My dear young friends,

It gives me great pleasure to address you on your commencement ceremony. Congratulations on the successful completion of the graduate course. The end of your course is however just the beginning. A significant part of the real education awaits you as you step outside this distinguished institute and into the world.

When Geeta invited me to speak on your commencement ceremony, I did deliberate on what is it that today’s young generation and my young friends over here would be interested to listen to. I actually did google for it too ☺. While you would have received a lot of advice from elders, parents, neighbours, neighbour’s neighbor and so forth ☺, let me not add a lot to the preaching, something that you would most likely ignore. Rather, I would like to take this opportunity to narrate some real experiences. Experiences that have shaped me, my outlook and attitude over the years. Experiences that can possibly be attributed to the journey of Microland in the last over 20 years. By doing so, perhaps you could take away certain learnings and insights from them.

Post Engineering and MBA, I joined Wipro as one of their first employees. Those were the early days of the electronics and networking industry in the country and I thought a career in IT would be an exciting if not an unconventional choice. Few years down the line, when I saw an opportunity by a rather small organization called Computer Point to set up its retail arm in India, I thought why not and joined its operations, again as one of the first few employees. Post a 3 year U.S stint to expand the operations of Sonata Software in the United States, I had an instinct of the manner in which technology could potentially influence our lives in the near future. In a few years, I had developed some relevant experience of the market and some idea of what the market wanted which made me think why not call your own shots and be in charge of our own destiny? I came back to India in 1989 to set up Microland along with the help of few friends. The business proposition was simple; Help build computer networks with help of international tie-ups.

The next decade or so witnessed a period of rapid growth.

…And then 1991 happened. At the brink of the economic collapse, bold steps of liberalization, privatization and globalization were taken which in turn unleashed the innovation and entrepreneurial potential of the country. The growth of the IT/ ITeS sector including companies like Microland in the next few years was testament to what young companies with ambition could do. In many ways, the breakdown that we came so close to led to the breakthrough of the sunshine sectors. In less than 10 years, Microland came to be known as the leaders in the network integration space.

However, in the later part of the 1990’s, something fundamentally was changing. The role of network intermediaries was becoming less value adding with the emergence of the Internet, quick affordability and consumerization of the Internet economy. We saw the trend and in 1998, we took a conscious call to diversify into the Internet economies and pull out completely out of the hardware business. What started over the next few years were a series of ventures into the Internet economy, indya.com, planetasia.com, netbrahma.com and so on. We were the early movers in the Internet economy.

…And then, something again happened. The dotcom bubble crashed in 2001, 9/11 strikes in the United States proved fatal for many dot-com companies. We took a strategic call and sold off 4 companies in one year. Come 2002, we had to start all over. We had to reflect on where we can leverage our core competencies, competencies that we had acquired over years and competencies that can help deliver sustainable value to our consumers. Leveraging our core strengths in the telecom & networking, one area that became evident was remote management of infrastructure networks. We sensed the blue ocean in the remote management of infrastructure networks and were early movers in the remote management space. Today we are known as one of the largest standalone remote infrastructure management providers.