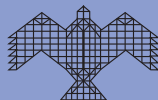


Excellence in
Leadership
Lecture Series

Excellence in **Leadership**



Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu

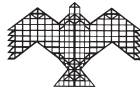


NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore - 560 012, India

Excellence in Leadership

Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu

NIAS LECTURE L1-08



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The Head, Administration
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Indian Institute of Science Campus
Bangalore - 560 012
Phone: 080-2218 5000
Fax: 080-2218 5028
E-mail: admin@nias.iisc.ernet.in
niasoff@gmail.com

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Excellence in Leadership*

Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu

Dear Dr. K. Kasturirangan, Dr. Sangeetha Menon, and all the distinguished members of the faculty and all the participants of the XXII Senior Executive Course, who have undergone a week-long training and leaving NIAS today as the future leaders of India.

The normal tendency with human beings is that what they are supposed to be aware of is known to them and it can be taught to others. This feeling exist especially when they are in their pre-mid career, their main objective is to safeguard the current job rather than learning more when they have already settled and climbing the career ladder automatically.

But despite this all of you have decided to gather at NIAS to learn about what is happening around you and back to your pavilion as enriched as possible. And I am sure with enhanced knowledge and training will facilitate in pursuing your post mid-career, to be as excellent leaders.

*Valedictory address delivered for the participants of the 20th NIAS course for senior executives, 2006.

It is quite obvious which all of us know that India will be great country only if we have a good leader. In this context, a person who has the qualities of leadership, could structure it so well, identifying the problems, finding loopholes and taking suggestions comments from all the angles, could make the organisation / company a number one. On the whole, the top leaders should be patient enough to take the views from the bottom most level very sportively and initiate action smoothly.

Un-structured Leadership Style

In a top-driven organization, where the leader really thinks about something which he wants to do, things will really change. But leaders and their decisions will vary in structured and non-structured organizations. Leader's role in a structured organization is rigid in nature and limited to certain set of norms. Given the situation, if the organization has to develop a move forward, the leadership has to change. Whereas in non-structured organisation, we could see decision of leaders are most responsible one and little flexible in nature. But in some organizations where the leadership can change which are un-structured and unidentified with an individual thereby anybody can become a leader under the given circumstances as it was witnessed during the freedom struggle from British rule. Hence, the change in leadership should take immediate view for better governance.

Now the question arises that about the nature of leadership under organized structure or able leadership with full responsibility. Needless to say, neither organized leadership is conducive nor disorganized leadership is un-conducive. It was experienced that individuals with creative ideas has always proved their mettle in spearheading the good cause. For example, Bhagat Singh, Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak – each of them became a leader not by virtue of holding some position but only because of the ideas that they put before the people. They were acknowledged as leaders because of their abilities in foreseeing the national development.

Absence of Good Leadership

Absence of good leadership is a problem in India. Also those who think that leadership is a problem but refuse to be leaders themselves are also another problem. And therefore if we decide to do something to change the organization, in a limited way, it is possible that we can change it. But if you want to do that then first we will have to start with the process of saying it is not “he” who is the problem, and it is not “he” only who can solve the problem, even I can solve the problem. Let me make an effort to solve the problem.

Therefore, the leadership option should not be left only to leader of any organization per se, but should be harvested

at the grass root level. An individual by birth is not a leader but he can gradually be nurtured as a leader and so is the case with you all. Now I feel each one of you who have undergone training will surely decide there is some way or the other by which you can impact within or outside your organization.

In the process, you are in a position to identify the issues ahead you, and try to change it, as and when necessary. Such changes will take place over a period of time without you even being acknowledged as a leader. But you will be the leader for the idea generated. Under such circumstances, one can claim leadership for having generated the positive ideas and this itself is witness of imparting training. Good Leadership is a problem in India. It will prevail and we ought to strive to change this situation.

Chinese Leadership

China since 1949 had two outstanding leaders. One – Mao Tse Tung, who really laid the foundation for modern China. But people say that Deng is the real leader of China. It is a fact, because in 1978 Deng initiated the process of reforms. But what Deng could do in 1978 was possible because the foundation for that change and the required preparation for a massive economic change was already created by Mao Tse Tung. From 1949 to 1978 he brought

about the social transformation of China. China became a classless society where there were no barriers between male and female and they got rid of their old taboos. Later, a seamless and unified society was created under Mao's rule after the massacre. Since there was no information forthcoming from China, it was not known to outside world until 1978 that it was on the verge of total collapse. The point was realized by Deng and he started with remedial action. Deng, in fact was always the leader of the party and was wanting to bring about a change. Thus, China had two outstanding leaders.

