

# Salutatorian Speech

Ishaan Pathak



Good morning, Dr Nicholson, Dr Long, our honourable guest Shekhar Gupta, family and friends and the class of 2014. While it is an honour to be standing here as salutatorian for this class, I would be lying if I told you I enjoyed the idea of giving a farewell speech. I am not a fan of goodbyes, and to be fair I do not think anyone really is. To me they are always awkward moments of wondering what has come to an end and wondering when to stop looking over your shoulder. To be blunt, there is not a lot of good in goodbyes.

Which is why I refuse to make this speech about farewells, instead I choose to make this a dedication to the class of 2014, because it has been an honour to come this far with you, to be able to call you my friends and family. And let me be the first to say that this is no eulogy, for while we may no longer be in Woodstock, or stay together as a grade, this class and its spirit will live on through all of us, wherever we may be and whatever we may be doing. Because all of us have contributed to making this class what it is, have put effort into it and derived energy from it, meaning that when we leave we all take a spark from the fire that is 014. And the fire of this class truly burns bright, through the incredible diversity and talent that is represented among us. Diversity not only of nationality and ethnicity, although there is something to be said about rooms where every roommate represents a different nation, but diversity also of thoughts and beliefs. For this class encapsulates the whole spectrum of atheists, agnostics and believers and the many who fall somewhere in between. It represents varied and original ideas, but ideas that do clash with each

other, both amicably and every now and then with vehement ferocity. There is no dearth of talent in this class either. It has amazing athletes, some of whom have astounded us with their talent in this very court and others who have shown us sportsmanship in events such as cross country by making sure they never leave a friend behind, even if they do stroll in an hour over the time limit. It has musicians, many of whom you have seen in the performances the last few days, whose talents reach beyond the classical or a single instrument. But it also has musicians who teach us that music truly is expression of self, and that being tone deaf really does not matter when you have that microphone. Many of these athletes and musicians are also part of the grade's collection of artists which includes photographers, painters, designers and urban artists, people who have learnt, no matter the tools they use, that art is the power to express yourself onto a medium. And they are very good at such expression. Then there are the people who make each drama performance a spectacle, from the actors and directors to the stage managers, prop artists, designers and many others. Even these barely touch the surface of the skills that 014 represents or the potential that we still have to be better. Let us not forget the writers, speakers, organisers, philanthropists, chefs and those who have the talent of being incredible, caring people.

Yet, among all this diversity, the one thing this class manages to share is its spirit, an uncompromising energy that unites us and has allowed us to do some incredible things. It's this spirit that makes us one of the most vocal classes this school has seen, this spirit that gives us the energy to be running around the hillside at 11:30 on a Friday night despite going through a whole week of school, it is this spirit that allows us to come together and do incredible things or make incredible memories. Of the top of my head I can think of the JSBs and Sadie Hawkins we have organised or the times we spontaneously decide to go somewhere. Most of all, it is this spirit that means we always have each other's backs. That's not to say that this spirit has not landed us in trouble, those of you who were here in tenth grade must surely remember our first ever homeroom of the year, which consisted of a lot yelling and admonishments to "be more respectful" and "get it together". And I think we definitely have got it together since then,

even though we slip up every now and then and never really lost the rebellious nature that we started with.

Honestly, a lot of us have made mistakes or done things that we really should not have, sometimes through ignorance and on other occasions through pure teenage bluster. And yet most of us are still here, having grown from our mistakes and being accepted back into the fold of our class and the school. To me this stands to credit the fact that Woodstock is our home and this class is our family. Not because we spend a majority of our year here, but because we feel safe and comfortable here. Comfortable enough that any large enough surface is fair grounds to take a nap on. Safe enough that we never have to make any considerations when we step outside, no matter the time of day. And if home is where your family is then we have made this place home together as a bickering, dramatic but altogether supportive family. And a large part of making us a family and helping us feel at home here was the teachers and system we have had. While we may have had our ups and downs with them, they have never given up on us and have become more than just teachers. They are advisors, officially or unofficially, guiding us through high school life and feeding us when needed. They are friends who you play board games with, or who take you on hikes. But most of all, they are always there when you need them, which is why I want to take a moment to thank all the many, many teachers we have had over our years in Woodstock.

I had a revelation the other day. I am a fool. I'm not a huge fan of my revelations. Not that I see anything wrong with being a fool, Newton himself once said "I know not what I appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me." No, I am a fool because despite having spent the last four years in a school, there is so much for me to learn and explore and because I know I will still have times when I make mistakes. There really is nothing wrong with being a fool, however as Socrates taught us, the wise man is one who knows how little he knows. Even the gods of the Pantheon were fools in

many ways, always being tricked, deceived or bested by other beings, whether it was Sisyphus tricking the gods into releasing him from the afterlife or Prometheus stealing fire. Due to their arrogance the Gods could not accept their mistakes, and this lack of humility prevented them from ever learning. Being a fool means that there is more for you to do, it means you can be better, and learn more. It means that you have never quite

reached the peak of your mountain, which is great because it means your adventure can continue. And if I have taken anything from Woodstock, it is not to stop being a fool but to be a compassionate fool, a caring fool. A fool who knows not to leave his friends behinds because they are also fools. A fool who knows that there is good and evil in this world and in us, and accepts responsibility for making the right decisions. A fool who

knows that no matter how daunting the circumstances or impossible the feat, if you have a dream you go for it.

So fellow fools, panties-on and killumatis as we go into the world today, carry your spark with you and let it burn bright. Never hesitate to follow your dreams and always do your best. And remember that no matter where you are this family will never be too far away.

## Graduating Class of 2014



**7th Row:** Ishaan Pathak, Giacomo Samms, Manraj Bhangra, Mathai Puthiakunnel, Siddhanta Bista, Jeong U Kim, Kushal Mittal, Saw Yan Naina, Sumat Purewal, Raman Mathur, Utsav Garg **6th Row:** Prabir Pradhan, Michael Wiggins, Arpit Lall, Aryan Samuel, Rohan Kumar, Dilsher Khana, Ji-Ho Jeong, Ye Rang Lim, Madhav Nautiyal, Gamli Yonggam **5th Row:** Phuriwat Chiraphisit, Abhishek Mehra, Mila Sherpa, Sashwat Shrestha, Ishaan Rijal, Frederick Turk, Tushen Nayar, Nathaniel Park, Duc Ngo, Namrata Mohapatra **4th Row:** Yash Ghei, Kunal Nekiwala, Sohail Das, Jonathan Kurian, Param Shah, Rowan Limbach, Frederic Bonhour, Ayman Kabir, Abyaya Lamsal, Sasha Kenny, Seerat Jhaji, Sonam Deki, Ritsen Gyaltshen **3rd Row:** Ein Jung, Pia Taneja, Dechen Shrestha, Amber Kang, Hazel Ebenezer, Megan Moore, Asma Ebadi, Hope Wright, Sarah Kim, Malika David, Tara Sood, Nina Mandal, Monica Lall, Tanuvee Agarwal, Zara Ismail **2nd Row:** Ugyen Lama, Raageshwori Pradhan, Su Bin Kim, Yeshin Cho, Supriti Pradhan, Kethayun Mehta, Deki Tenzing, Navika Singh, Sara Pesavento, Devika Kothar **1st Row:** Jesal Parikh, Sohila Samuel, Anjuri Kakkar, Nutchana Panaspaipong, Nivedita Dhammi, Mansi Kedia, Karina Shrestha, Tanya Lohia, Jihoo Park, Pema Selden, Rotluangpuii Ralte