

SPEECH OF
DR. V.S. VIAS, DIRECTOR, IIMA,
AT THE 15TH CONVOCATION
OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, AHMEDABAD,
ON APRIL 8, 1980.

Vice-President, Shri Hidayatullah, Chairman of the IIMA Board,
Shri Keshub Mahindra, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a matter of great pleasure for us in having you all with us today.

Mr. Vice-President, we are honoured, by your presence in our midst. Sir, you represent not only the two highest offices in our country, but you have shown how one can attain such exalted positions in public life without compromising one's principles.

This Institute has traversed 19 years. Eighteen years is a sufficiently long time in the history of an institution. It is an adequate period to consolidate the gains and reach out to new areas which require some risk-bearing capacity. The record of activities during this academic year suggests that we have been able to achieve both in some measure. However, there is no scope for complacency. But there is also every reason to be satisfied.

This year we increased the size of the post-graduate class from 150 to 180. With the given physical resources, particularly of the dormitories and class rooms, we have reached the limit of student expansion for the time being.

We are fully aware of the demand for the type of education imparted by the Institute. As in the past, this year also more than 6,000

applicants wanted admission to our Post-Graduate Programme. We can satisfy only a fraction of this demand. What we are striving at, as I had reported last year, is to provide management education which can serve as a standard for others to approximate and to strengthen other management training institutions by sharing with them our experience and our limited resources.

The pursuit of excellence requires that we continuously examine and assess whatever we are doing. In the Institute we have evolved mechanisms to get feedback from the students, the faculty, and our client groups, particularly those who employ our students. We use this feedback to decide upon the requisite changes in the existing courses and also the introduction of new courses. Some of the courses which have been introduced this year or for which preparatory work is going on are Internal Change Agents, Management of Creativity, Fiscal Policy and Business, Seminar on Personnel Management, Social Development, and the like. As a part of the training activities of the Centre for Management in Agriculture, a programme for rural entrepreneurs is also being considered.

One of the charges, which in my view is not altogether a wrong charge, levied on the institutions like ours is that our students are not sufficiently alive to social, political, and economic realities of our country. Fortunately, the students themselves have realized this lacuna in their learning, and this year they, largely with their own effort, organized a three-day seminar on

"Alternatives in Social Development." For each topic discussed in the seminar, the students prepared the issue papers and invited some of the most knowledgeable and experienced persons in the subject to comment on the issues raised.

Our experience of placement this year once again proved that there is no dearth of opportunities for well-trained, alert, and sensitive young men and women. Within three weeks of the opening of the placement activities all the students get jobs of their choice. In fact, the abundance of jobs is creating a problem. Placement, like other activities of the Institute, demands a sense of direction and a degree of self-imposed discipline. We will have to remain conscious, all the time, to fulfil the expected norms, more so because of the prestige imparted to the IIMA training.

Our effort to strengthen other management institutions got a fillip with the Education Ministry as well as the University Grants Commission recognizing our Programme for the Development of Management Faculty under their respective Quality Improvement Programmes. This has enabled a large number of less endowed institutions to sponsor their faculty for a one year training at the Institute. In this case also physical facilities prevent us from admitting more than 15 participants, though we know that there is a great need for training of management teachers in this country and in other developing countries. This summer at the request of

Tribhuvan University, Nepal, we will be conducting a three-week course for the management teachers working with various institutions in Nepal.

While the Programme for the Development of Management Faculty serves as a post-entry programme, the Fellow Programme in Management, which is equivalent to a Ph.D. Programme, serves basically as a pre-entry programme for preparing teachers and researchers in management sciences. This year we have the largest number of successful Fellow Programme candidates. The work which these young men and women are doing is in a way pushing the frontiers of knowledge in management sciences. We take justifiable pride in this programme.

The Institute's faculty and its other resources are spent not just on 400 odd FGP, FPM, or PDMF participants. This academic year nearly 1,000 practising managers were trained in 35 different Management Development Programmes. These 35 programmes included the well-established general management programmes like the 3-Tier Programme and the Management Education Programme, functional programmes such as those dealing with Computer and Information Systems, and target group oriented programmes like those for handloom managers and forest managers.

Every year the package of Management Development Programmes is reviewed and necessary additions, deletions, and alterations are made. Let me mention three major developments in this area.

First, progressively we are going towards two sets of programmes under this activity -- long-term skill-imparting courses on the one hand and short seminar and workshop type of sensitising effort on the other.

