

Convocation address at Fostiima Business School

- Shri Jerry [Jaithirth] Rao, Chairman, Sri Balaji HRD Trust
- Shri Anil Somani, Executive Chairman,
- Shri Sunil Kala, Founder Trustee,
- Shri Rajeeva Kansal, Group Director,
- Shri Subhash Kakkar, Director,
- Distinguished Faculty & Staff,
- Young graduates of FOSTIIMA Business School

My warm greetings and goods wishes to all of you and each one of you!

I deem it a matter of great pleasure having been conferred with the privilege to address this 1st Convocation of FOSTIIMA Business School for which I am thankful to the management of this college.

This institute has distinguished itself as a pre-eminent institution for studies in management. It is the hard work, ingrained urge for quality, devotion to duty and dedication of teachers and staff – all under the umbrella of vision of management, to which the credit goes for this notable achievement. In particular, the dynamic leadership of Shri Anil Somani and Shri Sunil Kala deserves a special mention.

I am given to understand that FOSTIIMA is an initiative of the alumni of IIM Ahmedabad; found in 2007 and managed by them. What a pious thought? These alumni of IIM believe that they have an obligation to give back to the society what society has given to them and this they have done by taking a vow to deliver excellence in Management Education with the sole intent of 'giving back' to the society. FOSTIIMA provides an IIM atmosphere and excellent career opportunities to those who have not been able to make up to the IIMs.

I understand that not only is FOSTIIMA founded and managed by IIMA alumni, its Faculty pool is also drawn from IIM / IIT alumni who bring with them and share with FOSTIIMA students – their rich and practical corporate experiences, industry practices and global business perspective. This makes the FOSTIIMA class a unique mixture of theory and 'experiential learning', a methodology adopted by the best B-Schools in the world like Harvard, Stanford and the IIMs.

My dear young friends! Today is an important day in your lives. You have reached a significant milestone in the journey of your life. Today you are standing at the same door wherefrom you had once entered in the portals of this institution. You had come with an empty baggage which is now full of management wisdom, skills, confidence and capacity to innovate. All these you have earned by maintaining a keen urge for learning and dedication to studies. Not the least, you have enjoyed the guidance and

blessings of your teachers, parents and elders. It is a moment of pride; but I caution you not to suffer from complacency; for, learning is a continuing process. Till this day you may have learnt from others; today onwards your own life will teach you lessons. You will learn by experience. You will be your own teacher. You shall have to keep on growing. Remember: one who ceases to grow, begins to perish.

Our profound ancient wisdom, handed down to us by tradition, has divided the journey of life into 16 chapters, each opening with a sanskar i.e. sacrament. In the ancient educational institutions called *Gurukool*, the students leaving the educational institution and preparing to enter into the journey of life used to undergo *Samavartan Sanskar*, the 13th of the 16th sacraments. On that day the *Guru* would deliver his parting discourse to his departing pupils which contained the quintessence of the learning imparted till then and useful tips for a meaningful life ahead. The convocation function performed in the universities and other educational institutions is a relic or modified version of *Samavartan Sanskar*.

Given the opportunity, which I acknowledge with gratitude to the management and all of you, there are two or three messages which I would like to give you on this solemn occasion.

You are fortunate to have born in a free India which is a democratic republic governed by a constitution. India as a nation has lived 72 years of freedom where, atleast in theory, we have ruled ourselves. Though with a note of regret, yet we must catch the bull by its horns and face the reality what it is. India is grossly engrossed into corruption. Transparency International, a noted NGO launched Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in the year 1995 and today it makes a scientific assessment of level of corruption prevailing in 180 countries. In the CPI for 2018, India stood at level 78 and we cannot take shelter behind the statistics that China ranked 87 and Pakistan 117. We are yet 77 steps below from the top honest country.

Our society is afflicted with inefficient allocation of resources, the presence of a shadow economy and low quality education and health care. Barring a few handful of privileged, by and large the common man is suffering from explosion of population and lowering living standards. A recent article by Mr. Pulkit Sharma mentions a statistical report published by the World Health Organization recently which declared India as the

most depressed country in the world along with a sharp rise in the cases of suicide, anxiety, addictions and many other psychological disorders. According to National Mental Health Survey of India (2015-16), around 15% Indians suffer from chronic mental health problems and desperately need professional help to reclaim their lives¹.

