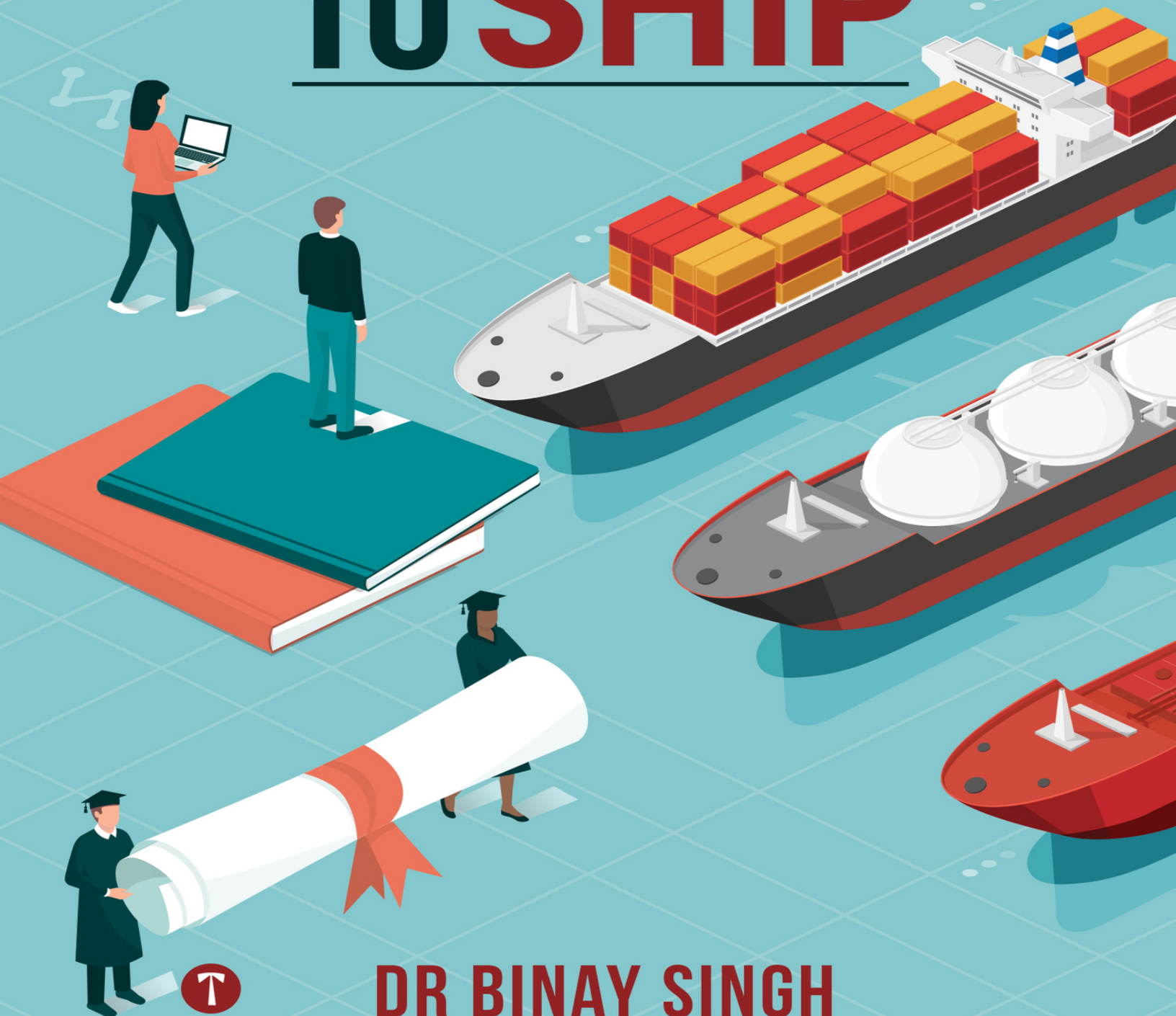


# FROM COLLEGE TO SHIP



**DR BINAY SINGH**



**FROM  
COLLEGE  
TO SHIP**



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Email: [hello@twagaa.com](mailto:hello@twagaa.com)

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After writing more than 130 books, I feel inspiration and motivation to work harder when I see all of the cadets in India, the Philippines, and Ukraine, who are without any jobs. It is devastating for me to see this. This book is for *all of you* - I see you, I hear you, and I want to be there for you. May this book help you along your path.

