

Success

Mangala Moonesinghe

Extracts of the speech made by Chief Guest Mangala Moonesinghe at the annual prize giving of Stafford International School which was held recently.

I see among you the future leaders of our country – leaders in various fields, whether it be government, in science, in business or in the arts. You are at a special time of your lives – a springboard from which you will dive into your futures, choose fields of study which will launch your careers, and embark on study courses from which you will gain not only knowledge from books but also from experiences that will shape you as the men and women of tomorrow.

You are living in both exciting and worrying times. Exciting as there is a world of potential global communication that is open to you that were not available before. Our children and grandchildren are constantly at the internet – using terms I barely understand – Facebook, YouTube, Skype and they use these tools to communicate with people around the world, to learn about diverse topics, and to share interests in photography, music and other exalting ideas.

There are times when science is racing ahead with interesting and sometimes frightening advances in areas such as cloning, and stem cell research – when enterprising path finders are preparing to go on their voyages to space aboard privately owned spaces vehicles. Yet these are anxious times as well, as your generation of worrying about issues of global warming, terrorism and unprecedented green in financial markets around the world.

From a Sri Lankan perspective we are facing a terrible war-that may or may not end anytime soon that is affecting the lives of countless citizens and an economy that is facing hard times due to both external and internal shocks, and poverty and a lack of education for many of our children. On the positive side you are living at a time that is considered the Asian Century –when the world is looking at our continent for its educated workforce, for opportunities of outsourcing, for partnerships on resources and business ideas.

As students that are now preparing to head out into the world – to universities and onto other specialised fields of study, you should keep in mind a few things that have always guided me in my life.

Always be a law abiding citizen. Do the right thing – knowing to be guided your inner voice, to, live by high standards and ethnic – to remember not to give into corruption and dishonesty in your dealings. To give you inspiration use quotations or personal stories or biographies of famous people. But above all be driven by your conscience.

Cultivate a spirit of generosity to those in need – whether it is for the people close to you, your community or for the country. Learn to give, share you ideas, share your knowledge,

share your wealth and share your time. If you can make a difference in the betterment of one person's life, your life will be one of contentment. Even when you are engaged in busy careers make time to help to community.

Develop a sense of gratitude and be thankful for the things you have. We live in a materialistic world where we are constantly bombarded by advertisement luring us to buy a better car, a trendier pair of jeans, and the latest cell phone. You will never be happy if you only pursue the acquisition of material things, because it always leaves you wanting more. Be thankful for what you currently have you will be able to live more contented lives.

As you graduated and move into the next phase of your life you are taking a huge step forward. You are moving way form your cloistered home environments and will be taking responsibility for your lives. If you are going abroad for your studies you will for the first time be away form the watchful eyes of your parents.

No one to tell you to be home early, to have a shower, finish your homework or eat your food. You will enjoy a freedom that you have never known. Use this freedom carefully, for you, and only you, are responsible for your life, for who you become. Study hard for education matters.

Your learning will always open doors for you in the future. Choose careers in which you have an interest in, and learn from the hurdles that life sets in front of you.

My name is not on the panels of prize winner adoring the wall of the royal college hall. But I got a lot our of my days of confidence in myself and sense of pride in the school, a sense of discipline and fair play, blinding tries of friends and above all respect for our willing to explore.

My mine goes back to my English teacher who inspired an abiding interest in literature and poetry and the teachers who drove into us that our word was our honour and always speak the truth, whatever consequences may follow. Bill Gates was a Harvard drop out, but look at the heights he reached and Harvard gave him an honorary degree.

With all the pluses and minuses I have given you I my assessment as a student the fact that honesty and integrity was a lesson learnt and carried to this day be me and I have imparted this to our children. Today I can stand here with my head held high and say that in all my years in public life, I have never been tempted to enrich myself by corrupt means, nor have I shied away from my duty in my chosen field.

When I practise law my dedication was to my client as a member of parliament to my voters who voted for me and to those who did not as an ambassador to my government and to my country. This I can tell you does not come with mere scholarship; it comes from moral values instilled in your home, in school and from your peers.

This brings me to another matter; choose your friends and companions with care. You are the leader of tomorrow you are the opinion makers tomorrow, you are the custodians of the entirety of your countries integrity and therefore I entreat you to act with care and thoughtfulness and act sober; act with care and act with tolerance and respect for others.

Do not become insular in your approach. Read widely and open your mind up to global influences which will broaden your horizon and know that there is bigger world outside our island shores.

I would like to take this opportunity to request you to remind yourself at all times that we are all Sri Lankans living in multi religious, multi lingual and multi cultural society. We must learn to accept and respect this diversity as a feature that enriches our lives and unites us.