



## ***Born for Higher Things(Ad Majora Natus Es)***

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This paper is based essentially on empirical data: experienced over years as a student in India, with several degrees in Science, a student in the United States, with two Post Graduate degrees in Business, a Quality Control Manager in a Multinational Pharmaceutical Company in India and in the U.S., a Manager in a Hospital in N.Y., a Professor of International Business: Management and Marketing, Chair of the Academic Standards Committee (4 Years) in her College, and a Member of the Board of Directors and Chair of its Academic Standards Committee at another College in New York for about two decades.

Abstract: For years people admired us. A halo effect was noted in global consumer preferences for American goods. We were riding on a crest of excellence.

In the 1980's our financial situation was dismal; reaching a low point in 1992. President Clinton changed the scene. We did not just break even; we were way ahead – in the black. The world admired us for this financial success. It was our Work Ethic that also helped.

Our Education System was the envy of everyone. We held the #1 position in several fields: Science, Technology, Innovation, Manufacturing and Education. Our Academic Standards are sliding down a slippery slope in recent years.

Globally, we see gloom around us; but we can't join the club; as we are Americans. We believe that In God we Trust; so let us get back to the Work Ethic of the past, and trust Him to help us help ourselves.

I Introduction: Years ago, as one traveled around the world, it was obvious that people in most countries admired us, the people who live here in the United States of America. They appreciated all that our great country stood for. This admiration was put into action as they came here and enjoyed their visits to our cathedrals, libraries, laboratories, museums, picturesque landmarks, restaurants, buildings for entertainment and shopping; and above all, our world famous education system and technological advances. A halo effect was obvious in global consumer preferences for goods Made in the U.S.A.; so too, our services performed here, were considered to be of superior



quality. We were riding on the crest of excellence. It was the popular belief that everything American was indeed the best.

Growing up in Bombay, India it was obvious to note that the people there, not unlike the people elsewhere, openly admired and appreciated all that this great country stood for – not just the affluence and material possessions, music and movies, but mainly the wide variety of choices and opportunities to which the young people here are exposed.

People holding positions in multinational corporations that offered financial remunerations that were better than the average pay package, had one main objective: collect sufficient cash and purchase a round trip ticket to the United States. It was very interesting to note the enthusiasm in the persons who were en route to the U.S. They had their two years leave accumulated, the cash for the air-line ticket and some extras for the stay, and a friend or relative with whom they could live for the duration of the trip. They made it a point to visit some select cathedrals, museums, picturesque landmarks for entertainment, education and technology. On their return some believed they had now assumed a special elite status; after all, they had just returned from America. It would be considered infra dig to mix with the common folk in Bombay, now. Very few of those people, in casual conversation, would at times, refer to the U.S. as their adopted country, using the phrase, “Back home in the U.S.”

Even though we did not win the race in space; we were expected to win in the end. We planted Old Glory on the moon with well-earned pride. That was then. Today, there are other countries that have tried to emulate or even exceed the records of which we were so proud; with taller buildings, more sophisticated shopping centers, highways, restaurants, etc. Have we developed complacency because of our past performances and successes?

Has lethargy crept into our psyche as we rest on past laurels? Are we today making way for the success of other countries, while we take a back seat in major areas like education, technological advances, manufacturing, innovation and major reconstruction of the infrastructure of our aging cities? Much attention is needed in our Health Care system, especially for our aging population. Above all, the widening gap between the Haves and the Have-nots demands much attention. The task ahead is indeed a formidable one. All we have to do is get ourselves organized with a well-thought out plan; working with managers who have proven records of ethical leadership, social responsibility and all forms of communication skills, devoid of prejudice and partiality.

II Where Were We? and Where Are We Now? The Twentieth Century is often referred to as the American Century. To list the success stories in the different categories, is best described as time-consuming. However, the first incidents that come to mind obviously, are our successful landing on the moon, and the two World Wars we won, assisting our Allies. The obvious moral lesson is that the enemy of the moment can in time, become a friend. Most of our success stories in Technology and Science can be traced to the initial Government Projects that blossomed into products of practical application in most areas that are so important to us today: items we use at home and



at work. These are successes that resulted from prior Government Projects. However, some of us conveniently forget the origin of these essential products of today; and they label Government involvement as being antithetical to progress and success. This is possibly due to very short memories or perhaps, prejudice. [The President's proposed Health Care Plan was shot down, we were told, mainly because it is a Government plan, and as a result, it was believed, it will certainly fail. Perhaps those Senators and Congress people forget that all their Health Care Plans are essentially Government plans; that work very well for them and their families, for decades. Then why must we, the people, be deprived of that same Government Health Care Plan]?

In the early years, people were conscientious; they worked very hard. Their job was their life. They believed in ethics and social responsibility. Quality Control was not needed; it was reserved for the Pharmaceutical and Chemical industries that needed FDA approval. The many products that we produced were of excellent quality. We were proud of that Made in U.S.A. stamp. That was then. The automobile industry, our pride and joy, prompted the popular jingles:[Baseball, Hot Dogs, Apple Pie and Chevrolet, and What's good for General Motors, is good for U.S A.]. We were #1 in the world. People everywhere wanted a G.M./ Ford car in their driveway / garage. That was a mark of status and prestige.

