**Purdue Commencement Speech:**

**Live, Love, Laugh**

What an exciting day it is…..for all of us. All of you graduates are to be celebrated for reaching this milestone today and for me, whoever said "You can't go home again" was dead wrong! I am thrilled to come back to a place I hold so dear and to have the honor to be the commencement speaker this year shows me one thing very clearly... Graduate records must have **lost my transcripts.** (**Wait for the laugh**). I joke, but I sincerely want to acknowledge one very important point... if one pays attention and gets a solid foundation in college, with a positive attitude, determination, and the will to keep learning, success... however each one of us defines the term... is within our reach. I would like to first thank President Daniels for giving me this very special honor and privilege, something I will remember for the rest of my life. If I knew back then as a student that I would receive such an acknowledgement, I probably would not have wished for my transcripts to be lost.... (**Wait for the laugh**).

To the Class of 2016, I want to join your families, friends, contemporaries and administration in wishing all of you hearty congratulations. Today will remain one of your most important days and this will be a true milestone in your life. So soak it in and **live in this moment.** This is a keeper. Snapchat may be fleeting, but those Instagram and Facebook pictures you've plotted and posed for all day will last a lifetime... (**Wait for the laugh**). I would also like to extend very special congratulations to all the parents, families and friends who have traveled from near and far... from across the US and from around the world, as a show of strength and pride and support to you grads, their loved ones. They are all so proud of you and in turn you must be very proud to share this moment with them. And especially since Purdue is a very tough school to get into, we know it's even tougher to graduate from... I know **THAT** from experience.... and today we will learn it's **EVEN HARDER** to **leave**... is it the nostalgia? Is it the fear of wondering what lies ahead... just outside the confines of this beautiful campus? Is it the yearning to share these last precious moments as a student with your colleagues?? **No**. With a crowd like this... there's only one word to express what's going on...**TRAFFIC**. Imagine the backup on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Name a typical outbound road from the school and wait for the laugh**).

It has been 30 years since I graduated from Purdue, and what a 30 years it has been. How the world has changed. Mark Zuckerberg was playing is his diapers when I began my college career at Purdue. (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) I didn't actually know of him back then, but fortunately for his parents disposable diaper technology was already up to speed (**and wait for the laugh**). I landed in Chicago in December 1984 and on the first night I was greeted by a **blizzard...** 12 inches of snow. As time has progressed, I have since learned that 12 inches of snow is actually considered "a dusting...." and things don't get REALLY interesting until we get about 24 inches... but everything is "MORE" here at Purdue... (**Wait for the laugh**) I had never been to the US before and had never seen snow in my life. I was so excited. I remember my first drive to Purdue along the Wabash river and as we approached West Lafayette, I saw a lot of signs for bars. I remember thinking, "Wow, what a rocking place it must be." I stayed at Tarkington Hall and the first semester the only company I had was my amazing roommate. You might say our connection was "electric." We would spend hours on end together every single day after classes, and I basked in the light of our relationship until one of us got "turned off" each night before I went to bed. Yes. My TV was my only companion... it was a long, cold, lonely winter. I was alone and did not have the chance to meet anyone, until one day on the coldest day that winter I looked outside and saw naked people running around... like they had sprung forth from the woodwork...I can assure you, this was **NOTHING** that my best friend, General Electric, could have prepared me for!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Yes it was the Nude Olympics. All hell broke loose and everyone ran around as though there was no tomorrow. To paraphrase that famous movie line.... "I had a feeling I wasn't in (**Name your hometown in India**) anymore!!!" ( **Wait for the laugh**). And then came spring and West Lafayette sprung to life... and there was no looking back.

At Purdue I was **exposed** to so many new adventures.... (**If you want you can add**)... no snickering... I kept my clothes on... (**Wait for the laugh**) and it was here that I was shaped into the person I am today. University is not only about education but it's also about the experiences that you go through that form the person you become in life. It was when I was at Purdue that I had my first drink and my first date, I learned how to shovel snow, learned how to be responsible, and also learned how to study hard and party hard. It is here that I dreamt of what I wanted to do with my life and wrote down my goals. Most importantly, it was here that I fell in love with the love of my life, Pinky, the gorgeous girl that I married and who is with us in the audience. I owe a lot to Purdue and I am sure you realize the importance that this institution has played in your life.

But I am here today to talk about **you**. For all of you this moment is the pinnacle of your life and **so far** it is most probably your greatest achievement. While there is a great sense of accomplishment and celebration, there must also be the question, "Where do I go from here?" And I don’t mean Harry’s bar. I mean after Harry’s bar and after the parties and packing, and so on. I was in the same position 30 years ago and I want to share with you what I learned and hope that it will be something that you will use as a guide to create your own fulfilling journey into the future.

