

**Indian School Muscat  
Graduation Ceremony for Grade XII  
March 19, 2022**

**Remarks by Amit Narang, Ambassador**

**‘Dream big dreams, but don’t leave behind that dog’**

Dear Students,

I am privileged to be speaking to you today as you exit one world and enter the next.

As you prepare yourself to take on the opportunities and challenges of college life, and as you take the leap of faith into adulthood and the multifarious responsibilities that come with it;

Your minds today are filled with excitement, your hearts with foreboding perhaps of what lies ahead.

Your thoughts are a combination of the thrill of not having your parents constantly on your case – freedom; but simultaneously a strange dread of leaving the comfort of your homes, the care of your Moms and the weirdly comforting feeling that if something goes wrong, Dad will take care.

Not anymore; the comforts of home, the reassuring feeling of someone watching your back.

Soon, the world will be unleashed on you. Cold, vast, full of opportunities and excitement yes, but a new place where you will have to make a niche for yourself.

In other words, you stand on the cusp of a new adventure.

I feel excited for you.

Change they say is the only constant.

You are entering a world however, that is changing so fast, that we don't even know what it will look like 4-5 years from now, by the time most of you come out of college.

Change is inevitable of course, and world has always changed - year-to-year, decade-to-decade and generation-to-generation.

Yet, the pace of change that we are witnessing in our lifetimes is breathtaking in its speed and enormity.

You are entering a world where the most important problems confronting you will know no national boundaries; a world where concepts like workplace, colleagues and friends have changed beyond measure; a world where the very meaning of success and failure have taken on new implications.

Some of you will likely never walk or drive to work, you will simply log-on.

For many of you, a colleague will not be the one sitting next to you on a bus, but someone from the African continent, or even a computer bot.

For many of you, a friend will not be someone you play soccer or cricket with, but someone who likes your pictures on social media.

You will live and work in a world where the largest taxi company does not own a car; a company that has the answers to all questions, doesn't own any content.

A world where the most valuable commodity is personal data, a world where currency is made not by minting metal, but crunching data on computer farms.

A world where the most prized computer skill is not programming, but hacking.

In the world you will live in, skills you learn today will become redundant tomorrow.

It will be a world where your concepts of family, friendships and relationships will be challenged quite fundamentally.

A world where you will struggle to distinguish between real and fake, between physical and virtual, and between true and false.

Yet, we expect you not only to live successfully in this world, but to also lead this new world, to find solutions to its most

intractable problems, and to change it, to make it a better place.

So, how do you prepare yourself for this new world?

I do not claim I have the answers, those you will have to find on your own.

But I can share with you some traits, some basic attributes that will be very important.

I would like to share 5 such attributes with you today.

The first is **'Adapt'**.

The foremost criterion for success in the new world is to be adaptable. In a world where nothing is constant you will have to develop to skill to learn new skills.

The famous futurist Alvin Toffler said, "*The illiterate of the future are not those who can't read or write but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn*"

That is the new mantra.

A constant quest to acquire knowledge, learn new skills, upgrade competency.

Being future-ready means deconstructing accepted truths, challenging status quo, and imagining new ways of doing things.

This ability to re-wire will differentiate between those who write the future and those who simply live in it.

Second, **'Specialize'**.

We live in a world where information is like a commodity.

It is cheap, omnipresent and equally accessible to everyone. The result however is that shallow knowledge dominates. Everyone seems to be a good at everything, but master at none.

Whichever area of work you choose, be it art or engineering, history or artificial intelligence, calligraphy or coding, you must develop the habit of not just learning, but mastering knowledge.

There is a Sanskrit shloka that goes:

काकः कृष्णः पिकः कृष्णः को भेदः पिककाकयोः  
वसंत काले सम्प्राप्ते काकः काकः पिकः पिकः

Both, the crow as well as the Koel are black; so what is the difference between the two? Well, let spring come, as soon as the Koel starts singing, it becomes quite obvious which one is a crow and which is the Koel.

The challenge therefore is how to distinguish yourself in a world where several have adequate or similar levels of knowledge.

Specialization is that method, which will give you comparative advantage, make you unique.

### Third, '**Communicate**'

Steve Jobs is credited with saying something that has become fundamental to success in today's and future world:

He said, "*The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values, and agenda of an entire generation that is to come.*"

Communication skills are going to be very important in your world. The skill not just to have new ideas, but to convince the world about them.