Second, we are orienting more of these programmes to various facets of development administration. We do hope that within a year's time we will be able to offer a full-fledged programme in development administration. We are happy that the decision makers in public sector enterprises and those supervising public systems have started making adequate use of our programmes.

Third, in the management development programmes more than in any other activity of the Institute, we see scope for international collaboration. This year we had organized two programmes with the collaboration of the ILO and the FAO. In a number of existing programmes participation of practising managers, administrators, and teachers from other developing countries is progressively increasing.

There is another aspect of the Institute's activities which I would like to bring to your notice. This is our effort to understand and also contribute to the mainstream of thinking on social and policy issues. The annual Vikram Sarabhai Lecture was given by Prof. Rajni Kothari. Five reputed scholars, artists, and journalists have addressed the IIMA Community in the Institute Lecture Series. We organized this year's IIMA Society Conference on the theme of "Human Resources Development, Marketing, and Control Systems." We were fortunate

to have Professor Harry Hansen, Director of the European Centre for Management Development (IMELE), Lausanne, to preside and guide our deliberations. The second of the seminars on the National Policy Issues was organized on the theme of "International Dimensions of Indian Business." Thirty-three top ranking officials from the Government of India and Reserve Bank of India, chairmen of public sector banks, chairmen or senior managers of the public and private sector organizations attended this seminar.

Another major way in which the faculty has made its contribution is by its research and publications. Apart from a number of working papers, research reports, and journal articles, more than 10 books were published by the faculty on different aspects of management education. These publications have made significant contribution in bringing management education closer to Indian realities without sacrificing the rigours of the relevant disciplines.

All this was made possible because of the appreciation of the Institute's contribution in its chosen field. The concrete manifestation of the goodwill and recognition came by way of instituting chairs by two leading organizations — the State Bank of India Chair on Rural Development and the Bank of Baroda Chair on International Banking and Finance.

While this was a year of all round achievements, thanks to the excellent support from all our publics and sincere effort of the faculty and the staff of the Institute, this year was also a sad year for us.

We lost one of the pillars of the Institute, Seth Kasturbhai Lalbhai. In his death we have lost a friend, philosopher, and guide. A void has been created, and it will be difficult to fill this void. I am sure that the grateful Board and the appreciative IIMA Society will devise appropriate ways to commemorate Seth Kasturbhai's association with the Institute.

I would like to impress upon this graduating class the basic values and, more than abstract values, the unique managerial style which he symbolized. The lessons which we can learn from a successful and socially respected manager like Seth Kasturbhai are many. I will emphasize only two aspects of his style which to my mind are important for all of you who will be entering into the management career.

The first aspect is an implicit sense of fairness -- fairness to the consumer, to the worker, to the society, and, of course, to oneself. In this unperfect world, the pursuit of idealistic standards is very difficult. But the answer is neither nihilism nor self-centred action. One can still lead a meaningful life if one is not totally impervious to the well-being of all those who are affected by one's actions. It was this sense of fair-play which brought universal respect and admiration to Seth Kasturbhai.

The other aspect to which I would draw your attention is the contribution of such people in evolving a national consensus. For growth, it is imperative that there is a convergence of views on the key issues of the policy and action if we have to make any headway.

With individualistic norms or sectional interests we will never be able to move forward. Seth Kasturbhai devoted his life and career in discovering and achieving the national consensus on a host of activities with which he was involved.

While persons like Seth Kasturbhai contributed in building the national consensus, all of us in our own humble way can contribute in approximating our action to what is generally agreed upon by large sections of population. Once you translate issues needing decision into contemplated action and relate these actions to what you would consider the mainstream of thinking, it would not be difficult to arrive at decision rules which have broad societal sanction. It is not so difficult to reach hierarchical positions in organizations as to govern one's actions informed by somewhat larger and broader considerations than one's self-interest.

My graduating friends, since people like you are acknowledged as the meritorious and successful young men and women, an added responsibility is bestowed on you to see that you do set an example of competence tempered with compassion. Our society is still guided by the norms set by leaders in different walks of life. *परीक्षा*
व्यक्त जित्वा स्वयं कर्तव्यम् . The path that you will traverse will tempt and inspire others to follow. Which path you choose is, therefore, important. I fervently hope that you would make a conscious and considered choice in your career which this Institute would be proud of. Wish you all the best.

Thank you.