**FAREWELL SPEECH OF THE FORMER**

 **PRESIDENT TO THE DPA MEMBERS**

 **MARCH 21 2018**

We are what we are because of the manner of our **upbringing** and the manner we **respond** to events as they unfold in our lives.

In that sense the **extensive praise** you have showered upon me is, to a great extent due to my **parents.** Although not **bountifully endowed** with wealth, they **insisted** that we, my brother and I, went to one of the most prestigious schools in Mumbai. In his own way my brother is bringing hope to children living in the far flung slums of Mumbai. But, apart from the formal education we received, it was the insistence on the **Zoroastrian work** **ethic** and the Zoroastrian values that has stood both of us in good stead throughout our lives. Not only to distinguish between **Good and Evil** but to **fight Evil** whenever encountered.We received **a moral compass** which, unfortunately, isnot to be found these days**.** A heightened sense of **justice** was instilled in us.Injustice hadto be foughttill justiceis restored. Above all, we were taught how torespond toseemingly **unassailable challenges.** We were taught the meaning of our shortest prayer, The **Ashem Vohu.** Righteousnes for the sake of Righteousness for Righteousness is its own reward

Let me now talk about a few seemingly unrelated stories. It was **January 1949,** I was starting my last year in School, which also happened to be the last year of our **Principal** who, after serving the School for **25 years, the** **last 10** as its Principal. L.M.S.Bruce was a stern faced, bespectacled red haired Scotsman, best noted for the fact that when he wielded the cane with such efficiency that when it came crashing down on the tender bottom of a recalcitrant student, the whack could be heard in the adjacent classroom which happened to be ours! The Principal was solely authorized toselect the **Head Boy** or School Captain**.** Bruce surprised everyone when he selected me to this honour. At the end of the year the winner of the **McDonald medal** for Leadership was announced. Usually, but not always, the medal was awarded to the School Captain. So it was no surprise that I got the medal. However it was what Bruce said on that occasion that made me particularly happy.”The honour was bestowed on Kapadia **more nearly unanimously** than I have ever known before.” Doing things unanimously is what leadership is all about. It is often debated whether leadership can be **taught** or one is **born** with it. If I was taught leadership, I do not know who could have done this. There was no subject like Leadership taught in School and the Greats who spoke and wrote about the subject, like Drucker and Goleman, came on to the scene much later.

After a short stint in college, it was time to go **abroad** for higher studies. A scholarship was needed. The **J.N.Tata** Endowment agreed to give me a scholarship only if I went to Germany. In those days we had to learn the language as lectures were held in German. Therefore, the decision to go was a tough one to make. Those days the **Endowment** was headed by **an eccentric Parsi lady**, Piloo Vesugar, whose most favourite word was **Ghadhera!** She had no compunctions in calling her husband one in public! Seeing the perplexed expression on my face she exclaimed “Ghadhera tar ma bheju che ke bhusu. Ass do you have brains or saw dust.” I was not sure about the brains part but reasonably sure that it was not saw dust. So I told her that I would let her know my decision in a few days time. After tossing in bed for several nights the **AHA** moment arrived and I said I will go. The next morning I walked up to my mother and told her that I had decided to go. She said, son, do you know what, last night I too came to the conclusion that you should go. Was that a **coincidence?** My four years in Germany were some of the most memorable of my life. The integration with the country was near complete. With the birth of the baby girl Merle family Hage became the third family in Germany I know for four generations!

On returning home it was but natural that I work for a Tata Company. So it was off to **Jamshedpur.** There are many stories I can recall about our – I had married **Rati** shortly after I started working - 27 year stay in that delightful town but I choose to narrate one incident that illustrates the point I am trying to make.

It was a round 2 am one night. Rati and I were sleeping in the room adjacent to where our daughters, Jeroo and Rukshna, not yet in their teens, were sleeping, when Rati nudged me to say we have company. What does one do when woken up in the middle of the night to be informed that we had intruders? One gives a war cry and charges to push back the intruders. The response? A flash, a bang and they dissolved into the night. I was about to climb back into bed, when I felt something trickling down my chest. It was blood! I had been shot and some 100 pellets of lead were pumped into my system. Alarm bells were sounded and all the top doctors, most very good friends of ours, turned up at the hospital. During the emergency operation some 75 pellets were removed. The rest lie harmlessly in different parts of my system. As Dr. Reddy, the radiologist, entrusted with the task of locating the pellets said, “Kapadia it was your sternum bone which saved your life.” If the blast of pellets had entered my body just a few inches to the left of where it did, I would not be standing before you today!!

By now you may be wondering what binds all these randomly selected stories together. If you have listened carefully, you might have noticed that an invisibly thin thread runs through all these stories. Whenever I needed it, there was a **PRESENCE** by my side ready to hold my hand. This **PRESENCE** was never needed more than when I was your President!

I have now a word for my young Ervad Sahebs. I would like to repeat to them what my mother told me when she nudged me to become a Navar. That was some 75 years ago! She said “Son, there wasa time when it was an **honour** to wear a **white Pagree.** Only the **elite** of the elitewere **entitled** to wear it.Never do anything in life that would bring **disgrace or disrepute** to the Pagree.” Your story does not end with becoming a Navar. It has just begun! You have to lead from the front, showing the way!

The **DPA** has always been a **torch bearer** in community affairs in India. But , for all practical purposes, no other Anjuman was following the example of the DPA. **Those** who have given the Anjuman a very firm footing **look down** upon us from the wall facing uson the stage. However, I feel that **now,** more than at any other time in history, when the **BPP** is in a seemingly self **destructive mode** and the **Federation** having seemingly **lost steam**, the DPA has a very significant and leading role to play. I am not aware of any other Anjuman where a **lady** conducts its affairs, much less one who is **married outside the community**. What we do and say is stated in the Supreme and High Courts! The DPA , for me, has always been like the **Statue of Liberty**. Welcoming those not welcome elsewhere and **throwing light** on the way forward. I shall be **standing and applauding** from the sidelines as the DPA plays its pre ordained role in the future.

We would not have been able to achieve what we did without the active support of some of our very senior and highly respected members, Fali Nariman and Keki Daruwala. We acknowledge with gratitude their unstinting support.