

New Delhi Institute of Management
23rd Annual Convocation (Online)
Presidential Address
by
Shri Ashok Kumar Gupta, Chairperson,
Competition Commission of India,
September 16, 2021, 3:00 to 4:30 PM

1. Shri N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons, Dr. V. M. Bansal, Chairman, New Delhi Institute of Management, eminent personalities, distinguished Board of Directors, faculty members and my dear students. I am delighted to be here at the convocation ceremony to award Post Graduate Diplomas in Management. This institution has carved out a unique place for itself amongst various MBA schools, and I must compliment each and everyone associated with it for maintaining these exceptionally high standards.

2. I convey my heartiest congratulations to the 23rd batch, in whose honour this function has been organised. I would also like to convey my sincere thanks to Dr. V. M. Bansal ji for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

3. You have all passed out from a very prestigious institution, and this must rightfully give you a sense of pride. This is a landmark moment in your lives. Since you will be occupying positions that will be instrumental in building various organisations, I should tell you something based on my 40 years of experience as a civil servant that will help you manage those positions.

(i) You should enjoy work: Whatever assignment is given to you should be executed with a sense of joy and purpose. If you really want to enjoy an assignment, you have to go into the details and understand the fundamentals of

various issues. Once you gain a command over the subject, you will see that you start enjoying the work, and excellence will follow. In a long career, it is entirely possible that you don't always get an assignment of your choice. That will be tough, but your attitude towards such assignments will have a bearing on the nature of subsequent assignments. You will be judged by your contributions to assignments that may not be very glamorous or to your liking, or which no one wants to do. But once you 'deliver' such assignments, your versatility and talent will be appreciated, and you will stand out amongst your peer group. Here, I would like to quote technology pioneer Steve Jobs, who said, "*Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do*". Please note, in some situations, you may have to love what you do. The choice might not be yours.

(ii) As we all know, verbal communication is only a minor part of total communication. Often, what is not verbally articulated expresses itself through body language. At all times, note that your body reflects your state of mind; if you are not enjoying your work, even though you may not say so in as many words, your body language will reveal it, unless you are a good actor. So, when you interact, your entire body should be involved. The movements of your hands, head, etc., should reflect your enthusiasm. Conversely, it is important that, as you move up in hierarchy, you begin reading the body language of your juniors and not merely depend on verbal communication. That will help you with decision making.

(iii) In any assignment, there should be clarity of thought and no confusion about any issue. In the Bhagwad Gita, Shri Krishna said that "*the confused mind makes a person lose one's ability to reason and power to solve one's problems*". Should any confusion persist, it is incumbent on you to resolve such doubts. Doing so will bring a remarkable measure of consistency in your decision making.

Never make a decision that is not in line with your convictions. If your decisions are based on extraneous factors, you will find that they lack consistency and cause problems. I will give you an example. I know an officer who was the Home Secretary of a state. He sanctioned someone's criminal prosecution. The aggrieved person went to court stating that the Home Secretary had sanctioned the prosecution in just two days, which shows that there had been no application of mind. You will be surprised to know the reply of the Home Secretary: he stated that he clears all files on the same day, but since this was an important file that required application of mind, he took two days. The court accepted his defence based on his track record. He had such a high degree of clarity that he never left anything pending. Clarity of thought will not only ensure consistency, but will also help dispose of matters faster.

(iv) Always maintain good relations with your boss, peers and subordinates. Maintaining good relations does not mean being a conformist or not challenging other people's views; one can be firm as well as cordial. Good relations hinge on clear communication between professionals. Therefore, it is always important to listen very carefully to what the other person is saying and not jump to conclusions. It is also important to pay due respect to your boss. The reasons are two-fold: (a) Your boss definitely has more experience than you and (b) being at a higher vantage point in the organisational hierarchy, your boss has a better understanding of the vision of the organisation. I have seen some cases where people narrate and treat any instance of disagreement with their boss as a badge of honour. It never pays off and only serves to lower the degree of professionalism at the workplace, and people eventually begin viewing that person with circumspection. I am not trying to say that there cannot be a genuine difference of opinion between you and your boss. However, you must not only be cautious but courteous and polite while communicating such a difference of opinion. As Plato once said, "*Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools speak because they have to say something*".

