



# ENGLISH SPEECHES

## WITH BIG SUBTITLES



## SHAH RUKH KHAN

### FREEDOM TO BE YOURSELF

<https://youtu.be/BZ7v0wVrKDo>

Thank you, David and thank you everyone for inviting me here. This is a huge privilege, not because I'm the chief guest. I think it's a privilege mainly because I'm one of the parents who have had the opportunity. And I'll take this opportunity on behalf of all of you to put my hands together and thank Dhirubhai Ambani International School for doing what they're doing to our children. So, I want to thank all the teachers, all the heads of departments, Zarine and Fareeda, I mean, you're the people I used to come to, when I have trouble I come and look at your faces and go away, and I'm calm; everything will be sorted out. Kava sir was fantastic at cricket matches and shouts louder than anyone else in the world can, all the staff members, the management, the gentleman who man the security outside; so wonderful and so even the guy who does the parking back there, everyone for the last 13 to 14 years that I have been here. And especially my friend, Mrs. Nita Ambani. Thank you so much for looking after our children. Thank you very very much.

Ok, so good evening boys and girls. Exams are over, if I may say so, darn school is over, which seemed an impossibility just a few years back. That horrible math or physics, or whoever your least favorite teacher is, you will never have to see again. That PE coach who was all about to get you is done and dusted now. I know everybody is looking there! You want to party now, relax, hang out with the beautiful friends you've made in the last 13 years, 14 or some, less. The last thing you really want to do is sit here and listen to someone give you advice on life lessons and what the future holds for you. And to top it, my qualification to be doing this is zilch, nada, not at all, nothing. Really, apart from the fact that Nita and I are friends and thus, I have some benefits. My reason to be here is the same as that of your elder brother or your sister being allowed to do things that you're not allowed to do at home. I'm like them, older! That's all. So if you think that I have had a successful career, as I was getting very embarrassed when David was recounting because also it's been so many years since I've got an award. Got to work harder! Also if you think I've had a successful career, a great past performance and my experiences of it; are no assurance that it will work in the future for you, or work for you at all. And anyway, none of what I say today, you will remember as soon as you're out of here or maybe even earlier, because you're still sleeping from the big party you guys had last night.

What I say may make sense to your mom or dad, who will remember it some years down the line, and they will also remember it for the inappropriate things that I'm going to say tonight. But you are here, and so am I, so I promise to keep this extremely crisp and sharp, about twenty minutes tops. But be rest assured, I understand if some of you walk out in the middle of my speech for bladder control reasons. Feel free to do that. Feel free, because that's what essentially my talk is about; feeling free.

The freedom to be yourself, to listen to your inner voice, and never let anyone tell you who you are, who you ought to be, including me. These are the only years of your life in which will be allowed to make regret-



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free mistakes. As you do so, you will chance upon your dreams. And hopefully make a happy life out of their fulfillment. When you get to be 50, as some of your parents are, none of the mothers, they all look 35. They're all looking extremely hot. Some of your parents are, and like I am. You will know that the bulk of your regrets are from not having done what you wished to do. So don't hold it against your over diligent father who's telling you to study extra, even post the exams, your annoying mother, who is still depressed that your handwriting is bad. You know she doesn't understand if it was bad five years ago, chances are that your handwriting is not going to improve for the rest of your life, ever! Mam, get that clear, it's not going to happen. But, let me assure you, squiggles and ants and mosquitos on paper won't kill your career. Any doctor here will tell you, indecipherable hieroglyphics may actually be a career booster. Don't be angry that your parents tell you that friend of yours is not good company, he is spoiling you. And please don't hold it against them when they tell you he's a movie star son and will become a hero what about you? Let me assure you, movie stars' sons and daughters also have to work. Basically just don't grudge the old man and the old bag, ever. All we parents try to do is to make you happy with your choices, by annoying you with ours, that are actually your choices anyway, but you just don't know it yet. Your hormone levels are too high for you to understand this confusing logic. All you want to be is yourselves and you're quite sure you know what that is. And I'm here tonight on your side only to confirm your convictions, as you set forth into the big bad world, from the loving shelter of Mrs. Nita Ambani and all these wonderful and beautiful and warm teachers and faculty who have nurtured you to embark on your own journey through life.

