

## CONVOCATION ADDRESS BY SHRI MORARJI DESAI

Mr. President, Mr. Chairman, Dr. Kantarovitch, those who have got the degrees and diplomas today, Fellows of the Institute, students and friends:

I am in a very unusual predicament. I have to give convocation address to the new degree holders particularly. I am one of them. I do not know what I am going to tell myself. So whatever I tell you will apply to myself also. That is why I have to speak very carefully, particularly being in a statistical institute I have got to be quite correct because otherwise as statistics can sometimes err absolutely I can also do so. You are passing out or getting your degrees and diplomas from an institute which is quite unique, does not have another of this type in this country. It was started by Professor Mahalanobis with whom I had the honour and pleasure of working for quite a few years in the Planning Commission. And he started this before we got our freedom in 1931. That shows how farsighted he was. Whatever we do we want to do by properly planning it and that is why we have a Planning Commission and our plans. Plans can be made properly and usefully only with the help of statistics and therefore it is very necessary to have correct statistics in all fields. The National Statistical Institution was started after 20 years in 1951 because that was vital but that was also made possible by this institution already working and Professor Mahalanobis wanting it to be done as it was very vital to do. In the present-day world we cannot do without statistics in any field particularly in the economic field, in the field of development with which planning is vitally concerned. Without accurate proper statistics from every section of development it will not be possible to do planning effectively or efficiently. We therefore depend very greatly on the talents that are given by this institute. As I said earlier statistics can be inaccurate if one is not fully dedicated to it and dedicated to truth. Professor Mahalanobis had devoted his whole life to this important knowledge and preparing proper persons who would get that knowledge and use it for the country's benefit. His dedication was to statistics total, if I may say so. He was a student and a Professor of Physics and that was perhaps one of the similarities

between him and me; I was also a student of physics and chemistry but I have forgotten them whereas he remembered it his whole life and made further progress in it. But I do benefit by the scientific education and I had because it gives me correctness of thinking, exactness in acting and adherence to truth. There can be no scientific advance unless truth is rigorously observed in the pursuit of it and therefore it holds even more true for the statistical science; it is also a science. All these therefore who are passing out this year getting their degrees and diplomas have a great responsibility on them. I am quite sure they are conscious of this and they have great work to do for the country wherever they work. A little fault in the preparation of statistics can mislead us and direct us in wrong channels and the whole work can become futile or at any rate not as meaningful as we want it to be. Statistics are also vital for assessing the results properly and there also statistics can give us different kind of picture depending upon how they are collected and presented. They can be presented in a manner where it can be shown that much has been done whereas very little has been done and it can also be presented in a manner where it can be shown that nothing much has been done though many things have been done. There is nothing which cannot be misused in the world. That seems how the world is created. Everything has its good and bad points. There is nothing without it. None of us are without it. But we have to work to see that we know what is good and what is evil, what is truth and what is untruth; stick to truth and give up untruth; stick to good and give up all evils. Then therefore in statistics also we will have constantly to be careful to see that the great ability that you acquired in this institute is used with dedication with regard for truth completely. The law of averages has much to do with statistics also. The law of averages can lend us anywhere between 1 and 100 if we take the average; it will be 51 which will not apply to anybody perhaps. Therefore it can also lead us nowhere if it is not properly done. Therefore this must be weighed on substantial data which have comparable qualities in it. If we take averages of things which are not comparable it will differ vitally in their conditions and impacts.

The average that will be drawn from it would be totally misleading. Then we depend upon statisticians in this matter. I personally cannot claim to have had any proficiency in this science and yet I am given a degree here which I was very hesitating to accept. I was not hesitating because I did not consider it a great honour; I consider it an honour but I thought I did not deserve it because I have done nothing in this science so far as my studies are concerned and yet I value statistics more than anything else. It is the kindness of the Institute that has given me this honorary degree as I feel greatly honoured by this degree conferred on me and I am deeply grateful to the Institute and those who are in charge of it. Dr. Kallianpur succeeded in persuading me although I was unwilling. As I hope he was quite adept in persuading people because I am supposed to have a very obstinate temperament and yet he succeeded in persuading me to accept it. I hope he will apply this great capacity of his to persuading the students here to see the value of truth, to dedicate themselves to the science which they have chosen to pursue. It must be remembered that one cannot claim at any time perfection in anything. One has got to go on learning till the end of one's life and improving all the whole. Unless we are prepared to see our own mistakes we cannot go on improving ourselves. And statistics can help us in this matter provided we collect them properly and utilise them properly and this is a task which you have undertaken by your studies here and by qualifying for the degrees and diplomas. It is not possible for me to give you any suggestions how best you can go about it in any details or as regards the science of statistics. But I can only repeat what I said that the foremost requirement of dedication to statistics and the sciences is a rigorous pursuit of truth with the greatest courage and without any fear. I only wish and give you my best wishes. On this occasion for getting this capacity of following truth ruthlessly, if I may say so, may God give you that capacity. That is my best wish for all of you. I thank you for inviting me here to give you my views on this subject and I again thank the Institute for honoring me in this unique manner. Thank you.