

**Valedictorian Speech by Ms. Anam Ehsan
at the Global Virtual Convocation of the Aga Khan University
Karachi, Pakistan, 22 May 2021**

Graduands of 2020, the provost, the university administration, honored guests, family, friends, and well-wishers, we are so honored to have you all here on this beautiful and auspicious occasion as we celebrate the dawn of an important chapter in our lives. My name is Scoviah Masudio, and I am so honored to be representing the class of 2020 today.

I thank God for the grace and preservation of our lives that we are here today witnessing an important milestone in our lives. Despite the numerous disruptions and setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have persevered and we stand proud today as we declare ourselves champions!



I come from a family of 10 siblings and several cousins. My father (God rest his soul) finally attained his first degree at the age of 58. He told me, “my daughter, I don’t have money, neither am I much educated, but what I can tell you is that if I have managed to get my degree at this age, then nothing can ever stop you from achieving your dreams. He said you must go back to school. I want those that classified me as a failure to know that great people have emerged from my family”. Alas! Here I am today, the first girl from a long line of my family to graduate with a degree. That is history made for me, small as it is. Today is a dream manifesting into the reality!

I did not achieve this on my own. I am here today because of each and every one of you. Thank you, the university administration, the faculties and school staff. You never gave up on us, you guided and nurtured us so diligently and now it’s our time to blossom.

To family and friends, thank you for the endless sacrifices you made to ensure that this day comes to pass. To my classmates, thank you for the inspiration and encouragement.

To the Johnson & Johnson scholarship scheme, words alone can’t express our gratitude. Thank you very much.

We all have dreamt and eagerly waited for the convocation day, and it has finally arrived! But what happens after today? What does your degree or diploma mean to you? Is it going to be another piece of paper to add to your living room decorations? What are you going to do with what you have got from Aga Khan University? To the nurses and midwives, are we just excited about becoming nursing or midwifery officers? What impact will your qualifications have on the lives and training of your colleagues at work who did not have the opportunity to go back to school?

We have been empowered and are now being set free into the world, battle-tested and ready to serve humanity as agents of change, through our various disciplines.

We have received the training and skills to be the best we can be out there but are we prepared to deal with failure? I am not saying you will be a failure, but this is life. It's never a straight and smooth path. It’s filled with hills, rough terrains, and unexpected curveballs. You will apply for jobs and never get called back, you will try to save that mother bleeding, and she will die. How do you deal with all of this? Remember, no one is perfect. Every time we fall, we get an opportunity to rise stronger and wiser to deal with what made us fall. The number of times you fall doesn’t matter; it is the number of times you refuse to stay on the ground that counts. Failure should never hold you back; it should instead ignite more fire in you to want to learn a better way to handle the same problem. The first semester was tough for me, I did not perform as I expected, coupled with the loss of my father, I was so discouraged and almost gave up. Well, here I am today. I decided that I am not a quitter, and neither are you!

This is our moment to shine, go and make a difference in the world. Make use of every opportunity that comes your way, if the opportunities are not there, create them yourself. You will discover that you have more potential and capability than you give credit to yourself. You are unstoppable, you have all you need to rewrite your history. Create your own legacy, put passion and dedication in everything you do, face all your fears with boldness and courage, turn your weak points into your strongest. Be the best version of yourself every day.

Thank you and good luck to you all!

Congratulations class of 2020! God bless you.

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