

The Indian Mind

Excerpts of a speech delivered by Dr. Mashelkar, Director General, CSIR at the HCL Mind Conclave, Noida on 15th January 2004

“..Let us look at this century, this century, it has been acknowledged, is going to be the century of knowledge. That is very clear. Some people go beyond that, it is going to be the century of mind. Then I do believe that it is to be an Indian century for a simple reason, that Ajai mentioned Idea; Indian mind is the best that is going around. If one looks at different nations, looks at their histories and see what were the different points, which actually came, which made a difference and made them grow, made their economic progress possible. They are different for different countries and economies. If you look at the United States of America, it was roads and railways, which actually spurred their economic growth. If you look at Denmark, it was milk and milk products; if you look at Sweden, at a point of time it was timber and timber-based products. If you look at Britain, it was textiles. If you look at the Middle East, obviously, it was oil. What is going to be the oil for India in the 21st Century? I think there is only one answer, which oil is going to be Indian mind. And I say so, so very confidently because we are seeing its evidence. You just talk about software professionals, generating 20 per cent of our exports and there are briefs, as I was reading about -- the other day reaching 30 per cent. You can very well imagine that that little tip of the iceberg that you have of an Indian population. Today we are dreaming in terms of its continuing -- yes, it is difficult -- that is the progress of Indian mind. If one looks at Indian mind, one will find that this is not a recent phenomenon. It was always a powerful mind. Today you talk about, let us say the information society, the digital word and so on and so forth. If you look at primary digits which comprise zero and one, one proudly take the credit for the fact that it was an Indian mind that at a point in time which invented zero. So as to say, if we had not invented, maybe, somebody else would have invented it. But we can take pride for the fact that, yes, the today's digital economy is somehow or the other is based on something that the Indian mind did. We talk about information technology, we talk about biotechnology, and we talk human being technology, we talk about modern biotechnology. There again India, as the whole world knows, it made names..”

“..We do not win; we do not take gold medals in Olympics in athletics and so on. But when it comes to Olympics of mind, we win gold. I do not know how many of you are aware, but there are chemistry Olympiads, physics Olympiads, mathematics Olympiads, etc., that our young people are participating in. Do you know these young people carry away the largest number of gold medals specifically? So, when it comes to Olympics of mind, we happen to be the winners basically. This continues and this will continue..”

“.. It is going to be on the strength of that Indian mind by 21st century of the Indian minds. We are not going to win because you are leaders in software; you are not going to win because you are leader in hardware. You are going to win because you leaders in mind..”