

Special Convocation

On

October 15, 2019



JAMIA HAMDARD
Hamdard Nager, New Delhi-110062



میں اکیلا ہی چلا تھا جانب منزل مگر
لوگ ساتھ آتے گئے اور کاروں بنتا گیا

*I had set out for my destination all alone,
but people kept joining me and a whole caravan was born.*

Founder of Jamia Hamdard : Late Hakeem Abdul Hameed

Thoughts of
Frank F. Islam
at
Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi
on
**Education, Empowerment, Entrepreneurial
Leadership and Civic Engagement**
October 15, 2019

Thank you for that kind introduction. I am deeply grateful of your warm welcome and your hospitality. It is an honor and privilege to be here with you students, faculty, staff of Jamia Hamdard University and distinguished guests. It is truly a pleasure for me to be here at Jamia Hamdard.

I am most pleased and honored to accept this honorary Doctorate degree with all due humility not for me, but in recognition of all those Hamdard University giants who have made a difference in society through their leadership, education, and public service.

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to the Vice Chancellor Seyed Ehtesham Hasnain for inviting me to speak at this marvelous institution. I want to commend the Vice Chancellor for his leadership and his enduring service and commitment to Jamia Hamdard. We admire and appreciate all you do Mr. Vice Chancellor to make a positive and profound difference. You are making positive impact and influence in people's lives. You provide the broad shoulder upon which we can stand to carry the torch to light the way. Let us give him a big round of applause.

I also want to recognize and give special thanks to Neelofer Shama and Ali Rizvi and S.M. Khan.

As I look at you students in the audience, I see me in you. I see the future of India. I see the future of the world. You are the

promise and potential of India and the world. You are the hope of tomorrow. You are keys to the future of India. You are creating the dream and future for the next generations. You have the capacity, capability and responsibility to help India achieve its full potentials. You can bring an overall positive and profound impact on society. Your education at Hamdard will prepare you to become a change agent. You can change impossible to possible and unacceptable to acceptable. There are no limits. If you can conceive it and believe it, you can achieve it.

Also, as I look at you, it is almost like peering into a looking glass. Looking into that glass cause me to reflect upon the journey that I have made over several years. As I think about my journey, it causes me to think about your journey to come over the next several years.

When I was invited to give this address, I accepted without hesitation. I did so for three primary reasons.

The first reason is what this excellent institution has accomplished in the relatively short period of time since it was granted university status. To be chosen as one of the ten institutes of excellence by the Government India – and being the only minority institution speaks volume for Jamia Hamdard's recognition. Having the top-ranked medical school, the number one pharmaceutical school, AND a highly rated law school is outstanding.

I must say what Jamia Hamdard has accomplished to date is truly remarkable. What is more remarkable to me is that you've only just begun.

That is my second reason for being here. Jamia Hamdard continues to grow and to expand and add new schools and programs that are responding to the needs of India of its people. Your vision which includes providing "international quality higher education and undertaking cutting edge research" in order to meet the "societal education needs of underprivileged Indian communities" is compelling and inspiring.

The third reason is that I understand how important higher education can be in one's life. Education is the gift that keeps on giving. It is a powerful equalizer to lift people out of

poverty. Education helps create higher aspirations and higher aspirations propel individual and moves the nation forward.

Higher education provided me with the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities that I needed for employment and success in the business world and as an entrepreneur. It provided me with the essential foundation for realizing the American Dream. It prepared me for my journey. Education shaped my story.

And, that is why I am here today - to talk about my journey and also to talk about your journey. I have titled my talk: Thoughts on Education, Empowerment, Entrepreneurial Leadership and Civic Engagement.

It is structured in three parts: In part one, I will introduce and discuss the concepts and connectedness of Education, Empowerment, Entrepreneurial Leadership and Civic Engagement. In part two, I will share the major lessons that I have learned on my journey. And, finally in part three, I will address civic engagement in depth because I think that area of the journey for all of us is critical to the future of India and the world.

Part 1: The Concepts and Their Connectedness

Let me begin by discussing education and empowerment and describe how they are intertwined and go hand and glove. I strongly believe through education, empowerment, and entrepreneurship you will be able to achieve your full potential.

Education and Empowerment

One of the advantages that I have had on my journey is my AMU education. One of the advantages you have on yours is your Jamia Hamdard education. You have been enriched, enabled and empowered by Jamia Hamdard education.

