

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Laxman said:

I am greatly honoured that I have been invited to be the chief guest on this great occasion, to see so many young people go out into the world, hoping to be something great. But I must confess, I can't see why I was chosen to be the chief guest. If I may say so, I think there has been a slight mistake of identity. I am not a manager and have never managed anything. I have left every type of management in the domestic life to my wife. But I think the confusion is because that there is another R K Lakshman, President of our company, who is a great manager, He was the Chairman of ITC. I wonder whether you thought I was that person and invited me.

However, having come and accepted and felt honoured, let me say a few words. I don't know anything about management, I don't know anything about Economics. I don't know how to manage anything. As a cartoonist, you may ask who managed your career? Well, I would say nobody, but destiny. I could have easily been a doctor, an engineer, even a chairman of a corporate body, but ended up as a cartoonist. Why? I don't know. I could say that, somehow, destiny has led me into this career, which I do enjoy occasionally but I note that most people enjoy it more than I do, because I have to do a cartoon every day which is a terrible thing. It may appear simple. The entire art of cartooning is in removing the effort behind that, which I do successfully.

There are managers in every aspect of life—from a *paan shop walla* who manages his affairs, to a *channa walla*, to a person in a small industry who has to manage in order to thrive. There are multinationals, big corporate bodies which are managed by people like you. Don't you think it is a wonderful thing that there are managers who manage, produce, trade, manufacture, and so on and so forth?

What is the greatest thing in life? It is one's nation. Our nation is bigger than any corporate body. But how come it has had no managers at all and is so badly managed? You don't put an ignorant man at the top of a steel industry, but you do put a man who is illiterate and a criminal, to manage a nation. It is a fantastic phenomenon. Why are these people who are so ignorant—I can name them but it is not necessary, you ought to know—who can't manage anything, managing a nation? You chaps must go into the field and try to find out why. A terrible thing happens, yet we tolerate incompetence. How is it that we have come to this mess? - Well, I will tell you. When I became a cartoonist, this country was just coming to be independent of British rule. When the British were ruling, we were fighting unitedly to get rid off the foreign ruler. When they left, there were three parties in this country-left, right and the middle-and they were all together to retain the independence, which they did indeed. Then, one day our Constitution was drawn up, in which the Democratic Republic of India was declared; and human rights, equality, fraternity and liberty were declared. We took the Constitutions from both parliaments, British and American, mixed them together and gave ourselves a beautiful Constitution.

It was on the 15th of August 1947, when Jawaharlal Nehru said, "align yourself here, stand together on this line, and at midnight we are going to march and meet the tryst with destiny,"

to all the people with different ideologies and hopes. What a wonderful world! Tears came into my eyes. We thought this was going to be great. But tears came to my eyes, because if this tryst with destiny was going to succeed, what would I do as a Cartoonist? The whistle was blown, and Nehru asked them all to march. Each one put his foot forward wrongly-one fellow this way, another fellow somewhere, else-and it became a mess. One person said that his ideology was to stop cow slaughter. Another one felt that the people should be educated first. Third person wanted the name of his State to be changed. He said, "if you do that, everything will be alright. I will work only for that, otherwise I will throw stones and bum buses to get that done." The ideologies seemed to be different and, continue to be so even now.

Then, when all that was done, the multiple party system developed. At this point, the United Sovereign Republic of India was a nation united. But some people felt that there had to be linguistic division. "We cannot stay with people from Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, etc. We have to have different States," they pointed out. So, what was united was divided beautifully by our leaders. There was no management. Then there was the language problem. Each one thought that his language was the best and that electric bills should be printed only in that language, so that others might remain totally ignorant. So, today we are at a point where educated people are only a handful. They will become NRIs in the future.

This country could have been far better if only we had not divided it in zones. Then came another demand, "I am from the backward class, I want reservation for my education, job, etc." Even that demand was conceded. This was followed by demands from other backward classes too. Indians are equal but some people are more equal, like backward, forward, etc.

Today, after fifty years, we are talking about reservation for women-33 per cent reservation in parliament, which is a terrible thing. I don't see any reason for this sort of thing because women are equally talented, and hard working. We have had a woman as Prime Minister, which very few countries in the world have had. They feel that they must be given reservation, and for that, they are fighting, wasting their time, money, resources and so on. Our women, whether they are educated or not, are very strong and capable. Our women are the ones who work on multistoried buildings with a whole lot of bricks on their head, then come home and cook for their husbands and children. I have not seen, anywhere in the world, such hard working ladies. And when they get educated, they do so very well: they stand First. Therefore, is it not proper that attention should be paid to their education? However, nobody is looking at this aspect. Changing the name of a street is more important. Each time there is some change, a couple of buses are burnt, there is a *inorcha* with shouting, and fear of our children being hurl. So schools are closed.

Then slowly, came in a thing called the Fifth Five Year Plan. Every time, resources were borrowed. taxes levied and a bridge was a built, a minister who was a fellow humbly living in a little cottage suddenly became rich. You wondered why. Then the bureaucrat became rich. When some project is started, the minister involved with it becomes rich. What happens is a scam; corruption seeps into our system. But it is a nice thing to see that whatever corruption you are involved in, whether it is forty lakhs or four hundred crores, you are not touched. Sessions judges become so corrupt that they hide for some time and then surrender themselves before the coprt. If you allow this kind of thing to happen, is that management?

Certainly not. Is that management to see Lalloo Prasad with his forty crores fodder scam, or Jayalalitha who lives in her palace, or Sukha Ram not touched. I again ask you, is this management?

We want multinationals to come and open their industries here; they will do damn well, no doubt. But what happens to the common man who is my favorite? Shouldn't these people be punished immediately? Who is protecting them? Several years later, I find that St Kitts forgery, which I had almost forgotten, is opened now. Bofors is not completed. The urea scam of Narasimha Rao is still pending. What is going to happen to Jayalalitha who openly violated all rules of honesty and still continuing? Is this management?

I hope that it won't continue like this. I am sure you chaps are going to take over and manage this country well. At that point of time there won't be any question of bandits becoming members of parliament. All of you who have received your diplomas and gold medals see that things get better, so that there is no scam, no corruption and no mismanagement. Then this country will run so beautifully; it will be a paradise. But when this happens, I will lose my job because I won't have anything to draw. What do I do? May be, become a beggar in the street. Thanks to our Government, I am flourishing and you people think that I am a great man. Thanks to our Government which has fed me with ideas all these fifty years, I can come and talk and deliver this lecture. I am so tired. I hope for the next fifty years; they won't be again feeding me with ideas. I must appeal to them that I am tired. Continue with your Utopia, paradise, but leave me as a beggar in the street. I will be happy.