New Frontiers at Our Doorsteps: 
Transforming Challenges into Unimagined Opportunities

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The great Indian poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore expressed a fervent hope in his prayer song:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world is not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
(From: Gitanjali for which Tagore received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913)

Tagore’s dream, originally for India and now considered as a universal anthem, may only be possible if we recognize that there are countless manifestations, colorful and intriguing spectrums of diversity, and creative expressions that define and grace, and provide mirror reflections of our civilization. Just look around; feast your eyes, mind, and spirit on:

- Geography and landscape
- People and cultures
- Faith and traditions
- Ideas and ideals
- Thoughts and perceptions
- Unique and colorful human creativity
- Arts and architecture

This must, as the great poet hoped, include:
- Respect for life and liberty of all living beings
- Sacred rights and human dignity, our own and of others
- Opportunities and freedoms, our own and others
- Earnestly seeking, sharing, and exchanging ideas, wisdom, and goodwill
- Rejecting all forms of ignorance, stereotyping, racial profiling, discrimination

You may ask – why should we care about the rest of the world?
Let your faith, conscience, convictions, and understanding guide you on this question.
Let me share with you my simple reasons:

**Anthropologically:** We may have our common origin in one ancestor, if you believe in the Evolution Theory. We are connected to each other if you embrace the Intelligent Design concept and the creationist point of view.
**Spiritually:** Major faiths universally affirm that we are all children of One heavenly Father. The Sikh faith proclaims that “Every living being is a repository of the divine Spirit and Light” and “No one is outside the Circle of God’s Love and Benevolence.” The Sikh faith further commands: “Recognize all humanity as One Brotherhood; One Race.”

**Culturally:** There are textures and rhythms, cultural echoes and patterns, and languages and sounds that seem to connect continents, communities.

**Socially:** Traditions and rituals about life and death, birth and burial; sense of community and family; festivals and celebrations seem to suggest an inherent or transferred common knowledge and wisdom.

**Intellectually:** Our mind and spirit, heart, and emotions respond to similar concerns, images, stimulations; we seek adventure and excitement to discover the known and unknown; we instinctively and in daily reality understand that we are interconnected and interdependent.

**Economically:** With interconnected global economies, the marketplace for our products, services, and talents have enormous opportunities and intense competition.

As never before, internet, information technology, travel, and transcendence of ideas and experiences, people and cultures crossing fabled and forbidden frontiers seem to affirm an unimagined and expanding revolution. We have suddenly entered a new “millennium of communication” which is encouraging, demanding, and forcing contact, dialogues, exchanges, and transfer of knowledge and technology to the remotest civilizations, villages, and settlements scattered across our Earth. We enjoy the splendor and beauty of places we would have never dreamed of a few decades ago, nor imagine the opportunities that await us in unexplored horizons. We have intensified efforts to protect the environment, conserve the Earth’s resources, and explore the unfathomable cosmos and outer space, which form a shared canopy over all Creation.

There is a growing interest to understand the human universe; the advanced technology and transcontinental connections are leading to amazing changes. For someone like me, with a comfort zone in the Golden Age of the Renaissance, this transitional period is certainly intimidating. For young people like you, it is the most exciting time; literally, the sky is your limit. Your mentors at IUPUI will be further shaping and sharpening your talents and curiosity and preparing you for a world much different than we know and with undreamed of challenges and great expectations. Your new frontiers of exploration would be the stars and galaxies. Your work and pursuits may take you to unfamiliar corners, introducing you to mysteries and landscapes, languages and cultural footprints, experiences across time zones and corridors of history that will make new demands on your skills and spirit.

You could witness spectrums of life and lifestyles, tapestries of culture, and human condition and circumstances that would invite your attention and generous gifts. You would have the opportunity to belong, and the responsibility to break barriers; build bridges across temporal
physical divides and emotional and unwelcome landscapes. You will need to transport your thoughts, imagination, and energies to new realms, new frequencies.

As we go forward, we must make room in our space and time and investments for those caught in conflicts, natural disasters, human tragedies, and circumstances and events beyond their control. That must be the foremost lesson of our humanity.

To relate to the world beyond our immediate concern, we must learn about the world. We must open our personal and national windows so that the winds of ideas and cultures may freely flow through our citadels. We must hear new symphonies, celebrations, and the cries of those less fortunate:

1. Offer helping hands, encouragement, compassion, and friendship
2. Span bridges of hope and healing where there is need, suffering, and deprivation
3. Share innovations and successes to solve problems
4. Expand exchange, trade, marketplaces for goods, services, and goodwill
5. Strengthen the foundation and unmistakable areas of our common humanity
6. Make room at the table for the strangers and newcomers; encourage them to share their experience, culture, faith, vision, and wisdom

We do not know all the answers. We do know that we have the best chance to transform our planet into a place of hope, peace, and friendship. That is what we would want for ourselves if we were in an unfavorable environment. I know that each of you have an unlimited capacity to contribute to the dream of universal freedoms and global prosperity.

In Indiana University classrooms and on the Campuses, your mind, spirit, and talents will be mentored by some of the world’s brightest and best educators, led by Chancellor Charles Bantz. Make these the best years of your life. Go beyond the educational skills, expectations, and finding a life partner. Be ambassadors and explorers; find out about the people of other countries and cultures who are in your classes and dorms. Learn all you can about the world to make a difference. Make this the century of understanding; discover the crossroads of world citizenship; step into the challenges facing the global community; and in serving, harvest the promise of tomorrow.

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“Let us make a place at the table for new friends and old,
Share our common dreams and shape a community
Where the Light and the labors of each one
Enhance the gifts and promise of all.”

The Art and Spirit of K. P. Singh –Selected Drawings and Writings
Kanwal Prakash Singh