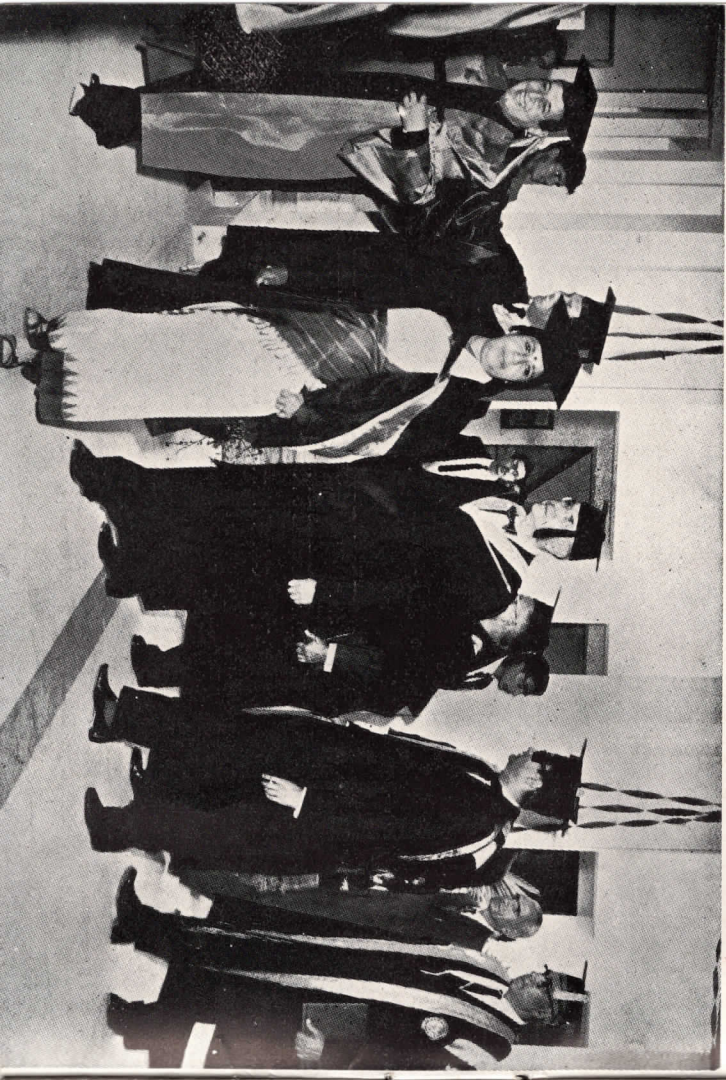




The Chairman, the Director and members of the Board of Governors and General Body getting ready for the Academic Procession:- (From left to right) Shri L. N. Birla, Director V. Lakshminaraynan, Shri K. K. Birla, Shri G. D. Birla and Shri C. D. Pandte.

A part of the Procession.



Birla Institute of Technology & Science PILANI (Rajasthan)

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

By

SHRI G. D. BIRLA

THE FIRST CONVOCATION
the 6th February, 1965

FOREWORD

The first Convocation of the Birla Institute of Technology & Science was held on the 6th February 1965, in the Central Auditorium of the Institute. The Chairman of the Institute, Shri G.D. Birla presided over the convocation and conferred degrees on 162 graduates in the various Engineering faculties. He also delivered the convocation address.

It was an impressive ceremony, solemn and dignified. Many a distinguished person graced the function with his presence, and we were the recipients of a number of messages of felicitations and good wishes, including those from the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister. In the following pages we reproduce the Convocation Address, extracts from the Messages and the Vote of Thanks moved by the Director.

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

by
Shri G. D. Birla

Mr. Director, Members of the General Body and Board of Governors, Deans, Members of the Senate, Ladies and Gentlemen, Students and Friends,

I welcome you all to the first Convocation of the BITS. We are very proud, and thankful to God that we are in a position to have our autonomous constitution and decide our future programme. I congratulate the engineers who have been awarded degrees to-day. I wish them all my cordial good wishes and hope that in their future life they will be happy, prosperous and serve the cause of the country. Let us all thank God, at this stage, because this is our first convocation and I hope as time progresses we shall march onward and onward.