Because of the foresight and religious beliefs of our founders, we have been given a purpose-driven education. That purpose is to make India and the world a better place.

At the establishment of AMU in 1875, Sir Syed its founder said, "this college shall expand into a University whose sons (and I would add daughters) shall go forth the length and breadth of

the land to preach the gospel of free inquiry of large-hearted toleration and pure morality." At the establishment of Jamia Hamdard in 1989, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi lauded Hakeem Abdul Hameed for setting up learning institutions that Gandhi said "...will enable the minority to go forward and help India to march forward."

While two institutions were founded more than a century apart, they share a common bond and mission. That bond is faith and belief and that mission is to make a difference.

These two respective institutions do not just produce graduates, they develop empowered individuals. Those empowered individuals come in all shapes and forms. They are doctors, lawyers, teachers, public servants, business people- and the list goes on.

These two institutions also equip students to do well and to do good. In this regard, I would like to share with you what AMU means to and has done for me.

My Aligarh education gave me a strong knowledge base. It also instilled and infused in me a sense of values, that have served me in good stead throughout my adult life. These values continue to be my guiding principles.

Aligarh taught me that there is much more to life than one's personal success. The values it helped shape in me include:

- a passion and love for education
- eternal optimism about one's hope and dreams
- being collegial and candid towards all
- keeping steadfast to standards of excellence, and
- living in peace and harmony by being tolerant and respectful toward the dignity of each person

I know that Jamia Hamdard has imprinted similar values in you as well.

We have been empowered through our educational development

with both technical expertise and moral rectitude.

Entrepreneurial Leadership and Civic Engagement

That combination is critical because we are living in troubled, turbulent, divisive and self-centered times. That is why now, more than ever, we need entrepreneurial leaders to step forward. We need leaders who understand that doing the right thing, working with others to solve problems, and giving back is more important than what one accomplishes individually.

Our education prepares us to meet this challenge as empowered individuals to be those leaders. Just as education and empowerment are intertwined so are the concepts of entrepreneurial leadership and civic engagement. I will explain and expand on both.

Let me start with the concept of entrepreneurial leader by defining entrepreneur. What and who is an entrepreneur? There are various definitions, the one that appeals the most to me is the entrepreneur is "a person who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk."

I like that definition because it emphasizes "any enterprise" and extends the definition beyond just the business owner. A person can be entrepreneurial in any type of organization as long as he or she is willing to step up to the plate and take a leadership role to shape the direction of the enterprise or the portion of the enterprise which he or she controls.

In that regard, let me share one other definition that applies. That definition is of entrepreneurship. It was provided by Professor Howard Stevenson of the Harvard Business School almost 40 years ago. Professor Stevenson said "Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled." In other words, entrepreneurs are not constrained in their thinking. They think outside of the box.

Now, let me combine those two definitions into my own definition of entrepreneurial leader. Entrepreneurial leaders are dreamers who dare. They are seekers who seize the

moment and take calculated risks to create new enterprises or to make their current enterprises better.

Taking it one step further entrepreneurial leaders do the right thing. As the old American saying goes, managers do things right, leaders do the right thing.

There is an old saying that an Entrepreneur is born not made. Take it from me and my journey, contrary to the old saying that the truth is leaders and Entrepreneurs are made not born. You may be born more or less advantaged or disadvantaged society and economically- but to become and be respected as an Entrepreneur, you must do it in the old-fashioned way. You must earn it by doing the right thing.

Working within that construct, the entrepreneurial leader is a person who recognizes that becoming an entrepreneurial leader is a journey and invests the time to make that journey in a thoughtful and meaningful manner without taking shortcuts along the way.

From all that I have learned, I know that Jamia Hamdard prepares its students for that journey. From personal experience, I know that AMU prepares its students for that journey.

My wife Debbie and I recognize that and that is why we funded the building of the Frank and Debbie Islam Management Complex at AMU. At the dedication of that Complex, I stated:

Our overriding motivation in supporting the Management Complex is because of the emphasis it will place on preparing the students at AMU to become entrepreneurial leaders who will engage in activities that will create jobs and opportunities for thousands of people throughout India and in other parts of the world.

On this visit we will be dedicating an entrepreneurship center in that Complex to facilitate entrepreneurial leadership and engagement.

Entrepreneurial leadership is an aspect of civic engagement. Increased civic engagement is essential from all of us who are concerned about the future of India and the world.