I was talking about parents, because I think tonight is about parents so I'm going to tell you something about my parents. My mother was top class, she was really cool, she loved me and cared unconditionally, was beautiful like all mothers and believed that I will be the most famous man in the world, and I could do no wrong. In Delhi they say, "Humaara bachha na, is the apple of my eye". Some Punjabi ladies make it bigger, like, "the pineapple of my eye". So I was the pineapple of my mother's eye. My father was a gentle man, he was very educated, Masters in Law; extremely intelligent, knew seven languages, had traveled the world, knew his politics, fought for the freedom of our country, India, and excelled at sports like hockey, swimming and polo. He could cook and recite poems and knew the capital of every country in the world. My father was also very poor, he was unemployed and struggling to make ends meet for 15 years of my life, that I had the privilege of knowing him. From when I was 10 to when I was 15. Not being able to afford fancy gifts for me, he would wrap up something old that belonged to him, in newspapers and declare it as a birthday gift when my birthday came along. In the next eleven and a half minutes left, that I have, is the story of the five gifts my father gave me and how they helped me become what I am today.

When I was ten my father gave me an old chess set. Chess is a reflection of life, they say, and as cliched as it sounds, it's probably true. The first thing it teaches you is that every move has a consequence, whether you perceive that it does or does not, nothing you do, not a single moment is empty of living. So think of things through, not always, but often enough. Often enough, so your life does not feel as black and white and as uniform as the squares on a chessboard.

Sometimes in order to move forward you might need to take a few steps back and there's no loss in doing something that hurts in the short run but proves worthwhile and time. Sometimes the Queen might seem sexier, they always do, but if she gets taken by an advisory straight after you save her, then you might be better off saving your castle or the bald Bishop, instead. So don't always choose that which seems more



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desirable, if something tells you that it is going to get you into a whole lot of trouble. What I mean is also about tonight, drive home while your wits are about, instead of staying and getting stoned senseless after the party here. You can't get anywhere in chess, if you don't look out for the little ones around you, the small pawns. Life is like that too, if you forget the smallest of your people, or become foolish enough to imagine that the little grades you are given are of no value, you end up nowhere. When you look around, you learn to notice all the tiny little things that make your existence privileged and special. Just the fact that you are here, in this very moment, at this fantastic school in the company of such adoring parents, is the product of immense love, hard work and sacrifice on the part of many people present here. Taking your blessings for granted is the most ungracious stupidity, both in chess and in life.

Then, there's what they call, don't know how to pronounce it, but sounds very cool, the zugzwang (German for "compulsion to move") the zugzwang is a really cool word, it sounds like a Chinese aphrodisiac, but it actually is German for, ok I will tone this down, "Oh! Fish I got to get out of here". Anyway, for those of you who have never played the game, it's when you get so stuck, that whichever move you make is a bad move. It will happen to each and everyone of you, at some point in your lives. For sure, a moment will come when it will look like there isn't anything going right and nothing you can do to prevent disaster. Ask me, I just finished Dilwale and followed it up with fan! So, when you are in zugzwang, kids, don't panic. Whenever there is trouble and you know there is no way out, or disaster, don't panic. With a little embarrassment you will survive it. Trust me all you have to do is make a move. All you have to do is move on a bit. As the Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland said, when Alice came to the fork in the road, "If you don't know where you're going it doesn't matter which road you take". I will add to it, as long as you take one road and don't keep standing in the middle of the fork until a truck runs you over. Often in zugzwang, your enemy wins that particular move, but mostly you end up winning the game.