We have an exciting history of the past sixty years. We started as a small school and grew to a big campus. At present we are educating 6500 boys and girls. In this important work, the one man who rendered great service continuously during the last more than 35 years is our revered Pandejji (*applause*). In honouring him we have only honoured ourselves, and I hope that the example set by him will be emulated by the future generation of teachers.

From this institution we have produced 2000 engineers, 1300 arts-graduates and 1100 scientists. This is not a very big number, but I think we can take pride in the fact that we have been able to make some contribution towards the scientific knowledge of

this country. Perhaps you would like to know that according to my information the United States of America is producing 45,000 engineers a year with a much smaller population than ours; Russia produces still more, and England about 12,000, but the standards being different, the comparison is not fair. India on the whole at present is producing something like 9,000 engineers a year. Although the number is fairly good, yet in regard to our population it is very small. Then we have to take into consideration the question of quality. Our quality is not the same as that of other countries. We are quite proud of our achievements, and of our past, but the time has come when we should move forward, and that is the reason why we have converted the colleges into an Institute of Technology and Science. You would like to know why it was necessary for us to break from the past and convert the colleges into an Institute of Technology. There are reasons - good reasons - for that.

I want you to visualise the future that we are going to face after 20 years. 1985 is not going to be the same as 1965. I may not live to see 1985, but the young men who are here will be called upon to take greater responsibilities in 1985. We shall be facing new challenges, new problems, and new demands will be made (upon us). And the question will be: who is going to solve the problems? Not the present-day generation, whatever be their qualifications, whatever be their experience. I fear most of us, the leaders of the present, are getting outofdate. And the time has come when we must confess frankly that in order to solve the problems of 1985 different type of qualifications would be needed. And I hope and pray to God that the young men who are present in this hall may fulfil this task, because the old generation may or may not survive. Unless we all move with the times we will not be able to cope with the situation. What are the problems of India today? I want you to note that because some times we don't concentrate on *real* problems, we get involved into small details. The greatest problems in this country are *want* and *ignorance*. The future government and the future leaders of the society will be called upon to face these problems. There are some politicians and businessmen who have made some contribution - but I frankly admit - and I myself am a businessman, and I am not hesitating

to admit that we are lagging behind the times. The future is going to be very complex; very huge problems are before us. The question is: how to eliminate poverty, how to build more houses, create more health, give better education and how to remove ignorance. And if I may say with all humility, the present-day generation of leadership is not fully qualified. The politicians are still wedded to the old conceptions of negative policies: "Don't do this" and "Don't do that". This is not going to create an intelligent and affluent society. You can't create things out of nothing. You can't create things by regulations and regimentation.

Day in and day out we don't hesitate to swear by austerity and poverty. You can't continue to worship poverty. What we want in this country is to plan for an affluent society. For that purpose we have to think in a different way. We have to think of more production. And I wish to tell you that the future is not going to be shaped by politicians or ordinary businessmen, but by technocrats, by scientists, by engineers, and by economists. And the future politician will have to give up the method of agitation. He will have to have greater knowledge about foreign countries, about international politics, about the parliamentary system of other countries; how other countries have progressed and what we can do to lead the country towards more affluence, more intelligence and greater knowledge. This is the problem before us.

The future businessman is not going to be the businessman of the kind that we see today. The present-day businessman does not realize that it is not just selling and buying which makes a man a businessman. He has to do something much more than that. He has to be responsible to the consumers, to the investors, to the workers, and to the society at large—and also to the Government. These are the problems which we have to solve, and for which we have to educate men.

The administrator of to-day is also outofdate. He is just writing his notes on files; and if I may say so, he is more interested in seeing how the things *cannot* be done. He is not interested in *getting things done*. That is the curse of India. In fact,

we have been suffering from this curse for centuries and centuries, because we were told, "Don't do this. Don't eat that. Don't drink. Don't go overseas."—and so on and so forth; with the result that we have become very much a narrow-minded and caste-ridden country.

