

FULL TEXT OF THE INAUGURAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY
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Education alone is capable of laying a solid foundation for the nation's all-round development. It is for this reason that the independent India embarked on opening professional institutions of higher learning. These institutions offered a platform for great social and economic mobility.

The demand for management and business schools has gone up considerably since liberalisation. The Indian School of Business came into existence, as a result of collaboration between premier corporate bodies. In fact, this has now become an ideal template for business education.

On various metrics, the Indian School of Business ranks as the best business school in India. It is recognized not only in this country, but also globally. Alumni of this institution have risen to the top in various fields and are making waves wherever they go.

All of this was achieved in a short span of 20 years. The way leaders of the business and consultancy worlds had come together to establish this institution is a story in itself.

The State Government, and particularly, the then Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh, Shri Chandra Babu Naidu, had provided resolute assistance for setting up of this school. Without his efforts, this Business School would not have been the successful institution that it is today.

Year after year, you have heard prominent business leaders, leading entrepreneurs and erudite economists. I must admit, I am not an expert in business, economics or accounting. In that sense, I am least qualified to address your leadership summit. I was brought up in an agricultural household, so I have some experience in managing limited resources.

Yet, I am very happy to be in this campus today, because I too have some connection with this institution. As Mahakavi Sri Sri said:

“తాజ్ మహల్ నిర్మాణానికి రాళ్ళెత్తిన కూలీలెవ్వరు?”

“Taj Mahal nirmaanaaniki raallettina kooleevvaru”

I am like one of those thousands who carried the stones for building the ISB. My connection with ISB goes back to the initial days, even prior to the setting up of this institution, which was fraught with challenges. I know about it because I was the Additional Advocate General of the State of Andhra Pradesh at that time.

A major stumbling block was a petition filed against the Government of Andhra Pradesh questioning the acquisition of land for the project. I was deeply involved with strategizing the legal battle in close coordination with the government of the day. Ultimately, due to collective efforts, the High Court intervened and upheld the grant of the land, which was done in public interest. One of the greatest judges Shri Justice B. Sudarshan Reddy delivered the judgment in the matter. It is a must read judgment. It has law, literature, culture, poetry – everything. I advise you all to study this beautifully written judgment. I am requesting the Dean to circulate it to all.

As I was reaching this place a while ago, on the way I saw pictures of business leaders and other who have contributed to establishment of this Business School. One picture that must find place in such a gallery, but unfortunately is missing, is that of Shri Chandrababu Naidu who alone is responsible for this School coming up in Hyderabad.

I am extremely proud to be able to say that I was a part of the establishment of three world class institutions - NALSAR, the International Arbitration and Mediation Centre in Hyderabad and the Indian School of Business.

For us to succeed in any profession, we must follow certain principles of management. Even when it comes to management of Courtroom by a judge, or management of cases and clients by a lawyer, or management of a law firm, the principles and techniques of management have a significant role to play.

As I said earlier, I will not be able to add to your understanding of business. But I would like to share my experiences in

administering the affairs of the Indian judiciary. I hope you will be able to analyse the same and draw appropriate conclusions.

Speaking of my journey, I started as an ordinary first generation lawyer from the Taluka level. From Vijayawada, without any support, I moved to Hyderabad with the hope of gaining access to a wider canvas.

I believed in my ability to work hard with dedication and sincerity. With a bit of luck on my side, I could represent a wide range of parties, from workers to Chief Ministers. I was a practising advocate for about 17 years. I worked as a judge of a High Court for 13 years. Thereafter, I assumed the position of acting Chief Justice of the High Court of undivided State of Andhra Pradesh, and went on to become the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court. Since my elevation to the Supreme Court, I worked as judge for 7 years, and thereafter I spent 16 months as the Chief Justice of India.

Each Chief Justice of India assumes the office under a set of circumstances that are unique to his time. While people think that the office carries a wide range of powers, we must remember the responsibilities and challenges which come with it.

The role of the Chief Justice calls for leadership and long-term vision for the institution. I assumed office when the country was going through the most lethal second wave of COVID-19. The pandemic had completely disrupted physical hearings.

