

Remarks at First Convocation of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, April 10, 1966

Shri Chagla, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I bring you greetings from a distant sister institution that is graced by the opportunity to share this day.

To those of you who, devoted to an ideal, brought this Institute into being, I bring greetings of admiration and respect. Your list is long, and you will forgive my oversights, I hope, of protocol: Sarabhai, Lalbhai, Tandon, Mangaldas, Mehta, Chowdhry, Isvaran, Choksi, Thacker, Chandiramani, Charat Ram, Dandekar the members of the Board of Governors and of the Society; Douglas Ensminger; and others whose contributions are great but quiet. You touched the Institute with your hands and gave it life. You created the Institute. You did not have to do it, but you knew it had to be, and that was enough to make you fill your busy lives with still another problem.

There is a theory that humanity progresses because it must. If indeed this is true, if humanity progresses inevitably, there is no need to worry. One can as the expression goes "snore away" and let humanity carry us to realms of perfection and delight. But humanity does not necessarily progress. One of the world's great intellectuals introduced his work on the philosophy of history by writing, "When we first contemplate the past, that is history, the first thing we see is nothing but ruins ". We must grip the future in our hands, and shape it, and not leave it to humanity, or to say it differently to others in general. To modestly correct another philosopher who said, "I exist, therefore I am" one would more thoughtfully say, "I create, therefore I am". To you who created this Institute we send greetings: here is a dream given reality in this class, in the guests assembled here, and the magnificent buildings that rise around us. What finer reward is there than to see the fruits of one's labors before one's eyes.

To the Faculty I bring also greetings of admiration and respect, and the keenest appreciation of your fortitude. You came by design from different walks of life: business, education, government; from the four corners of India and from abroad. You threw in your lot with a new venture in education, sensing its promise, yet risking your careers in being asked to take up new ways of work and thinking. You were men enough to be drawn by the challenge. You suffered through the shock of a year at Harvard; the uncertainties of forming a new faculty; the problems of blending the cultures of India and America. You had a thankless task in which you could not escape criticism: you were asked to teach, to research, to administer, to come to know each other, to forge new concepts of faculty behavior, and to do all of these things yesterday. To you speaking for my colleagues, I bow and offer my hand; you were asked to do the impossible, and you did it. If reward in life is in the overcoming of what is said to be impossible you are today rich men and women. As a professional in your field, I salute you.

And now to you, the class, for I have saved you for the last, I bring special greetings, greetings of warmth and affection, of hopes and challenges, of welcome into the ranks of the potential leaders of men. Overworked, underworked; misunderstood, understood; ambitious, lazy; insecure, secure - you are like your American counterparts who some sixty days from now will sit under the elm trees of Harvard Yard and say goodbye to the freedom of youth and accept with a rare combination of regret and pleasure the responsibilities of their own lives. For better or for worse you, like they, are now your own administrators, and you can and must run your own show.

This is now the first year a company such as yours has assembled here to mark the passing through of a class. You are almost now the "old boys", but for a few of your members who must always be the

“young girls”. You are indeed a small company, but you are unique, you are the first, you are the smallest class there will ever be, you have experienced the most, you cannot ever happen again, you will be the most remembered. You suffered, you learned, you protested, you laughed, you insulted. Will any class again run such a gamut of emotions? No.

Close your eyes. Close your eyes. I want you for a moment to see and hear in your imagination the great company of the young of India who will follow you and sit where you are. Sit closer for there are many to come, and they are important, and they crowd you, and all of you together must even so overflow the plains around us. Close your eyes. Can't you hear their voices, feel their presence? Be reminded by your senses that you are more than the class of 1966; you are part of the class of the twentieth century and of the twenty - first and beyond. No one has been here before you, there is no end to those who follow after you.

But you have a price to pay for being such a special company. You cannot truly be the leaders we hope you are unless as you work for whatever honours or wealth may be your lot in life, you sense your place in the ideals and rich culture of your great country, and give yourself to meeting its great needs. By this giving you will in the end indeed receive a good deal, no small and selfish gains, but the great rewards that come from service and dedication to goals larger than one's own. To those of you who may not wish to shoot your arrow so high I say, "pull back the bow", your aim is stronger than you think.

You are now the first. If your class were to have a heraldic crest, it should have inscribed on it the lines from a moving quatrain:

" Awake! For morning has flung the stars into the bowl of night and put the stars to light and lo! The hunter of the East Has caught the palace turret in a noose of light"

You are the morning. You must think, and feel, and dream in vivid imagery such as this if you are to grow the resolve to accomplish great things. Never fear - - life can be relied upon to place the obstacles to force the resolve. And men will not be surprised if you falter. Men do. But I am enough of a mystic to believe that life wants us to prevail in the end and chooses its obstacles to fit the man, asking only as its price for victory that we do in all tasks more than we need do. You are in the morning of your lives; make it a greater morning for others. If there be stars in your eyes, don't brush them away.