



## Speech for Special Convocation 2025- PGD-ABA, IIM Ahmedabad

**Shri Ashank Desai, Principal Founder and Chairman, Mastek**

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**Good evening, Everyone!**

It's a privilege to be here with you today at this momentous occasion.

Director of IIM Ahmedabad, Bharat Bhasker, esteemed Board and Society Members, respected faculty, and most importantly graduating class of 2025, ladies and gentlemen.

Standing here today is deeply special for me. Forty-five years ago, I was seated where you are now — as a graduating student of this very institution. I still remember the excitement, the pride, and the quiet curiosity as we waited for our Chief Guest to speak.

And today, I speak to you from that very stage — not just with pride, but with a deep sense of responsibility to give back.

### **Three Reflections for Your Journey Ahead**

I don't intend to keep this too long. Instead, I'll share three thoughts with you — lessons that have shaped my life as a professional, as a founder, and as a lifelong learner.

#### **1. Be Part of the Solution, Not the Problem**

In any organization, in any system — problems are easy to spot. But what sets leaders apart is the **willingness to solve**, not just criticize.

As Chairman of Mastek, I've seen this time and again — success belongs to those who raise their hands to own challenges. Be the person who contributes, collaborates, and builds. And today, you're stepping into a world that **desperately needs solutions** — especially in the space you've trained for: **Advanced Analytics**.

You now hold a **Post Graduate Diploma in Advanced Analytics** — a degree that is as relevant as it is powerful.

Across the boards I serve on, I see analytics courses attracting the highest interest — and rightly so. This is the **era of data-driven decision making**. We are generating zettabytes of data every single day — but are we really using it?

Industries like **consumer marketing, clinical trials, telecom, social media** — they're all seeking people who can turn noise into insights. That's where you come in. From roles like **Data Analysts, Business Intelligence Professionals**, to **Product Managers and Decision Scientists** — you have an expansive runway ahead.

But remember — analytics is changing fast. You've heard of **ChatGPT** and **Large Language Models**, but we're entering a new wave: **Agentic AI**.

Agentic AI is not just about passive insights — it **autonomously makes decisions**, plans, and takes actions. It doesn't replace you, it **augments you**.

As data professionals, you will now spend less time cleaning data — and more time **interpreting business signals, spotting anomalies, and enabling strategy**. Your job is moving up the value chain — and that's a good thing.

You'll have to **design systems** that allow AI agents to act across previously siloed departments. You'll need to constantly observe, adapt, and **learn faster than the technology itself**.

The age of Agentic AI is not coming — it's here. And **you are the vanguard**.

## 2. Nurture Every Relationship

While skills matter, relationships will accelerate your growth. The network you've built at IIMA — your batchmates, seniors, alumni — they're not just contacts. **They're lifelong collaborators.**

Let me share a personal story. Back in 1979, when I was still a student, I found my co-founders, my classmates, and I began what later became **Mastek**. At the time, **software development was virtually unknown** in India. But we took the leap. Even when being IIMA students we got guidance encouragement from Professors like **Patel, Bhatnagar, and Mohan Kaul**.

We went to Delhi to meet then policymakers in Department of Electronics to guide us. We met influential IIMA alumni. **This institute and its people shaped the Indian IT industry.** I was the founder member of **NASSCOM** and later Chairman of Nasscom too, so I can say this with confidence.

Make full use of the **libraries, mentors, alumni, and friendships**. They will open doors long after you leave this campus.

## 3. With Privilege Comes Responsibility

Graduating from IIM Ahmedabad is no small achievement. You are now among the most privileged professionals in the country. But with that privilege comes a duty — to act with **ethics, integrity, and accountability**.

You will help businesses grow. You will advise governments and social organizations. And you also have a responsibility to **give back** — to this institute, and to society.

Whether it's recommending IIMA to colleagues, mentoring juniors, or contributing in your own way — remember: **you are now an ambassador of IIMA**.

Personally, I contributed by helping establish a **Leadership Centre** here — focused on leadership research and impact. You'll find your own path to give back, too.

## **In Closing: Your Journey is Just Beginning**

Let me end with a small story.

I started as a mechanical engineer. I never imagined I would enter IT — let alone become an entrepreneur. But life has its own plans. Your career may not unfold exactly as you expect. And that's okay.

What matters is this:

- **Do what you love**
- **Play to your strengths**
- **Be curious, stay adaptable**
- **And most importantly, enjoy the journey**

Let me leave you with a line I hold dear from the **Bhagavad Gita**:

**“Karmanye Vadhikaraste, Ma Phaleshu Kadaachana”**  
*You have a right to action, not to its fruits.*

So go out there. Give your best. Enjoy the work.  
The rest will follow.