Unfortunately, India did not have a leader like the Chinese, who could really bring in a progressive transformation and change for the country. We had great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi who proved to be a great leader, whereas leaders in Prime Ministers are leaders by virtue of their position.

Basically, leadership in India is a problem because everybody thinks that unless leaders do something, nothing can be achieved. It is also expected that a messiah will arrive or an incarnation to happen. Since the next avatar of Lord Krishna is not sure, the leadership problem will continue to persist. The question is are there leaders by birth or leaders by the circumstances?

Leadership Styles

Let us take one of the greatest leaders India ever produced – Mahatma Gandhi. If that incident had not taken place in Durban wherein Mahatma Gandhi was removed from the train probably he would have pursued his career as a solicitor in South Africa. And he naturally would not have thought of coming back to India. Had he not removed from the train, the world would have seen a great solicitor undoubtedly. Therefore, I doubt that whether leaders are created by accident or by circumstances.

Let us see another leader of the past century, Kemal Pasha in Turkey. He nearly transformed that nation into a modern state, which is so unique. It is not an Islamic state and the whole population is Islamic. In fact, Kemal Pasha was not born as a leader but as a soldier. He never thought he would ever become a leader, but the circumstances made him a leader. When there was a collapse of the Ottoman Empire, he realized that unless he seizes the opportunity of power he would not be able to steer his people to this end. Thus Kemal Pasha as a leader was born.

Another example – Hitler would not have imagined that he would be the leader of Germany. He realized it when the Germans were humiliated and treated like second-rate citizens. As a result, he fought for his countrymen and

eventually he became a leader. One could visualize here that all great leaders of the past century dominated the world, for good as well as bad. They were leaders by circumstances and not by birth.

Leadership and Vision

In today's context finding a leader, who is not a born leader like Dalai Lama, is a tough job. What we really need is somebody who is not a leader created or born but who can steer us to a new height which is applicable for the country or the organization. Mainly, the leader's job is to steer the organization that he heads, steer the movement that he leads and guide it to a new horizon. In short, we need a leader who has great vision to guide India.

In the latest estimation India is now the third largest economy in purchasing power parity; tenth or eleventh largest economy in the world and has huge reserves of foreign exchange. Despite this, 260 million people are living below the poverty line on the basis of one dollar a day and 65% of India's people are living below the poverty line on two dollars a day, which is an accepted norm, internationally. So, what is the problem today? In spite of simultaneous growth in GDP and purchasing power, poverty is also increasing. Under such circumstances, what type of leaders do we need in India? As mentioned earlier,

a leader who can actually have a vision to make sure that our economic progress is not stalled because of the rhetorics of politics. At the same time care is taken of the large number of people who are living below the poverty line. Does this mean that our leaders must have a complete blueprint of action?

When Deng took over leadership in 1978, he virtually saw the economic collapse in China which required the reconstruction of economic policy. The question was where should he start? Deng decided to start from Shenzhen near Hong Kong which was like a new paradise. Though capitalism was born China, it was not known all because of restriction put forth on travel. Incidentally, members of the Congress Party confronted Deng to explain the status of what is happening, to which he affirmed. They were quite surprised to know about the changes. When he returned in 1981, there was total revolt in Congress party. He was asked to provide them the blueprint for having changed the Chinese system and he answered them that it was only an experiment and the lessons learnt would be to duplicate only in the rest of the country. He explained further, 'when we cross the river, we don't prepare a blueprint but feel the pebbles and then cross the river'. His ambition was to see as to what China should be and how it will become a super power. The becoming of a super power will be decided from time to time from experiences obtained and participation of all members.

This is what is expected with leaders in India, in future. The blueprint of action is something we will not be able to spell out over a period of time. But at the time the leaders should be a crystal gazer to guess ahead of time and must be able to guide it.

