

Be a Person, Who is Remembered For Helpful Nature *

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I think it's a very special day for you; it reminds me of the day when I started off in schools like you, and all those anxieties, fears, and thoughts that have been through our heads. And of course, that nervous look of everybody around us which says *accha ye kaise aa gaya yaha per* (Oh, how come he is here?). So what I am going to do is share three lessons that I think will help you to make the most of two years that you are going to spend here. So, what's the three pieces of advice that I have for you as you spend the next two years on this campus? I will also try and share two or three lessons that I have learned at work around life and leadership which I think made a difference to my life, and I have a chance to share it with some young people. Hopefully, it will make a difference in your lives too. I recognize there is a very interesting crowd here today; we have students, parents, and faculty. So can I just ask all the parents to please put your hands up? Delighted to have you all here and I really think it means something for all of the rest of us to know that you have taken the time to be with us today. If it's fine with rest of you give a round of applause for all the parents sitting over here. I think it's too special for us. And just to make sure students aren't sleeping can I have you put your hands up please to say "yes" we are here.

Maybe we wanted to get started with a little story! It's a story of a pencil and an eraser and apparently, there is an imaginary conversation between that pencil and that eraser.

The pencil looks at the eraser; pencil tall, dark, and handsome and that eraser, that little piece of dirt, sitting out there. And the pencil says you know I feel sorry for you, you are so unlucky. Look at me, I am this pencil, I can go out and draw as well as write, and the whole world admires my works. And every time there is a mistake you poor eraser, you have to come in and clean up and even as you clean up you get a little dirty and you also become smaller. A little bit of you goes away in trying to clean my mistakes.

So the eraser said:

You know what, don't worry about me. I am so happy that you can go ahead and write; that you can go ahead and draw; and people will say good things about you because my job is really to make sure

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that you can make mistakes and yet nobody will know, you can make mistakes and I'll clean up. So don't worry that I am getting smaller. I take great pride in the fact that you as a pencil are doing all this good work and writing. So just go ahead and keep writing and don't worry if you make a mistake remember I am there to help you.

And I thought it's a pretty interesting conversation, and if you think carefully you might recognize that all of us as students over here, we are the pencils. We get to write and do all the lovely stuff; we get to draw and people would say lovely things about us, but it's the parents and the teachers who are those erasers who make a difference to our lives. So, it is a good idea to remember that. And I think, there are people over here who worked very hard for whom it's a bit of a dream to say "I am putting you to school over here." Remember, that they are the people who ensure that you can make mistakes. So never be scared to make mistakes. Remember there is someone to help you. But more importantly, remember that every person plays a role in our lives. And never forget that. So when you go out and become these pencils, the stars, remember that there are professors, remember that there are parents who actually made a difference in your lives. And that's something even as we get started that I thought you should remember.

So, now as you get into business schools you will discover that all the learning that happens in the next two years is not necessarily in the classrooms. That's good news and bad news. The important bit to remember that a lot of lessons you will learn are not professors trying to tell you about theories and practice of management but there are professors who will try and help you how to think. They will try and tell you how to structure your mind and how to get your mind think about problems. Their job is to get you to think rather than to tell you this is the theory, or this is the practice, or this is what appears on page 437 of that textbook that you will have to read. That's something that you have to remember. It's not only about the fact that learning will happen outside the classroom. Remember, what you learn in the next two years is not what you will be taught, but what you want to learn. The onus will be on you; what you want to learn and on what you want to learn. And if you thought someone is going to hammer it in your head and put a gun against and tell you if you don't learn this you will be in trouble, that won't happen. It will be up to you. In many sense business schools simulates the corporate world, where if you don't want to work you can get away for a long time, but if you are serious about your career and work, it is up to you to take the initiative and to get it right.

So, having said that what are the pieces of advice that I have for you to make sure that you have two very good years at BIMTECH. First, remember that life is all about teamwork; it's not about how good you are individually but it's also about how good you are as a team. So, the first thing that I want you to remember and learn to try and say is how can I become a part of a great team. How can I become a part of a team of people who may be very different, who may be unlike me but yet I learn to work with them and I ensure that I get the best out of them. They, in turn, get the best from me. You know one of the challenges all of us have is that until now we have been trained and groomed to be

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individualistic. You were trained to be told that *woh ek mark aapko jayada milna hai* (you have to score that one mark extra.) because if you helped your neighbor and he got one mark more, then Gupta ji's son will get admission in engineering college and you will not get the same. So you are taught to guard your knowledge and build a wall around yourself. You have to compete with everybody around you. But that's not the real world.