I am thankful to dear friend Capt. Purnendu Shorey for writing an inspiring Foreword to this guide, which is for every passionate cadet and seafarer.



# FOREWORD

People often ask me - how can I join the Merchant Navy? I ask them another question - why do you want to join the Merchant Navy? Typically, the answer is quite far from the true reasons one should consider becoming part of this dynamic profession.

I interact with thousands of Cadets & Trainees via my social media channels, by visiting their colleges and the Inter College Event that we host every year. Many of those who have already joined the courses are also unaware of what lies ahead and how to proceed after graduating.

To some extent, I hold myself responsible for this widespread ignorance. I and others like me have not managed to clear the haze when it comes to this profession. It is time to change that, and this book is a step in the right direction.

Yes, it is a rather competitive world out there and this is not going to change anytime soon. There are a lot of 'unwanted' elements from outside the industry who are waiting for the students to pass from the colleges, so that they may try and make a quick buck from misguiding them. Lastly, there is always the challenges of an adult life that await students. Once they are done with their college and hostel shenanigans!

This book is a step in the direction that can help you "begin to prepare" (the full recipe of life can never be written down) for a journey that has the potential to give you most of the things that you may desire.: Employment, Money, Job Satisfaction, and more.

Looking back over the 30+ years that I have spent in the Shipping Industry, I am thankful for what I have learned (and continue to) and am glad to see that Dr. Binay Singh has begun to use his pen for writing a book that is not addressed to the CEOs and Captains, but for the maritime future (those in colleges).

Well begun is half done - an age old saying that still holds good for most actions in life!

So - begin your journey 'well' (researched) and you will find that there is a lot more in the offing!



**Capt. Purnendu Shorey**

*Co-Founder, Offing Group  
Organizers of the largest Inter College Fest of  
Maritime Cadets in the World (NAUGHTICA)*

# CONTENTS

[To the Cadets of the World](#)

[Setting Yourself Apart](#)

[Looking for Support](#)

[Two Places, One Life](#)

[About the Author](#)

[More Books By Dr Binay Singh](#)



CHAPTER 1

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TO THE CADETS OF THE WORLD



Cadets of the world, you live in my heart. You are the future of the maritime sector, and as such, you are *my* future as well. At this moment, you must be transitioning from the maritime academy to your first assignment at sea. Because I have been where you are right now, I know how stressful this transition can get. You must be feeling pressures from all sides -, your parents, your professors, and not least of all from yourself. It might seem that every minute of the day, there is something else for you to think about and another task for you to handle. No one would blame you for longing after simpler times - either an earlier year during your studies or some year in the future when you have found your place in this sector.

I am here to help you and to guide you forward. More than anything, I want you to feel more comfortable about all the decisions that are in front of you. It would mean *everything* to me to hear back from you if you have used any of my advice to cut down on the confusion that is so common among graduating cadets and incoming seafarers. There are, I am sure, many questions on your mind. You may have looked over some job postings or chatted with some staffing specialists, and woefully concluded that your outlook is bleak. In that case, my recommendation is simple: keep your head up and continue to look brightly upon the years to come.

Of course, I understand that is much easier said than done. I know that when you are up against such a daunting challenge, as you are right now, no words are going to provide much comfort. Only *action* will reassure you. You want to feel like you know what others expect of you - and like any other obstacles that come up, they will seem different from the ones you have overcome but only in small ways, nothing so substantial or so different that you need to start all over again. That is what I aim to provide you, the confidence that you need to address even the sparsest of job markets, as well as the skills that will pull all attention your way even in the most crowded field of applicants.

