

## Commencement 2022

Address to the Trinity College Graduating Class of 2022  
By Raja Changez Sultan '72

President Berger-Sweeney, members of the Board of Trustees, members of the faculty, parents, esteemed guests, and cherished members of the Class of 2022. It's a privilege for all of us to be sharing this proud moment with you! It's a day of celebration! A day to let your dreams soar above the clouds for you have finally crossed a most important milestone in your journey that opens the future for you.

From here onward, it is a world of greater freedom, responsibility, and accomplishment. Some of you will head off for postgraduate studies, others for jobs in the public or private sector, and then some, who will most certainly set their minds on ventures entirely their own. No matter which path you choose, we wish you success beyond the measure of your imagination!

When I received the email from President Berger-Sweeney informing me that I had been selected for an honorary degree as well as to be the speaker for this occasion, I welcomed the news, but then I thought, what on earth would I say to an outstanding class of eager young graduates? It is then that it struck me: the world has gotten a lot smaller, and the problems confronting us everywhere are just about the same.

The same virus that strikes you there, kills us here. The same jobs that elude you there, deny us a living here, and the same quality of life you dream of, we yearn for here. Peace, progress, and prosperity that you desire, we want in equal measure. In short, small or large, your problems aren't all that different from ours. That being the case, a time has come for us to set aside traditional concepts of nationalities and geographic boundaries, ethnicity, race, and color in favor of the collective good and to begin dreaming of a truly global partnership where nothing is yours or mine, but everything is ours. It is this unity that our survival depends upon.

Perhaps your administration foresaw this and felt even a recluse sitting beneath the towering peaks of the Himalayas may have something relevant to say on this auspicious occasion!

For what it's worth, I am a poet and a painter whose journey, like yours, began when I landed at Trinity as a Strawbridge Scholar from Shrewsbury School in England. My intent was to study mathematics and physics, but by the time I graduated, it was painting and poetry that won over. Perhaps a thorough grounding in liberal arts that Trinity provides so well and some dedicated faculty members gave me the impetus to head down this road.

As you know, at Trinity, you learn from every teacher you encounter. But then, there are always some who help you beyond the call of duty. In my case, it was Professors Mitchel Pappas, Hugh Ogden, and Stephen Minot. I am indebted to them for challenging me at every turn. No wonder then that I decided my life was going to be a story of 10 good paintings and 10 good poems. What I did not realize, however, was that I was asking for two lifetimes to be lived in one!

Next came the School of the Arts and the Journalism School at Columbia University. Thereafter, it was the United Nations in Geneva and an eventual return to Pakistan.

That was my journey, but let's come back to yours. Positives aside, the road ahead is one of fierce competition. It will test the very mettle of the values you have grown up with. It is one where lies and truth, cover-ups, and transparency all intertwine in such a manner that creating a befitting niche for yourself will always remain a daunting task.

But it is your calling! You are our future! You are the new faces of our visionaries and dreamers; our scientists and scholars; our conservationists and planners; our poets, painters, musicians, and dancers; our educators, engineers, and doctors; you are the future brand of our politicians with the motivation to move mountains. As such, you are the men and women undoubtedly destined to play a major part in taking us forward.

Before you set sail, however, there are three insights I would like to share with you. I hope they help you shape a better world for all of us!

### 1. Bridges, Not Chasms

The first is that you aim for building bridges instead of creating chasms! In today's fragmented world, it is a much-needed mindset that removes differences between people in the hope of uniting them. There is so much in common between us that building relationships and forging a commonality takes us much further than exploiting differences.

The diversity that you find around the globe is our collective strength: the languages, cultures, traditions, religions, mythologies and a hundred other facets.

But sadly, we are our own enemies as well. Over time, the ignorance within us has led to the desecration of our environment.

Be it our forests, our oceans, our air, or the pollutants we have spread around, or the ozone layer we have punctured, or the wildlife we have almost eradicated; the fact remains we have not been kind to ourselves.

Hence, to rectify our collective wrongs, the way forward is by building bridges that unite instead of creating chasms that divide.

### 2 A Better Balance between Power and Wisdom

The second insight I wish to share is that you strive for a better balance between power and wisdom. Be it in the political arena, the corporate sector, or other walks of life, our leaders have relied heavily on power, while wisdom has seldom been their first weapon of choice. In your turn, build a world where this imbalance is rectified.

Human history is full of laudable examples where wisdom, coupled with power, created opportunity and advancement, stimulated innovation and creativity, enabled arts and sciences to flourish, and

went a long way in shaping an enlightened society. But wherever it was a case of power without wisdom, then the high and mighty trampled on the hopes and aspirations of the weak, usurped their lands, and confiscated their wealth.

So, bear this in mind, should you end up advising those in power or exercising a fair bit of it yourself.

### 3 Shun Shortcuts

The third, and last, is to shun shortcuts! Be it a craft you wish to excel in, a profession you wish to master, a role you wish to play, everything takes time, energy, patience, and persistence.

Shortcuts will never make you a genius; they will cut you short. Success has always come through dedication, hard work, and commitment. Strive for that, and undoubtedly you will succeed.

I end my address now with an excerpt from a poem I wrote way back in the '70s. Its title is "PAST THE DEADWOOD OF MEMORY."

#### PAST THE DEADWOOD OF MEMORY

The night dies peacefully each day  
The sun rises from a turning world.  
There is nothing that falls away  
And cannot arise  
When the will  
is granite  
And the fire  
From a deep blue flame!

The mind is twisted beyond the cobra coils.  
The heart is a ravine,  
Your thought, a river gushing through  
The many minds of the subconscious.  
I am what I know with my eyes  
And the language of my hands,  
While you, my wispy friend,  
More vague than the weather  
In the deeper regions  
Of my tropics!

Where will I find the strength  
To fight you and burn  
The timber of my love  
In the forest that is yours  
In the subcutaneous regions  
Of your earth and find  
A life that must be mine

By choice not imposition?

That is the struggle.

The river is my strength.

The fire is within

And I must learn

To burn

To be born again.

Once again, ***congratulations*** to all of you. May your journey be long and purposeful, and may each of you leave an indelible mark on the sands of time!

Thank you!