

*Address by Dr. A. Didar Singh to the 10th Batch of Graduates of Mrs. Helena
Kaushik Women's College on Saturday, 16th July 2011*

Introduction:

Dr. Alwyn Didar Singh is a senior IAS officer presently posted as Secretary to Government of India in the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. He has earlier served in several Central Ministries and in the State Governments of Punjab, Assam and Meghalaya. Dr. Singh is an author and expert in IT, Foreign Trade, and Migration. He also has several publications including three books to his credit in the areas of e-Commerce, Health and Trade.

Dr Surendra Kaushik,

Principal,

Staff Members of Mrs. Helena Kaushik Women's College

And most of all, dear students of the 10th Batch of Graduates and other students present here,

Not only is it a great privilege for me to be here amongst you but more so a matter of joy and celebration to congratulate each and every student on your successful graduation this year.

The examination you have all passed in is important but the real learning and success has actually been elsewhere. It has been in the experiences you have shared between yourselves, in the warm relationships you have developed with friends and teachers and most of all in the sharing you have had in this very worthy idea of honoring, empowering and educating girl students that this College represents.

To me that represents success at so many levels and it is this which has brought me here all the way from Delhi. When Dr Surendra Kaushik first spoke to me about this women's college and told me how and why he had founded this institution a dozen years ago, what struck me was that in many ways this institution represented the full circle of migration from India; his leaving for overseas; assimilation and success in the new country, in this case the United States; and finally the return and giving back to the homeland not just charity but actual sustainable development that may itself inspire young students such as all of you to maybe consider going forward on similar successful paths.

As Secretary of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, the Pravasi Bhartiya Mantralya, this is what we through Government try to promote. It is to recognize and acknowledge such an initiative that I readily accepted the invitation to be present here. The invitation letter that I received suggested that my address today should be on women's higher education, empowerment and development of rural India. Each of these three subjects would require an address of its own. I am neither an expert nor competent to offer you a discourse on any of them. In my opinion all the three topics, i.e. women's higher education, empowerment and development of rural India are embodied and represented in today's function of the graduation of students of the 10th Batch of Graduates of Mrs. Helena Kaushik Women's College. I believe therefore that I do not need to say anything more than acknowledge and congratulate both the students as also the staff and administrators of this College for this success.

Instead I would like to share a few thoughts with you about yourselves, about the idea and tools of learning - learning to learn and learning to be happy.

Now that you have graduated, after years of hard work and study, the question is whether the mere fact of attending classes at Mrs Helena Kaushik Women's College has not only taught you the subjects you learnt but it has also equipped you with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the changes that will surely come in your life. Has your education taught you how to learn and adapt to the changing world.

Let me narrate a small story to make this point.

This is the story of a young Chinese student who was sent from his village to study Kung Fu under a Great Kung Fu Master at a famous Chinese Monastery. Kung Fu is a form of martial arts like Karate. On the very first day when he presented himself before the Great Master he was given a large bowl of water and told to hit the water with his hands till all the water splashed out of the

bowl. This carried on for a whole year till the young boy returned home to his village for the winter vacation. There the Village elders summoned him on the evening of his arrival and asked him to demonstrate the skills of Kung Fu he had learned from the Great Master. They placed a thick plank of wood before him and asked him to demonstrate his strength. The young boy was severely embarrassed as he had not been taught how to break a plank of wood. Nevertheless he summoned up courage and attempted to smash the plank with his bare hands. With his very first blow the thick plank broke into two and suddenly the boy realised that he had acquired the mighty skills of a Kung Fu warrior without even knowing his own strength.

To me this story exemplifies the hidden facet of studying at a college like this one. You have quite unconsciously become graduates and life-long learners. By the sheer rigour of handling day to day tasks, you have become both, a master of your craft and a good educated citizen of our great country.

However before you begin to think that all learning is now over let me quote from a famous saying:

“The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement.” ~ Unknown
(*Subsa bari jagah who hae jo aur bhe acchae karne ke jaggah hae.*)

Kahani abhi khatam nahi huie!

To continue to learn and to be happy, always have goals. It is human nature to improve and achieve full potential. In fact, that is success. This success is not measured in money or cars or houses. It is what is possible for you. No doubt getting a good job and being financially successful is important. However that is not the purpose of life. If that was the case, Shri Ambani or Shri Birla would not go to their office every day. Amitabh Bachan or Shah Rukh Khan would stay at home and not dance or sing anymore. Bill Gates would not work so hard to make better software or better handle philanthropy work. Dr Surendra Kaushik

would not work at both his job in New York and still monitor this college. Why do they do it? What makes them work every day?

They do it because it makes them happy. They do it because it makes them feel good. Improving at whatever you do feels good. If you study hard, you can improve your rank in the exam. If you make an effort to be nice to people, you will make more friends. If you practice hard, your game will get better. You may not become world famous yet trying to do better makes you feel better.

That is my second message to you. Think of the first day you came to this college. Remember the excitement and joy of being here. Today as some of you leave, do not forget that desire and excitement. That is what will give you the most happiness. The desire to be and remain happy is a part of human nature. Being able to live and work to your own ideals and ambition is what will give you true happiness.

I will end with two very famous quotations:

A famous writer Mark Lewis once wrote, *“The way to be happy is to like yourself and the way to like yourself is to do only things that make you proud”*.

And father of our nation, the great Mahatma Gandhi, advised all of us by his famous saying: *Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes.*

So remember that learning comes naturally. So do mistakes. So learn from your mistakes also. But most of all, be happy at whatever you do because that is what will result in your personal success and development.

Thank you for listening to me and best wishes to all of you.

Jai Hind.