it. Similarly the successful person returns success and retains none of it.

Here is one anecdote about a successful person, a happy person. There was a young man, who was working in the Indian Army. He could not find meaning in his life. So he decided to commit suicide. Suddenly, he realized that his sister was to get married, so he decided to postpone his mission. In the meanwhile, he chanced on a book by Swami Vivekananda.

Somehow he got inspired. He took premature retirement from the army, collected Rs 65,000, and returned to his village in Maharashtra. He used the money to repair the village well, to close down liquor outlets and to mobilize public opinion for their own development. In a few years, his village was proclaimed a model village and he found a new meaning to his life.

The name of the village is Ralegaon Siddhi, and the person is Anna Hazare, decorated with Padma Bhushan for his pioneering work. He found happiness within himself.

Just as the Himalayan musk deer tires itself by running around seeking the source of the fragrance, little realizing that the smell originates from its own navel, man too should search his own self.

I am not sure who wrote this line but it is wonderful:

“It is not what you gather, but what you scatter that tells what kind of life you have lived”.

**Conclusion**

I have shared just five lessons that I have learned, I could go on for long. But these lessons are not taught, they are learnt by you. I wish you luck in learning what you cannot be taught.

Our country is about to re-occupy the high place it had occupied 400 years ago in the league table of nations. The next 50 years will be defining years as India scrambles up the ladder rapidly—often lurching in a confusing way, but all the time advancing. You are the privileged generation who will be witness to this miracle. Your ancestors have borne their burdens to create these conditions, now as inheritors, do seize the moment.

As you inherit, please remember that you too need to be good ancestors. Enrich the society you will live in as you develop your career and leave an even better India for your children.

Enjoy the journey and my best wishes are with you. God Bless.