There were no computers when I was a kid, and nor were there i-phones for us to google pornography on, while our parents were busy checking the selfie, likes on Instagram. One of the most precious gifts my father gave me was an Italian typewriter. I learned how to use it from him, how to roll paper into the roller and press the lever. I don't know if you guys have seen a typewriter. It's...Google it. I'd hear the clicking sound of the letters as I pressed them with my fingers, forming words on blank pages fascinated me. To use a typewriter well, you needed diligence; one wrong letter and the whole exercise had to be started all over again. We used something called typeX to erase our mistakes in those days, not to sniff out during math classes. But too much typesX in math classes or in typewriting is unacceptable. So we had to learn how to move your fingers accurately to make words out of thoughts with efficiency and do it over and over again till we got it just right. As an adult I have come to understand that there is nothing of more value, than your capacity for diligence and your ability to work hard. If you can outwork adversaries and your employees, you can ensure your own success. And whatever it is you choose to do, whatever you're doing, do it once then do it one more time, even more carefully. Practice will make everything seem easier. Be diligent, be thorough. Think of every job you do as the first one, so you have to get it right or you won't be able to impress everyone. And at the same time do it as your last job as if you will not get a chance to do it again ever. Don't just workout, outwork yourself. Only parents clapping! In fact you can outwork yourself, if you cannot work yourself, then pretty much nothing can prevent you from learning.



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My father gave me a camera, and the most beautiful thing about it was that it did not work. I learned that things don't always have to be functional, to fulfill a need, that sometimes when things are broken, the greatest creativity emanates from the fragments. I found myself looking at my world magically through the unusable lens. And the fact that there was never any actual photograph to see, taught me my most important lesson yet; that creativity is a process of the soul. It does not need an outcome or a product for the world to accept. It needs only the truth of its own expression. It comes from within. And makes of your world, whatever you wish it to make. So don't be afraid of your own creativity. Honor it. It doesn't always have to be seen or approved by those around you. It is an expression of your deepest selves and it belongs as much to you as it does to the universe. That nurtures and inspires it. All creativity is not for everyone to like or understand. All art is not up for sale. Some creativity has a bigger role to play. It is to keep you company when you're alone, when you need a friend, when the world doesn't seem to understand you. Your creativity, whatever that may be, you know, I know a friend of mine who makes a dolls out of barf bags from airplanes. Whatever your creativity is, your creative will be the only thing that will keep you inspired and satisfied. Honour it to the end, whatever it may be. Mine is poetry. I write rubbish poetry. it's so bad that sometimes I cringe to read it myself. it's crap, but I write it, it's my secret place. It is mine to make me feel free and happy. So you find yours and if the world loves it good, if it doesn't, even better, because now you will truly have a friend to keep your creativity intact.

My father was a funny guy. He had the capacity to turn any kind of serious situation in a way that it seemed less stress filled, with a bit of humor. Without a sense of humor the world will always be a dull and greedy place. No darkness of despair should ever be beyond a good and a hearty laugh. I'm going to tell you a few incidents, if you're not bored! I have got about seven and a half minutes left. We used to live on the third floor of an apartment building, and as people on third floor tend to do, my friends and I used to throw things down from the balcony; you know, wrappers, tit bits, dog shit wrapped in newspapers, the usual stuff. One day the old gentleman on the ground floor, for there's always an old senile gentleman on the ground floor. He had had enough of our daily droppings. He charged at us yelling at the top of his voice "bhaisahaab, bhaisahaab, upar se cheezen neeche aati hai, upar se ceezen neeche aati hai" and you know the whole colony emerged to witness the spectacle. My father was there. I was mortified. And he kept screaming, "Upar se cheezen neeche aati hai". My father calmly looked calmly at him and said, "Chacha ji, upar se cheezen neeche aati hain, ye Newton ne boht saalon pehle bataya tha. Aap koie nayi baat batao. Andar baith ke, chai peeke baat krte hai", and it instantly diffused the situation. The old man smiled, went into the apartment, worked out how dog shit needs to be disposed of properly, over a cup of tea in life was back to normal again.