The boy and girl who will do well tomorrow in the world is not the person who got one mark extra in business school, but they are the people who helped other people to get one mark more. Become that kind of person; become the kind of person who helps other people. Build a reputation for yourself as someone who is that "go to guy" or that "go to girl." If you have a problem you must go to her, she will help you, become that kind of person. I will like to believe that in a world, I am sure you see that there is a door out there; there is another door out there, very often you will find that as you enter a room you got to push the door open. And what do you do, you push the door and you walk in; we don't always look back to see if there somebody else coming behind us. Become that kind of person who looks back to see if someone is coming and if somebody is coming then hold the door open, wait for a second. Nothing is going to change for you, don't worry about the fact that *oh! no* if I hold the door open for her as I go into the canteen will she get the extra paratha there or will I miss out on the soup. Don't worry, become that kind of person who holds the door open for other people and when you become the kind of person, just make it a habit, just hold the door open. Every time you enter a room, every time you push a door open, remember you are the leader, now try and see if there is somebody I can help to come in.

And if you start even looking behind just to make sure that somebody else is being helped I am telling you, you will become a rare bird. You will become someone who will truly become a leader, who people will start to respect. Who people will start to say, Wow! Here is somebody who cares for others. Who is not caught up in his or her own world? So remember success is not about getting the one mark extra; it's not about saying how can I get ahead of everybody else, it's also about how can I take everybody else with me. That's what teamwork is all about and it's your chance now to start to learn how to work in teams.

The second thing that you should do on this campus in the next two years is to learn to slog and work hard. Learn to push yourself to do things even when you don't feel like it, to push yourself to start saying I don't have to do this because somebody else is asking me to do it; I have to do it because I want to do it. I love the story of Sachin Tendulkar, apparently in his good old days when before a season started, even while he was at the peak of his career, in the nets, in the practice before a season he would often play a thousand balls. He wanted to play every possible ball that could be bowled at him in the test match. So if it's a 100 in a test match or if he scores a century in a probably 160 or 180 may be 200 balls but in practice, in nets, he would take and face 1,000 balls. Garry Kirsten who was

the coach at that time said, "Even my hand would hurt throwing balls at him but Tendulkar wouldn't be tired." He wanted to cover for every eventuality; what if I got a ball that is outside the leg stump, what if I got the rare full toss, what if I got a ball which piths on the out stump came in went out, he wanted to prepare for everything. As Garry Kirsten said Tendulkar studied the entire textbook for the examination. Think about it, he was the world's best batsman, he could score runs with his eyes shut perhaps and yet he worked hard at it. What do most of us do *accha yaar batana kaun sa section padhne se* (ok friend tell me which section do I need to study) I can pass those three questions and get the examination through? The look for shortcuts is a dangerous place to be in business schools.

If you are looking for shortcuts you will find lots of shortcuts, but that's not why you are here, that's not why your parents are putting you through BIMTECH, that's not why all these professors are here, to try and teach you shortcuts. They are here to try and stretch you to say how much more you can do, how much more you can learn to do. So use this opportunity, there will be a textbook that's given to you, you don't have to read it but you should want to read it. There will be a subject that you are not interested in, you should get interested in it, you must learn. You don't want to be that C.E.O who at the age of 40 when has a crisis in the business says actually *woh finance main BIMTECH ek option tha, I didn't do it yaar* (Finance was one of the options in BIMTECH but I did not study the same.) So I don't know what the answer to this one is. You don't want to have that kind of freedom; you want to be someone who studied the entire textbook for the examination. So it's like if Tendulkar can do it I am sure you can do it too. So slog, make sure you form teams and learn to work in teams.

Slog, work really hard. And the last one is really to say get out of your comfort zone. Don't stick inside your comfort zone, go out and try and do things you have never done before. Don't try and say *nahi nahi maine toh history kiya tha* (No, no I have done History.) so you know maths, I don't like maths, I am not going to do maths. Don't do that. Do the things that scare you, if there is something that you are really scared off, do it. This is your chance to learn, this is your chance to do things you have never done before. Somebody said that you know that word FEAR is actually false expectations appearing real. So a good way to overcome fear is to challenge it. A good way to overcome fear is *accha* (ok) really let me see what this is. And you will suddenly discover maths doesn't bite, you will suddenly discover economics can be fun. You will discover finance at the end of it all is actually very important for all of us, never mind which function we might get into and you will suddenly discover that if you don't understand the technology you are history, you have no role to play in the future of this universe. So push yourself, don't stick to what I know and what I am good at, start doing things you are not good at. Get comfortable failing, do something and say wow! I just failed, I just messed it up. Doesn't matter because this is your chance to make mistakes! And if you make enough mistakes you will learn enough too.

