

## SPEECH AT SHIBLI COLLEGE

Members of faculty, students, ladies and gentlemen:

I am thrilled and excited and I am most honored to be with you. I want to thank all of you for what you do for this College.

I sincerely thank all of you for coming and thank you for your hospitality. I am proud to be standing here with fellow countrymen, and looking at you today, I have never felt so blessed. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my cousin Shah Asfar Faizan.

I was born not too far from here. The boys that I played with taught me how to ride bike in hot summer sun and they taught me how to catch a kite in brown muddy waters filled with rice paddies. They also taught me to give dignity and respect to others. I still treasure those thoughts.

The memory of Azamgarh still lingers on my mind. It has not faded from my memory. It is as fresh in my thoughts and my heart as it was long years ago. My days at Azamgarh have profound effect on me. It was here that I developed the strength, courage, discipline, and determination to succeed. I still cherish those memories and nourish those thoughts.

My ancestors are buried beneath their beloved city Azamgarh. Their monuments built by carved stone and marble are constant reminder of their vision and their values and love of their children. The walls that surround these monuments are speechless and voiceless but to me they are a source of inspiration. They tell the story of my past. My ancestors' memory and legacy still lives in bright lights and dark shadows and those shadows are everywhere.

Shibli College is a true treasure. I care deeply and love this remarkable institution. No turning of the seasons can diminish the greatness of this great college. This college stands as a symbol of knowledge and progress and center of learning and serves as a beacon for the entire world. I have always held Shibli College in high esteem. I congratulate Shibli College for its continued success in honoring the legacy of its founder, Shibli Nomani, and remembering his commitment to the principles upon which this college was founded-service to humanity. Shibli Nomani was an extraordinary man with extraordinary talent. He was man ahead of his time. He shaped our future. He embraced the future and he was never frightened of the future. He remained focused on the brighter horizon even when he endured storm and even when he suffered and struggled during his dark days. All of us owe a sense of gratitude to him because he made impossible to possible and he made unacceptable to acceptable and he made irrelevant to relevant.

Let us carry the torch handed over to us by Shibli Nomani. Let us commit ourselves to ensure that his dream shall never die and his cause shall endure.

Long years ago my father went to Shibli college. This college provided my father hope, opportunity and strength and has taught him the dignity of hard work. My family and I will always be grateful and indebted to this college. My life was carved out of my parent's dream. What is best in me I owe to my parents? Not a single day goes by that I do not mourn the passing of my parents. They were the best and the brightest. My father firmly believed there is light at the end of tunnel. He did not believe in darkness, despair and disappointment at the end of the tunnel.

My own remarkable success story and my journey from Azamgarh to Aligarh to America should resonate well with all of you. It reaffirms the notion that if you aim high and if you work hard, you should be able to achieve your dream. It is that promise that has always set us apart – that through hard work and sacrifice each of you can pursue your own individual dreams. For you no dream should be too far out of reach.

Let us commit to working together to eliminate poverty. Several reports that I have seen deepened my understanding of how entrenched poverty is in the Muslim Community. Poverty crushes hope. Poverty fuels a dangerous mix of desperation and frustration and results in an instability that has erupted numerous times in violence. Remember violence breeds violence. There is no single solution to eliminating poverty, nor can we expect a single entity to shoulder the entire burden. However if we come together we can do so.

Education is a powerful equalizer opening doors to all to lift themselves out of poverty. Let us commit to working together to eliminate disparities in education. The disparities among Muslims are most striking when it comes to educations. Lack of access to education creates a vicious cycle that crushes a person's hope for improvement. The best way to eradicate poverty is to provide opportunity for education to every one.

The greatest gift we can give is the gift of education. Education empowers the mind and uplifts the soul. Education enhances the dignity of a human being and increases his or her self-respect. Education is central to development and strengthens nations. Education can be a powerful engine of employment and entrepreneurship. Education can also be an important component to foster positive change and social values.

Let us do our part to invest in education and to expand education to all people. Let us together develop a culture that reinforces the values and importance of education. We have to have a long term vision that combines human resource development and education to provide a solid foundation for our people.

As we approach the dawn of a new decade, let us come together to find a way to work together because all of us share a common destiny, and a common hope, and a common dream. All things are possible when we work together, struggle together, suffer together, sacrifice together, learn from one another, and listen to each other. All things are possible when we seek a common ground to work for shared goals.

Let us weave into the fabric of our society a sense of optimism, a sense of positive energy, a sense of hard work, and a sense of hope. All of us have potential to develop and achieve our fullest potential. All of us have role and responsibility to shape our future. Let us together build a noble mansion so that our children can dwell, so that our children can prosper, so that our children can have bright future. It is the future that beckons to all of us.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak to you today and thank you for your time and your commitment to make a difference in the lives of others. I wish all of you continued success in the future, and hope that our paths will cross again.

God bless you.