

SPEECH OF HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VIJENDER JAIN, CHIEF JUSTICE, PUNJAB AND HARYANA HIGH COURT, CHANDIGARH AT LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF SOFT SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR SC/ST STUDENTS AT VARDHMAN TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, LUDHIANA ON 13.05.2008.

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Mr. S P Oswal, Chairman & Managing Director, Vardhman Textiles Limited, Mr J R Singal, Chairman CII Punjab State Council, Distinguished delegates & Dear Students, Members from the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In a country like ours, where there are islands of prosperity in the ocean of poverty, the launch of soft skill training programme for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students by Confederation of Indian Industries under the leadership of Shri S.P.Oswal will go a long way in ushering a new era of voluntary commitment by the Indian Corporate Sector in its endeavour to ensure equal opportunity to the members of depressed classes.

In this era of globalization, one must not forget that fruits of wealth if not percolated down to the under privilege and those members of the civil society who are

marginalized, then the economic growth of a few would create social disharmony leading to unrest in the larger segment of our society.

Therefore, it is imperative for the leaders of the industries to take such kind of initiative to improve the lot of hitherto vulnerable section of the society, i.e., Gandhian concept of trusteeship becomes relevant in the modern era.

In India, there are a number of such social groups, which constitute a sizable portion of population. These include former untouchables or scheduled caste (SC), tribals, nomadic, semi-nomadic and de-notified tribes (or ex-criminal tribes) etc. These groups put together constituted more than 250 millions in 2001 (about 167 millions SCs, 86 millions STs and other small minorities). These groups have historically suffered in the past from exclusion in multiple spheres, which has led to their severe deprivations.

The Schedule Caste (SC) constitute the largest social group in India accounting for about 17 percent (equivalent to 167 millions) of the total population in 2001. The exclusion and deprivation of SCs is closely associated with institution of caste and untouchability.

The *adivasis* or the Tribals (STs) constitute the second largest social group in India and accounts for about 8 percent of (equivalent to 85 millions ) the total population. They are also closer to the SCs in terms of exclusion and deprivation.

As India evolves into the knowledge-based economy, the skills of the workforce have become a critical factor for remaining competitive. Regional and global competition has intensified the importance of skills in the workforce in enhancing India's long-term competitiveness. Capital is becoming more mobile and increasingly investments are being attracted to countries that have skilled workers. Inclusive growth can also be achieved by training the young in acquiring skills adding this will give the country a huge competitive advantage by raising per capita incomes and reducing dependency ratios.

With half the population under the age of twenty-five, India already has the youngest potential work force in the world and will have more young workers aged 20 to 24 by 2013. The successful management of demographics will help unlock the growth potential of the country.

To ensure growth, we need to see India through new eyes. As companies, you will need to develop new price points and set up alternative supply chains to address needs. You will need to develop durable relationships with Academia to penetrate into the emerging needs of a globally capable workforce. More businesses - small and large - are recruiting graduates. And more employers are beginning to look to universities as a source of potential workforce. Higher education is expanding and universities are welcoming students from a broader cross section of the population. Also, the labour market for graduates is changing rapidly and the economy is becoming increasingly knowledge-based and competitive.

Many students already work part-time throughout their courses, and are graduating into a wider range of jobs and career patterns than ever before. A new report, 'Enhancing employability, recognizing diversity', explores how universities are improving the work skills and knowledge of students from a wider range of backgrounds than ever before. It explores the diversity of ways in which higher education institutions, employers, their representative organisations, careers services and others

are working together to develop students' capabilities and capacity to manage their careers.

To unearth the wealth in India, you must innovate. Today, at the Launch of the Skill Development Training Programme it is visible that Indian companies are rethinking the way they manage assets, distribute products and use technologies to create new services. The efforts of Vardhman has been through the similar training initiated to benefit underprivileged remains as a model how corporate India can contribute towards sustainable livelihood creation.

We need to reprogram our mindsets and prepare to play our roles as responsible global citizens. In this respect, a culture of change is vital, at all levels and in all spheres of life in the ways we learn, live and work. We have a long way to go. But I am convinced that we have no other option than to reinvent ourselves. Each and every one of us should become an agent of change. As Mahatma Gandhi has said:

*“Caste has nothing to do with religion. It is a custom whose origin I do not know and do not need to know for the satisfaction of my spiritual*

*hunger. The law of Verna teaches us that each one of us earns our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights but our duties. It also follows that there is no calling too low and none too high. All are good, lawful and absolutely equal in status”.*

Industry can play a vital role in dealing effectively the menace of social evil, like female foeticide. I have launched a relentless war against this social evil after assumption of my office as Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court. I am happy to note that from the cross section of the society, the mindset of the people has started changing. It is only a small beginning. We have miles to go in this direction. But what touched me was a letter received by me from one industrialist that in its industry they have started giving incentive to its workforce in case a second girl child is born in the family of a worker and that incentive goes on till the girl becomes of marriageable age. These are not only laudable but noble work as this will expel the assumption from the mindset that girl child is a curse in the family.

Congratulations again upon your willingness to admit in this finishing school training led by Vardhman and I wish you a life full of success and fulfillment in sharing your talents. And remember India needs your presence and your talents as we build a new India: vibrant and thriving in the face of international competition.

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