



Centurion
UNIVERSITY
*Shaping Lives...
Empowering Communities...*

7TH CONVOCATION 2019

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

SHRI P. S. KHAROLA, IAS

SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION,
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

6 DECEMBER 2019

CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT
ODISHA

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Your Excellency, Shri Ganeshi Lal, Governor of Odisha,
 Shri (Dr.) K. P. Krishnan, Secretary, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
 Prof Mukti Kanta Mishra, President, Centurion University,
 Prof DN Rao, Vice-President, Centurion University,
 Dr Supriya Pattanayak, Vice Chancellor, Centurion University.
 Senior Faculty Members of Centurion University,
 Members of the Media,
 Parents, my dear students,
 Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me express my gratitude to the Centurion University of Technology and Management for giving me this chance to participate in the Foundation Day.

Congratulations to all my student friends on achieving this important milestone of their life. Graduation is an important milestone of life. It marks both an ending and a beginning; you are moving from a protected environment to an environment which is challenging and sometimes unforgiving. But you will be able to meet these challenges because of the grooming you get during your school and college days. It is said that '*the more you sweat in peace the less you bleed in war*'. My oratorical skills are no match to those of the highly learned faculty here. So please do not expect a scintillating speech and pardon me if I am not able to rise up to your expectation. My message to you on this occasion is based on my own experiences in my career. I have just distilled and condensed them to a few principles which may be of some help to you.

Selective use of common sense management: Management actually involves common sense. But just because something is common sense doesn't mean it is practiced commonly. By saying so I do not want to undermine the importance of sophisticated tools and quantitative techniques used for management. What I mean is

that more often than not good managerial decisions emanate out of common sense. Common sense is something that cannot be taught in classrooms. But it is acquired by observation, experience and interaction with others. But let me caution mere common sense cannot help in all situations. One day I was sitting in by office in the city bus transport company. A smart boy entered my room and told me sir I have a solution for you. On being asked what is it he told me that he has a device which if fitted on each bus could tell me the precise location of each bus and by doing do I would be able track all my buses. This was in the year 1998 and GPS had not become common then, and he was talking of fitting a GPS on each bus. After thinking a little bit I told him that I do not need your device as I already knew where my buses were. He asked me as to how do I know where my buses were. *I told him that half my buses do not leave their depots.* But a word of caution, Common sense doesn't work always or else we would not require managers.

Always be willing to learn and that too from the grassroots: This is a corollary of the earlier point. Whatever one may say a manager is a generalist. We have managers in all organisations. Management is a profession. But domain knowledge of the area we are working is very important. One has to be lucky to have such domain knowledge well in advance. But generally such knowledge has to be acquired while on the job. This is more true for a new assignment. Therefore managers have to be good learners. Such learning could be by conventional or non-conventional ways. When I was made the Managing Director of the Bengaluru bus transport company I was totally new to the job. Indeed I was given that assignment to ensure that the organization is liquidated. The organization was notorious for indiscipline and strikes. Financial sustainability was a foreign concept altogether. I went about learning my job. I would travel incognito in buses to observe as how the systems works and how pilferage takes place. In lighter vein, I was travelling on a Sunday and I sat next to the conductor. I had a long chat with him. He was very critical of the management.

He also told me that a new Managing Director has taken over. I asked him as to has he seen the new Managing Director. He stared at me and said “ *He looks exactly like you*”. The entire mystery of bus transport management was unraveled in those incognito journeys in my own buses.

Synchronizing ends and means: More often than not we follow the existing procedures and practices. Seldom do we think whether they are appropriate or not. It is very important to ensure that the means we adopt are in sync with the objectives we want to achieve. I will again give you an example from the bus transport sector. Bus transport is a labour intensive sector. We require drivers and conductors in large numbers who have to be recruited in large numbers. Every recruitment the applicants would run into tens of thousands. The HR division would then swing into action. It would conduct a written test, shortlist the candidates and then call them for interviews. The process would go on for a year. The process apart from being time consuming was also quite opaque as interviews meant a good scope to dispense favours. If one analyses deeply the purpose was to get candidates who can conduct the buses and perform simple mathematical addition. And for this we would administer him a test of general knowledge and an interview where we would ask him all sorts of questions. This was a case where the means adopted were totally out of sync with the objectives to be achieved. Therefore the solution was to treat the recruitment process as a mere elimination process. A simple change was done -Applicants were asked to furnish the marks obtained by them in the Board Exams and just on the basis of the marks obtained the candidates were appointed. Thus the process got completed quickly and as spin off benefit was that it was totally transparent and there was no scope left for any patronage.