Dr. Mithas* said curiosity is important, be curious and I think the most powerful line that you can have for yourself is to say "I don't know." Many of us are too scared to say "I don't know," we are worried and think *log kya sochenge* (What will the people think?). We are worried so that when somebody says IOT is the real future, you can say *hota kya hai IOT maine LOT suna hai ye IOT kya hota hai* (What is this IOT...I have heard of LOT). If you don't know it ASK. If you think ML is the future, what is it? Ask. The worst mistake that you can make is to spend the next two years is going through this cover in front of you which tries to say I am smart when actually I don't know something. So, be willing to say I don't know; it's a very powerful phrase. The minute you say "I don't know" you will find lots of people around you who will say hey! Let me explain to you. Let me help you, let me teach you, let me tell you and you will suddenly find that you are learning a little bit more. That's really the three things which I think you should be doing while you are here, which is work in teams, work hard, slog and make sure that you get out of your comfort zone.

I want to move quickly to the three lessons that I have learned at work. I started my career working for the Hindustan Lever. I used to sell soap, and I want to share a lesson that I learnt out there. I was a young area sales manager, a management trainee turned area sales manager, and we had the chairman of the company visiting us. Now, the chairman of the company coming was a big deal and you want to impress the chairman. So he is coming on the market visit, you want to take him out and show him shops and how we are doing in the stores. Our chairman at that time was known to ask lots of questions. So now obviously as a young manager, I wanted to impress him. I had answers to every question you can think of. How is lifebuoy sales this year in comparison to the last year? What is the market share?, Why is Nirma kicking Rin?, What's happening to Lux?, and so on, Think of the questions and I had the answers. But, our chairman at that time was a scientist, so I had answers to tougher questions as well. I was in Chennai those days, so I was aware of the hardness of water in Tamil Nadu, the yield per hectare for paddy in Tamil Nadu. So the big day arrives, the chairman comes in and you know young manager receives him at the airport and we are supposed to drive out to a place about 95 kilometers away, the place called Maduranthakam. We got into the car and I am not saying bring it on, no questions and I say damn, what a waste of effort this is. You know all that effort went down the drain and it's half-an-hour into the drive and we are leaving the city and I look out and can see a paddy field out there. I am hoping that the chairman will also look there and say tell me what's the field per hectare for paddy? No luck, no questions, damn! Anyway, we then reach the distributor's godown, who are stockades who sell all our products. As it happens in our country to welcome the chairman, you have got the distributor, his wife, his mother-in-law, the dog, the delivery boy who is actually an old man who puts open in the store, there is a merchandiser whose job is to put posters in the shop. All of them queued up to welcome the chairman. And out of nowhere, the delivery boy, who is an old man wearing a baniyaan (vest) suddenly says "Hello Sir", like you know, '*kahan the itne din*' (where were you all these days?). Of course, the chairman turns around and says hello to him and then he turns around and asks me my first question, "What's the

*Prof. Sunil Mithas, University of Maryland, USA.

name of that delivery boy?" Damn! come on, why would anybody want to know the name of the delivery boy. But you know what, the chairman then puts the hand on my shoulder and gave me a master class on leadership. He said, "You know what the problem with you young leaders, young managers is you are always looking up to see who is the boss? Who is the boss's boss? Who are the important people in the company? You don't recognize that it's the people like him, like that delivery boy who makes a difference to our business.

They are the people who make us look good, for very little money that man goes day in and day out, put soaps in the stores, make sure that soap is visible. It's because of him that we are such a respected company today. And if you would have kind of introduced me to him, known his name, I would have shaken his hand, we would have a chance to recognize someone who makes a difference to our business. And I think it's a lesson that stayed with me and it's a lesson that's true for all of us. Become that kind of person who learns to respect that delivery boy, who learns to respect those ordinary people who make a difference in our life. Someway along the line you will be told to go through a psychometric test to see what kind of a leader you are, forget it. If you want to know what kind of a leader you are, it's easy to see. How do you behave with waiters in a restaurant, or behave with the liftman in the lift, or with that security guard outside? These behaviors, how we are with ordinary people reveal how we are as an individual. And if you become that kind of person who makes that delivery boy feel great, that waiter in a hotel feel like what a guy he is, you will be unstoppable.

They will do more for you than you would have ever thought was possible. How many of you have taken an Uber ride in the last month? Anybody, Uber ride last week? Yeah, lots of hand going up. So what happens when you finish an Uber ride? You rate the driver. What does the driver do? He rates you. Be careful, 2 years from now when you have a campus interview somebody is going to ask you *aapka uber score kya hai?* (What is your Uber score?) Because that score is going to tell them a little more on what you are, how you are as a person. So become that kind of person who learns to respect other people. Become that kind of leader who likes to make that ordinary person feel good about being a part of your team. Don't show I am the boss, I am the leader, I am going to do what I like. Try and take care of that person and he would do more for you than you have ever thought is possible.