The time has come when we should revolt against all these outofdate ideas, and acquire new knowledge, acquire new dreams; think in a new method and be prepared to face the problems of 1985.

Now this is the problem which we are called upon to solve. For this purpose, we have to change our concepts, we have to change our visions and angles, and we have to be prepared (for the future). It is for that purpose that we have decided that we should give a new kind of twist to education. An engineer is good for many things; but the time is coming when becoming a mere engineer or a mere scientist would not do. Even a mere economist won't do. He will have to be something of everything. He will have to be jack of all trades and master of one. That is the new education which we hope to introduce — which means that engineering is not just drafting, equipment or machines. The engineer will have to know something of philosophy, something of geography, something of economics and something of languages, and of what we call humanities. These are the things which we hope to introduce in your courses.

You know all these plans are very good, but don't forget that they are very ambitious plans. There will be difficulties. The difficulty will be about equipment. The difficulty especially is of men and money, of course, though not so much money as men. Now as you know that in the future the computer is going to play a very important part. The other day the Education Minister, Mr. Chagla, said, "Businessmen should spend more money on research." I entirely agree with him. But even for research we need men; we need equipment. Therefore, all these difficulties have to be correctly appreciated. Unless we get equipment, we get men, men from abroad to guide us — we can't do research work. Thus, you will see that all this is a break from the past. The past has

been good, but the future must be something better. The bullock-cart, the motor car and the railway have served us very well. But now, once we decide to travel by 707 Jet, we have to forget all the old modes, and we should not shed tears that we are breaking away from the bullock-cart. Bullock-carts have served us very well, and many other things have served us well but the time has come when we should move quicker and faster. So, if God wills, we are going to travel by jet. Of course, we have to get jets.

In this connection, I should like to mention that the Ford Foundation have been extremely encouraging and helpful to us. As a matter of fact, the MIT is taking keen interest in recruiting professors for us. Professor Drew is already here. Many more professors are expected to come. We wish to establish research work also here. I hope we shall be able to get a computer. Now very few people know what a computer is. There are all sorts of foolish impressions about computers — that the computer is a "brain." It is nothing of that kind, as far as I know. I may be corrected by Professor Drew and others. As far as I know, computer is not a substitute for a brain. A computer is a help to the brain. At the same time, we should know how to use computers. I have seen some computers. But frankly, I don't understand a thing about computers, because that is beyond my depth. As a matter of fact, in some of the big firms, I have seen very large number of computers, occupying such a big hall as this and giving all sorts of information. How they give this information, how they collect data, how they give answers to questions — which by old methods would require 24 hours, but which they answer in two minutes. These are the things with which we have to get acquainted.

You know the engineers of today, unless they keep themselves fully acquainted with the future they will get outofdate. I know even in America those engineers who passed their examinations, say in 1940 or 1950, have become outofdate, unless they have kept themselves well-informed about the most modern achievements and the modern inventions. Therefore, I should like to say this to you engineers, who are graduating today; "Don't think you have completed your study. In fact, you are starting or beginning your study in life.

If you become stagnant, then you lose all your charm. You will be forgotten by the society. In any case, I have told you what my dream is. I may not be alive to see all the dreams fulfilled, but I have no doubt that a good work started always ends in success.

We are very thankful to the Ford Foundation for taking keen interest in what we are doing. I want the co-operation and help of all of you—the teachers and the students. Students, once they go out of Pilani, should not forget Pilani. They should come off and on and help us in our onward march. And if we get co-operation from every side, I have no doubt that we shall fulfil the task. I wish to remind you again that we have got very difficult times ahead. This is a country of 460 million people—a country full of poverty, ignorance, superstition, all sorts of false notions, which the engineers and the scientists have to remove. But you have to work hard, because if you don't work hard you don't keep your mind open. If you don't move with the times, you won't be able to enjoy the sweet fruits of 1985. The world is moving fast. Whether India wants or not, India will have to move with the times, you have to progress willy nilly. If we are not prepared to face the situation and solve the problems, we will not have any achievement. Therefore, I exhort you all to realise that you have got a very difficult future before you.