During my entire tenure of 16 months as the CJI, despite our best efforts the Supreme Court could sit for just about 50 days for physical hearings. Vacancies had piled up. Pendency was a massive challenge. Based on my own assessment, I felt I needed to focus on three key issues- (1) filling up of judicial vacancies, (2) augmenting judicial infrastructure and (3) deployment of modern technologies in functioning of Courts. Filling up of vacancies is no easy achievement. It is a result of determined consensus building exercise. In my 16 months as the Chief Justice of India, the Supreme Court collegium could ensure appointment of 11 judges to the Apex Court. Out of the 255 persons recommended for judgeship in various High Courts, nearly 233 are already appointed. This amounts to

nearly 20% of the total sanctioned strength of the High Courts. Due to concerted efforts, we could make considerable progress in appointing more women judges, and promoting social diversity on the Bench.

We got 15 new Chief Justices for various High Courts during the same period. About 100 vacancies in various tribunals were filled up during this period.

To complement the strength of the judiciary, we need to have state-of-the-art infrastructure in place. The nationwide study that I had commissioned revealed certain hard truths about the poor state of judicial infrastructure in the country. The state of judicial infrastructure in India even after 75 years of independence is disturbing. This prompted me to propose an institutional mechanism to address the issue.

Since no one understands judicial requirements better than the judiciary, in my proposed structure I had given primacy to the judiciary. Unless a comprehensive system is put in place, this problem is going to haunt the judiciary for decades to come.

The pandemic forced us to depend on technologies. I wanted to build upon our entry into the virtual world. In the model court complexes I had proposed, technology was an inseparable part. We must co-opt modern technology in every aspect of the functioning of Courts to be able to catch up with even the filings.

As you already understood, the whole issue revolved around the burden on the judiciary in terms of pendency. While we try to find solutions within the judiciary, we need to look at the root causes as well. During the Chief Ministers and Chief Justices conference in April this year, I had the occasion to highlight my understanding of this problem. As I told in the presence of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, one of the major concerns is that the Government is the biggest litigator.

The number of inter-departmental disputes, service matters, and those relating to inaction of authorities clogging the system is appalling. Half of the judiciary's problems would be solved the moment the Government decides to put a halt to State sponsored litigation.

Contrary to popular belief, the independence of the judiciary is limited to only adjudication. The judiciary does not have the power of the purse or the sword. When it comes to financial support and appointments, coordinating with the Government is always like walking a tightrope.

During my tenure, I also wanted to foster a sense of belonging among the people towards the judiciary. The fact that the judiciary is there to serve the people needed to be emphasised. And this is what I tried to do through my public speaking. I was happy to note that the media acted as a collaborator in my mission by spreading the message.

From the above, I think I have made it quite clear that the duties of the Chief Justice of India are not just limited to the Supreme Court, but extend to the entire judicial system across the nation. The Chief Justice of India has to pay attention to the standards of legal education, to building a Constitutional culture among the people, apart from the problems being faced by the district judiciary and the High Courts. The Chief Justice of India must not only highlight these issues but must also attempt to resolve them within his or her limited time in office. And the Chief Justice of India must do it in the face of various pressures from different quarters- the Government, the opposition, lawyers, judges, NGOs, civil society, social media, etc.

The Chief Justice wears many hats, of an impartial and fair judge, an able administrator, a visionary and a leader. I tried my best to fulfil these duties. Within the available time, I tried my best to take care of the institution, to improve the pay and working conditions of judicial officers and to resolve pending issues with the Bar and the Supreme Court employees. I tried to be approachable and create an environment where everyone was motivated to work. I tried to ensure that the Courts were welcoming spaces for the litigant public. I made sure to reach the public, so that they could realize the importance of the Supreme Court, the judicial system and the Constitution. Through my speeches, I attempted to create awareness about the rule of law, and to signal to the people and the judges, that the system would protect them.

Ultimately, whatever name I may have earned, the People's Judge or the Common Man's Judge, I will be satisfied if I have contributed to the revival and renewal of the image of the Court in the eyes of the public. It is the faith and confidence of the people that will boost the morale of the judiciary.