Motivation and Futuristic Vision

In fact this Institute, has been created by a great visionary – J.R.D. Tata. When he created this institution many people would have made comments as to where there is need for such huge campus like this to develop the Indian Institute of Science? The answer is he had the ability and the vision. His vision was matched with action, as mere visions will not help. But he had the ability to convert that vision into reality and actually act on it. It is that kind of a leadership that is lacking presently. In Bangalore, people who had great vision and also the capacity to act on it build several institutions. But will that vision of an individual create an organization? In my opinion, what is required is that person's ability to motivate each one of you to think that vision of his is not his individual vision but an organization's vision. This idea is something, which we can inculcate in the minds of everybody who works for that organization. This is not my vision but a shared vision of all of us, we have to act on it, so that great institutions can be created. The world class institutions which have been

created nationally and internationally, keeping in view of the principles mentioned above.

Very interestingly, there was a study which was made by two Ph.D scholars in Harvard, James Collins and Gerry Porras, to find out the institutions which can be said to be visionary institutions and which have lasted a long period of time despite changes that have taken place worldwide? According to them, there are four institutions the Citibank, GE, Merck and Sony which in sixty-five years have grown six times higher than their peers, Chase, Westinghouse and Pfizer. Why did this happen? It is so because in those companies their mission statement was very clear. But that mission statement was not something which was stated outside the premises of the building.

If you happen to go to any government building it is said that corruption is bad and if anybody indulges in corruption, please report. If it is a mission statement, and you go inside the building and at every table nothing happens without corruption, then what is the use of that mission statement? Just imagine, if the mission is outside and inside there is only commission, it can never become a great organization. But that organization, where the mission is integrated into the day-to-day functioning of that organization, then this organization becomes great.

In each of the above four organizations, the two scholars found that the vision mission was more than used in day-to-day action of each of the employees of the company. This was something which reflected mainstream and therefore these organizations became successful. What way these are successful? In these sixty-five years they performed better, fifteen times better than the average that the market performed. And why? It is so because their vision and their mission were more than used in the day-today life; the values which were stated in the mission statement became an integral part of the organization's day-to-day function. I think in India those organizations which we see as successful, like Infosys, is one in which the mission statement and what is actually practiced is in consonance. In case of most of the Tata companies also, you will see that the mission statement and what is actually practiced is also true, and therefore the brand equity for Tatas is also different. Tata's leadership has reached to height because of their belief in the value system, the mission statement which is actually practiced in the day-to-day life.

The study has shown that in each of these organizations, the original leader, had created a good succession plan so that ideas went from the torchbearer of this idea like a baton from one generation to another, one leader to another, never remained as the idea of a particular person, but became an idea of the organization which was

practiced by everybody irrespective of the change in the leadership. I think that is what will really make a great leader who can change not only his own organization during his lifetime but make sure that ideas transformed from generation to generation and the organization would expand as the day goes. I think this is what we have also observed in politics, business, social organizations, and in virtually all organizations where the value system has gone from one generation to another. The leadership of organizations will depend upon such attributes and qualities to the extent they will be able adopt it. Hitler and Mussolini were leaders during their lifetime. But nobody could succeed them as leaders because they were autocratic in nature and allow the same value system which could go from one generation to another, from one leader to another and naturally, their ideas and values died with themselves.

As I mentioned in the beginning, each one of us is a leader. If we want to change something for good cause, we can do so. I was a little more fortunate when I became the Chairman of a co-operative bank at the age of thirty-four. Eerybody in my Board were at least twenty-five years elder to me and each one of them who were successful in their own life, reached good positions in their respective areas and therefore they were always claiming that they knew better than others. When I became Chairman I had a top advertising agency called Ogilvy & Mather, O&M. I told

them we want to launch a major campaign to popularize the bank and today, this year, the bank's profit incidentally is 1,600 crores. The Economic Times came out with a survey that we are one of the unlisted organizations with the highest profits and Saraswat Bank is one of the top six. When we did that survey, people said that Saraswat Bank is not known to them which was 70 years old. All my Board members were very upset and reacted to say what they were doing is wrong for all these years? There is this agency saying the bank is not known to anybody and how could happen? I said, basically whether it is right or wrong, it is a scientific survey made by a professional agency which we accept and work on it. We then proceeded further for next step as to why it is not known to the people? What is the problem? So we analysed it systematically and objectively. We prepared a plan and went through a long session of almost two months with each and every employee. If the bank has to reach a particular height today and the bank has made a profit, the bank must be acting on these issues, which have been identified as the problems of the bank. Now, the bank is doing well and making profits. It is important to realize and follow this path if we all work together and take the bank to different heights, it did happened. What is the missing link? We didn't have a common mission. The mission, whatever we may have, may not be accepted to the people. The employees never thought that it is not my mission. A creative mind with generous