As we attempt to trace the etiology of the current situation in which we find ourselves today, we are at a loss initially; but one look at the mirror will help us. We seem to have changed considerably!! Many of us today are more self-centered, lacking that essential element, ethics and all that it includes: personal and corporate social responsibility. The quality of the products we produce (and our services too), has diminished considerably; we are now more concerned about ourselves and our imagined wants, at the expense of the quality of our work. We rush home early on Fridays, spending much time planning the weekend events; and dream all day, thinking about them on Mondays. The infamous Monday and Friday cars made the introduction of Quality Control absolutely imperative in all our industries. We have reached a stage when we are no longer considered as reliable employees; we have to be monitored throughout the day, in order that the products we produce and our services too, can be labeled as satisfactory. "Oh what a fall is that my countrymen!" People have begun to lose faith in our goods and services, and above all, in us. Could we ever forgive ourselves? We have let our Country and our Families down. We are mainly responsible for losing our supremacy in the one industry of which we were proud. [Today there is some semblance of a comeback]. Japan stepped in with real success. We are trying hard now, to catch up and learn from them, and apply their new ideas to what we have done so successfully for decades. We note now that adapting to current changes seems to be a solution in many cases.

There was, however, a shining silver lining around our dark clouds, towards the end of the millennium, the century and the decade: We were drowning in red ink for twelve years, as major tax breaks were given to our millionaires and the financial elite of our society. Working with the financial experts in the field, President Clinton changed the scene. We did not just breakeven – we were way ahead, in the black. The world admired us for his financial success. The situation today is very different. Even that



success no longer exists. Tom Friedman has appropriately named his book, That used to be us.

III Our Education System: What it was & What it is now! If the Proof of the pudding lies in the eating, I must confess that I too am one who was anxious to have my final education, my Executive MBA and my second Doctorate degree (Business), in the U.S.A., the country that had been universally considered as having the highest standards in the different fields of: Business, Science, Computer Science, Social Sciences, Liberal Arts, Medicine, Nursing, Education and Law – for Undergraduate and Graduate studies. The college I selected was Pace. It had to be re-named, Pace University for my graduation, as I am the first to receive a Doctorate Degree at Pace University. [Today Pace has quite a few Doctoral Programs; but Business is its First]. Libraries in the U.S. are current and very well stacked and organized, as are the Computer rooms and Laboratories for the different disciplines. The ambience is precisely conducive to concentration on study in the selected major and minor. Classes are small, to encourage individual attention. Classrooms are always neat and clean; all air-conditioned / heated, depending on the season. These are just some of the main physical aspects, often considered the envy of institutions of education elsewhere. Even more important, are the Academic Programs offered in the different Schools, and the courses offered in the different Disciplines; and above all, the classes offered on different days and times, just to suit the students: Customer Orientation or rather, student orientation is what is obvious. Professors were all very well qualified (with a Doctorate degree, Graduate and Undergraduate degrees, coupled with practical corporate experience) in the discipline they teach. No exceptions were even considered. No classes were ever assigned to any individual who did not completely comply with the official stipulations. People's first choice was to be accepted in an American college / university. Today an education in Europe / Australia is selected.

The current trend of flexibility has resulted in the recent hiring of some faculty who do not satisfy the above-stated criteria. It has resulted in the gradual decay / reduction of our high Academic Standards. To compensate for their "missing essentials", and to ensure continuity of service, every effort is often made by those faculty members, to obtain really great student evaluations. It is certainly no secret that these evaluations are of paramount importance for faculty hiring, promotion and tenure. As a result, these evaluations end up as the objectives around which those faculty persons plan their assignments, both in Quality and Quantity, with little regard to our academic standards.

The recent authorized Biography of Stephen Jobs by Walter Isaacson details Steve's praise for the excellent education he received at his California High School, where he believed that the system sowed the seeds that helped him to blossom into the very special successful person he soon became. Education today is scarcely a shadow of the excellence of the past. The blame may be placed squarely on students, faculty and academic administrators. Research reveals that it is indeed our education system, coupled with corporate greed that is spreading like a cancer in our society, resulting in a wide divide between the Haves and the Have Nots. Hopefully the lesson we learn from the Occupy Wall Street situation with its global involvement – will result in changing the



financial inequality and malaise in which we find ourselves today; to deal with the emerging Asian and other markets. There the increasing population results in the demand to increase the number of educational institutions. In a country like India, one can see these schools and colleges of different languages and religious persuasions, everywhere; based essentially on the conviction that an enhanced education is absolutely essential for future financial success. Getting a degree seems to be important, with little stress placed on the quality of education in these rather recent institutions of education. Good Colleges there are not looking for student enrollment; instead they raise the required minimum GPA, and succeed in selecting the better qualified students.

