

Speech of Prof. V.S. Vyas, Director, IIMA on the
occasion of the 17th Convocation (3rd April 1982)

Your Excellency Smt. Mukerjee, Chairman of IIMA Board of Governors
Shri Keshub Mahindra, Members of IIMA Society, Faculty Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen and my Student friends:

First of all, I would like to add my own word of welcome to
that of our Chairman. We are particularly grateful to Her Excellency
Shrimati Sharda Mukerjee for having agreed to preside over this Con-
vocation. As Head of this State, as a renowned public figure and as
an individual who imbibes in herself grace and dignity with the
courage of conviction, your presence here Madam is the most welcome
feature of this Convocation.

This occasion is of special importance for us because we have
conferred today the honourous causa title of the Fellow of IIMA
Society on Shri J.R.D. Tata. In honouring him we have honoured our-
selves.

This year marks the completion of two decades of IIMA's existence.
From what we hear from our friends and wellwishers in this country
and abroad we feel that we have not belied the hopes of our founding
fathers. We are entering the third Decade with confidence and with
a sense of fulfillment, but certainly not of complacency. We appre-
ciate that whatever has been achieved is due to valuable contribution
by all sections of the IIMA Community, the Faculty, ^{the officers,} the supporting
staff and the students. We also realise and acknowledge the support

we have received from the industry and the government. In time to come there are more challenges to face, more promises to keep, more difficult paths to traverse. And we are not oblivious of these. More than anything else it is the tendency of critical self-evaluation which has ensured that we will not falter in our mission. We shall soon embark on an exercise to review what we have achieved, where our performance has not been adequate, where do we want to go and what means and mechanisms we would like to employ.

For past several years the Directors of this Institute utilise this occasion to report on various activities undertaken during the preceding year. Over the years the activities have become so multifarious and diversified that even to list them is becoming a time consuming task. I will, therefore, confine my remarks, as this occasion demands, to two major activities of the Institute, namely the Fellow Programme and the Post-Graduate Programme.

The Fellow Programme started in 1971. Strength of the participants in the Fellow Programme has gradually increased and a batch of nearly 20 students are likely to join the programme this year. As of today, 46 students have graduated from this programme. An interesting development is the desire of a number of people from the All India Services, Indian Foreign Service, Indian Police Service, Indian Railway Service to seek admission to this Programme. Students from other countries have also started taking interest in the programme. The programme has been recognised both by the Education Ministry of the

Government of India as well as University Grants Commission as a Quality Improvement Programme for teachers from the management departments of the Indian Universities and for faculty of the engineering colleges.

A number of Fellows of the Institute are engaged in teaching and research in management institutions in India and abroad. Nearly two-third of the students who have graduated so far have gone to academics. However, there have been real difficulties in placing our Fellows into the University system in India because of the rigid recruitment criteria adopted by them. We hope that gradually some of these constraints would be relaxed and Universities would be able to augment their teaching and research resources by recruiting our Fellows.

The offering of advanced courses for the Fellow Programme students have been continuously on the increase and currently over 50 courses are being offered to the participants. This year, for the first time, admissions are being offered for FPM in Public Systems. A number of special courses have been introduced in the programme to strengthen the teaching and research capability of the Fellow Programme students. Courses on pedagogy, research methods, written and oral communications etc., have been introduced with this objective.

Married students in the programme have been facing serious hardship due to high rents being charged for housing in Ahmedabad. In view of limited amount given as fellowship many married students have

to keep their families away from Ahmedabad for a long duration. I am happy to inform you that arrangements are being made to sort out their problems, at least to some extent, during the coming academic year.

As regards the Post- Graduate Programme, which is still the sheet-anchor of our activities, this year also a very large number of applicants, over 8000, applied for admissions to this programme (compared to nearly 7200 in the previous year). We are not flattered by the ever growing number of applicants. But what gratifies us most is the composition of these applicants. More and more bright young men and women from middle and lower middle income strata as also those belonging to scheduled castes and ascheduled tribes are applying for admission to this Institute and this is reflected in the class which gets admission. A large majority of our students belong to the middle and lower middle class. It is, therefore, wrong to call such an Institute an elitist one in the narrow sense of the term.

