

Indian Institute of Management  
Ahmedabad

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TENTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION

SPEECH BY DR SAMUEL PAUL, DIRECTOR, IIMA

Mr Chairman, Mr Pai, Mr Lalbhai, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The annual convocation marks the close of an academic year at the Institute. I am deeply grateful to all of you present here for your participation in this function. On behalf of the Institute, I would like to express our special thanks to Mr T A Pai for being with us this afternoon to deliver the convocation address. Sir, I have no doubt that your words of advice to the young men and women leaving the Institute today will inspire and guide them as they go out into the wide world. I am indeed grateful to you for your presence in our midst on this occasion.

This convocation is unique in that we have used this occasion to honour and publicly express our appreciation to Sheth Sri Kasturbhai Lalbhai for his services to the Institute. Though the Chairman and the Chief Guest have dwelt on his pioneering role in relation to this Institute, I hope you will bear with me if I add a few words about him and what he has meant to me. I have never learnt so much in so short a period of time from anyone as I have from Sheth Kasturbhai. As a naive academic when I stepped into an administrative role with little experience,

stumbling and uncertain, he held my hands, encouraged and supported me. I have marvelled at his qualities of forthrightness, simplicity, mastery of detail and thoughtfulness. Whenever the Institute's autonomy and underlying principles were at stake, Sheth Kasturbhai was firm and foremost in upholding them. Yet he always respected the views of those responsible for the operations of the Institute. Sir, for all that you have taught me and my colleagues, and for your warmth, support and understanding, I am and will forever remain grateful to you.

As is customary on this occasion, I shall now briefly review the highlights of our activities since we last met. This year, we admitted a total of 171 students to our Post-Graduate Programme, the largest group we ever had. This class includes 26 students who will take a special package of courses in agricultural management. Our Fellow Programme in Management which awards the equivalent of a doctoral degree has 23 students. A total of 18 management development programmes including two conducted by our Centre for Regional Management Studies were held this year with 800 participants. Nearly 55% of the participants in these programmes were from the public sector. Six programmes for practising managers and university teachers will be offered during this summer. Our short term programmes cover a wide spectrum, from general management and functional programmes to programmes for government administrators, rural development personnel and small and medium industrialists.

This morning, a colloquium was held on the campus to

highlight our new research activities. Several important and nationally significant projects were reported on this occasion. In addition to a number of studies under way in industrial management, a major project on rural development with an accent on action research has been initiated. Eight new projects have been completed by the Centre for Management in Agriculture. Research on educational systems and management of family planning programmes have made considerable progress. We are currently planning research on energy management, transport, and management of local government and are moving towards the concept of a public systems group at the Institute which will be the focal point for work on these diverse government related systems and programmes.

The Institute has decided to bring out a new Journal with effect from August 1975. We hope that Vikalpa, the Journal for decision makers, will be a leader in its field.

Two new professorships endowed by the State Trading Corporation and the Industrial Finance Corporation of India respectively have been established at the Institute this year. I am happy to announce that Prof. S K Bhattacharyya has been appointed the IFCI Professor of Management and Prof. Subroto Sen Gupta, the STC Visiting Professor of Marketing. We are grateful to the donor corporations for their vision, initiative, and interest in honouring and strengthening our faculty capabilities. With the help of our alumni, we have established this year two new PGP scholarship funds in memory of the late Professors B K Hegde and Warren Haynes. I am grateful to the chapters of our

Alumni Association in different parts of the country and friends from abroad for their encouragement and support in this endeavour.

As the chairman observed, this convocation marks the graduation of the tenth batch of our Post-Graduate Programme. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of my thoughts and concerns about this programme which seems to have attracted considerable attention in the world of professional management.

The number of young men and women who have successfully completed our Post-Graduate Programme and are working in a variety of organisations is close to a thousand. Several from the earlier batches have risen to senior positions in their organisations. Some have set up their own enterprises and are doing extremely well. The number going into public sector companies and core sector industries has markedly increased. The quality of incoming students has been steadily rising. Our annual out-turn of graduates is still small and therefore the imbalance between the supply and demand continues.

For a young programme, these are indeed important and reassuring accomplishments. The faculty, staff, and students who over the years have shaped and brought the programme to its present level can certainly be proud of its record. Yet during this tenth anniversary year of the Post-Graduate Programme, we paused and asked a number of searching questions among ourselves about the direction and relevance

of this programme, about its impact and future. Our concerns were threefold: First, are the thrust and design of the programme such that those who complete it are well equipped to participate in the professionalisation of management of important sectors of the economy? Second, even if they are equipped, are they motivated to take up the challenge and adapt themselves to the needs of the organisations for which they work? Third, is the environment, both at the Institute and outside, conducive to the creation of attitudes and values that society would expect of these graduates?

The Post-Graduate Programme is under constant review and scrutiny by the faculty. I believe that its focus is appropriate to the development of professional management both in the private and public sectors of the economy. The design of the programme, however, is based on two critical assumptions about the environment of organisations. It assumes that competence will enjoy a premium over confidence where people are involved and that the environment will foster a spirit of competition and not collusion. Apart from learning concepts and tools, the Programme enables the student to take a total, integrated view of any operation. Not many people realise that nearly two thirds of the teaching materials used in this programme are based on Indian experience. The specialisation in agricultural management is another important adaptation to the needs of the environment. Unfortunately, the programme cannot be tailored to meet the specific needs and

problems of every industry and enterprise. To the graduating class of 1975, may I say that this is where your ingenuity should come into play. I hope that you who have been carefully selected and exposed to a variety of situations will have the skills and motivation to adapt, improvise and innovate.

Our graduates have attracted public attention and noise out of proportion to their numbers. It is said about our architecture that no one who encounters it will be left indifferent. You are either for it or against it. Our graduates also seem to evoke strong responses. We have many success stories about them. We have also come across problem cases. Perhaps some problems of adjustment and unrealistic expectations are unavoidable. Excess demand tends to breed indifference and reluctance to adjust and adapt. To my young friends, may I say that your learning and brand image will be of no avail unless by your humility, understanding, and willingness to listen you prove yourselves worthy of the responsibilities you seek.

The hardest of all is the question about attitudes and values. How much of it can be imparted in the classroom? Does an intellectual understanding of values guarantee its practice? Will the determination of a few to uphold what is right and fair survive in an environment in which lip service is paid to values with no action to support it? I don't know. But it has heartened me to hear once in a

while from some of our graduates that they had resigned their jobs because they found their own sense of ethics to be in conflict with that of the organisations concerned. The task before the professional managers of our country today is not only to manage efficiently but also to stand up for certain values, and attitudes appropriate to our culture and society. May I appeal to you, young men and women, to place the integrity of your profession and the concern for public good above everything else.

From the sheltered walls of academia, as we now send you out into the world of practice, our best wishes go with you. We are confident that you will prove worthy of the trust that has been placed in you. Good bye and Good luck.