And there was another incident I'm going to relate. I had been eyeing this attractive, dusky girl who lived in our building. As smooth as I have always been with ladies, for some reason, it occurred to me that if I blew up her letter box with a Diwali cracker called, atom bomb, she'd be very impressed with me. I've always been good with girls like that, ya. I know things about girls. In this insanely romantic belief of mine, her letterbox soon exploded before her eyes. And I still don't know why the desired effect of her running into my arms in slow-motion was replaced with a screaming drama in which he flew up the stairs screaming, "amma inge vaa, amma inge vaa". I took my chance and as all macho men should do, I fled the scene. Few hours later the doorbell rang. I looked through the magic eye and the mother of the love of my life was standing outside looking incensed. I found a place to hide. My father opened the door. The lady began to



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rattle off a complaint; your son this, your son that (speaks in Tamil), my Tamil is not good! And he listened patiently and then responded, “You know ma’am, as you were speaking, I was getting angry with my son. But then I suddenly realized how beautiful you are. And I can imagine if your daughter looks anything like you, how can my son be blamed for falling in love with her and behaving so stupidly?” The lady went silent as my father continued telling her how beautiful she was, and then she became a little quiet. Another cup of tea was had and she said to me sweetly, “Beta, just because my daughter is so beautiful you shouldn’t behave badly with her. You should come home, sit with us, and be friends”. So not only did my dad get me off the hook, for blowing up the girls letter box, he actually got me in-roads to a long satisfying relationship with the love of her life that lasted six days. Because then I realize that dating beautiful girls has its downside. Every boy in the colony made advances at her. So I was regularly beaten up in my attempts to offer her some boy friendly protection. But that’s another story. The point being, learn to laugh at yourselves, every chance you get. If you can manage not to take yourself too seriously, no matter how big a shot you become or how lowly, useless, trivial you feel, you will instantly disarm life’s power to beat you down. It makes you braver to face ugliness, because it changes your perspective. Humor is actually the deftness to see the world, the reality, for the transient farce it really is. It’s like a talisman for survival. Cultivate it and allow it to lighten every heavy moment. Wear it like a vulgar tattoo, if you don’t already have one. Don’t ever let it get washed away in the turbulently beautiful seas of life. It’s your ticket to staying young and childlike forever. And you will realize why it matters to stay childlike when you’re my age. And you’ll watch this speech on YouTube with your children. I’ll probably have kicked the bucket by then, having smoked enough cigarettes to light up a forest. But I certainly hope that you will have understood what I understand now. No, not that smoking kills, but that part is ok.

Well, what I am referring to is, what counts as the most beautiful and final gift that my father gave me. I only realized it was a gift on the day he died, when I was 15 years old. A gift your parents have given to you already. Yes, the singularly most exquisite gift, you and I have been given is the gift of life itself. There is nothing that marks a man or a woman out from the ordinary, more perfectly than grace. Grace is the consciousness, that life is bigger than we are and therefore gratitude for it must match its vastness. It is the understanding, that everyone we encounter, whether they are loving towards us, or offensively abrasive, is a human like we are. It is knowing that experiences shape human beings and no matter how good we are at something, or successful we may become, we are never better than the other person. If you can live your life with grace towards those around you, you’ll accomplish more than you could if you became the president of America. That came out wrong, knowing that Donald Trump is so close to becoming the president of America! I didn’t mean that I’ll rephrase that guys. If you can live your life with grace towards those around you, “ok actually what the hell”, because I came and told you a secret that I like rubbish poetry I am going to read out a poem and end this. This this is the most rubbish poem you will hear. But keep it in the heart because I’m the damned chief guest tonight. If you’re after part, EDM. I thought it would be very cool if I use the word EDM. Is EDM still cool? Class of 2016 is it cool? No? Okay.

“If you’re after party EDM, stoned sunrise has found you,  
with dark ship, wrappings, and friends that will not confound you.  
And you start on this journey with a brave heart about you,  
If you live life at grace towards those around you.  
You’ll get where you have to and it won’t astound you.



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If it isn't Ferraris and a white house that downed you,  
You won't need an entourage to always surround you.  
It's your truth, you will have, that will shelter and ground you,  
And you remember this day, as the day that unbound you.  
From the walls of this beautiful school, and the teachers,  
Exams and all the rules that sometimes seem to hound you, and let me tell you,  
All will be successful let me remound you."

So boys and girls, go forth, be free, have fun, make wrong choices, make mistakes. You will still succeed because the gift of education you have from this wonderful institution called Dhirubhai Ambani International School. The love meter has given you, and the genes that your parents have provided you with, will always look after you. And when you succeed don't forget to thank your least favorite teacher, because he or she actually cared for you the most. Love you all and be happy.