A unique feature of our PGP programme is the special care which is bestowed on the applicants from the weaker sections before they come to the regular classes. A remedial programme is organized during the summer vacation to enable students who have some shortfall in written and oral communication and quantitative reasoning to make up their deficiency, so that once the regular classes start they would not feel inferior in any way. I am happy to inform that the Sir

Dorabji Tata Trust have agreed to foot the total bill for organizing remedial courses for the weaker lot for the next 2 years. We highly appreciate this gesture.

On this occasion I wish to make a special mention of the generous endowment made by the Seth Kasturbhai Lalbhai Group of industries to establish the Seth Kasturbhai Lalbhai Chair in Management Development. With this endowment the Institute has eight chairs endowed by industry, banks and trading organizations. Coming to the academic side of the PGP, while all the 21 courses in the first year continued to be offered, for the second year a number of new elective courses have been added. The new courses include Seminar on Human Resources Development, Seminar for Marketing for Non-Profit Organizations and Management Control and Information System courses for the SPA package. The programme was further strengthened by inclusion of sixty four new cases and technical notes written by the faculty during the course of the year. A serious exercise is being undertaken to review the SPA package. The question of offering a two year programme in agricultural management, is being examined by a faculty group.

The Institute lays great emphasis on inculcating social awareness and a sense of relevance among the participating class. As in past few years, this year also the students were assisted to organize a seminar in the series which has come to be known as, "Alternatives in Social Development". This year's theme was 'Social Responsibility of the Media'.

The Institute invited three eminent speakers to deliver lectures under the Institute Lecture Series. Shri Arvind Narottam Lalbhai, President of FICCI, Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, an eminent economist, and former Union Education Minister and Shri P.R. Nridul, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India and a former Judge of Bombay High Court, delivered these lectures to our community.

Apart from the Institute Lectures a number of seminars, workshops and discussion groups were organized during the year. Nobody can say that the IIMA graduates sit in a ivory tower, or shall we say red-brick towers! In fact, at times one feels that we might be overdoing some of these extra curricular activities. As in the case of intellectual activities, in cultural and sports activities also the Institute students have shown ample interest and remarkable proficiency.

Because of the accumulated goodwill as well as the individual worth of the candidates, there was the usual influx of the employers to select our students for various positions in their organizations. I am glad to report that within the first fortnight of the opening of the "Placement-season" every student who wanted a placement had a satisfactory job offer.

A heartening feature of the current situation is that inspite of shodiness of academics products in general, or may be because of it, wherever the quality products are available, the society attaches due importance to these. The rush for the admission to an institution

like ours cannot be brushed aside as a 'fad' nor the demand for the graduates of this Institute by industry and business can be considered as former's need for having some trappings of modern management. Such fads or fancies cannot be supported for a period of twenty years. One is entitled to take a positive view and maintain that if relevant type of education is available, the 'market' responds. If we can have institutions which provide a sound education in their chosen field the society will recognise these efforts.

To the graduating class of this year, I extend my heartiest congratulations. The very fact that you were admitted to this institution is a testimony to your superior performance and acumen. A bright future awaits you. While starting your new career please do not forget that there are not many groups like yours who will have such an easy start in their life. Boys and girls whose native intelligence is no way inferior to yours but who did not have the requisite opportunities to develop them, good fortune to go to well-reputed educational institutions or good instructors to teach them: where they are today? Probably doing some routine job in an uncongenial atmosphere, or even more likely going from pillar to post for getting some opportunity for gainful employment. This thought should sober you, as much as your well deserved success in the field where you wanted to specialise elates you. Enter your new career with zest and optimism, but occasionally remind yourself what role a few individuals, a few institutions and a large number of fortitious circumstances have played

in making you what you are. And then take a more charitable view of your fellow human beings.

I have blessed three successive classes of Fellow and Post-Graduate students with the words of the great poet Kalidasa,

"शिल्लोक्तं पदं शिष्यं पति!"

I wish you the same.