The best definition of civic engagement that I have seen comes from a collection of readings titled Civic Responsibility and Higher Education.

That definition states:

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

As I said near the outset of my remarks, I will concentrate on civic engagement in part three of my speech. Let me now turn to part two and tell you what I have learned on my journey

Part 2: Lessons from and For the Journey

I share the story of my journey primarily for the students in this audience. But I also hope that my thoughts will be of some relevance to all of you for your journey.

I share these lessons not because I expect you to imitate my path or adapt my perspective but because I hope they will be useful as touchstones and frames of reference as you chart your course for the future.

I will tell the story of my journey in three sections:

- Lessons from India
- Lessons from America
- Lessons from Life

Lessons from India

I learned many lessons from India. Growing up in India had an enormous impact and influence on the person I am today. Here I learned lessons from this country, my family, my home city of Azamgarh, and Aligarh Muslim University – which I have already talked about.

All of those forces shaped and influenced me during my formative years.

Let me tell you how.

My country: I love India. I love this country because I was born here and because of its art, history, music, culture and rituals. But most of all I love India because it stands as an international beacon of hope for democracy, diversity and peacemaking. India's democracy shines as a beacon of light in a world that is becoming increasingly darker.

My family: I grew up in a middle-class family. My parents taught me to: Treat people in the way that you want to be treated. Give dignity and respect to others. Work hard and aim high. Do what you can to serve your community. In the neighborhood where I grew up, all of us from different backgrounds and different faiths learned to work side-by-side because we were bound together in the service of others.

My home city: I was born and spent the first few years of my life in Azamgarh but I grew up in Varanasi. I treasure Varanasi. I have fond memories of that city. It is where my journey began. It shaped my story. It is a beautiful city and a tolerant one. It is there that I learned about the richness of religious diversity and respect for other religions.

My university: Last, but not least of course, is Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

I have already told you about AMU's exemplary effect on me. What is good in me, I owe it to AMU.

Lessons from America

Those are my lessons from India. Now, let me tell you about my lessons from America.

I share them not because I hope they will be useful as you chart

your own path.

When I went to the United States from India to pursue the American dream, I wasn't quite sure how I would achieve that dream. I knew even then that being a business owner would be part of it.

I also knew that it would mean being apart from my family and developing my own career track with little parental or professional guidance. This was a daunting challenge.

But it was also an opportunity. That's the way I saw it – an opportunity to define myself in America, the land of opportunity.

That process of defining myself in America had five stages:

- Getting a good education
- Taking a risk
- Becoming an entrepreneur
- Building a strong and talented team who shared my vision and values
- Broadening my horizon

I got my bachelors and masters' degrees in computer science at the University of Colorado. Then, I worked with two major information technology firms which gave me the skills and real-world grounding that I needed to be a business owner.

Within 13 years, along with my management team, we took my company the QSS Group from a workforce of 1 employee – me – to more than 3,000 employees and approximately \$300 million in revenue. The team of talented managers was central to everything. Success in business is a team sport. So, when you ask me how I became successful, it was not me but we who made it happen.

Success taught me to move forward. And, more importantly, failure taught me to never go backward. Thus, failure is the first

Students in the audience. That advices are:

- Don't think anything is impossible
- Create your own legacy
- Make it your journey
- Do well but also do good
- Willing to take risks

Don't think anything is impossible. If you would have asked me more than 40 years ago coming from a middle-class family in India could I achieve and accomplish what I have, I probably would have said no. I was not certain about where I would end up when I went from India to the United States. But I knew absolutely that working hard, aiming high and getting the right education was the key to success.

I am confident that the same will be true for you no matter where you or your family is currently on the economic ladder.

There are numerous stories here in India of the successes of graduates of modest means from higher education institutions. That is why I ask you to don't think anything is impossible.

Create your own legacy. Realize that wittingly or unwittingly, we are writing the narratives for our lives in the way we conduct ourselves both personally and professionally. Professor Clayton Christenson from Harvard put it this way, "Think about the metric by which your life will be judged and make a resolution to live every day so that in the end, your life will be judged success".

Make It Your Journey. Even though I have shared information about my journey with you, you will succeed by making it your own journey.

Frank Islam's journey was Frank Islam's journey. Just as Bill Gates was Bill Gates. Steve Jobs was Steve Jobs.