Friends, why do I invite your attention to the darker side of our democracy? There is a reason for it. Having taken instructions in management and having acquired skills therein you are a class apart. You are different from other students and other citizens. Your capabilities whereon I am building certain hopes (which I would shortly share with you can) be perceived from the very concept of management as disclosed by the definitions of management. Van Fleet and Peterson define management, '*as a set of activities directed at the efficient and effective utilization of resources in the pursuit of one or more goals.*' Megginson, Mosley and Pietri define management as '*working with human, financial and physical resources to achieve organizational objectives by performing the planning, organizing, leading and controlling functions*'. According to F.W. Taylor, 'Management is an art of knowing what to do, when to do and see that it is done in the best and cheapest way'.²

If you feel that you have only equipped yourself with competence to make a career by having acquired confidence to manage an office - public or private, in my humble opinion you are underestimating yourself. The principles of management which you have learnt here, have ingrained in you the power to successfully manage yourself, your family, the society in which you live and the nation to which you belong. You know what to do, when to do and to see that it is done best and fast. Each one of you is bound to be a leader which you must. Remember - a leader is one who knows the way, shows the way and goes the way. We are governed by a Constitution. Article 51A obligates each citizen of India to perform 11 fundamental duties. I will mention only three of them. They are:

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India - (i) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture; (ii) to develop the scientific temper humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform; and (most important, a key to unlocking your tremendous potential power) (iii) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.

¹ 'A Spiritual Approach to Mental Health' *The Speaking Tree*, TOI 10.10.2019

² Management Study HQ – www.managementstudyhd.com

Be knowledgeable of all our resources, human and natural which are rich and in abundance available in India. We have the largest number of youth population. You need to collect the data, plan, organize, coordinate, command and control. The picture of ours which I have projected a little before, is not intended to alarm you (much less to frighten you) nor did I intend to be a critic much less a pessimist. More adverse the circumstances, more is the challenge in the task which in result makes us depart from the routine. They were such like adversities which had enlightened Vivekanand into giving a call – rise, awake and rest not till you reach the goal.

How can you do it? The source to solutions belongs to us. We need not search elsewhere. I am reminded of an anecdote.

[A Beggar]

I invite your attention only to three things. First, learn Sanskrit if you have not already learnt it. Sanskrit is a wonder. Not only it is the most ancient language but Sanskrit literature is so rich that once you learn it, the doors of a treasure of knowledge, a treasure which is yet to be known to the western world, are thrown open to you. Sanskrit is rich in everyway – rich in vocabulary, rich in literature, rich in thoughts and ideas, rich in meaning and values. It is a language of upliftment and enlightenment, a repository of wisdom and values³. I request each one of you to read a little book '*The Wonder that is Sanskrit*'.

Secondly, do read Gita and Upanishad, if you are already not doing it. Your learning in management would not be complete unless you have read Gita and Upanishad. Gita is not a book of religion; it is a book of knowledge. A great scholar like Rajagopalachari has said - for every problem under the Sun either there is a solution in Gita or there is none. Upanishads introduce the reader to the essential nature of this world, the individual self and the supreme self and their interrelation. Upanishads enable purification of consciousness. Upanishads enable establishing the fundamental building blocks of spiritual awareness. A person, more a professional, who is well versed in Gita and Upanishad is the best manager in as much as the task of management which he then performs runs parallel with those principles by which God, the Supreme manager manages the affairs of the universe.

Friends! This convocation address of mine is not intended to be any exhausted statement of the subject. I have only touched the tip of the iceberg. My this address is an invitation to you to join in the realm of spirituality while

³ '*The Wonder that is Sanskrit*', *Sampad and Vijay*, Shri Aurobindo Society Pondicherry, pp.6-7

performing the worldly affairs, the responsibilities whereof now you are destined to shoulder.

The gist of teachings of Bhagvad Gita is *'Fight the battle of life. Let the virtue in you vanquish the vice. Any useful work that falls to your Lord gives you enough of opportunity for self-discipline, emulation, and emancipation. The divinity within you is your ever available guide. Attuning yourself to it, do your job as splendidly as you can. Ever hero is obliged to wage the Mahabaharta War in and through his own life'*⁴.

[History – read/write /on whom written]

Debashis Chatterjee, one time a director of IIM Lucknow and then of IIM Kozhikode, has written a beautiful book – Break Free, a must read for everyone of you. He poses a question which has haunted the humanity ever since the man was born on this earth; and then by narrating a real life anecdote he answers the question. – Question is 'What is the purpose of life? Answer is - The purpose of life is to live a life of purpose.

Let me close my address on a lighter note.

The days of Dusshera festival have just passed. Ramleelas were performed here and there. Ramleela is a natak or a drama which is played to recall and re-educate ourselves with the high ethics and ideals of Lord Rama. At the end of the Ramleela, the drama is over and if the actors have performed their role well and played their part with perfection, the curtain drops but the audience keeps on clapping. Friends, in a way, our life is also a drama. We have to perform the role assigned to each one of us well and with perfection. My message to all of you, my dear friends, I would sum up in an Urdu couplet wherein *shiddat* means excellence and *kirdar* means the role assigned.

Now listen to this couplet with rapt attention and remember it for all times to come:

**Kuchh aisi shiddat se nibhao apna kirdar;
Ki parda gir bhi jaye magar taliyan bajti rahen**

⁴ Swami Chidbhavananda – 'The Bhagavad Gita', p.9.

