



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

Dear Friends,

We are all fellow-travelers on the great journey of life, the odyssey of mind and spirit. Many of us in the audience have been traveling for some time; for you it will be the beginning. As a fellow-traveler, I would like to share a thought that may help you to make the journey more meaningful.

Our compass needle should point towards **Excellence**.

Excellence is a core value, an attitude, and a habit of mind that aims at continuous improvement. The Japanese call it *kaizen*. Traditionally, leaders have been rewarded for achieving great results for themselves individually and for their specific interest group. This must change, because in the process, we are endangering the future by self-indulgence and lack of commitment.

Instead, excellence should be considered as an objective for the **Common Good**, an ideal that goes beyond the individual and the group. Such excellence is achieved by creating “down-the-line” leaders in society. This ensures that leaders are dispersed and available at all levels of society, and we are not solely dependent upon a few leaders at the top. This is the magical effect of excellence for the common good.

Excellence for the common good occurs when we **pay back to society**. Parents and society have shaped you into what you are today. They nurtured you during infancy, released your potential through the right education, protected your individual rights, and gave you an identity and sense of belonging. In return you must pay back something to family, society, nation, and humankind. You do that by ploughing back your talent, your time, your precious insight, and even a small fraction of your wealth,

to strengthen the bonds between you, the family, the community, and the nation. I assure you, that the more you give, the more you will get – even money and happiness.

There will be two challenges in your quest for excellence. First, is the natural and expected fallout of youthful idealism. You are not the only who are idealists; even a large numbers of elders subscribe to the fantasy of a **Utopian world** where everything has to be perfect. I have said it before and I will say it again. There is nothing ideal or perfect about life or human beings. Life in its most natural form is paradoxical and non-dual and not bipolar – life and death, order and disorder, peaceful and violent, happiness and sorrow, and rational and irrational. They are two sides of the same coin. Yet life is beautiful. Likewise, there is no perfect society and there is no perfectness in man either. The only perfect man is an imperfect man.

The second challenge will be in becoming a **lifelong learner** wherein you are responsible for your learning and growth, to be what you could be – your fulfillment. In the pursuit of excellence, learning is more about who you are? What are your strengths? And what can life teach us. We learn how to be ethical. We learn to accept what we cannot change. We learn that many people are neither for us or against us; they are thinking only about themselves. We learn that whatever we may do, some people will still not love us, or be grateful. But we must still continue to give them our love.

I cannot recommend any magic recipes, but you might find these useful.

Man is not born as talent because talent is a process. Man is born potential. Potential is honed when you focus on your strengths and not weaknesses. When you pursue your vision relentlessly, when you practice, practice and practice, excellence is born

When you pursue a higher purpose, something larger than yourself, something other than yourself, you give meaning to life, and in the process you provide the motivation to achieve excellence.

The story of humankind is replete with examples of common individuals who have dedicated their lives to realize the best within them, and to defend the ideals of a good society to the best of their abilities. They struggled relentlessly for excellence and in the bargain founded religions, created works of art, and went beyond the frontiers of science to make this world worth living. You too can do it. We have great expectations of you. In turn you must have great expectations from yourself and the people you are responsible to lead.

With warm regards,

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

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Chief Executive Officer
Indus Trust