(v) During your career, you will come in touch with senior officers who are your well-wishers. Try to remain in touch with them. They could be your mentors and provide useful guidance in difficult situations. But do remember that a senior officer would like to reciprocate and be in touch with a junior officer only if he or she feels that the junior officer has some potential and, if groomed well, can become an excellent officer. Hence, you have to give a good account of yourself before establishing such a mutual relationship. After all, senior officers are inclined and positively disposed towards mentoring junior officers who have proven themselves and are going to be an asset to their organisations.

(vi) Always try to maintain a good and healthy work–life balance. Give time to your family. Look after your children, for it is your responsibility to bring them up to become good citizens of the country. This may require you to curtail activities that do not help you in the long run, either personally or professionally. Work–life balance is often a neglected area, and people later regret not giving enough time to their family. Contrary to popular belief, this regret does not dissipate with the passage of time, but only becomes more intense. Therefore, take care of your spouse, children and parents from the beginning, and only then will you find that you have achieved satisfaction in life. When you do justice to your personal and professional life, you have understood the true meaning of life. Related to this, keep your conduct above-board at all times. You are being judged all the time, whether you are in office or at home. No amount of preaching works. Your children will copy you in toto. If you are sincere in your dealings, your children will imbibe the same qualities. Similarly, you are being observed by your seniors, colleagues and subordinates. So it is in your interest to put your best foot forward all the time if you want to do well in life.

(vii) Expressing yourself clearly is very important. If you have the ability to express your ideas with clarity, you will find that you are able to carry your proposals through. In today's age, this is becoming all the more important. There

are a number of assignments where the ability to put your views across is highly appreciated. As you move up in hierarchy, your responsibilities as a leader will increase; you will be required to tell your team about your vision, and, in such a scenario, articulation becomes extremely important. You will soon find that, irrespective of the unit/division/section you are heading, your work may require you to inspire your juniors and highlight your plan of action so that your team works seamlessly. This brings me to a related point: you should always have a vision for your organisation. The story of Seshan, the Chief Election Commissioner in the '90s, is a striking example of the transformation that an individual can bring about. He redefined the status and visibility of the Election Commission of India. He had a vision and implemented a series of electoral reforms that had never been done before. He articulated and implemented his vision with ruthless efficiency, and the Election Commission was never the same thereafter.

(viii) As an officer, always follow the spirit of the rule and never constrain yourself by the technicality of the rule. It is for you to creatively interpret the rule to achieve the desired purpose. Rules exist for your guidance and do not cover each and every situation. Trust me, no one has landed in any trouble for not following the rules, provided the decisions are made in the larger interests of the organisation and without any hidden agendas. On the contrary, I know a case where an officer blindly followed rules and landed in serious trouble. Why? Because an officer is expected to keep his or her eyes and ears open while following rules. You should have a knack for getting work done rather than blaming rules. People who succeed are fiercely outcome-oriented and have transformed organisations with the same set of rules. It is their administrative acumen, clarity of thought and positive outlook that ultimately yield the desired results. You may have seen numerous instances where an organisation is totally transformed with a change in leadership. Thus, never use 'rules' as an excuse for not doing things. This is a sign of weakness and lack of self-confidence. The law

is just a set of instructions and has to be interpreted in the context of ever-changing real scenarios. As the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi tells, make yourself aware of ground realities and fulfil the aspirations of people accordingly. Aspirations are dynamic and contextual, but the law remains the same. Hence, the spirit of the law supersedes the letter.

4. To conclude, everything you choose to do is a step towards your future and will become a part of who you are, just as the choices you made in university and your memories at the New Delhi Institute of Management have become a part of each and every one of you. It will start moulding your personality and a unique identity will start emerging. People will talk about you as you move from one place to another. In fact, your likes and dislikes, biases and prejudices will be known to people before you take up a new assignment. Your rise will follow a scientific process and will be contingent upon multiple feedbacks from various stakeholders. It may appear to you that life is very long, but it is not so. I vividly remember 1981, when I joined Indian Administrative Service. These 40 years have whizzed by. As it is in cricket, which is a one-ball game, in life too, you have to focus on the issue confronting you at that point in time. This is the sign of an uncluttered mind. So live each day with complete consciousness, and soon, you will observe that you will carve out a career that is resilient to the vagaries of fortune. On that optimistic note, I would like to conclude with a quote by Thomas Jefferson, who said:

"I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have."

Once again, heartiest congratulations to all students and their family members, on this great occasion.

Thank you.