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Evanston IL, Aug 26-27, 2006

NSF Regional Contests Ceremony
Hinsdale IL, Mar 2009, Champaign, IL, Mar 2009
Peoria IL, May 2007, Grand Rapids MI, Apr 2008
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Good evening everyone. I feel very more of an honor than pleasure to be here with all of you today. I thank the coordinators for having me here this great evening. First of all, my congratulations to all the participants (*participation is more important than winning*) and my best wishes to all the winners for the National Finals.

Before I speak on my association with NSF, let me thank you all for your kind support for North South Foundation.

Today, I am not here to talk about the NSF contests - how they started, what they are and how much positive change they are bringing in our children's lives. This is not my talk today. You know about all this much better than I do. I am here for something else. I am here to show you how each one of us in this room is making a difference by being part of NSF.

I believe, most of you know only one side of the NSF coin i.e educational contests at the regional and national level to help our children excel in various categories like English, Math, Geography, Public Speaking etc. However, all this makes only 50% of what NSF is. NSF was never really meant for the educational contests. There is something else that NSF does in India.

The real purpose of the foundation lies on the other side of the coin AND I am here to show you what that is.

All I am going to share with you is my little story and that should explain you everything about what NSF does in India. I was neither born in this country nor had any family tie ups here. In fact, I never thought during my school days that I will be in a country like USA working as a software consultant. But, some miracle happened to me and helped me grow this far.

During my school days, I had received state ranks in both the 10th and 12th standards. I also took the Engineering entrance examination and got one of the top ranks there as well. Unfortunately, free education ends after the 12th standard in India. So, my state ranks and top scoring did not really mean anything to anyone and they were not enough to get me into college. You know why? Because, I couldn't afford to pay \$200/yr as tuition fees to join the college. The \$800 it cost for 4 years of course was a very large amount for my family. My father was a small time tailor who stitched clothes for the people in my village, and could hardly save any money for my education. When I approached him for the college fees he immediately replied, *"Are you out of your mind? You know that I am only a tailor and that your mother doesn't work. All I can afford to do is feed you and your mother, but I can not save \$800 for you even if you give me another 10 years of time. Think about some alternatives."* Then I realized that he was right and there was no way he could ever support my tuition costs.

The realization was very frustrating and frightening. I had done so well in my studies, and I had a strong desire to continue my education. Unfortunately, my desire was not enough to fund my studies. You won't believe, how many sleepless nights I went through with a fear that I would have to quick college. This was the time that NSF came into my life. One day, I came across a notification about NSF in one of the daily newspapers, which stated, "We offer financial help to poor and bright students." The moment I saw it, I immediately knew that I was qualified to receive such help. I applied for the scholarship and fortunately, I was selected and offered a

scholarship of \$200/yr for all 4 years of my graduation. This was such an immense and timely help that I received. As a result of the scholarship, I was able to complete my undergraduate degree, got my masters from IIT, Kharagpur, and settled down as a software professional working here in USA.

That was the kind of role NSF played in my life. It really made a big difference and made me what I am today.

If NSF wasn't there, I wouldn't have been here today. I would not have been able to continue my education and I would have followed my father to become another tailor in my village - not knowing about education, not knowing anything about the world AND probably not knowing anything about myself.

I got the lifetime gift of education from NSF. Why do I say it is a life time gift? We all know the importance of Education and that's the reason why we are all here today. Education offers you many opportunities, and makes you a complete person. The importance of Education can be best described by a Chinese proverb -

*"If you want to think one year ahead, plant rice
If you want to think ten years ahead, plant trees, BUT
If you want to think hundred years ahead, give education to people"*

That is the beauty and power of education. This is what we at NSF believe in: providing education to hundreds of deserving students every year with support from people like you.

Another interesting point that I would like to mention here is - in addition to monetary help, I also received something else from NSF - "Giving attitude, Sense of giving, Joy of giving." Why a person sitting in Chicago, USA, is so concerned and wants to help a poor student from a village in INDIA? What exactly connects them both? This strange situation encouraged me to think beyond my textbooks for the first time in my life. No matter what you do, what you earn, and where you are, there is always at least one person in this world who needs your help and support. It is your responsibility and a God-given opportunity to help those in need. This was the realization that I got after knowing and associating with NSF.

This inspirational message motivated me so much that - 7 years ago (in 2002), I founded a small organization called [PADALA CHARITABLE TRUST](#) in my district in INDIA to try to help poor but bright students each year. I find the poorest section of students with the best academic records and offer financial help for their higher education. I tell them not to worry about their tuition costs, their uniforms and books - I'll take care of all those. Just continue your hard work and go on. So, what do you think I am doing here? All I am trying to do is "Pay it Forward," nothing great, nothing big, just something that I feel I am responsible for.

As of today, I have managed to give 284 scholarships to such students. More importantly, I have been successful in inspiring them to help other needy around them. A dozen of the recipients have already settled in good jobs, successfully supported their families, and are already on their way to help other disadvantaged students. Very frequently, I receive checks from my scholars whom I supported in the past. They ask me to use that amount to help the other needy students. So, the significance of my experience is to see how "the scholars" can become 'the sponsors'.

This is the message I always wanted to pass on to my scholars - "Pay it forward." Such philanthropy is like a chain reaction of "Paying it Forward," initiated by just one person, [Dr. Chitturi](#), and supported by a great number of wonderful volunteers & donors. I am very

confident that this cycle of Paying It Forward continues for ever touching as many lives as possible.

I am just one example and one little branch of NSF. There are hundreds of people like me being helped and inspired by NSF each year. As of today, NSF has 17 chapters all over INDIA serving the poor and needy.

Now you all know what the other 50% of NSF that I mentioned in the beginning. This is the main intention and the very cause for NSF existence - help our children in India. Give them access to higher education and let them grow as greatest assets of our country.

This is the kind of difference every one of us including our kids is making by supporting North South Foundation.

I promise you that each penny you donate to NSF and each minute that you volunteer for NSF counts and it reaches the most deserving in our home country, INDIA. So, please continue your patronage to NSF. Once again, I thank everyone for giving me this wonderful opportunity to be with you this great evening. Finally, I conclude by saying one thing that I always believe in and try to practise:

"Your Talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it, is your Gift back to God."

THANK YOU

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