Vision – lizard vs spider approach: It is said that if one has to be successful one has to be like a lizard and not like spider. Both these are very smart hunters but with a big difference. A spider waits for

its prey to come to its web, get trapped and then it devours it. But a lizard does not believe in waiting. It goes after the prey. In real life the problems we encounter have to be treated as a prey. The lesson here is that –do not wait for a problem to arise and then solve it but rather foresee the problem, predict it and then go after it before it gets unmanageable.

We were planning the human resources for the running the metro rail in Bengaluru. Metro trains are highly automated but still the trains have to be driven by a train operator. As I earlier said that the impact of such essential services is quite widespread, and this is often used by workers to bring the management down to its knees by threatening to stop operations. To avert such an eventuality it was decided that addition to the train operators, each supervisory officer in the system will be trained to operate the trains and he would actually run the run once a month in order to hone his/her skills. As was predicted, the train operators went on strike one day, but the train services were not affected as the officers ran the train. Of course all this was possible because the metro trains are highly automated and safe. Thus it was the ability to foresee a problem and being prepared for it. But lets be careful, this may not work for a bus system. The moral of the story is that, and I quote one of the most revolutionary thinkers humankind has ever birthed, Albert Einstein: “*Intellectuals solve problems, geniuses prevent them.*” The most pertinent question that follows, therefore, is what will you perceive yourselves as when you begin to confront the trials and tribulations of your professional world as managers: An intellectual, or a genius? The spider, or the lizard?

Let me do some social marketing for my own profession. Today we have a large number of graduates from management schools and engineering colleges joining the civil services. It is true that civil services does not give the quality of life which one can get in corporate sector. But then how do you define quality of life. If quality of life means material comforts, then civil services definitely cannot compete with the private sector, but if quality of

life means a meaningful life with a sense of fulfilment, then joining civil services is the answer. I am sure that given the track record a good number of the young friends sitting here would join the civil services.

In fact, what I have said is already embedded in your University's credo. 'Shaping Live. Empowering Communities'. Your University, in a short span of eight years has many achievements to its credit – it has been accredited by NAAC as Grade-A, received ICAR accreditation and recently has been notified as “Centre of Excellence” by Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship. This speaks volumes about the determination and perseverance of the faculty and the students.

I will be failing in my duties if I don't give credit to the faculty members as well as the parents who have helped in moulding you. I wish you all success in life, but with a word of caution. A success is not worth if it leads to the greatest failure, which is arrogance and pride. Though I do not want to wish you any failure but don't forget that Failure can lead to a great success, which is humility and learning.

नमन्ति फलानि वृक्षा नमन्ति गुणिनो जनाः ।
शुष्क काष्ठश्च मूर्खश्च न नमन्ति कदाचन ॥

(Just like a tree laden with fruits, learned people are always polite. On the other hand a foolish person and a dried wood are always rigid and unwieldy.)

Jai Hind

Shri Pradeep Singh Kharola, IAS

Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India

Air India chief Pradeep Singh Kharola has been appointed Civil Aviation secretary, a year after he came on board the national carrier, as part of a minor top-level bureaucratic reshuffle effected on Wednesday, according to an official order.

Kharola, a 1985-batch IAS officer of the Karnataka cadre, was named the Chairman and Managing Director of Air India Ltd in November 2017. He took over the reins of the debt-ridden national carrier on January 9, last year.

It was under Kharola's tenure that the government last year came up with the proposal to sell off 76 per cent of its stake in Air India. However, the proposal was later put on hold due to unavailability of possible buyer.

The Air India has a debt of about Rs 55,000 crore. The government has started the process of restructuring the national carrier to help it reduce its debt. Kharola has been appointed as the Civil Aviation Secretary in place of Rajiv Nayan Choubey, who superannuated on January 31.