

--- On Tue, 8/12/08, vishakha <vishakhaj@dcbl.com> wrote:

From: vishakha <vishakhaj@dcbl.com>
Subject: Keep the Spark Alive.....GOOD ONE !!
To: "vishakha " <vishakhaj@dcbl.com>
Date: Tuesday, August 12, 2008, 3:15 PM

Keep the Spark Alive

Inaugural Speech for the new batch at the Symbiosis BBA program, Pune
23rd June, 2008 By Chetan Bhagat

Good Morning everyone and thank you for giving me this chance to speak to you.

This day is about you. You, who have come to this college, leaving the comfort of your homes (or in some cases discomfort), to become something in your life. I am sure you are excited. There are few days in human life when one is truly elated. The first day in college is one of them. When you were getting ready today, you felt a tingling in your stomach. What would the auditorium be like, what would the teachers be like, who are my new classmates. There is so much to be curious about. **I call this excitement, the spark within you that makes you feel truly alive today. Today I am going to talk about keeping the spark shining or to put it another way, how to be happy most, if not all the time.**

Where do these sparks start? I think we are born with them. My 3-year old twin boys have a million sparks. A little Spiderman toy can make them jump on the bed. They get thrills from creaky swings in the park. A story from daddy gets them excited. They do a daily countdown for birthday party - several months in advance - just for the day they will cut their own birthday cake.

I see students like you, and I still see some sparks.

But when I see older people, the spark is difficult to find. That means as we age, the spark fades. People whose spark has faded too much are dull, dejected, aimless and bitter. Remember Kareena in the first half of Jab We Met vs the second half?

That is what happens when the spark is lost. **So how to save the spark?** Imagine the spark to be a lamp's flame. The first aspect is **nurturing** - to give your spark the fuel, continuously. The second is to **guard against storms**. To nurture, always have goals. It is human nature to strive, improve and achieve full potential. In fact, that is success. It is what is possible for you. It isn't any external measure - a certain cost to company pay package, a particular car or house.

Most of us are from middle class families. **To us, having material landmarks is success and rightly so.** When you have grown up where money constraints force everyday choices, financial freedom is a big achievement. **But it isn't the purpose of life.**

If that was the case, Mr. Ambani would not show up for work. Shah Rukh Khan would stay at home and not dance anymore. Steve Jobs won't be working hard to make a better iPhone, as he sold Pixar for billions of dollars already. **Why do they do it? What makes them come to work everyday? They do it because it makes them happy.** They do it because it makes them feel alive. Just getting better from current levels feels good. If you study hard, you can improve your rank. If you make an effort to interact with people, you will do better in interviews. If you practice, your cricket will get better. You may also know that you cannot become Tendulkar, yet. But you can get to the next level.

Striving for that next level is important. Nature designed with a random set of genes and circumstances in which we were born. To be happy, we have to accept it and make the most of nature's design. Are you? Goals will help you do that.

I must add, don't just have career or academic goals. Set goals to give you a balanced, successful life. I use the word balanced before successful. Balanced means ensuring your health, relationships, mental peace are all in good order.

There is no point of getting a promotion on the day of your breakup. There is no fun in driving a car if your back hurts. Shopping is not enjoyable if your mind is full of tensions.

You must have read some quotes - Life is a tough race, it is a marathon or whatever. No, from what I have seen so far, life is one of those races in nursery school, where you have to run with a marble in a spoon kept in your mouth. If the marble falls, there is no point coming first. Same with life, where health and relationships are the marble. Your striving is only worth it if there is harmony in your life. Else, you may achieve the success, but this spark, this feeling of being excited and alive, will start to die.

One last thing about nurturing the spark - **don't take life seriously.** One of my yoga teachers used to make students laugh during classes. One student asked him if these jokes would take away something from the yoga practice. **The teacher said - don't be serious, be sincere.**

This quote has defined my work ever since. Whether it's my writing, my job, my relationships or any of my goals. I get thousands of opinions on my writing everyday.

There is heaps of praise, there is intense criticism. If I take it all seriously, how will I write? Or rather, how will I live? Life is not to be taken seriously, as we are really temporary here. **We are like a pre-paid card with limited validity.** If we are lucky, we may last another 50 years. And 50 years is just 2,500 weekends. Do we really need to get so worked up? It's ok, bunk a few classes, goof up a few interviews, fall in love. We are people, not programmed devices.

I've told you three things - reasonable goals, balance and not taking it too seriously that will nurture the spark.

