

Indian Institute of Management
Ahmedabad

Fifth Annual Convocation
April 11, 1970

Speech of Mr. S. L. Kirloskar, Chairman of IIMA Society

Mr. Jha, ladies and gentlemen:

May I welcome you to the fifth annual convocation of the two-year Post-Graduate Programme conducted by our Institute. I would particularly like to welcome our Chief Guest Mr. L. K. Jha. I am fully aware of the pressures on Mr. Jha's time particularly in view of his forthcoming assignment to represent our country in the United States of America. Perhaps it is particularly appropriate that Mr. Jha, as Ambassador-designate to the USA, should see at first hand an outstanding example of the outcome of international collaboration in the educational field. As you are all aware, this Institute was started seven years ago with the collaboration of the Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, and we are grateful to them for the assistance they gave us in building a basic framework of this institution. Even though our collaboration formally ended in 1966, the relationship between the two institutions has remained as close as it ever was. The success of this collaboration was due not to the fact of collaboration itself, but to the mutual understanding that this Institute must be

a truly Indian institution. Over the few years of its existence the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad has developed a strong character of its own, and a pattern of activities which reflects its own creativity. It has now developed relationships with many other institutions all over the world that are concerned with management education.

Institutions cannot be transplanted. They must, in a basic sense, reflect the culture and the needs of the environments in which they are functioning. If we had merely tried to reproduce the activities, methodologies and the mannerisms of Harvard, we undoubtedly would have failed to build an effective national Institute. We would be the first to admit that what we are doing is not entirely original. We have adapted ideas that have been developed elsewhere, we have learnt from the experience of others; but have done so through a process of testing, adjusting and adapting, a process which, with growing institutional maturity, results in the generation of our own ideas.

We have developed as an Indian institution and yet are not parochial. Our activities are designed to meet the very real needs of the country, but at the same time we have kept our mind open and receptive to new ideas from wherever they may originate. The field of management education is developing very fast. This pace is constantly accelerating along with the increasing rate of technological progress. We would be short-sighted, narrow-minded and self-defeating if we were to regard the building of our national character with a xenophobic exclusivity which shuts out the world of ideas beyond the boundaries of our nation. Our roots must be firm in Indian soil, but

our flowers will be open to the sun.

This Institute is devoted to the development and application of knowledge. I emphasise the word application since it is our endeavour to help people and organisations improve their management practices. It is our responsibility to see that these ideas are used and in fact form a part of the individual's operative thinking and the organisation's culture. To do this we must build a body of knowledge on the experience that exists. Experience cannot be transferred. Experience will be taken as the raw material and, within the conceptual framework of management science, it is fashioned into a form that is capable of assimilation.

The young men and women who are graduating today have had the considerable benefit of going through this programme which blends conceptual development in this field of education with the experience of the Indian environment. The many hundreds of cases that are used in this and other Executive Development Programmes have been collected by the faculty and research staff of this Institute from the field. They have been collected from industrial companies and other organisations and reflect actual and real problems which these organisations faced. If we assume that knowledge must be applied, an institution like this would fail in its responsibility if it merely told its students "This is the theoretical concept. It is up to you to see whether it has any application in the Indian context or not." On the other hand, a student in this programme exercises his conceptual capabilities on the real problems which the faculty bring into the class room.

Even this, however, is not enough to complete the picture of applied education. We must not merely be a borrower of knowledge, but must also contribute to the body of knowledge. It is important, therefore that the Institute is undertaking a considerable amount of research. Such research will help in the development of a framework of knowledge based on the circumstances of our country's development. We cannot improve practices unless we know what the existing practices are. Knowing what they are, we can help their improvement only if our basis of knowledge is strong. We can improve our basis of knowledge only if our capabilities of generating knowledge exists.

It is vital for an applied institution to integrate itself with those which it intends to help. In every activity which the Institute undertakes the endeavour is to bring about this integration. Most of the organisations which have and will employ our young men and women from this programme have participated in the many Executive Programmes conducted by the Institute. To a different degree they have undergone a similar learning process. They know approximately what these young people have been through over these two years. They have also discussed the materials developed by our faculty. It is from their organisations that much of the materials have been gathered. It is in their organisations that much of the research work is done. It is from our faculty's experience with these organisations that we learn how to respond to the environment.

When I say that this Institute has developed its own national character, I mean that it has based its educational developments

on the realities of India. It has brought these realities to those who must work in the Indian environment and has integrated itself with those in this country whom it must serve.

Many statements have been made by the government, public and private industry and other organisations extolling the virtues of management education and insisting upon its necessity in relation to the country's development. I hope that it is not intended by those who make such a statement to confine themselves to lip-service of the obvious. If they mean what they say, I hope they understand what it means. Applied education is, of necessity, expensive. If the staff must achieve what I have described they must be given the facilities to do so. Building teaching material in the field, doing research in the field, solving problems in the field, will undoubtedly require much larger resources than will be needed in purely desk work. In order to get all this work done we need a larger staff than would be the case if staff requirements were based on out-moded faculty-student ratios. Private industry has in the past, and continues to, express its confidence in this Institute by the support that is being given. However, the government's policy towards the financing of technical education does cause us considerable apprehension. The revised Fourth Five Year Plan outlay on direct central support to technical education is only Rs. 67 crores. On the one hand this is wholly inadequate to maintain the quality of excellence which the national technical institutions have built up. On the other hand, it allows for hardly any development at all, so that, once again, in rapidly advancing technological fields we are likely to be left behind. It is argued in the government that industry should primarily support Institutes such

as this. I will agree with this up to a point, but this argument can be exaggerated. It is in the national interest that the government should provide the infrastructure within which the country's managerial manpower can be developed. This is a social responsibility of the government. When these Institutes were first established they were intended to be joint ventures between the government and industry. They still are. Private industry is assisting the Institute and I hope will increase its support. But in terms of a joint venture, the government cannot absolve itself of its continuing responsibility. As a country, if we want applied educational institutions and if we want institutions of excellence, it is as appropriate a charge on general revenues as the building of industry itself. I would strongly suggest to the Government of India that they should have another and closer look at the role which Institutes like this must play in the country and the meagre and wholly inadequate provisions that they make for their existence. I would also like to suggest to public sector corporations that in addition to using the services of this Institute, which they do in large measure, they also should make a direct and substantial investment towards the funding of this institution. I would suggest to the government that, rather than deter, they should positively encourage public sector enterprises to donate to this Institute. In opening this convocation which concludes this academic year I make this appeal-that we, as a nation, should exercise restraint in the proliferation of institutions and in the wasteful dissipation of

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limited resources; that we should be conscious of the need to build quality and not give way to the temptation to produce cheap quality and that it is the social responsibility of our government to see that this is achieved.

Once again, Mr. Jha, may I welcome you to this Institute and so have you associated with us in our endeavours.