In order to answer this very important question of where you want to go, you need to first figure out what it is that you want from life. This is obviously not an easy question to answer for many of us and it can take an entire lifetime to figure this one out. There are two ways to approach this essential issue. Either you take it as it comes and see where you end up in life or in the alternative you decide what you want and work out a plan towards achieving it in a step by step manner. I would recommend that you go for the latter. Life will be so much more fun when you are clear where you are going. I don't mean you should remove the excitement of spontaneity but there needs to be a plan. As "they" say “ What you think, you become”.

I, too, faced this same question and it set me thinking as to who could I learn from who may have already worked it all out. Is it the accomplished, the rich, the academicians, religious leaders, politicians, doctors? Who is it? After a lot of soul searching it became clear to me that it is children, especially the teeny boppers... yes... that's what they were called "back then," who are unbound by rules... they're clear about what they want and so they go after it. Think about it; they are not yet bothered about the world around them; their spirits are free; they are not limited by rejection or the word "impossible;" they act spontaneously and imagine the world around them will adjust accordingly. As children, we begin by living life to the fullest, we give unconditional love to everyone and we laugh out loud at every opportunity. Unfortunately as we grow older, we get influenced by the ways of the world and in the bargain we get confused with what we want, constrained by others' limitations. and we begin to doubt our potential and where we want to go in life.

By observing the innocence and freedom experienced by children, I realized the simple yet profound attitude of kids is a concept which is easy to remember in three simple words; **Live, Love, Laugh**. The three L’s. Yes, live your dream, love everyone and laugh out loud. This is what I have been following as the simple goal of my life. It is a journey with no beginning or end, the journey is the destination.

**LIVE your dream**

Let's face it... You are all actually living your dream right now. If not, you would not be in this room. You are graduating from one of the best universities in the world, because you were clear on your goal and decided to go after it with all you've got. During your time at Purdue you must have gone through a lot of challenges, but each time you would pick yourself up and you reminded yourself about your goal and worked single-mindedly towards achieving it.

Every day a new window of opportunity opens up; it is up to you to recognize the possibilities and see if they match with your dreams and if so, go after it. Be the architect who gives shape to your life; the artist who paints your future and the singer who creates the tunes which resonate within your heart; you can create your own magic. You already do. It is in your hands and only yours. Yes, there will be many external factors that may influence your path but it is your own single minded determination that gets you to where you want to go. You may come across naysayers, as there a lot of them in this world. I invite you to consider what they say and ignore them if their message is not authentic to your purpose, and tell yourself, as others in contemporary culture might say, "Haters gonna hate..." (**Wait for the laugh**). If you truly believe in your passions and your plans, go ahead no matter what. This is YOUR life. Live it to the fullest. Listen to your heart and it will tell you where to go.

A famous philosopher once said, “We all have two lives and the second one begins when we realize that we have only one”. Just think about it. Many of us end up living someone else's dream until we realize we have only one life. It is then that we make amends to start following our own lead. I came to this realization a while after I completed school and since then I have been sculpting my life into something fulfilling. I feel I am in control and it gives me immense joy and happiness. The process has also given me a profound sense of understanding that I am responsible for my actions and the life I have created for myself.

I always wanted to be a serial entrepreneur and to start new businesses every few years. Pursuing this dream, I got involved in many ventures including hotels, power plants, pharmaceutical research, resources and airports. And next year I am about to start a new business around technology. Some of my friends would think that I am crazy since once a business became successful I would move to the next. I always used to say that it is not about making money that gave me the kick, but the challenge of creating and achieving something is so satisfying. At every given opportunity I aimed very high and reached for the stars.

My father taught me to never compromise and only aim for the best. When our company won the tender to own and redevelop the Mumbai Airport, we were faced with a project which was the most constrained airport in the world and had huge challenges. But we did not waiver. We set a clear Vision to become the best in the world, which will make Mumbai and India proud. A lot of people told us that the task was audacious and impossible. But we stayed focused and pursued it one step at a time. The Mumbai airport last year was ranked as the best airport in the world in our category by Airports Council International. It was featured on the Discovery Channel in a global program called Build It Bigger as an engineering marvel. I am proud to state that my engineering education at Purdue gave me the insight and the confidence to take up such a large and complex project. The lesson I learned from this experience was profound. "NOTHING is impossible."

In living your dream, whatever it may be, I want to give you one piece of advice: pursue excellence. Do not be satisfied with the ordinary, go for the **extraordinary**. Pay attention to the details. It will add that special zing into everything you do. It will make life more challenging but also more rewarding. In everything I do I look for that something special which will make it stand out from the rest. Dream big, take chances and live life to the fullest as in the end the only things that you will regret are the chances that you didn’t take. Abraham Lincoln said “In the end it is not the years in your life that count. It is the life in your years”.