For those among you who are interested, it may be a good case study to analyse and draw conclusions about the efficacy or otherwise of the path that I visualized for the judiciary during my tenure.

Apart from recounting my experiences, after looking at the audience and the occasion, I thought it would be appropriate to share some of my thoughts relating to the responsibility of young business school graduates in today's world. The significance of business education in contemporary times, cannot be understated.

The true strength of our nation lies in the youth of our country. One fifth of the world's youth live in India. This huge human resource, if properly trained, will drive economic progress. With the west falling short of skilled human resources, it is India's turn to fill the gap, globally.

Education and social development are closely connected with each other. Addressing the issues affecting our society requires contributions from all fields and all players. Be it medicine, law, science or business, none of these fields can find societal relevance if they operate in an isolated manner.

The world of business is no exception to this. Business is not only a means of generating wealth. It is a means of economic liberation. While trying to maximize profits, we must draw a line and stay away from exploitation of all forms.

This is the reason that I think a basic understanding of the Indian Constitution is essential for all, including business students. Of course, when the governance is at its maximum, it is necessary for business managers and owners to stay abreast of the changing legal landscape - be it labour law, environmental law, corporate law, etc.

We need to understand that rising inequity is the key aspect which will deter economic growth. In fact, this rising inequity

is a profound challenge on all levels, be it social, economic or political. These growing economic disparities will inflict huge social cost on individuals who will slowly fail to afford the basic necessities of life. This has the potential to stir great social unrest and disharmony.

In this context, I have a piece of advice for you. You are trained to emerge as business leaders. While generating wealth, you must adopt models which will ensure proportionate distribution of wealth among the stakeholders. Accumulation of wealth, disproportionately, in a select few hands is a sure shot formula for friction in the society. Poverty alleviation and equitable income distribution are the need of the hour.

Apart from the above, one thing that may be considered is the revival of rural and cottage industries and increasing the robustness of local industry. For instance, the local neighbourhood retailers have shown great resilience to withstand the challenge by multinational corporations.

The reason may be the unique role that these stores, and the local marketplace play in society. They are not just sites where business is conducted, but are places where people find support, assistance and social connection. This needs to be kept in mind during any analysis. Our local models which are integral to our social fabric and culture, have to be protected and strengthened.

I hope my words are good enough to provoke new ideas and thoughts. Don't be afraid to take risks and to innovate. There will be no shortage of cynics who will always attempt to undermine any good job that is done. Fortunately, the world does not revolve around cynics. Remember, as they say, if you do not ruffle any feathers, you are probably not doing anything worthwhile. I have always believed in this. As Aristotle said, the only way to avoid criticism is to do nothing, say nothing and be nothing.

I congratulate the ISB community for successfully leading the institution to become one of the top ranked in India and around the globe. I wish ISB all the very best. I hope you continue to mould future leaders and entrepreneurs, and create a stronger workforce to meet Indian and global requirements. Your campus is ideally located in the city of

Hyderabad which offers unlimited opportunities for innovation and incubation.

Due to consistent efforts, the city of Hyderabad and the State of Telangana have emerged as role model for attracting investments and in creation of wealth and employment opportunities.

The Chief Minister and the Government of Telangana deserve rich complements for this. The Government of Telangana continues to build on the solid foundation laid in late 1990s and early 2000s in the wake of liberalisation. This is how the Governments should function. Irrespective of which party is in power, the successive Governments should strive to improve upon what they have inherited from predecessors. No one understands this better than the Chief Minister and Government of Telangana. I wish them all the best in their endeavour to take the State of Telangana to greater heights.

Professor Madan Pillutla, Dean, Indian School of Business has been requesting me to attend this event from much before I demitted office. Surprisingly, he has not given up even after I became the former Chief Justice. Sundeep Jammalamadaka, Associate Director, External Relations has been relentlessly pursuing my office for this event.

As I could see, you are going to have 10 stimulating sessions where leaders from diverse backgrounds such as arts, sports, bureaucracy, fashion, etc. are going to enrich your thinking. I have requested the management to consider extending the period of learning here to two years. I wish you all the best. I thank you for giving me this opportunity to address some of the brightest minds of this country as a part of the prestigious ISB leadership summit.

Thank you.