thought can realize that it is bank or management mission which is one and the same. What is the management? It is the Board of Director's mission. In my opinion, unless it becomes a shared vision, the mission of everybody would remain unsuccessful. When we started acting on it, there was a huge resistance from all the employees who were not in position to accept something new. As the time went on, each one of them worked on the mission and all of them feel proud to say that they work for Saraswat Bank. Four years later, I met the then Chairman of the State Bank of India, Mr. Basu, Dipankar Basu, who said jocularly that, people are asking him whether Saraswat Bank is big or the State Bank of India? This is the perception created and allowed the value system to continue. Likewise, every leader to make sure that these type of changes really take place in the country which transform the society, as well.

Another example – when I was the Minister of Power, I called for a meeting of all public relation officials in the Power Ministry in the year 2000, where National Thermal Power Corporation, Power Grid Corporation, Power Finance Corporation were present. We had started power sector reforms in India in the year 1991 which was a decade old. When I requested the officials to tell us what constitutes the power sector reforms? and the response I received was - “Power sector reforms are very good.” I said, “You are absolutely right. Power sector reforms are good. When

I posed this question once again to them that what is power sector reform? Can you define it?" After long discussions, people thought it is a very irrelevant question to ask. This was a meeting, which went on and on. After some time somebody said, because first they were discussing only generally, then we said Enron is power sector reform. I said, "How Enron is reform?" Anyway, the point I am saying is: After ten years of reform, so-called reforms that they launched in India, the people who were working in the Power Ministry, the people who are working in the Public Relations Departments of the Power Ministry, they were not clear, and it is not their fault, because nobody in the Power Ministry or Government of India, had really defined what is power sector reform. It was a Minister's idea, at the most the Prime Minister's idea, it was somebody's idea, it was never the power sector's idea as to what, why and how it is to be done. We then defined for the first time, what is power sector reform. It was then the mission of the power ministry started and converted an idea, a concept into a product adopted this system that it is a product of real need to be launched countrywide. We had 2,500 road shows on what is meant by power sector reforms for the benefit of the common man and this took place in almost all the districts of India, including smaller towns I will tell you that those people who were initially reluctant, about talking what is power sector reform which became the champions of spreading the concept of power sector reforms everywhere.

You know why? Because the country's programmes must be converted as programmes of the people of India. Hence, the leadership of any organization has to make sure it does not become an individual's agenda which dies with him but is institutionalized which remains in the longer run. Whenever we have seen the institutionalization of an idea, we have experienced better things.

In fact, we are talking about common economic reforms in India, forget the power sector reforms. We are seeing that reforms are needed for India are being opposed for whose benefit the reforms are made. You know what is lacking here, that we have never marketed the reforms and taken the reforms to the people seriously. It is quite obvious that we have not talked to the people and explained to them what the reforms are meant for and this is cause why people are opposing the reforms and for whose benefit the reforms are implemented. It is typically like in a family constituting the wife, husband and a child. The wife realizes that she also must work to secure a better future for the son. Father is obviously working, and mother is also working, but the child is feeling deprived. The child is thinking that father is not giving me attention and my mother does not care for me, because both of them are pursuing their own careers. Now look at the paradox. Both of them are pursuing their career, undoubtedly because they want to secure a better future for the child. But the child is thinking in a totally

different line. The economic reforms in India are something like this. The reforms are to be benefited for a particular class of people and people themselves feel that this is something, which is against their interest. There is a gap and find what is the gap? It is a leadership gap. The leaders have to make sure that the ideas are to be reached to common people and how to take advantage of ripened fruit.

Here I would like to compare India with China. In China everybody believes that he is working for the country. I will give you an example. I had been to China, I had gone there many times. On one of my official visits as the Power Minister, there was a young girl who was attached to me. She will come at seven in the morning and maybe even after dinner till eleven whenever official banquet were held she will be there and again she will be report at seven in the morning. One day I asked her, "Are you married"? She said, "Yes." "Do you have any children?" She said, "Yes. One child". "Where is your child?" "The child lives with my parents because I can't have the luxury of meeting my child everyday. I meet my child only once a week". I said, "You work like this. Do you get overtime?" She was totally perplexed and couldn't understand. She was just looking straight into my face. I realized she had not understood the question. So I asked her again. "When you work from seven in the morning till eleven or even beyond at night and in the meetings you double as interpreter, you also discuss

and make sure that all arrangements are made. You must be working for money”. She very casually, not even trying to say she is doing something extraordinary, she said, “I don’t work for money. I work for my country”. I think this is what makes the difference between India and China. But in China, what is important is that each one of the Chinese, he thinks that he is working for a cause. And what is the cause? To make China a great country.