The world is, more than ever, a perplexing place. It may seem strange to you to think that you would dedicate your life to a single profession for such a long stretch of time, learn so many skills, and think so specifically about one industry, just for the job market to come up *empty*. In your search, not only for this job but for every job in your career, you should never lose sight of your own value. No one should be able to reject you for a position - and in doing so, make you *feel* rejected.

This is a subtle but critical lesson for you. The maritime sector, as long as employment remains low, is a painful place for any new graduate. Cadets, particularly those who are not coming from one of the top academies, will hear bad news before they hear good news. Unless you are able to approach this process objectively, and keep your emotions from getting in the way, you are going to make it even more difficult for yourself. You are going to create one more impediment to your success, standing in your own way when there are already so many challenges ahead of you.

As inflation and supply chain issues are - at the time of this writing - hindering economic growth worldwide, things will get worse before they get better. There will be even more competition for entry-level positions. Cadets who are graduating *right now* will be competing both with their fellow graduates and with last year's graduates who have not found a job yet. That means, if you are looking for your first position at sea, you must work even harder than anyone who has entered the sector before you.

All the same, I believe that none of these challenges is insurmountable. I remember when I was entering the maritime sector in the 90s; there were naysayers and doomsdayers who told me that nothing would ever go well again and that I was foolish for trying. That type of people *never* go away. All you can do is ignore them, reminding yourself somewhat regularly that despite all of their pessimism, and against all of their "seasoned advice", you still believe in your worth to the potential employers.

This is a matter of practicality. There is no way you will end up in the position you want unless you can maintain a solid attitude. No one and nothing, not even the sector as a whole, should be able to discourage you. That is the *first* lesson that I would like to impart to you. As soon as you start to get down about yourself and your prospects, you have already fallen far behind the competition. Someone else is *precisely* where you are, but because they managed to show up at the interviews with a firm lip and a calm demeanor, they are going to win out over you.

We must *all* remember that in the worst of times, at the lowest of the lows, we can still reach inside ourselves and tap into our spirit. Remembering our faith and our willpower, we can push ourselves past what others may assume to be our breaking point. This is something that costs us nothing and takes up none of our time. It is a *choice* that we make, about how we are presenting ourselves to our employers.

To every cadet around the world, I say: look for the unbeatable person inside yourself. This will always be your greatest advantage, during your job search and afterward. Find the cadet whom every ship owner would be *lucky* to employ. This person, this *entity*, does exist, even if you feel that there is a disconnect. You can always rediscover the most capable version of you if you believe in yourself and search hard enough.

The reason that I speak so passionately about these topics is that I want you to find a job. One of my biggest goals is to play a role in driving full employment in the maritime sector. I want to see the maritime sector become an even more positive force than it is in the world today. This sector has done so much for me, changing my life fundamentally and enabling me to provide for my family, that I would like to see it do the same for millions of others.

My hope is that you will all do excellent work and that your employers will get from you outstanding service. Until then, focus on



*preparation*. Find things that you can do to build your self-image and present yourself more attractively at the interviews you secure. During your last year, you should be exploring possibilities as to where you will work when you graduate. This is of *equal* importance to all of your coursework.

The reality is that you are not going to finish your education and then just jump into a job. It does not *work* that way. On the contrary, there is work, yet, for you to do. This is not only your concern, either. In India especially, fathers and mothers have usually worked hard to cover the cost of their children's education. When you complete your degree, unless there is something in line for you, you are going to find yourself back in their homes without any means to support yourself.

It is your *duty* to remain true to your obligations. To help you do that, let's next talk about what you can do to make yourself stand out in this process.



## CHAPTER 2

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# SETTING YOURSELF APART



**H**ow can you set yourself apart in the job market? This question *haunts* many job seekers. Because there has been no one there to mentor or guide them, they feel helpless. They see other applicants showing up to the same interviews, and they feel like they are lacking something, even if they are unsure what. This is a tough issue to address because it is *never* one thing that is lacking. Instead, every applicant is lacking something - and the majority are lacking several things.

