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129th Graduation Graduation Speech by Prof. Soe W. Myint.

Thank you for the introduction Professor Kumar.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Board of trustees, Distinguished guests, Faculty members, families, friends, and most importantly the graduates,

It is a great honor for me to be here and talk to you at this very special ceremony.

I remember the day I was sitting in this same auditorium as one of the graduating students 25 years ago. Everything looks the same. The only difference is that I am almost bald now. My forehead is a lot wider. I have lots of gray hairs. I should have worn a graduation cap.

Seriously, I know how hard-working you all have been. *I know the level of stress and pressure with regards to your graduate study at AIT.* You've worked endless days and nights, weekends. I can imagine how many sleepless nights you've endured to achieve this. I'm honored that you are giving me the time to share some of my own experiences before you continue on your journeys. You have worked days and nights. You have worked really hard. You have worked weekends and overnights. You deserve this. This is the time for you to shine. You have a great future ahead.

I would like to take this opportunity to share two stories with you.

The first story took place at Stanford University in 1960s. A professor of Psychology and his research team members conducted an experiment, what's now known as the "marshmallow test" to examine participants' ability to delay gratification or temptation.

The test went like this: put a marshmallow on the table in front of a four-year-old; tell the child that he or she can either eat the marshmallow now, or leave it uneaten for a while (15 minutes) and receive a second marshmallow at the end of the test (those of you who do not know marshmallow – it is like a candy or a cookie); have the researcher leave the room for the prescribed period of time; if the child sits alone with the marshmallow for the test period and does not eat the treat, the researcher returns and gives the child two marshmallows to eat. Whenever they want to eat the marshmallow they can ring the bell.

This is a test of delayed gratification. What's interesting is that the test is apparently predictive of future life success. If a four-year-old delays gratification (which is pretty rare), that kid will very likely grow up to be a very successful adult.

Most of the children struggled to resist the treat and controlled their temptation for an average of less than three minutes. A few kids ate the marshmallow right away. They didn't



even bother ringing the bell. Other kids would stare directly at the marshmallow and then ring the bell thirty seconds later. I saw a kid in a similar test sniffing the marshmallow and putting it back on the table. She sniffed several times. She looked like she was seriously struggling not to eat the marshmallow. Later she took out the middle part from the bottom and ate it. Then she put the marshmallow back on to the table. About thirty per cent of the children successfully delayed gratification until the researchers returned. These kids wrestled with temptation but found a way to resist.

The children who rang the bell quickly, seemed more likely to have behavioral problems, both in school and at home. They got lower S.A.T. scores. They struggled in stressful situations, often had trouble paying attention, and found it difficult to maintain friendships. The ability to wait for a second marshmallow is important. They have a stronger will power and self-control. The child who could wait fifteen minutes had an S.A.T. score that was, on average, 210 points higher than that of the kid who could wait only thirty seconds. In general, those who could resist were rewarded at the end of the experiment and later on in life.

So “Don’t eat marshmallow yet” It applies to anybody at any age.

Here is the second story.

A Professor of philosophy walks into a classroom and sets a transparent jar on the table. He silently places 2-inch rocks in the jar until no more could fit. He asks the class if the jar is full and they agree it is. He says, “Really,” and pulls out a pile of small pebbles, adding them to the jar, shaking it slightly until they fill the spaces between the rocks. He asks again, “Is the jar full?” They agree. So next, he adds a scoop of sand to the jar, filling the space between the pebbles and asks the question again. This time, the class is divided, some feeling that the jar is obviously full, but others are wary of another trick. So he grabs a pitcher of water and fills the jar to the brim, saying, “If this jar is your life, what does this experiment show you?” A bold student replies, “No matter how busy you think you are, you can always take on more.” “That is one view,” he replies. Then he looks out at the class making eye contact with everyone, “The rocks represent the BIG things in your life – what you will value at the end of your life – your family, your partner, your health, fulfilling your hopes and dreams. The pebbles are the other things in your life that give it meaning, like your job, your house, your hobbies, your friendships. The sand and water represent the ‘small stuff’ that fills our time, like watching news, watching movies, watching entertainments, hanging out with friends at Pubs, Bars, and Restaurants, vacation on a beach, camping in a wilderness, going to a concert, throwing parties in your backyard, or running errands.” Looking out at the class again, he asks, “Can you see what would happen if I started with the sand or the pebbles?”

Prioritizing certain things in your life like family or health should be your “rock.” We should prioritize self-care whether that means exercising, doing yoga, meditation. Take time to get medical checkups, play with your children, go for a run, talk to your parents, or write your



grandmother a letter. Do yoga and meditation for your health. Do physical exercise for half an hour a day for 3-4 days a week.

Speaking of our families let's think about our parents. Speaking of our families let's think about our parents. When I say parents I am talking about biological parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, guardians, and others who play a vital role in supporting, helping, providing valuable information, and taking care of you. How exceptionally wonderful our parents are in our lives? Let's think about it for a moment. Parents provided us shelters, foods and clothing that we all badly need in our lives until we can live on our own. They provide us a place to live, a place to eat, a place to study, a place to hang out, a place to sleep, a place to take shower, a place to clean, etc., They provide you a bed to sleep. They provide you breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. They listen to you. You can seek advice whenever you want. They teach everything. They provide your protection against any harmful things. They provide lights and water. They provide you clothes, sweaters, t shirts, shorts, trousers, dressed shirts, socks, etc. They provide us education. They provide comments and suggestions for any issues you have. They provide pillow, blanket, bed sheet, and pillow case and change them so many times.

When we were toddlers we did not know how to change, how to get foods and eat, how to use the toilet, how to take a shower, how to clean, how to go to bed. They changed our clothes so many times a day. They fed us 4-5 times a day every day. They cleaned us so many times a day every day. They changed our diapers so many times a day every day. They bathed us every day. They carried us all the time. We all need to realize these priceless exceptional things that they provide us for so many years in our lives.

Who do you think in the world can do all these things for you for so many years? Please think about your parents. Please support your parents whatever possible and whenever you can. If you cannot support a whole a lot find time to talk and say hi to them. It will make them happy. Please wish them well whenever possible. Believe me you will receive tremendous positive blessings by doing good things for your parents. Most of us forget about how important they are in our lives. Don't let it happen to you. You take care of your parents whenever you can. Don't wait until they get really old. They are the most trusted persons for you on earth. They are the ones who love you the most. Don't make your parents upset. Don't make them mad. Make them happy.

Finally, don't harm others to be successful. Don't play politics to be successful. Don't be crooked to be successful. Don't exploit others to be successful. Don't be dishonest to be successful.

If you do bad things you get bad things. That is the universal truth regardless of whether you are Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, or Buddhist. If you do bad things to a good person who is kind, considerate, honest, simple, sincere, and does not create any problem to anybody for his or her entire life the adverse effect for this could be exceptional. You do not



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know when you will receive this huge adverse effect. Forget about this exceptional negative effect. You have to do the right thing as a human being.

- (1) Don't eat the Marshmallow yet!
- (2) Set priorities for rocks!
- (3) Take care of your parents!
- (4) Be honest and kind
- (5) Treat others as you would like to be treated!

Now is your time to shine. Congratulations to the class of 2018.