My story is testimony to the fact that anything is possible if you make it your journey. Write your own story. Chart your own path. Create mission, vision, and a set of values that are unique to your area of endeavor.

Do Well but Also Do Good. In making it your journey, I am encouraging you to succeed but do not forget those who have been less successful. You should extend your hand, your help, and your heart to those who are less successful, who are less fortunate, who are socially and economically disadvantaged, who are voiceless, and who are vulnerable. Reach out and help them with education and inclusive economic mobility. Help them through their darkest moments of their lives. Please remember when they succeed, all of us succeed. India succeeds. The world succeeds. All of us cannot succeed when they are held back.

Willing to take risks. Entrepreneurship is about taking risks, being focused and being committed. It is about confronting uncertainty with optimism, ingenuity, and creativity. It is about getting out of comfort zone, venturing into new horizon and experiencing new environments.

Part 3: The Critical Importance of Civic Engagement

That brings me to Part 3 of my presentation: civic engagement. Doing well and doing good is part of civic engagement.

I decided to focus on civic engagement because I was asked to provide some thoughts in this speech on "how Minorities can be engaged to address the negativity toward Muslims..."

In my opinion, by far the best way that we can accomplish this is through civic engagement.

Civic engagement as I view it takes five primary forms:

- Individual engagement – being the best one can be and

personally responsible for one's actions

- Organizational engagement—contributing to the success of the groups (e.g., business, religion, associations) to which one belongs
- Political engagement— participating in those processes that shape the structure and nature of government
- Community engagement— collaborating to make the locale and the world in which we live a better place
- Social engagement— advocating for justice and equality of treatment and opportunity for all

I want those of you here at Jamia Hamdard to think about what you have done, are doing, and can do through civic engagement to counteract the negativity toward Muslims and minorities.

In my opinion, the best way to accomplish this is by working through civic engagement to establish a state of interdependence among the people of India and the world. On this Independence Day I wrote an article titled "Celebrate Interdependence on Independence Day" which was published in many newspapers. In that article, I spelled out the roles that each citizen should play and the special contributions that religious leaders, political leaders, business leaders and civic leaders can do in collaboration.

I began the interdependence Day article as follows:

India would embrace and celebrate the richness of religious diversity. Diversity makes us stronger. Diversity is vital in keeping democracy healthy. Diversity brings us together. When we are together, we can help shape a better future for India.

We need to recognize and celebrate the interdependence of all Indians. This wish can be addressed by coming together to promote the unity as one nation under God. By achieving a true state of interdependence India would become a global beacon of hope for democracy and India would be a role model for other

democracies to emulate. If it realizes that potential it will bring about a new dawn of democracy in the 21st century.

I closed the article this way

I understand that it will be up to us as mere mortals to pursue them

We can do that not by looking to the heavens and to the gods whom we worship. But, by looking at the earth and the people and the family that we are.

We all have role to play in that pursuit. Each citizen should engage in small acts of kindness by reaching out to those who are less fortunate and to the downtrodden, by extending a helping hand and a hand up. Some people have special contributions to make.

Religious leaders should promote interfaith dialogue. They should emphasize building bridges instead of building boundaries and barriers. They should bring together followers of different persuasions for meaningful discussions. They should promote a dialogue of understanding and a shared sense of community with other faiths. They should call attention to the fact that attack on one religion is attack on all religions. They should call attention to the fact that when we attack people based on their faiths, we are tearing apart the harmonious fabric of India.

Political leaders should promote a framework of unity and civility. They should ensure that all laws are fair and fairly enforced. They should take affirmative actions to promote an atmosphere of communal peace and harmony. They should promote hope not fear. They should promote unity over divisions. They should bring people together to pursue the common good. They should promote the belief that the future of India rests upon the foundation of inclusiveness.

Civic and business leaders should promote collaboration. They should toil together transcending their creeds to plant the seeds for doing good deeds. They should invest in programs that cut across and eliminate racial, religious, and socio-economic divides.

Being here with those of you in higher education at Jami Hamdard today, let me signify upon the pivotal role you can play in helping India achieve interdependence. I say pivotal because you influence studies, students and society through your good work.

Your impact through research, writing, and teaching goes far beyond the walls of Jamia Hamdard. It goes across India and because of the growth of the Indian diaspora it goes into the United States and around the world. You are difference makers empowering others to make the Jamia Hamdard difference.