The best that you can do is *minimize* the number of things that you are lacking. When you show up to a job interview, you should be able to answer all of the questions that the interviewer asks you. In order to do that, you need to spend time preparing for *every* interview. Look into your potential employer, studying their specialties and needs. If there is something in which they take a particular interest, you should take a particular interest in that too. You want to align with your interviewer as closely and on as many levels as possible.

There are other steps that you can take that are *not* employer-specific. These will make you more attractive to *every* interviewer. Let's go over some of them together.

First of all, work hard to earn merits during your coursework. Your grades *matter*. Even if there are jobs available to cadets who have struggled through their coursework, your path will be much smoother if you can show up to your interviews with an impressive transcript. Your grades, imperfect measurements though they may be, are one of the few definitive ways through which you can show others how you stack up against your peers. If your grades are exceptionally high, then you will look all the better on paper - getting you an in for most of the interviews you want.

In the maritime world, there is always a demand for seafarers who have proven their willingness to work hard and deliver results. This is because persistence, determination, and gumption are crucial

when you are at sea. Ship owners want to know that when they put someone on board one of their investments, that investment will be *safe*. In turn, ship managers do not want to disappoint the ship owners. They want to earn commendations for their service, the same way that we all do. The most obvious way for them to do that is to make smart, safe hiring choices.

If you have not qualified for merits in the past, then you need to work that much harder while there is still time. This is your last year, and if you earn merits during one of the courses you are taking right now, it will speak *volumes* about how far you have come as a student. It would be fair to say that the merits you earn today are two or even three times more valuable than merits you may have earned in your first year. Because the merits are closer to the time that you will be spending on your first ship, they are more relevant to whoever is making the hiring decisions.

You may also decide to take a special examination before you have graduated. To qualify for any examination, cadets must earn certain grades and complete varying sets of requirements. Ship owners and managers are aware that even to get into one of these examinations, you must go through a rigorous process. Therefore, if you do well on the examination itself, it will become an *extremely* positive mark on your application.

Another step that you can take to prepare yourself for the application process is one of the most difficult of all to find. If you can find it, though, you will be *leagues* ahead of your peers.

As you may have already guessed, I am talking about *sea time*. As per the International Maritime Organization, you must put in at least twelve months of sea time before you can qualify for a leadership position. This means there is no time to waste in order to get some sea time before you start applying for your first ship. You are up against a tight deadline, but it will be worth the stress. Stepping into an interview with sea time under your belt, you can breathe deeply

and coolly, knowing that you have done *exactly* what your interviewer is hoping you have done.

If there is no sea time available at your college, then it is up to you to *find* sea time. You must seek out the necessary resources. Ask your professors, do some readings online, and figure out where you can go to make that happen. Whatever the cost is, find a way to pay for it. Even if you have to work a second job to pay for your sea time, you will be saving yourself the pain of a much longer job search. Calculate the money that you will *not* be earning if you are looking for your first ship for a year or longer - this is how much you should be willing to spend for your sea time.

What you must also remember during your job search is that not every opportunity is right for you. Don't go for short gains; accept that your road will be, for now, a challenge. It is *worth* the struggle because you are setting yourself up for success later. If a job seems like it is not on the track that you want for your career, then, if at all possible, continue to look for a job that is on the track that you want. Here, you will be striking a balance between realism and your own emotions. You do not want to compromise the latter, as long as you are not ignoring the former.

This is one more reason that more than half of the effort you put into your job search should *precede* the job search itself. Figure out what the right companies and jobs look like to you. When you connect with one company or another, make a note of them. Go back to them again and again, committing yourself to finding a position among their ranks.

There are, on top of research, technical skills that you can gain to make yourself more attractive to potential employers. Think *globally*. For example, navigation is a skill that ship owners always need and value greatly. The same goes for engineering; you will never run out of work. Both navigation and engineering, if you are capable of

learning them, will win you your first job more quickly *and* future-proof you against downsizing in the years ahead.

Physics, chemistry, mathematics: focus on these subjects, as well as on geography and general knowledge. Your employer wants you to know everything that there is to know about these subjects, if not to speak on them directly then to cover more advanced materials for which they will serve as a foundation.