That was lesson number one. Lesson number two: I worked for Pepsi and those were the days when Pepsi was all about passion. And you will learn soon in school that there are these four P's of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion that's what makes our success, trust me it's P-passion which really makes a difference. So we were this madly passionate company, it was Pepsi which was blue vs Coke which was red. It was blue vs red; it was war. And if you worked for Pepsi you could drive a car of any color except red. That's what passion was all about. And I think I learned a lesson at Pepsi, which is if you want to do well you must have a PHD in your life. I mean if you are studying for an MBA by the time you finish you must have an MBA and a PHD, and what's PHD? The P is for being passionate; you should be passionate about what you do. You must be passionate;

you must be in love with what you are doing. If you are asked to go and sweep the floor you must sweep it so well that people say wow!

If Mozart was composing music he probably looked like this. That's what you should be doing. You should have an H which is HUNGER; you should be hungry for success. You must want it. A challenge for this generation and I am looking at all of you now and saying this is, sometimes you had things little easy and therefore, you may not have the hunger to succeed. Also, I think you all have grown up in an era where outsourcing has become very popular, so you think hunger hum outsource ker denge, kisi aur ko denge (You think of outsourcing hunger.). Doesn't work. You have got to want it badly. If you want to succeed you have to get to want it badly and if you have that hunger in you, you will find that you can actually achieve a hell of a lot more. And then there is the D which is DISCIPLINE, so you need PASSION, you need HUNGER, you need DISCIPLINE. You need the discipline to stick with what you are trying to do. What happens to many of us is that we try to do something for few days and then give up, we will try something and then give up. There was this gymnast who became the world champion and she was asked what is the secret of her success and she said something interesting. She said it's pretty simple. She said I practiced whenever I felt like it and practiced, even more, when I didn't feel like it. Most of us are halfway to becoming world champion, we do things when we feel like it. Success will come when you push yourself to do things when you don't feel like it.

And the last lesson, it is something that I picked up when I had a chance to be close to Ricky Ponting, who was then coaching the Mumbai Indians. Ponting arguably one the best batsmen in the world, ok the second best batsman can make it to the third best batsman now. Great batsman, fantastic coach to the Mumbai Indians and if you follow cricket a little Ponting was one of the cricketers who had this ability to find the gap. Which really means you can set any file you like for him and yet he would find the gap and score the boundaries. Remarkable ability, a young Mumbai Indians asked him to tell me how did you do it, what's the secret? So Ricky said you know it's actually pretty simple, almost any batsman when he comes out to bat, when he comes to the middle, the first thing he does is to look at the field. After that when the batman put his head down, he could remember all the field placements, he knows that the fine leg is standing square, he knows that the mid-wicket is deep, he knows that mid-on is standing close to the bowler. So Ricky said fielders get imprinted in batsman's mind, and then Ponting says you know what happens to me, I look around and then I put my head down the gaps get imprinted in my mind. Everybody sees the fielders, I see the gaps. And that makes a difference. And the question to ask yourself is this when you look at what do you see? Do you see problems or do you see opportunities?

Do you see why things won't work or do you see how things might work? And depending on what you see, you will find that what you see and that is lots and lots. If you think somebody is not going to

help you, you will find that nobody is helping you. If you think this place is terrible you will find everything about the place terrible. If you think that guy doesn't really like us too much, even if he is telling somebody else you know this guy is really very good, you will say see I told you he will say something bad about me. We imagine it almost. So I think it's important as a leader, as young leaders to be far more positive about our future, to be more positive about the world around us. So don't worry about the obstacles, don't worry about fielders, you can't change the fielders. Don't be that kind of batman who says arey yaar itna accha shot tha fielder wahi tha nahi toh (oh friend what a shot, fielder was there only or else...) I won't have been caught, it doesn't help. You cannot decide where the obstacles will be but you can decide what you will focus on, focus on the gaps and you will find it. Focus on the solutions and you will find them, focus on the good around you and you will find that too. That's really the three lessons that I wanted to share from my own work experience. One last line before I leave, all of us have this habit of putting something against the bathroom mirror, a message to yourself and if you do it I think I'll give you one sentence, ten words, each of two letters and I love that sentence, it is something which has made a difference to my life and I thought I'll leave it with you. And the sentence is: IF IT IS TO BE IT IS UPTO ME. If anything goes apt it is because of you, take charge, have fun and hopefully we will see you 2 years later in the corporate world.

All the very best guys!