

## CONVOCATION ADDRESS BY DIRECTOR, IIMA (1993)

Mr. Chairman, the Chief Guest the Honourable Shri Narasimha Rao the Prime Minister of India, His Excellency the Governor of Gujarat, the Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat, members of the IIMA Society and Board, distinguished guests, my faculty colleagues and the graduates of IIMA.

After a quarter century a Prime Minister of India has once again graced this Institute. Smt. Indira Gandhi came here when this Institute was a mere fledgling. Mr. Naramsimha Rao comes here when this Institute has grown into a banyan tree with not one but many roots in the Indian soil. It is particularly appropriate that a Prime Minister of India on whose shoulders rests the destiny of 900 million people should visit this Institute when it has completed 30 years of its functioning. Mr. Prime Minister we are deeply grateful for the blessings you have showered on this Institute and its graduating doctoral and masters level students. These students will ever remember that their diplomas have been sanctified by a man of peace and wisdom and tolerance and goodness, a man who is striving to bring a different sort of freedom to this country from the one that Gandhiji brought.

We are also privileged that the two foremost leaders of the State of Gujarat, the Governor and the Chief Minister, are with us on this milestone day. My greetings also to all the distinguished guests, especially the parents of the students who have graduated today. They have added to our joy by their presence.

Our congratulations to the six of you who grasp in their hands the highest badge of scholarship of this Institute. You have gone through four years or more of cerebral toil in the quest for knowledge.

Management, however, is not an ivory tower discipline. Contact with reality is indispensable for creative scholarship. Fly your mental kites high. But keep your feet planted firmly in the flux of decision making, conflict resolution, resource allocation, coordination and control, and the often grimy human relationships at work. I am reminded of Herbert Simon, Nobel laureate, perhaps the greatest management theorist of this century. Before the age of 20 Simon had developed and run with the help of some friends, a 2000 acre farm in Wisconsin. Before he got his Ph.D. at the age of 26 he had run a public bureaucracy and a research organization. These managerial experiences were the well from which he drew his brilliant theories of bounded rationality and its implications for how organizations function. I wish you endless and fruitful sprints between the real and the imaginative. May you climb miles.

When I look at the forest of gowns of the freshly minted MBAs and the young and eager minds shimmering in its midst I cannot help experience a sense of awe. How alive you look. But will you still be so alive a dozen years from now or will you merely exist? To live is to be curious, to experiment, to quarrel with the conventional and seek the innovative, to give much more than one takes, to give up a lot for something worthwhile, to master the difficult, to risk failure. To exist is to be safe, to live contentedly within a cage of habits, to accumulate without asking why, to climb the ladder without knowing for what larger purpose. The choices you make now - about the organization you work in, the kind of work you do, the friends and

spouse you select, the passions you pursue - will determine how alive you remain years from now. I hope you will choose living over existing.

This brings me to the question of managerial leadership. It is not enough that you be full of beans and continually grow and develop. You must empower others in a chain reaction that propels this country's industry forward. You belong to a select band of young people that has been carefully chosen and trained to fulfil an important mission, that of professionalising management in the country. Professionalising management does not merely mean ensuring that the tools and techniques of management you have learnt from books get practised where you work. Professionalisation in our context means much more. It means setting a personal example for conduct, ethics, and work; high sensitivity to societal needs and expectations; dynamism and entrepreneurship; a passion for excellence; a larger vision of growth and development; a sense of mission within a poor and troubled society struggling to overcome stagnation; and a commitment to useful innovation. Managerial professionalism in our context does not mean earning five figure monthly salaries in multinationals. It means change agency to get your organization to play its part in the transformation of this country.

This Institute has completed 30 years. Thirty years of existence is no big deal. It is the quality that counts. Starting from scratch we have achieved much : three excellent academic programmes, training for 20000 managers and administrators from thousands of organizations, a vast research effort, help to scores of other academic institutions in India and beyond, a social vision that has led us to make an impact not just on industrial management but also agricultural and rural development management, and management of such core sectors as education, health

and population, transportation, and energy. In the process we have built up a large gene pool of management know-how and know-why.

But we at IIMA are bugged by a restless spirit. We refuse to rest on our laurels and limit ourselves to doing what we have been good at doing. We have set our sights high for the next decade. We would like to play a significant role in making liberalisation work. Indeed we brainstormed about this last year and have presented to the Prime Minister several innovative ideas that can make liberalisation work more effectively. We would like to help in changing the mindset of Indian business from a domestic orientation to a global one. We want to develop expertise in international management suited to our context. We want to study the dynamic, innovative, pioneering, wealth creating form of entrepreneurship and lead the pack in popularising it. We want to contribute to much more effective management of Government itself and various public systems and agencies through research, case studies, and training. We want to study how public policies get managed and thereby help in the more effective enactment and implementation of public policies, specially industry-related policies. We would like to restructure our MBA programme so that it produces not merely competent professionals but potential leaders that can transform our industry. These are vast tasks. Some may say that they are beyond our grasp. But then great endeavours are mostly beyond one's grasp. Indeed, it is precisely this synapse that builds up excitement and charge and makes ascent to a new height possible. That has been and will be the way of this Institute.

Sayonara, our young ambassadors. May we become partners in this most exciting of times in this most exciting of countries. You have our hearty support in the adventure ahead of you

and our invitation to return again and again to your alma mater. And thanks Mr. Prime Minister for bringing alive a precious moment in the life of an institution in a manner only a philosopher king can.