I have seen cadets *stumble* in these courses. There have been many cadets who have been unable to find a ship's position. What *use* is such a cadet to a ship owner? How does he expect to find a job? Until you can speak intelligently about the basics, you are not *ready* to join a crew. You would become a nuisance to your employer, which is the last thing that you would want to be.

What is radar? What is GPS? These lessons, too, are *pivotal*. You need to know all of this in order to qualify for a well-paying job. A certificate is not enough. Companies want to see more in you. They want to know that you can do more for them than your competitors can. As a rule of thumb, you can presume that any skill that companies are listing under their requirements, you ought to command them all.

Whatever you do, do not let this process get you down. Follow your ambition, dream bigger, and recognize your abilities. You have gotten this far because you are a capable cadet. Now you must become a capable seafarer. Set your sights on the biggest goals and then let nothing keep you from them. Continue to work toward the position that you want, even if you are accepting a less-than-desirable position to pay your bills for the first year or two.

All the while, you should continue to think about what *you* want. This is a subtle but important point that all maritime professionals should take to heart. There is so *much* that this sector can give you. Any time that you learn something new, any time that you develop a

skill or an ability, you and the sector become better *simultaneously*. Remember that some of the most successful maritime professionals have started out in roles disparate from the ones that would become their true destiny.

Keep searching, keep working, and trust that the process will pay off.





## CHAPTER 3

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# LOOKING FOR SUPPORT



The path that winds from your college to your ship might seem long. But you are at the beginning of the adventure of a lifetime. Few outside the maritime sector will understand *why* you would put forth such efforts. They will question how you could push yourself to do so much, all for the *chance* at a life on the ocean. I get it, though. Like you, I heard the call to serve in the maritime sector. I knew that there was no other path for me. Although I had come from India to Ukraine to study Computer Science, the sea became irresistible.

For all of those who think and feel the same way, know that you are not alone. Know that when you are in the midst of the most immense challenges, when it seems that there are no jobs available and no ships that are taking on graduating cadets, people like me are looking out for you. There is *always* some form of help available to you.

To do my part, I offer a variety of outreach and education programs through Singh Maritime Management and the Global Maritime Community (GMC). I have established myself, not only as a professional or entrepreneur but as a *helper* because I believe wholeheartedly in the work that I am doing. This is a mission for me, to see that when I near retirement and I am looking back on my legacy, I can feel *proud* about what I have done for young seafarers like you.

This has been a wonderful journey for me, and I hope that in time, you can say the same. I am always dreaming of becoming a global leader and helping seafarers far and wide. The maritime sector has provided a canvas to me to paint my vision of the future and plan for even greater accomplishments. There is always another person for me to help and another challenge for me to overcome. Right when you think the maritime sector has calmed down, and the work will become simple for a while, something like a pandemic or a recession comes along.

I *live* for those times, though. It is then that I can make the most impact on the greatest number of lives.

Today, I am a leader - but I have scratched only the surface. I am as resolute as ever before - and as motivated as I was the day *I* graduated from the academy. It is not my success, not the money I make, not the businesses that I build that compels me anymore, but the people I am able to help. My career has become a tool with which I can shape other people's lives for the better. I view all my companies as means by which I can do right by others, the same way that I view my career as an author.

The same attitude, if you can sincerely develop it within yourself, will take you a long way.

*Never* become complacent. Once you have secured a position on your first ship, think about what you are going to do next. Look into the future, reflecting on all the opportunities that may present themselves and all the opportunities that you may need to dig up. There is never any reason to settle for what you have and to throw up your arms as if you have done enough for one lifetime. When you are thinking about others, it is *never* enough. There is more that you can do and, therefore, more that you can achieve.

Think about that: there is always more work you can do, always something more with which you can fill your moments. In the maritime sector, if you are going about things in the right way, you will never succumb to the worst of all the fates - boredom. You will never become one of those people whose life seems to have passed them by. Instead, you will always be on the cusp of another revelation and another accomplishment. Your development will be *ceaseless*.