However, there are four storms in life that will threaten to completely put out the flame. These must be guarded against. These are disappointment, frustration, unfairness and loneliness of purpose.

Disappointment will come when your effort does not give you the expected return. If things don't go as planned or if you face failure. Failure is extremely difficult to handle, but those that do come out stronger. What did this failure teach me? is the question you will need to ask. You will feel miserable. You will want to quit, like I wanted to when nine publishers rejected my first book. Some IITians kill themselves over low grades how silly is that? But that is how much failure can hurt you. But it's life. If challenges could always be overcome, they would cease to be a challenge. And remember - if you are failing at something, that means you are at your limit or potential. And that's where you want to be.

Disappointment's cousin is frustration, the second storm. Have you ever been frustrated? **It happens when things are stuck.** This is especially relevant in India. From traffic jams to getting that job you deserve, sometimes things take so long that you don't know if you chose the right goal. After books, I set the goal of writing for Bollywood, as I thought they needed writers. I am called extremely lucky, but it took me five years to get close to a release.

Frustration saps excitement, and turns your initial energy into something negative, making you a bitter person. How did I deal with it? A realistic assessment of the time involved - movies take a long time to make even though they are watched quickly, seeking a certain enjoyment in the process rather than the end result - at least I was learning how to write scripts, having a side plan - I had my third book to write and even something as simple as pleasurable distractions in your life - friends, food, travel can help you overcome it. Remember, nothing is to be taken seriously.

Frustration is a sign somewhere, you took it too seriously.

Unfairness - this is hardest to deal with, but unfortunately that is how our country works. People with connections, rich dads, beautiful faces, pedigree find it easier to make it - not just in Bollywood, but everywhere. And sometimes it is just plain luck. There are so few opportunities in India, so many stars need to be aligned for you to make it happen.

Merit and hard work is not always linked to achievement in the short term, but the long term correlation is high, and ultimately things do work out. But realize, there will be some people luckier than you. In fact, to have an opportunity to go to college and understand this speech in English means you are pretty damn lucky by Indian standards. **Let's be grateful for what we have and get the strength to accept what we don't.** I have so much love from my readers that other writers cannot even imagine it. However, I don't get literary praise. It's ok.

I don't look like Aishwarya Rai, but I have two boys who I think are more beautiful than her. It's ok. **Don't let unfairness kill your spark.**

Finally, the last point that can kill your spark is isolation. As you grow older you will realize you are unique. When you are little, all kids want Ice cream and Spiderman. As you grow older to college, you still are a lot like your friends. But ten years later and you realize you are unique.

What you want, what you believe in, what makes you feel, may be different from even the people closest to you. This can create conflict as your goals may not match with others. . And you may drop some of them. Basketball captains in college invariably stop playing basketball by the time they have their second child. They give up something that meant so much to them. They do it for their family. But in doing that, the spark dies. **Never, ever make that compromise. Love yourself first, and then others.**

There you go. I've told you the four thunderstorms - disappointment, frustration, unfairness and isolation. You cannot avoid them, as like the monsoon they will come into your life at regular intervals. **You just need to keep the raincoat handy to not let the spark die.**

I welcome you again to the most wonderful years of your life. If someone gave me the choice to go back in time, I will surely choose college. But I also hope that ten years later as well, your eyes will shine the same way as they do today. That you will Keep the Spark alive, not only through college, but through the next 2,500 weekends. **And I hope not just you, but my whole country will keep that spark alive, as we really need it now more than any moment in history.** **And there is something cool about saying - I come from the land of a billion sparks.**

Thank You!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <SAWANT.NILESH@mahindra.com>

Date: Fri, Oct 30, 2009 at 6:33 PM

Subject: FW: Speech by Chetan Bhagat in Symbiosis - Good one

To:

A Good one

Speech by Chetan Bhagat in Symbiosis ...must read.....

"Life is one of those races in nursery school where you have to run with a marble in a spoon kept in your mouth. If the marble falls, there is no point coming first. Same with life, where health and relationships are the marble. Your striving is only worth it if there is harmony in your life. Else, you may achieve the success, but this spark, this feeling of being excited and alive, will start to die.

One thing about nurturing the spark - don't take life seriously. Life is not meant to be taken seriously, as we are really temporary here. We are like a pre-paid card with limited validity. If we are lucky, we may last another 50 years. And 50 years is just 2,500 weekends. Do we really need to get so worked up?

It's ok, bunk a few classes, scoring low in couple of papers, goof up a few interviews, take leave from work, fall in love, little fights with your spouse. We are people, not programmed devices....." :)

"Don't be serious, be sincere." !