The men of my generation had a comfortable life in a way but you are not going to have a comfortable life because you are going to have serious headaches and great problems. It will be a very exciting time for you because you will be called upon to solve the problems of those future days. I tell you that the Ford Foundation has promised us some help. But I am fully confident of the fact that if we deserve their contribution, the Ford foundation will give us any amount of help. I have no doubt about that. The only thing is that we have to *deserve*. We have to show good results.

I exhort you all to please read the translation very carefully of the Sanskrit text that I gave you, and over and above that keep in mind that you have got a big duty to perform. I also told you why we are having a break with the past—because my intention is

whatever we do, we must put this institution at a very high level. My ambition is to see that this Institute is not only the best in India but that, God willing, it must be comparable to the best institutions anywhere in the world. (*applause*). And in this project, in this ambition, although I am an old man, I seek the blessings and co-operation of all of you. I congratulate you my dear friends once again and I hope that you will be successful in your life.

Thank you all.

EXTRACTS FROM MESSAGES

1. President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan :

"The President sends good wishes to the graduates who will be awarded their degrees at first convocation of Birla Institute of Technology & Science on sixth February."

2. Vice-President Dr. Zakir Husain :

"I send my best wishes for the success of the first convocation of your Institute to be held on the 6th February."

3. Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Sastri :

"The Prime Minister sends his good wishes on the occasion of the first convocation of the Birla Institute of Technology & Science which will be held on February 6, 1965."

4. Finance Minister Shri T. T. Krishnamachari :

"I send my best wishes for the success of the function."

5. Dr. Sampurnanand, Governor of Rajasthan :

"The Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani, Rajasthan, is a young institution but it has already attracted attention by the very important work it has taken up. Such an institution possesses a nation wide importance, but it can play a specially important role in the life of a state like Rajasthan which is rapidly entering the arena of advanced industrial enterprise. I wish it all success."

6. Sardar Hukum Singh, Speaker Lok Sabha :

"Indeed it would be a very happy occasion to give encouragement to those who would be getting their degrees. Technology &

Science have to play a very important part in the shaping of our future. Every effort in the development of science would promote the well-being of humanity. We are left behind and Shri Birlaji has been a pioneer in starting this Institute. I send you my good wishes for this occasion.

7. His Excellency Mr. Chester Bowles, Ambassador of the United States of America :

"I hope it presages many more graduates in engineering. To faculty and graduates I extend my best wishes and congratulations. These young engineers have my admiration for their determination to embark on a career which is so important in India's future development."

8. Dr. Heald, President of the Ford Foundation :

"I am pleased to extend congratulations and best wishes from the Foundation on the occasion of the first convocation of the Birla Institute of Technology & Science."

9. Dr. J. A. Stratton President, Massachusetts Institute of Technology :

"I'm asking Professor Nathan H. Cook to represent MIT at first convocation of the Birla Institute and to express our congratulations and good wishes on this auspicious occasion."

10. His Highness Maharaja of Jaipur :

"I am glad to know that the Birla Institute of Technology & Science is holding its first convocation. This is another step forward in the advancement of science and technology in our country, on which depends the progress and development of our nation. I am sure the Birla Institute will play a major part in producing the experts we are in need of today."

I wish the Institute all success in its future development."

11. Her Highness Rajmata Maharani Scindia of Gwalior :

"I wish the function a grand success."

12. Dr. G.S. Mahajani, Vice-Chancellor, University of Udaipur :

"We send you our sincere greetings and good wishes for the occasion."

You know that I have visited Pilani and this institution (in its previous form) three times, and every time I did so I received so much inspiration. I have always regarded a visit to Pilani as almost a sacred pilgrimage.

I have no doubt that the function will be a success under the presidency of Shri G.D. Birla, whose distinguished house has planted these flowers in the desert?'

13. Prof. M.S. Thacker, Member Planning Commission :

"Would you also permit me to send my greetings and good wishes on this occasion to which we all have been so much looking forward?"