This ought to be your philosophy as you are preparing to transition from college to ship. Start moving, both in your mind and in your body, and then let nothing stop you. Become an unstoppable force,

lurching from one lesson to another. If you are fortunate enough that a mentor takes interest in you, accept their guidance happily. Show them your gratitude by telling them about all of the progress you are making when you follow their instructions.

*All the same*, remember that you are responsible for yourself. No one else will be there for you in the end. When I talk about support, I mean help *here and there*, not someone to pick you up when you fall each time. That much is up to *you*. Keep in mind that if you are studying under a sponsorship, you are still at risk. You *never* know what will happen to it, and if it does not work out ideally, then you will be out of options.

Before you head back out into the job market, let me leave you with some final words.



CHAPTER 4

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TWO PLACES, ONE LIFE



O ften, I have spoken out about the *severe* and *discouraging* lack of jobs in the maritime sector. In India, Ukraine, and the Philippines, specifically, cadets graduate from their academies without any idea as to what to do next. Their professors offer them, too frequently, almost no help. I know this because of the questions that I hear - questions that no recent graduate should have to ask anyone outside of their college. This is the reality of the maritime sector, but it does not have to be that way forever.

I know that we can do better. What is more, I know that there are many others who *share* my belief in the value of our seafarers. It is unfair to cadets, who are merely looking for careers, that the system is the way it is. What I would like to see is an *overhaul* of this system. I would like to look out at the job market and see endless postings and listings, more jobs than the graduating classes can fill. This situation would be preferable for all of us who care about the maritime sector and the seafarers who make it up.

There is no way that I can handle all of this work on my own. Mainly, I have been striving to *inspire* others to recognize what is going on. If I can nudge even a few other decisionmakers in the right direction, then I can fast-track the sector towards what I know is possible. You, too, even as a jobseeking graduate, can make an impact. By approaching this job search passionately and enthusiastically, by empathizing with your interviewers, you can make yourself a role model.

You will find that there is no end to the rewards that are within reach for hard workers like you. In maritime, we need more and more people all the time. We need the empathetic and the diligent; we need the intelligent and the brave. There is a place for every skill within this sector. Look long enough and work hard enough, and you will find how your skills fit into the larger tapestry. You will understand, slowly but surely, why you are indispensable to this sector.



In *The GMC Guide*, I wrote: "In the future, as additional crises impose such conditions on the world, those who have earned a degree will be at an advantage. Seafarers who have never even considered going back to school or transitioning from ship to shore, will, unfortunately, be at the whims of the governments and Mother Nature. They can do nothing but hope that things continue to run smoothly, that none of the changes that take place will be too jarring for them to handle."

These words hold true. The way that I see it, you are in an *outstanding* position already. Even though you are without a job, you can boast of a higher education. You have put yourself through the rigors and trials of advanced study. Sooner, rather than later, someone will acknowledge what you have done. An interviewer will see that you have developed yourself - and that they are better off hiring you than not.

I also wrote in *The GMC Guide*: "A seafarer's life is - it is worth noting - not especially conducive to higher education. Spending months away from shore, they can hardly keep up with a five-day course schedule for a semester, at least not in the traditional sense. At the GMC, we have worked hard to make educational opportunities more accessible to seafarers. Still, the ideal would be a shift *away* from a culture that emphasizes degrees over skills."

This is, as well, a significant point. Once you have taken your first job on the sea, it will *overtake* your entire life. Unless you are willing to put forth tremendous efforts, there will be almost no time to do anything other than your day-to-day duties. At GMC, we are doing what we can to facilitate more effective education and more positive employment relationships. We have focused much of our energy on segments the maritime sector has often overlooked.

Again, you cannot wait around for someone to save you, not even us. *Nothing* is more attractive to a potential employer than your willingness to *take* what you want. If a company has interviewed you

but has not called you back yet, then you may opt to take it upon yourself to call them. Some people may say that this looks desperate, but on a deeper level, it is a signal that you feel *driven*. Show ship owners and ship managers that you *want* to serve them and they will be much more likely to find a place among their crews for you.

