

Respected Chief Guest Shri Baba Kalyani, Chairperson of the Board of Governors Mr. Subodh Bhargava, Director of IIT Mandi Prof. Timothy A. Goncalves, distinguished guests, faculty, staff, family and friends: Good afternoon and welcome to the 7th convocation of IIT Mandi.

All of us batch of 2019 students are soon going to be walking out of this auditorium, degrees in hand, with our journey at IIT Mandi officially coming to an end. For most of our lives, we've been waiting to get older - as children, we can't wait to be teenagers, as teenagers we can't wait to be adults. The yearning only increases during JEE preparation, and we simply can't wait for college! Now we're adults and already have a lot of things to reminisce. That's probably why everyone refers to college as the best time of our lives – when we have that golden combination of time and freedom.

Our batch has bonded over a variety of activities during our time at IIT Mandi - club activities, fests, study group meetings, and the last-minute terror of getting prototypes working in Design Practicum. Our joint experiences leave us with ties and connections that cannot be taken away from us. I'm sure the most significant joint experience was, of course, shifting to North Campus. If anything, the experience definitely brought out the most solidarity I had ever seen in our batch. At a young institute like IIT Mandi, we got the unique opportunity to make significant contributions to its culture and academics. Our batch played an important role in shaping the college clubs, making our fests bigger, guiding our juniors, and growing college organizations like Career and Placement Cell, the Entrepreneurship Cell and Catalyst. As students or alumni, IIT Mandi will always be part of our lives - at the minimum, in our resumes. Whatever we achieve henceforth will also be an achievement for IIT Mandi. Even though our four years here are over, it will always be within our capability to raise our alma mater to new heights by simply pursuing success wherever we are, and giving back in whatever way we can.

In pursuing success and giving back, we need to keep in mind that the purpose of technology and engineering is to benefit our global society. This requires an in depth understanding of the world's problems. We as a race are an incredibly diverse set of people, and it goes without saying that the highest benefit would be achieved when we have a diverse group of people working on these problems. Our field gives us a decisive role in bettering the world, and so, making sure that women are part of this global phenomenon is of utmost importance. It is not that women do not have the capability to be part of it... it is simply a question of undoing millennia of unequal treatment and changing age-old mindsets. I recently watched the film about ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission, Mission Mangal, and at the end of the movie they showed photos of the women who were in leading positions, heading various divisions of ISRO. This was truly a proud moment for our country and all female engineers. Thanks to the new IIT policies that are both competitive and fair since the seats are supernumerary, I am glad to see the number of girls at IIT Mandi shoot up from our batch's dismal 6% to the current batch's 20%. Maybe in the future, seeing a woman head a department in this field may not seem like something so extraordinary anymore!

IIT Mandi is a unique combination of a number of remarkable things. The curriculum seems to be ahead of many other engineering institutes in India and even internationally. It gave us the freedom to pursue courses and projects across traditional boundaries of Mechanical, Electrical, Civil and Computer Science branches, with faculty encouraging and welcoming such exploration. I am currently pursuing my Master's in Robotics, and I have seen that a number of my classmates from various backgrounds don't have the same exposure to different fields that I was able to get over here. On top of this, we were able to spend our four college years in this beautiful Himalayan setting. Where else could one get this type of education, the brand name of IIT, as well as enjoy the mountains, rivers and snowfall? I have truly enjoyed all the trekking, mountain biking and star gazing activities here and will miss them dearly.

IIT Mandi could go on to become a much-sought after institute, and is already on the path of increasing branches, faculty, entrepreneurial activities with incubation funding, conferences and workshops. In the future, there could be more international student exchanges, higher involvement in the local community and more investment into issues like landslides and transportation. There could even be more contact with the industry for projects across India and also abroad. IIT Mandi has a bright future ahead of it, and I am glad that I was able to be a part of it.

Before I go, I would like to leave you with one final thought. When we trek up a mountain, how long do we actually stay at the peak? Usually not as long as we would've liked to, considering the amount of effort we put in to get there. And once we're back down, how soon would we like to go up another mountain? We of all people should recognize that reaching the top of one mountain isn't the end. The journey and the destination are both beautiful, we simply need to remember to enjoy ourselves, in whichever stage of the process we're in. We've enjoyed the view at IIT Mandi - both literally and figuratively - and there are many more mountains out in the world for us to explore. IIT Mandi has left us with immense opportunities and I hope each of us will enjoy our pursuits of success, as well as savour their fruit.

I would like to thank the faculty and staff of IIT Mandi for all their efforts, and I wish my batchmates the very best of luck for their future endeavours!

Thank you,
Preeti