

## CONVOCATION SPEECH

by Director, IIMA (1992)

It is with great pleasure that on behalf of all of us I thank Shri Rajmohan Gandhi for his soul stirring speech. Rajmohanji is with us today not only because of his illustrious pedigree or because he is an M.P. He is with us because he, like his two illustrious grandfathers, stands for some values - decency, truth, fearlessness - that every professional must possess if he or she is to be called a professional. Rajmohanji has not won too many elections but he has won many hearts and minds through his work in the Moral Rearmament Movement, through his pen as the editor of Himmat, his biographies of Rajaji and Sardar Patel, and through his practice of value-based politics.

To the five of you who have navigated the rapids of learning and have finally arrived at the shore of boundless knowledge we bow to you for your heroic efforts. We welcome you to that select band of scholars whose lifelong pursuit is knowledge and its dissemination. That knowledge is not just the mundane knowledge of how to manage organizations and enterprises effectively. Behind this quest is the impulse of creating a mighty renaissance, a mighty upsurge of the Indian creative spirit. Like Nachiketa you came to us with questions. We may have no ultimate answers to

give. But we have tried to share with you our own urgent questions and concerns. Our best wishes go with you in your search for the gold of knowledge.

Now I turn to you my young friends. You came to us just two short years back. Most of you were recently grown up children. You go forth from here as adults and friends. You are bright and you have had the best post-graduate education this country has to offer. Your success is assured. Our good wishes for your success are redundant. But permit us to wish you instead the pangs of growth, the pain of struggling with large tasks, the agony of having to reject the expedient and the self-centered in favour of the principled and the noble.

The world out there is not as sheltered as the life you have lived so far. You will have moments when your knees shake and your palms water. You will also have moments when you do not know which way to turn. In those moments of panic and calamity remember these brick walls and the large spaces of the Louis Kahn Plaza and the voices booming in the classroom. They will give you strength. They will show the way.

Go forth to be distinguished ambassadors of this Institute. Go forth to be decent citizens of this

country. Go forth secure in knowledge that you are the bloodline of those great humans that have given to the world one of its truly great civilizations. Go forth as shapers of a modern, resurgent India.

This year has been a year of change at IIMA. There was a change of leadership. Dr. Khanna became the Chairman in May 1991 and Professor Narayan Sheth stepped down thereafter as Director and I took charge. Dr. Khanna as Vice Chairman of the University Grants Commission, is not only a seasoned administrator of academic institutions, he is also an eminent management expert. He is one of the leading experts on transportation management. We are grateful, sir, for your leadership and support.

This past year has seen significant changes in IIMA's academic, financial, and administrative strategies. The Government of India appointed the Kurien Committee to look into the functioning of the four IIMs. This impelled us to survey our functioning as an Institute of excellence. We discovered many strengths and some weaknesses too. A number of task forces were set up with faculty and staff membership to develop options vis-a-vis such issues in our staff administration as fairness in promotions, rewards for merit, human resource development, grievance redressal, discipline, work culture, decentralisation, benefits, etc. The

recommendations have been integrated into a coherent package of policy guidelines that is being implemented. To recognise scholastic excellence in the non-teaching staff, an annual Gyanvir award has been instituted which this year was shared jointly by Dr. Pichholiya, a research associate in the Centre for Management in Agriculture and Mr. J.F. Pandya, Deputy Librarian. Three Karmavir awards have been instituted to go to those retiring members of the non-academic staff who have provided to the Institute at least 15 years of dedicated service. This year the three recipients were Shri D.C. Antani, Shri R.M. Barot and Shri A.P. Pandey.

Several training programmes for the staff were started this year. A programme on budgeting was organised for the officers and supervisors, and one on communication and work ethic was organised for several class IV employees. More such programs are planned.

Task forces were set up to review several facets of our academic functioning: our consultancy function, issues related to our research staff, the mission of the PGP and the vision of managerial excellence that should animate this flagship programme of ours, learnings from the working of our existing thrust groups so as to benefit newer groups, structural flexibility; long term financial strategy of the Institute, prioritisation

among our new initiatives, etc. Our institutional strategy is beginning to emerge from the deliberations relating to these issues. Let me share it with you:

1. A staff policy whose core values are fairness, participative decision making, meritocracy, openness, human resource development, professionalism, and flexibility.
2. A policy of structural flexibility so that we can quickly form new academic groups to respond to new requirements and opportunities. During the year two full-fledged academic groups were created, namely the International Management Group and the Industrial Policy Management Group. The Baba Ambedkar Chair in International Management was instituted during the year by MMTC.
3. Greater strategic focus for each academic group. Every academic group, area and programme is in the process of developing strategic objectives for itself in a 3-5 years time frame.
4. Greater emphasis on the sentient nature of each academic group. This means much more review by the group as a whole of the research, case writing, teaching, training, consultancy, and institution building activities of the members of the group.

5. Identification of strategic partners on a global basis for the Institute's various activities, academic areas, programmes etc. as part of the Institute's effort at globalisation.

6. Greater emphasis on innovation, experimentation, pioneering, and servicing of strategic but poorly managed priority sectors. Just a week back IIMA co-hosted a brainstorm on economic reform and administrative changes that generated some 500 ideas.

7. Greater financial autonomy for the Institute. The Government of India has frozen our grant for this year and the next and the prospects for continuation of this freeze and even cutbacks are substantial. The Institute will have therefore to generate large additional revenues. After deliberations in the Faculty Council, in the Board, and with other IIMs, the decision has been taken to raise fees fairly steeply not only for 1992-1993 but also beyond. A strategy of raising large resources through donations, endowments, etc. is being worked out.

A convocation is a time of thanksgiving for bringing home one more bountiful harvest. If the Institute has continued to be lustrous it is because of the dedicated efforts of seven hundred members of the IIMA family, the

direction and guidance, given by the Board, and the relentless pursuit of excellence by the faculty. To the students too our special thanks - for the privilege we have had of locking horns with bright, eager minds, for learning from their sharp questions and for the noisy life they bring to the campus on Friday and Saturday nights. Goodbye, and may the tempo of your life be always high.