While you have started this journey on land, it will inevitably take you out to sea. That is *the point*. Because of this huge transition, take it easy on yourself. Find the same compassion for yourself that you would find if a friend or a family member were going through this process. If you want to help yourself deal with the stress and anxiety you are feeling, then take some time away from the job search. Come back to the process later. It *will* be there waiting for you.

Yes, it is true that your college bears some responsibility for your job prospects. In *The New Maritime Way*, I explained that to set students up for success, colleges should provide them with materials and resources. Your professors should have taught you how to find sea time, and your administrators should have made such opportunities available to you. If they have not, however, then it is up to you to make up the difference. Even if it seems unfair, you need to do for yourself whatever they have not done for you.

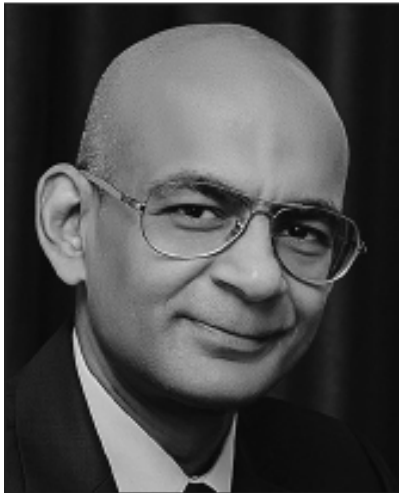
Once you have graduated, all of the impetus to succeed is on *you*. No one will catch you if you fall. At least, you can not *expect* anyone to catch you. You cannot go on thinking that you can blame your way from here to a comfortable life. On the contrary, you are better off forgetting anything that anyone has failed to do for you. If you think that there is a debt somewhere along the way, or that you have missed out on something, move on from it.

*That* is what a leader would do. To live the life of a leader, to inhabit that position as your own, that is what you need to do too. No one is going to care about your future as much as you do. In order to make

this transition successful, you need to take control. Own every piece of it - what you have done and what you have not done.

I, and many others, are rooting for you. When you struggle, I feel sad, and when you succeed, I celebrate alongside you. This is *our* maritime sector now. Welcome to the world, welcome to the high seas, and welcome to the rest of your life. May it bear fruit for you!

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



**D**r Binay Kumar Singh, Founder & CEO of *Singh Marine Management Ltd.* in Odessa (Ukraine) and Founder & President of *Federation of Global Maritime Community*, is an entrepreneur, author, and public speaker. His life mission is to serve the world's communities and guide everyone through positivity, love, and enthusiasm. This is reflected in his simple and timeless life philosophy: "Treat people as you like to be treated."

Dr Singh has a Master of Science in Marine Navigation and a Doctorate of Philosophy. He is a globally recognized expert in international shipping with over two decades of experience. Dr Singh is also taking wonderful measures for the needy community of the society as well. His new project with the name "Selfless Fund" is specifically targeted to help those who are in need. Dr Singh has also launched his new company GSR which is going to bring innovations to the shipping and maritime industry. His efforts for the shipping industry as well as for the society is an example of his generosity and selflessness.

He enjoys pursuing multiple passions like singing, dancing, playing the piano and the accordion, and keeping healthy by practicing yoga and CrossFit.

Email: [binay@drbinaysingh.com](mailto:binay@drbinaysingh.com)  
Website: <https://drbinaysingh.com>



## MORE BOOKS BY DR BINAY SINGH









# FROM COLLEGE TO SHIP

A successful maritime entrepreneur and former seafarer, Dr Binay Kumar Singh has devoted himself to providing employment opportunities within the maritime sector and fostering a better life for everyone who devotes themselves to the sea. *From College to Ship* presents his take on some of the most daunting challenges seafarers are facing today, explaining how graduating cadets can navigate the job market and settle into rewarding careers.



**Dr Binay Kumar Singh** is the founder and CEO of Singh Marine Management Ltd based in Odessa, Ukraine. His life mission is to serve the world's seafarer communities and change the world through positivity, love and enthusiasm; this is reflective in his simple, timeless life philosophy: "Treat people as you like to be treated."

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