



Lt. General (Retd) Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM

Dear Friends,

Today is a landmark day in the Indus Journey that started seven years ago. We did not consciously give ourselves a time frame. Instead, we embarked on the journey armed with a powerful vision – to create leaders of tomorrow through whole-education, lifelong learning, a strong sense of community, and a quest to bring out the inner potential of every child. We believed this is what 21st century schools and leadership are all about.

The vision was inspired by the most powerful and visionary bird – the eagle. The vision was carefully crafted on the banks of the River Indus that flowed silently pass my house in Leh. The vision aligned itself with the aspirations of our trustees to pay back to society as a mark of gratitude and a prayer.

There can be no vision without a higher purpose. Vision is the byproduct of a higher purpose that man sets for himself, a purpose that goes beyond oneself, that gives meaning to life. To explain such higher-order concepts to children is never easy when even most grownups do not understand or practice this in their lives. We made a beginning by trying to get children thinking about two questions that lurk deep in every human heart: who am I, and why am I here?

We had our share of opposition that came from several quarters. The prevailing idea in most schools is that apart from the usual PTMs, parents are off-limit. We believe that 50 percent learning stops by the age of 10, and therefore, parents must be the closest ally in their child's education. There is a strong Indian mindset that success in examinations, especially science and mathematics, is what matters. We believe that whole-education is a key objective of education; but not at the expense of academic excellence. Both are possible.

The third challenge was the entire notion of discipline considered by traditionalists to signify coercion and punishment. This is diametrically opposite to our view that discipline is the absence of fear, and is about moderation and self-management. Community service is to be seen as a form of experiential learning especially the values of love, humility, and compassion – an extension of the classroom. And finally, international-education goes beyond the 3Fs (food, festival, flags) and being a “cool dude.” In fact, international education is rooted in localism in one’s indigenous culture and historical traditions.

We have gathered this evening not to pontificate on how we navigated our journey; but rather to express our deep gratitude to you trustees, and you dear parents, for our success. The spectacular success is attributable in great measure to the positive role played by you in partnering the principal and teachers in this great journey.

You gave us a lot of space, staying clear of interference, criticism and questioning.

You encouraged us to make mistakes, and then learn from them.

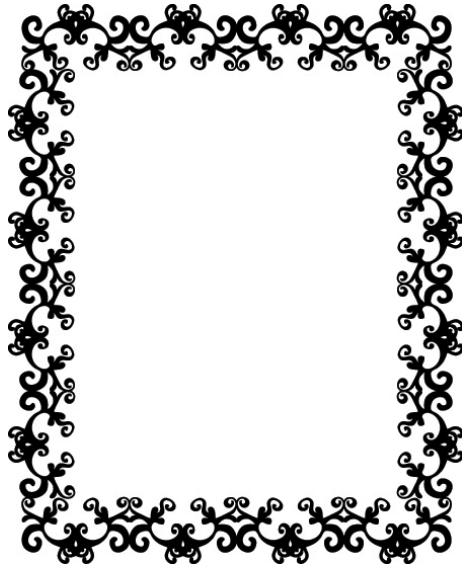
You placed your faith and trust in us with patience and equanimity.

You willingly offered sage advice during difficult times.

You helped us make a difference.

You have given us the courage and confidence to take another giant leap. Next year we will setup South Asia’s first international school for the poor – poor children who live below the poverty line, who go to sleep every night hungry, with no shelter, no medicines, no toilets, and no schools to go. Children in whose lives the light of hope has been extinguished. These children will pay just Rs 1000 per year and shall receive world class schooling. This vision is being made possible by our trustees, who inspired by their desire to payback to society, have so graciously offered to provide the entire infrastructure; and you parents, whom we invite to partner us. We call upon you to contribute just Rs 5000 to support one child, to give life and hope to those who are oppressed and marginalized. Your children will mentor these children, and in the process learn the virtues of compassion and humility, become good human beings and leaders of tomorrow, a tomorrow that is uncertain, unknowable and chaotic.

I spoke to you about vision – an imagined future, a future that human eyes cannot see. When setting a vision it is not important to think of **what to do**. It is more important to think of what we **want to be** – leaders who will make a difference in society, leaders who will be able to answer the question why am I here?



I want you to look at this blank photo frame on the screen. Imagine this is a photograph of you. Imagine it is one hundred years from now and your child and grandchild is looking at this photograph of you.

What is the story you want them most to tell.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Arjun Ray". The signature is written in black ink and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Lieutenant General (Retd) Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM
Chief Executive Officer
Indus Trust