To analyze, to assess and to present will make winners or losers. Whichever field you work in, spend time learning to communicate well.

### Fourth, 'reaching the stage of **unconscious competence**'

What do I mean by this?

This is the famous 'Competence Ladder' taught sometimes in management schools. Some of you might have heard of this, but as a lifelong student, I have found this most useful, so I thought I would share with you.

In this Competence Ladder, there are 4 stages of learning.

The first is 'Unconscious Incompetence'. This is the stage of ignorance.

'I don't know what I don't know'

Most of us start here, many of us remain here too. Because, as they say, ignorance is bliss!

This is also the stage where confidence exceeds ability. So the first task to figure out is what skill to learn.

The second stage is being 'consciously incompetent'.

You are still incompetent, or unskilled, but at least you are aware of your shortcoming.

In other words, 'I know what I don't know'.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the most important stage of learning. It is the beginning of knowledge.

The third stage is when you have worked hard to acquire the skills that you knew you didn't have.

That is, I have now become competent and I know it.

This should be the pinnacle of learning. I knew my shortcomings, I have worked hard, and I know that I am competent now.

But no, not yet. You have the skill now, but you still have to focus to get the task accomplished.

It's like learning to drive a car for the first time. You can drive, but have to be conscious about changing gears, looking out for cars behind, approaching traffic lights etc.

The pinnacle of learning is the stage called 'Unconscious competence'.

Now you are so good at doing something, you don't even notice it. The skill now comes naturally to you. The skill is now effortless. It becomes second nature.

As you leave school with a bag full of knowledge, please remember to constantly transition through this competence ladder, aiming to become effortless in any skill that you are acquiring.

Fifth, and perhaps most important – **'values'**.

You are fortunate to be a graduating from an Indian schooling system that would have given you a good grounding of core Indian values.

While by all means, become global citizens, but keep some of your core Indian values close to you. They will stand you in good stead in an uncertain world.

What values I am referring to?



Several, but I can relate some of them.

### **Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam**

Treating the world as one family. We are not going to get rid of different passports tomorrow, no. But humanism and globalism that our ancestors spoke about 1000s of years ago, are important values to inculcate as global citizens.

### **Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah**

To work for universal welfare. Look beyond the self and work for the benefit of others is what this core value is all about.

### **Ekam Sad, Vipra bahudha vadanti**

This value is about Knowing and practicing an inclusive vision of social and religious harmony. Following your customs, but always respecting that of others.

Talking of values, there is a beautiful story that comes to mind from the Mahabharata.

This one is from the Svargarohana Parva (स्वर्गरोहण पर्व) or the Book of the Ascent to Heaven, the last of eighteen books of the Indian Epic.

Svargarohana Parva describes the arrival of Yudhishtira in heaven, his visit to hell and what he finds in both places.

Years after the Kurukshetra war, the successful Pandavas decide to retire and renounce their kingdom on the advice of sage Vyasa.

Following the coronation of Parikshit as the king of Hastinapur, the Pandavas along with the wife Draupadi commence their journey to the Himalayas.

At the start of the journey, a dog befriends them and keeps them company throughout.

One by one, Draupadi and the Pandava brothers fall and die. In the end, only Yudhishthira remains with his dog.

This is when Indra appears and offers to take Yudhishthira to heaven.

But Yudhishthira insists that the dog, who is his friend now, must accompany him. This is not possible Indra says, upon which Yudhishthira declines to enter heaven. 'If he does not deserve to enter, then neither do I' he says.

At this point it is revealed that the dog is none other than 'Dharma' himself. And having proved decisively how he stood for righteousness, Yudhishthira gains entry into heaven.

The dog in this story is a metaphor and it can stand for many things.

Your values.

Your friends, your family, your sense of what is right.

Honesty, truth, righteousness, compassion, justice, brotherhood.

The moral of the story is - never compromise these values for short term gain.

Cherish, practice and hold on to truth and justice, even if doing so denies you some worldly pleasures.

Seek your Dharma, and abide by it.

Let me congratulate you once again, and wish you great success in whatever you choose to do henceforth.

May you have fair winds and happy sailings.

Let your dreams soar high into the sky, but let your feet be planted firmly on the ground.

Climb high heights, dream big dreams. But in doing so, don't leave that dog behind!

All the best!

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