In closing, let me leave you with one final thought and that thought is to remember and draw upon your Jamia Hamdard roots. Jamia Hamdard traces its heritage to Unani Medicine. Unani medicine is a means for meeting physical needs and promoting healing.

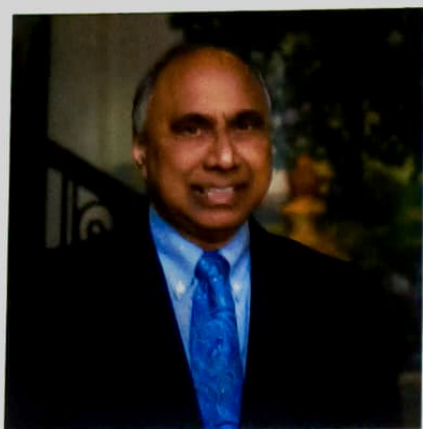
In today's world, with its growing divisiveness and darkness, there is a need not just for physical healing, but for psychological healing, and for societal healing. Because of how it has evolved, Jamia Hamdard can be in the forefront of that healing. I say to all of you, let the healing begin.

Thank your listening to me and letting me share my thoughts. I hope that they will be helpful on your journey.

My best wishes to all of you on your journeys. I also hope, as I continue my journey, that our paths will cross again.

Good luck and God bless all of you.

Frank F. Islam



Dr. Frank F. Islam

Chairman and CEO, FI Investment Group, LLC, USA

Dr. Frank F. Islam is an information technology entrepreneur, investor, philanthropist, civic leader and a writer who heads the FI Investment Group, LLC, USA. Dr. Islam received his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Computer Science from the University of Colorado. He was the founder and CEO of the QSS Group. Prominent and most influential, amongst the Indian Diaspora, he is a living example of fulfilment of the "Great American Dream" which he has realized by

imbibing virtues of hardwork, focus, quality, innovation and kindness. He is indeed an agent of change, a thought leader, and an epitome of entrepreneurial leadership and civic engagement.

Dr. Islam serves and has served on numerous boards and advisory councils including the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Board of Directors, Strathmore Center for the Arts, Ford's Theater Society Board of Trustees and Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts. His involvement includes Brookings Institution Council, Member of Center of American Progress (CAP), Foreign Policy Advisory Council, Woodrow Wilson Center National Cabinet, International Advisory Council of the U.S. Institute of Peace. He also serves on the board of renowned higher education institutions, including the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Johns Hopkins University Advisory Council, University of Maryland Smith School of Business, George Mason University School of Management Dean's Council, American University School of International Service Dean's Council, University of Malaysia (UTM) International Advisory Panel and American University of Afghanistan.

Dr. Islam was an active participant in the information technology, aerospace engineering services, and systems integration business for more than twenty-five years. During his professional career, he garnered multiple industry awards for leadership, entrepreneurship and excellence. He was recognized by the Ernst and Young as Maryland Entrepreneur of the Year and the US Small Business Administration selected him as the Small Business Person of the Year of the Washington DC Metropolitan Area in 2001.

Dr. Islam is widely recognized as a writer and a thought leader. He has a penchant for writing which is well elicited through the two books which he authored; *Working the Pivot Points: To Make America Work Again* (2013); and, *Renewing the American Dream: A Citizen's Guide for Restoring Our Competitive Advantage* (2010). As an opinion leader, his contributions in the *The Huffington Post* and *The Medium*, *Foreign Policy*, *IANSA*, and the *Economic Times of India* are well received globally. His steadfast striving to create opportunities that are sustainable and uplifting for humanity, his unparalleled success at the innumerable fronts and a special commitment to civic, educational and artistic causes makes him a harbinger of hope for his entire constituency, the humanity.

Dr. Islam has been recognized for his tireless efforts by numerous prestigious organization and has been most deservedly conferred upon D.Sc. (Honoris Causa) by Aligarh Muslim University (2016), Imtiaz-e-Jamia Award by Jamia Millia Islamia (2017), Philanthropist of the Year Award 2018 by Aligarh Muslim University Alumni Association, UAE. An eternal optimist, his belief in "creating entrepreneurial legacy", "empowering the civil society", "building narratives", and "commitment towards standards of excellence" is in reality the key to the development of a peaceful, sustainable and a progressive civil society.



JAMIA HAMDARD

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