I also want to remind you to embrace failure... learn to take responsibility. This is YOUR life. It is at those times of loss that we learn our most precious lessons. Sir Winston Churchill said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts." Success is that much sweeter when we overcome the obstacles that life will throw in our path. Take nothing for granted. No matter how much we may love what we do, it is not a given that it is ours. It's an essential part of personal fulfillment to appreciate **EVERYTHING** life hands you..... the good... the bad... the **blizzards**... (**Wait for the laugh**)

**LOVE everyone and everything**

In our Indian philosophy, we are always told what we give, we get. This is more relevant when it comes to love. It is important that we never forget to demonstrate our love for our family, our friends, and our community, but most importantly you have to start by loving **yourself**. The more you give the more you get. Love is not a bank account where deposits are made daily and we can withdraw when we want. It has an expiry date and every day lost is lost forever. This is something I realized later in life as in my younger years my entire focus was only on work. We cannot compromise one for the other. I also realized that we should not try to change the people we love. Try to practice unconditional love like children do. I used to correct and try to "improve" many people close to me thinking I was doing it for their own good, not realizing that I was actually doing it to suit my needs. Who am I to judge how others should choose to live their lives? I don’t do that anymore. I've learned that people are beautiful as they are with all their imperfections and shortcomings, just like me.

In addition, at every given opportunity we should work for the betterment of our community. I can assure you that there is nothing more gratifying than doing something for others. As a part of GVK Foundation we have an organization called GVK EMRI, which runs the world's largest ambulance service. We operate 12,000 free ambulances in India and employ 45,000 people. We cater to 750 million people, we handle more than 200,000 calls per day, we deal with around 25,000 emergencies daily, and save more that 700 lives per day. It is something which my father spearheads personally and we are all very proud of the impact it has on the community. Even though we have been successful in business, if there is one thing GVK will be remembered for, it will be this.

At your age, success is sometimes measured by the amount of money one makes or the senior position one attains at work. There is nothing wrong with that, but it will not do. You will later realize that true success is measured by the difference you make in this world... by the number of people who love you, respect you, and remember you. There is no point being the richest person in the graveyard if no one loves you. So be humble, kind, and compassionate to everyone who crosses your path. A smile does not cost you anything. Your consideration will be remembered and hopefully you'll be loved back. Winston Churchill said “we make a living by what we get but we have a life by what we give”.

**LAUGH out loud**

Life is too short... there's much to do and so little time in which to do it. We must learn to do things that make us laugh give us joy. While I enjoy my work, I have so many passions that I want to pursue. I love to collect traditional Indian art, I run marathons, read books, scuba dive, trek, travel, golf etc. I go after each one of these with genuine interest and enthusiasm. I set metrics for each of these in terms of how often I indulge and what I need to do. I measure them, keep track and review them regularly so that I know that I am not ignoring them. It is similar to what i do when we work. We measure everything and review regularly. Why can't we do the same for things which are our passions? Oh... I just realized another obsession of mine... analytics and metrics!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

I also find that I don't know what I really like until I try it... but I'm willing to try. For example, I never skied but was forced by my friends to go last year and both Pinky and I loved it so much that we would like to go back every year if possible. Don't pass up an opportunity to try something new. Who knows, it may become the most important passion of your life.

I believe that in the end what we are left with are memories. I want to create them and deposit them in my memory bank which I can cash in and enjoy when I get older. Memories of fun and laughter. Memories of laughing out loud. At the same time, I want to keep setting goals and reaching for the outer limits of my capabilities. Thomas Jefferson reminds us, "Nothing can stop the person with the right mental attitude from achieving his or her goal; nothing on earth can help the person with the wrong mental attitude." Which one are **you**?

These are some of the things I learned since I earned my foundation at Purdue. Each day I resolve to follow them so that I experience fulfillment. **Live, Love, Laugh.** It's a very simple concept, easy to remember and implement. Make it a part of your DNA. When you walk out of this door today, you will enter a new phase of your life, a new world which is welcoming you with open arms.... or not. It is yours for the taking. Pursue your path with determination and passion. I know that Purdue has taught you well. It is your turn to make a difference in the world. Be relentless in pursuit of your purpose.

I would like to end by saying that you should dream as if you will live forever and live as if you will die tomorrow.

In conclusion, let's keep in mind that Alfred, Lord Tennyson taught us, "I am part of all that I have met." I am proud to be a part of Purdue's legacy. I am honored to share this very special moment with all of you, and all of you are now a part of **me**. Thank you for your attention and optimism; for your openness and patience. I look forward to learning of your contributions to the world as you pursue your goals and dreams. Don't forget to LIVE, LOVE and LAUGH. All the best and wish you luck……Gooooo Boilermakers.