

Honorary Fellow Mr Harry S. Banga

Citation written and delivered by Professor Yan Houmin

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council and President:

Mr Harry Banga hails from Chandigarh near the Himalayas in northern India, but as a Master Mariner, he has voyaged far and wide, sailing to the remotest corners of the Earth. Since 1985, however, his home port has been Hong Kong, where he founded the Caravel Group, a company characterised by its interlocking rings of maritime services, commodities trading and asset management. He serves as Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer.

An impressive painting greets you when you enter the meeting room in Mr Banga's office in Wanchai. Compared to other works of art in the room, this one is not as large but nevertheless it captures your attention immediately. The artist depicts a ship, a caravel to be exact, its sails billowing in the ocean breeze. During a period of history often termed the "Age of Discovery", this kind of highly specialised craft enabled the Spanish and Portuguese to connect the Old World with the New, ushering in the first wave of global connectivity. By naming his company in honour of the caravel, Mr Banga envisions a comparable role for his successful business, as they manage one of the largest fleets of commercial shipping in the world and move commodities from country to country, facilitating global trade, making connections and building networks. Mr Banga's company of 500 ships, 1,000 employees across 15 countries, and 20,000 seafarers is a virtuous testament to history, but also to future possibilities.

Mr Banga attaches great significance to the five years he spent working in the UK as his first shore-based professional experience after a successful career at sea, where Mr Banga was one of the youngest Master Mariners from India. This experience helps to explain his great capability at traversing cultures. Having to work as an outsider in the UK in the early 1980s allowed him to appreciate the importance of fostering and developing relationships in addition to the diligence and hard work required to succeed in an environment that was not your own, and how these requirements

combine to prepare you for opportunities whenever they arise. More importantly, these challenges taught him the social skills and tenacity needed to assimilate into another culture, which has led to much of Mr Banga's professional success. He recalls the great pains he took to build trust in the early years with his business partners in China, enduring, for example, four days of bone-rattling travel on buses and trains to the hills of Guizhou to keep a promise to visit a client's steel mill, even though the meeting was to last only an hour. This example explains how Mr Banga was to become one of the first Indian nationals to make inroads into providing the Chinese market with the raw materials required to enable the country's remarkable industrialisation over the last three decades.

Once built, this enterprise has to be maintained, a task that Mr Banga compares to keeping a family together. Today, Caravel operates on trust, integrity and partnership, like a family. There is no "you" or "I", but "we". So crucial is family to Mr Banga's way of thinking that, while he apologises for not pursuing any hobbies, he happily admits that he looks to his family for relaxation, especially by doting upon his baby grandchild.

Mr Banga has won an enviable array of accolades for his success in business and in promoting a greater understanding of India and Indians around the world. In January 2011, the then President of India conferred upon Mr Banga the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award for his outstanding achievements in the field of business, valuable contributions in promoting the honour and prestige of India, and in fostering the needs of overseas Indians. He was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by *International Bulk Journal* in 2016 and was awarded "Personality of the Year" in 2011 by the same publication. In 2018, Mr Banga was conferred the "NMD Award of Excellence" by the Directorate General of Shipping in India and the National Maritime Day Celebrations Committee. Mr Banga is currently a Director of the Forum of Indian Professionals in Hong Kong, recently stepping down as the Founding President, and is active in other Indian and Hong Kong organisations. Through his Foundation, he is a devoted patron of several philanthropic and charitable groups both in India and abroad with a key focus on enhancing access to education for the underprivileged.

Mr Banga is an enthusiastic supporter of CityU. He is currently a Court member of the University and Honorary Vice-President of the CityU Foundation. In his eyes, CityU is a young, vibrant, innovative university, free of the burden of old-fashioned traditions found at some other institutions of higher education, and capable of forging strong links across all sectors of society. He supports how CityU remains sensitive to the needs of society and at the same time offers students the kind of training required for the future workplace.

Mr Pro-chancellor, Mr Chairman of the Council, and Mr President, Mr Harry Banga is a successful entrepreneur whose sense of adventure, persistence and international outlook constitute a model for us all. We are grateful for his unwavering support and we look forward to further collaborations. I present him to you for the conferment of an Honorary Fellowship of City University of Hong Kong.