Another instance, I had been to China some other time, I visited a small village, a province, a small place not like Bangalore or Mysore but may be like Hosur. In China, in the central square of the city, everyday in the morning I could see numbers which were not written in Chinese. I could see the numbers on the first day, 729, the next 728, third day 727 and so on. I asked the question, “What are these numbers which are changing in descending order everyday. I was told that ‘this is the number of days left for China to join the WTO. This is the approach in their value system. The entire Chinese country and a small city like that was waiting to join the WTO and wanting to know how the Chinese should change to become part of the WTO. In the Chinese Congress, whenever decision they take which are implemented in the next few days but not later than a week. They evolve a system where information are relayed to all the villages and all the villagers in China will be taught by the party about what is their new mission and the

decisions taken. Accordingly, each one of the Chinese will start working for it and the value systems are very transparent between Congress and the people of China. This is where we have to learn lesson and forego what is required. We have a leadership, which thinks probably for the best of the country but the people of India don't know what they are thinking and if at all people know their intentions, how this is going to happen will not be known. But in China what Chinese have to do will be marketed and told to each one of them. This is what constitutes one of the leadership values that how we can take it to the people. Unless it becomes a personal agenda of the individual it will never succeed.

And the two examples of that in America, again the corporate world, is Walt Disney and Columbia. Walt Disney, of course, as you know has an institutionalized structure and continues to be a successful company. Columbia died with the death of its Chairman, Harry Cohen. Columbia doesn't exist, it was taken over by Coca-Cola eventually. But this is what happens to an organization, to a country, to a government, to a society and unless each one of the society's members, each one of the members of the staff, each one of the members of the organization don't really think that we are here to do something which is really required, it is difficult to bring forward. Hence, the leader must have confidence in himself. In fact, you have seen,

I was giving the example of Deng, a committed reformist who had a huge opposition from public for his transformation. Despite the opposition, he realized that this was in the best interest of China and was pretty sure what he must do.

Few years ago, a billionaire died and he left behind some three hundred, four hundred million dollars in the name of Deng in his will. So when Deng was notified, Deng was surprised, “I don’t have a relative like this. And how can I get money like this”? He had written in his will that I am giving this money to Deng because all this wealth that I have got today is because of his policy. If he had not made these policies, there was no possibility for a private enterprise to come up. I would not be a rich man. So part of these riches legitimately belongs to him”. Being a committed reformist, Deng knew exactly what was required to be done. Unlike that, in India we started our reforms in 1991 and yet to bear the fruit. Similarly Russia the then President of Russia, Gorbachov brought in some reforms. When this event was taking place in Russia, the Manmohan Singh had presented his first budget which was being debated in the Indian Parliament being the first reformed budget. People were saying that if nobody wants change it is not something which we like to do as that budget was not something which had come out of a commitment to reform the society, but had come because at that particular

time there was a balance of payments crisis, and therefore we had to do something, so the leadership was not committed to reforms but as a knee-jerk reaction to the problem we faced. Thus, the leadership must be totally committed to what we want and also have the ability, the guts to take the blame on themselves even if it is committed by a junior or subordinate instead of passing on to another person. One correspondent asked the then Prime Minister, “What do you think about what is happening in Russia”? He said, “Those who try to move too fast meet with the same fate”.

I would tell you something, which Dr. Abdul Kalam keeps repeating in relation to the organization that Dr. Kasturirangan used to head. When Dr. Kalam was our Project Director, one of his launches failed despite the fact that there was a lot of money and time invested into the effect. The then Director Dr U.R. Rao told Dr. Kalam, “It is not your fault. It is my fault. I am the Director of the organization. You have done your best but I am responsible as Director”. Dr. Abdul Kalam keeps saying that if Dr U.R. Rao had not said that, probably we would never have had a successful launch thereafter. So we need leaders who will be able to take responsibilities upon themselves and not have to say, “Yes, if it is wrong, it is somebody else’s fault but; if it is right, of course, it is because of me”. Such attitude has to take a different view. We need leaders like

Dr. Rao and Dr. Kasturirangan, who took responsibility upon themselves for the failures and drove the organization to success. I think if we have such great leaders and great organizations, I am sure every step of ours is success.