14. Dr. K.M. Munshi, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay :

"My best wishes are with the B.I.T.S. I am sure, under the inspiring guidance of my friend, Shri G.D. Birla, it will grow into a M.I.T. of India."

15. Dean Gordon S. Brown, M.I.T. :

"We send our best wishes to the Institute on this auspicious occasion."

16. Dr. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Vice-Chancellor, Annamalai University, :

"I wish the function all success."

VOTE OF THANKS

By Director V. Lakshminarayanan

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Institute and Board of Governors, Members of the Senate and Faculty, Graduates of the Year, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This first Convocation of the B. I. T. S. is held on Basant Panchmi, the most auspicious day devoted to the Goddess of Learning - Saraswati - whose temple of pure white marble is right in front of us. I pray to Her to give us Her blessings, Knowledge and Wisdom. The motto of our Institute is - *Gyanam Paramam Balam*¹—"Knowledge is Power Supreme".

Sir, we are very grateful to you for presiding over this first convocation. Sixty-five years ago your grandfather, Seth Shivanarajji Birla, lighted the Lamp of Learning in Pilani. To-day this lamp is burning with glorious brilliance. *Tamso Ma Jyotir Gamaya*²—"From Darkness Lead Me to Light"—is our prayer. We are grateful to you, and to all members of the Birla family, for the great service that you are doing in the cause of education, which is our best investment.

Your Convocation Address today is an inspiration not only to those assembled here, but to the entire country. I am confident that the Birla Institute of Technology & Science will become the best institution of its kind, and it will provide the right intellectual and spiritual leadership for the future progress of not only our country, but also for international co-operation and brotherhood.

First of all, it is my duty to express my thanks to our Education Minister, Sri M. C. Chagla, to the Government of India,

¹ ज्ञानं परमं बलम् ।

² तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।

and to the University Grants Commission for giving us the status of a University, due to which we have been able to hold this convocation today.

The B. I. T. S. is fortunate in getting assistance from the Ford Foundation and the M. I. T. We are very happy that Dr. Douglas Ensminger is present among us here to-day. I request Dr. Ensminger to convey our thanks to President Heald, who has sent us his good wishes.

I am thankful to Professor Thomas B. Drew, who has been helping us right from the inception of the Institute. Professor Nathan H. Cook has brought with him greetings from President Stratton, and I would ask him to convey our thanks to President Stratton and to all professors of the M. I. T. who are on our Advisory Committee.

The British Council is represented by Mr. Cavaliero, and I would ask him to convey our thanks to the British Council for their active interest in our development.

Graduates of the year : I offer my heartiest congratulations to you on your well-merited success. Our alumni have made a name throughout the world for their brilliance and scholarship, character and service. I am confident that you Graduates will keep the flag of the Institute flying high. You have a special responsibility to bear in mind, in that you are the first batch of graduates of this Institute. I would remind you of the grand and ancient exhortation given to you by our Chairman. He has enjoined on you that ever in your life and conversation and conduct, you should conduct yourselves worthy of the degree conferred on you. "Satyam Vada, Dharmam Chara"—*Follow the Path of Truth in Thought, Word and Deed and do not Swerve from the Path of Right Conduct and Duty.* Success and Happiness are yours. I give my blessings to you all.

The organizing of this Institute has been a challenging and tremendous task. This being the first convocation, we had to work under very great stress. All staff members and students have

worked very hard to make the arrangements for this convocation. I express my sincerest thanks to the Deans - Mrs. Upadhyaya, Prof. Murthy and Dr. Tiwari, to all members of the faculty and to all other members of the staff.

I have to express my sincere appreciation of the excellent discipline of our beloved students who, in the words of our Chairman, are our *partners*. The entire Institute is for giving them the best education and training for leadership.

Finally, I must express my thanks to all members of the Institute, the Board of Governors, and to all the distinguished ladies and gentlemen who have graced this occasion and have made it a success.

Once again I thank you all.

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The fresh graduates.

A part of the distinguished audience.

