



Sir Ben Kingsley Lecture Series

Sir Anthony Seldon (September 2017)



A tangerine, a pencil, and a piece of paper with the words “Great Dream” running down the side....

....is what the audience received on arrival - it was clear this was going to be a very different kind of lecture.

Sir Anthony Seldon began in his charismatic demeanour, recalling his previous experiences which had led him to publish a book that stood out from his previous portfolio

of political biographies, entitled **“Beyond Happiness”**. He told about what in his life he found very enriching, and his love for teaching. **Action for Happiness**, an organisation which he co-founded, has made progress in helping young people in schools cope with the stresses of modern life, and Sir Anthony enjoyed telling us about how he pioneered his own happiness lessons during his time as a Headmaster. He explained the importance of meditation in our lives as it had helped him to deal with the sadness that had plagued him in the past. He then proceeded to elaborate on his ten tips on achieving a happier lifestyle: Giving, Relationships, Exercise, Appreciation, Trying Out, Direction, Resilience, Empathy, Awareness and Meaning, conveniently spelling out the acronym “Great Dream”.

He told us to think more about others than ourselves, pointing out that when we feel depressed, we are looking at just ourselves. He highlighted the importance of keeping relationships feeling fresh and exciting. Exercise also makes us feel more fulfilled and satisfied, and he reminded us that we often forget to appreciate the minor actions that make us feel good, telling us that writing down three things that made us happy daily, has a greater effect on our happiness than taking anti-depressants. Overcoming the fear of trying new things is also very important in achieving a more fulfilled life, and having a direction for your future can help us deal with the pressure we feel. Enduring difficult days is also crucial to then enjoying the high times in life, and feeling empathy for those around us can help us to stop thinking about our own happiness all the time.

Coming from a religious perspective, he said that finding meaning in his own life was not difficult, but atheists can also find their own meaning in life, and fulfilling this is another crucial step to achieving happiness. He left awareness until the end, which is where the tangerine played its part. He took us all through a guided meditation where he ran through all the senses separately and made us all experience the fruit, as if we were trying it for the first time. This eye-opening glimpse into the world of mindfulness left each person wanting to try out more meditation. I think it's fair to say that Sir Anthony Seldon impacted how we all live our lives from that day onwards, a truly memorable evening.

by Manraj Bhandal, Sixth Former