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Where the Mind is Without Fear:

### A Personal Reflection

Coming from a fast developing city of Bangalore in Southern India, Rahul Agasthya is a boy with vivid thoughts and ambitions. As any other Indian of his age he was also aspiring to continue his higher education in the most prestigious colleges in India, the Indian Institute of Technology. But, certain incidents made him change his decision and a few of these incidents were a student exchange program to National University of Singapore and the IAYP award.

First the Singapore trip which lasted for a week from 11<sup>th</sup> June 2011 to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2011. At the airport he met his friends and his teacher who would be accompanying him as a part of the same program. Excitement was clearly marked his face. Who knew that travelling alone to another place abroad at such a young age could be the game changer of his life?

Rahul walks into the University's lecture hall. He was flabbergasted to see the different people there. He met students from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, China, Korea, Philippines and his Indian counterparts from Mumbai and Delhi.



*Figure 1 NUS Completion Certificate*

The entire week was filled with an exciting activity or a visit. He learned a lot about global education, how it is important to be successful in 21<sup>st</sup> century and more over how a classroom filled with diverse cultures will be a root cause for world peace. His ambitions changed. He wanted to do something good, really good out of his life.



*Figure 2 Receiving the NUS Award*

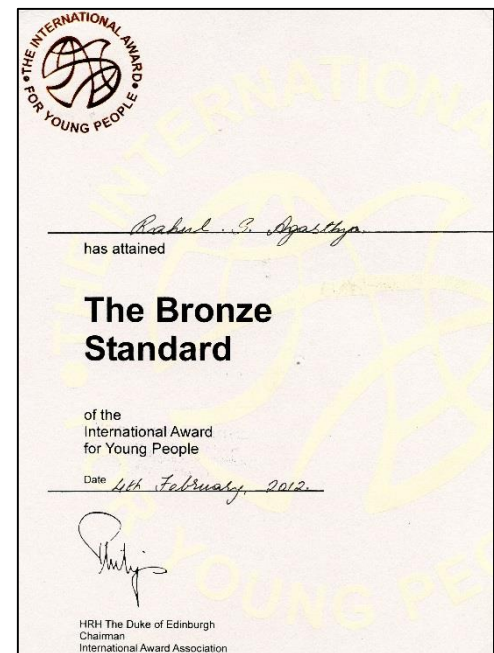
He aimed for the big, hoped for the better and worked for the best.

Over the next three years Rahul not only aimed for the best in India but also the best in the world. With this aim in mind, Rahul also achieved two prestigious awards from his school and one from His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh as a part of the IAYP or the

International Award for Young People. To earn this IAYP award, he had indulge in four activities. Firstly, an adventure camp. Second was Social Service. Rahul visited a blind school in Bangalore. After seeing blind students work independently without depending on anyone he gained the much needed strength and confidence to work towards his goals. When those students with no eyes can work so well (even on the computer), why can't I, Rahul thought. His mentality changed. "When others can do it, I can also do it.

But, when no one can do it, I can definitely do it." The third

activity was art. He practiced aero modeling. He has a collection of two huge gliders and six



*Figure 3 IAYP Bronze Badge Award*

small planes. Finally, Sports. He practiced Swimming and Yoga. For all these activities, Rahul was awarded with bronze badge.

On this grade 10 graduation day, Rahul had mixed emotions. On that day, he was awarded the 100% attendance award and IAYP Bronze Badge. But, it will be the last time he will be with his best friends.



Figure 4 100 % Attendance Award

Grade 11 and 12 brought new friends and new challenges to Rahul. But, he never gave up. His hard work and commitment proved fruitful. He was one among the 77 students of the 210 students who took the Grade 12 board examinations to score the highest in English (95%). He was given a certificate and a cash prize of One Thousand Rupees. It was a dream come true. Rahul was also admitted into Stony Brook University. His dream to study in the US, also came true. He intends to major in Computer Science and also pursue his post – graduate studies in the US, probably in Aeronautics. There have been many achievements in his life that have defined Rahul's identity and make him feel proud of himself.

“Optimism is the faith that leads you to achievement as nothing can be done without hope and confidence” (Helen Keller). These words were



Figure 5 Certificate of Excellence for scoring 95% in English Core

a source of inspiration for him as he was a bit apprehensive about his performance at this crucial juncture. These words made Rahul set a goal for myself to aim big and work hard. He was determined to do by best. He knew that achieving a good score was not going to be an easy. He had to work hard. He remembered the quote and worked hard with a new life of energy and

optimism. Finally, Rahul achieved what he wanted. He realized that to do well, he need to be good in basics, understand the concepts and practice hard. Rahul also realized that there is no substitute to hard work, seek support when needed and stay focused.

Another achievement is when Rahul was part of a Computer Science Project to write a program for booking airline tickets in JAVA language. They were a team of three and all of them started to write the code. Days passed by, they met many times but reached nowhere. They then, put our minds together and collected their ideas and started to code. Coming back from school, Rahul used to spend few hours on his computer and try to fix the problem. Finally, one night, he sent out a one liner email to all his team members that read “Success!! All errors resolved. Program running perfectly!” They worked for more than a month testing every possible code known to them, flipping pages of books and typing the 1000 lines code over and over again. They won and received 96% as the final score. It was a great learning experience, not only on the subject but also on how team work can be used to drive better results. Rahul realized perseverance pays.

While participating in a Web Design event as part of a literary fest, Rahul’s team were given just couple of days to prepare. The topic was “Real Extreme Sports.” While they started collecting data in the right earnest, they realized on the day of the event that the data was not organized properly. It was in shambles. To add to their problems, both Rahul and his team mate did not know how to use Microsoft Front Page. Slowly and systematically, they went through the software, glanced through every feature and started the fair work. They couldn’t believe that they had become so proficient in Microsoft Front Page in such a short span time. There was not much time in hand and Rahul’s team were only half way there. They had hundreds of pictures and lines of information to be added. With the small amount of time in hand, they quickly but carefully

placed the data and submitted it. After all their hard work and systematic approach, they were not only awarded second place but also appreciated. This really helped Rahul to understand the importance of patience, time management and not getting panicky under stressful situations.

Today, Rahul owes his success to his dear parents. They supported him in all his actions and helped him whenever needed. He said that his parents adhered to one saying,

“A gift is pure when it is given from the heart to the right person at the right time and at the right place, and when we expect nothing in return” (Chapter 1, Verse 20 of the Bhagavad Gita).

His parents may not expect a return gift from him but, it is his duty to offer them one. He said that the best gift he will be to graduate with good grades in college and once successful, take good care of them during their old age.

### Works Cited

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Vyas, Veda. "Visada Yoga (Verse 20)." *Bhagavad Gita*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. Retrieved April 2015.