

Honorary Fellow Mrs Indra Banga

Public Orator Professor Christine Huang Yi-hui

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council and President:

Mrs Indra Banga is one of the hardest-working philanthropists in Hong Kong today. She oversees several charitable organisations under the umbrella of the Caravel Foundation, which she founded with her husband, Dr Harry Banga. The Foundation has helped thousands of children from less advantaged backgrounds in Hong Kong, India and mainland China to access better education and healthcare opportunities. Her work has equipped them to be “productive and successful citizens of tomorrow”.

Mrs Banga’s close association with CityU is motivated by a desire to inspire the youth. A mother of two sons, one of her reasons for supporting CityU through the Indra and Harry Banga Gallery is to encourage children to explore art, science and technology at the exhibitions. The Gallery, which opened in 2016, focuses on new and original ways of presenting art and culture, combining new media with cultural artefacts to create exciting new ways for young people to view the world.

Helping young people fulfil their dreams is also a long-term aspiration of the Foundation. Mrs Banga has been highly instrumental in securing sustainable financial aid for deserving students through Caravel Scholarship Funds and Caravel Scholars at three of the most respected US higher education institutions – Dartmouth College, Duke University and Princeton University – which are the alma maters of the Banga family.

Mrs Banga’s involvement in humanitarian work is linked very closely with her cultural and religious heritage. Her family are Sikhs, and one of this religion’s central principles is the importance of donating one-tenth of one’s income. Mrs Banga recalls how she and her brother were encouraged to share gifts with others and help the poor in their home town in northern India. Then, after she married, she was inspired by her father-in-law who set

up a school from scratch for disadvantaged families. Together, they founded a small medical centre, too, one that provides the poor with medicine and medical services to this day.

These deeply held principles and her proactive approach to helping are captured in her personal philosophy: by helping just one child, you are helping an entire family. She is particularly thrilled by the impact that Integrated Brilliant Education (IBEL) has on the lives of children. IBEL, an organisation that she supports, is firmly committed to empowering students from underprivileged ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong through Chinese language support.

One of Mrs Banga's most cherished projects is to establish, like her father-in-law, a school. Her idea is to build a kindergarten specifically for ethnic minorities and local children to be taught in Cantonese. The school would enable ethnic minorities to integrate into the local language and culture in a more educationally supportive environment. The plans are ready, but there is one catch: a lack of premises. However, only a very ill-advised person would bet against Mrs Banga achieving her aims in the future.

Mrs Banga is also very sensitive to changes taking place in Hong Kong, the city that she has called home for nearly forty years. She feels society, both here and globally, has become highly divisive. Her philanthropy expresses her way of building a greater sense of tolerance and understanding.

This philosophy feeds into her dedication to areas such as yoga and cricket, two activities closely associated with India. Mrs Banga and the Foundation work closely with the Consulate General of India in Hong Kong to organise events for International Day of Yoga to promote health and wellness. In addition, the Foundation aims to make cricket more accessible to children and youth in Hong Kong through projects such as the Youth Pathway Programme which gives local primary schools the chance to play cricket.

Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of the Council and President, Mrs Banga is an excellent servant to Hong Kong, working on behalf of the poorer members of our society, encouraging tolerance, diversity and acceptance, and inspiring young people in their careers and education. In recognition of her outstanding public service, may I present Mrs Indra Banga for the conferment of an Honorary Fellowship from City University of Hong Kong.