

IIMA's 47th Annual Convocation: March 24, 2012

Address by Dr. Vijaypat Singhania, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIMA

Mr. KV Kamath, Members of the Society and the Board of Governors.

Parents, Students,

Ladies & Gentlemen.

Good evening and welcome to the 47th Annual Convocation of the IIM Ahmedabad.

It is a privilege to have Mr. Kamath with us here this evening. It is indeed befitting that we have an alumnus as Chief Guest for the convocation on completion of fifty years of the Institute.

The year that has gone by has been a difficult year for the world and India. The global economy has continued to falter and the impact has been felt by the Indian economy. The year was also difficult due to impending elections in some important states. Despite these difficulties, the Institute was able to take strides towards becoming more autonomous in its functioning. After continual dialogue with the government for about two years, the MoA and the Rules governing the Institute's functioning and relationship with the government were amended. These now provide much greater freedom of action to the Board. This puts an added responsibility on the Board to deliver even better performance than what has been delivered in the past.

Over the last three years, the Institute also went through detailed introspection on its strategy and functioning. Several measures have been implemented to improve the administration of the Institute as well as improve the quantum and quality of research and publications being done by the Institute. The Institute needs to provide a new and more effective infrastructure that will enable more meaningful and internationally accepted research. These measures will bear fruit in the future, and IIM-A would become even better known for innovative ideas in management that have the ability to transform organizations and societies.

Mera Bharat Mahan - INDIA, is indeed a great country - full of contradictions.

We talk of corruption, but who started it in the first place? We forget we inherited it for generations past. The Brits made the Maharajahs corrupt, the Maharajahs bought the Thakurs, who bought the Zamindars & the Collectors, and so on it went down the line. Authority without responsibility brought in unbridled power, and the fickle dramatically ever changing economic policies of the Government, brought in the need for self protection in the short-term, losing sight of their long term implications. I have seen the days of an Income Tax rate of 97.75% in addition to a wealth tax of 4% chargeable at market values of assets, requiring sale of assets to pay tax, attracting an additional CG Tax rate on top of it. For some years I have personally paid total taxes in excess of 120% of my income. In recent times though I remember the 'corruption fever' was reignited by a former senior most Minister of the Indian government who built it into the system so deep that many more generations will be buried under it. Not one I daresay, it will take a hundred Hazares' to even make a dent. Our thinking has changed, our

values have degraded. Does our Institute teach the future administrators, how to analyze its root causes and how to rectify them? I feel lack of education prevents us thinking of alternatives, or the long term consequences of our actions. I ask the parents to teach their kids not only what their children should do, but more important, what they should not do. Can this short-term approach to making quick money here and now, be converted into a philosophy for our long-term welfare? In which we can teach kids to care and to love - with a high level of integrity...to be understanding of others needs, respect for the seniors & the elderly, and most important, teach the politicians and the bureaucrats how to run an honest country. Out of 176 countries surveyed for corruption, India comes at number 4. When I told a senior politician that this was shameful, he said look at the bright side, there are three countries more corrupt than us!!!

A major change is required in our thinking. Let us work toward it.

I would be relinquishing office by the end of March. This would be my last convocation as Chairman of the IIM-A Society and the governing Board. I am happy to report that, with concerted efforts, the Institute has been able to put its finances on a sound footing. With the entry of foreign institutions in to India, the Institute would need funds on a much larger scale to be able to compete effectively with much better endowed institutions. Over the last year and a half, in the back drop of golden jubilee celebrations, the Institute has been able to reach out to alumni of the Institute to contribute to building a corpus for supporting the Institute's activities.

I am happy to note that my period coincided with the Institute winning global recognition. IIMA was accredited by EQUIS in June 2008, the first Indian b-school to receive such recognition. It was reaccredited in 2011. The PGP was ranked by FT at 8 globally, the first time it got considered for ranking in 2010. It was ranked at 7 by FT in 2011. The PGPM got ranked at 11 globally by FT in 2011, the first time it was considered for ranking. It retained its ranking in 2012. The Institute continues to be ranked in the top 100 business schools in the world by the Economist.

Graduates from IIM-A occupy important positions in all types of organizations, including the government. A significant proportion of graduates of the Institute have taken the path less trodden and become entrepreneurs; many of them have established organizations that work among the poor and less privileged in society. Over the years, the alumni of the Institute have contributed immensely to both the economic and social development of the nation.

I would urge the graduating students to take inspiration from the contributions of your illustrious predecessors. I would urge you to go out with a commitment to use the knowledge you have acquired to transforming the society so as to fulfill the pledge we made to ourselves at the time of independence, articulated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his maiden speech as the first Prime Minister of independent India, 'to wipe every tear, from every eye'. The happenings around us show that the nation is desperately in need of such a spirit of service from its young. Only then would the sacrifices made by your parents to educate you at IIM-A, not go in vain.

I wish you the very best in life. Jai Hind.