Colleges that are tuition driven in the western world, with low population density need students to enable them to run their classes. As a result, admission standards are relaxed to the absurd limits. To accommodate these students, the quality aspect of standards is sacrificed to satisfy the quantity aspect of admission objectives.

Lowering of Academic Standards is coupled with other problems today. We read of a total lack of respect for teachers and classmates, especially those who seem to be different, in some way or other. Bullies are found everywhere, even following the young person home (cyber bullying) resulting in incidents of suicide and other forms of crime among students, and even adults. Academically we note incidents of leaking of examination papers, hiring of faculty who are not adequately qualified to teach the course, but who were hired because of family or other business connections.

This does not infer that once again, education should be the prerogative of the elite or a select few; but it certainly expects that we raise the standard of education, concentrating on different problems individually. As a democracy, everyone is entitled to an education, but - that should be an education of which we can always be really proud – not just a bunch of letters of the alphabet as an appendix to one's name.

The world stands by with bated breath, with no idea as to how these major problems can be solved. But as Americans we just can't stand by and watch the deterioration of our great American Education System! We must make every effort to save it, as it was the best for decades. We all want to turn back the clock and the calendar, but we are scared we will slide back to our present state. At this stage, it is important that we stop and think: we are different from everyone else; we have a long history of successes. Let us go back to those good old days when our system of education was way ahead of the rest of the world - our competition in education. Additional finances alone will not help. What we need today is ambition, dedication, concentration and involvement of all concerned: Administrators, faculty, parents and above all, the students. Every element in this equation is important and responsible for the success of this effort. Perhaps re-education too, where needed, will help. As Americans we have no ceiling to our ambitions, as we believe that In God we trust, so failure is not an option. We must rely on His help, as we are Born for Higher Things and we cannot settle for mediocrity. We are expected to put into practice the ideas and ideals of the past, with some adaptation to the situations of today. To revive our education standards, a start may be made by



removing the elements that lowered our standards. Hiring only qualified faculty who will not stoop to compromising of standards for personal purposes must be the first step. The standards for the admission of students cannot be compromised to achieve our need for students. Prior tutoring may help the student who does not qualify. With only qualified faculty and students who make the grade, we will certainly achieve our objectives.

IV The #1 Position we Held in Science, Technology, Innovation, Manufacturing & Education: As the Quality of Faculty, Students and Administrators in Academia is reserved specifically for those who fit the bill, we can only anticipate the achievement of our prime objective: Going back to be #1 in all areas: Science, Technology, Innovation, Manufacturing, and most certainly, Education. However, with the current advances we now have, we can and will improve on our past standards. That will help us to see that we are at a higher level than others; we have been given much; and when much is given, much is expected of us. It is our responsibility to achieve our potential first, and also help other countries and people who do not have the advantages that we enjoy and take for granted.

We are now aware that we have been living and working with more than a losing hand. As we make every effort to fill positions of Faculty and Academic Administrators with only qualified individuals; and admit only students who make the grade, how can we avoid success? And once successful again, we must only enhance our objectives and aim higher each time, for we are born for higher things. We help ourselves by helping others.

Some institutions in Education may have a few faculty and/or administrators who do not measure up to our standards. Helping them with opportunities to enhance their education will benefit the Institution and the individual.

V Where do we go from Here? As we comply with the above - stated suggestions, we will soon find ourselves at the threshold of success. That success alone, as in the past, brings with it several responsibilities. As a mark of gratitude to the community around us, that keeps us going by sending their family members to our college / university, we can hold special classes for senior citizens who are interested in intellectual pursuits, for a nominal fee. Defensive Driving classes would also help. A day care center for school going children during the holiday months, would be a great relief to their parents who are at work. The number of volunteers, who will come forward for these projects, will be no surprise. These are just some suggestions. Working in liaison with the local businesses, can help bring together people with different interests and strengths, mutually beneficial to all involved – either as mentors, examples to emulate or contacts at the time of job search. Working together is just a wonderful way of helping others and the one reward is self satisfaction / gratification.

I shall end here with a short story that explains much of what I am attempting to arouse in all Americans: An eagle found itself in a nest of chicks. As a result, it grew up like the chicks: ate the same food, and did what baby chicks do on a regular basis. One day



when the farmer took a good look at the nest, he saw that one so-called chick, was quite different from the rest. It was a tiny Bald Eaglet. He then picked it out of the nest and said to it, "You are not a chicken, you are a Bald Eagle. You must get out and fly away: up, up into the skies." He made a few unsuccessful attempts. Suddenly, on the final day, as he spoke, the Bald Eaglet took off and flew up high, high into the skies: just as we Americans, must leave behind the others and realize that we are Americans; we are Born for Higher Things. Are we sincere when we say, In God We Trust? – It is time we mean what we say, and say mainly what we mean. So let's do our very best at all times; and He will certainly help us achieve our objectives.

Mentioned specifically are:

Steve Jobs' Authorized Biography by Walter Isaacson and Tom Friedman's recent book, "That Used to be Us".

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