And lastly, I think, when we talk about leadership and excellence in leadership, India, is on a threshold of becoming a real new world leader. People all over the world are looking at India from that context, because with the extreme poverty levels and other problems though we are a democratic country. Success story is India has leadership in many spheres but if India has to be global leader, then we must have leadership, not only political, and economic, but in all spheres of life. Why America is a leader today? America is the biggest economy in the world, biggest military power, leadership in education, in science, in sports and in whatever area Americans could play a role. If America could become a global leader because of leadership in such diverse areas then India cannot do so just by increasing its economic might but develop leadership in all spheres of life. So, each one of you, if you can become leader in your individual way, I think, that will make it possible for India to become a leader of tomorrow's world. I think this leadership course will ensure that you all really become the leaders of tomorrow and in the process make India also a leader of tomorrow's world.

Finally, I thank you very much for inviting me. I have been traveling for the last 24 hours to come and meet all of you. Dr. Kasturirangan has been extremely kind to me and therefore he introduced me the way he did. But I must tell you I am a great fan of Dr. Kasturirangan. What India needs is more such Kasturirangans in each of the institutions for institutionalizing new ideas and if we have more Kasturirangans, I am sure India would be a global leader and also make world-class institutions.



Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu

Hon'ble Member of Parliament
B-21, Sadhana Apartment, 16th Road,
Khar West, Mumbai 400 052
Ph: 022-2668 3635; Mobile: 98215 89555
E-mail: spprabhu1@rediffmail.com

Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu is a fourth time Member of the Lok Sabha from Rajapur Constituency of Maharashtra - one of the biggest states of India. He was Industry Minister, Government of India in his first spell. Then, he was Minister of Environment and Forests, Government of India and formerly, Minister of Fertilizers & Chemicals. He was the Union Minister for Power, Government of India until August 2002. As soon as he assumes charge, he would secure the blue-print of development for the next five years, fixing the target dates for the action points. He is well known for his easy accessibility to the public, which not only acts as a deterrent to the bureaucratic delays and corruption in the functioning of the Ministry, but also encourages new ideas and view-points. Shri Prabhu believes in listening to criticism of the Government's policies, which he says, helps in reorienting the policies towards the greater common good. He is also a believer in people's participation in the working of the Ministries under him, especially through the involvement of NGOs and people's groups. He holds FCA, The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, Delhi (Rank holder at the Inter CA examination); LLB, New Law College, Mumbai; B.Com (Hons), M.L. Dahanukar Collage, Vile Parle, Mumbai; SSC, Sharadashram Vidya Mandir, Dadar, Mumbai. His Profession is Practising Chartered Accountant. Had his own CA firm before he joined politics in 1996. Has a family business of clearing and forwarding, export and others, also, Banker, Politician, Social Worker and Educationist.

'Excellence in Leadership' Lecture series will bring to you lectures delivered by eminent speakers for the participants of the NIAS Course for Senior Executives. NIAS conducts an annual week long Course entitled 'Excellence in Leadership' that offers an integrated understanding of a wide variety of issues such as governance, management, leadership and Indian culture. The Course is intended to provide the overview that leaders of today and tomorrow will need to possess. The participants of the Course get to interact with some of the most important leaders and decision makers in the country.

The National Institute of Advanced Studies was conceived and started by the late Shri J. R. D. Tata. Shri Tata was desirous of starting an Institute which would not only conduct high quality research in interdisciplinary areas but also serve as a medium which would bring together administrators in government and private sector with members of the academic community. He believed that such an interaction could be of great help to executives in their decision making capabilities.

NIAS is situated in the picturesque Indian Institute of Science Campus in Bangalore. Its faculty is drawn from different fields representing various disciplines in the natural and social sciences. The institute carries out interdisciplinary research and is unique in its integrated approach to the study of the interfaces between science and technology and societal issues.

Dr. M. S. Swaminathan is the Chairman of the Council of Management of Institute. Dr. Raja Ramanna was the Director since its inception till his retirement on July 31, 1997. Prof. R. Narasimha was the Director from 1997 to March 2004. Dr. K. Kasturirangan, (Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha), Former Chairman, ISRO, is currently the Director of the Institute.

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