



Newsletter ~ Vallabh Vidya Mandir ~



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An Expression...

I had met her earlier that day. One of the staffers at the center, she seemed to be a friendly sort and smiled each time our eyes met.

Then, as I sat waiting for my turn to speak at a workshop I was conducting, she came up to chat. She asked questions about me. We traded facts about our respective children. And she told me her daughter, all of 19, was studying to be a dentist. "She's very smart, my daughter is", she added, with the pride of a mother who knows she brought up her child right. She wanted to know of avenues for growth, how the girl could progress in life. She had opinions on the status of the country, on the political mess we were in. Her statements were balanced and well articulated. She had obviously given the subjects much thought.

Then, later in the afternoon, I saw her walk past with a broom. A little later, when I went back out of the hall again, I saw her sweeping the room. She worked slowly and deliberately, making sure no dust remained hidden under the table or

chairs. I thought she was probably allergic, she had decided to clean her room herself. She looked up at me and smiled.

"How far have you studied?" She asked me. I told her. She smiled appreciatively. "I tell my daughter that studies are a wealth that no one can take away". Education is within you; no one can rob your education. It will always help you in times of need more than money or jewelry can."

"Look at me", she continued, "I lost out because I did not have enough education".

I looked at her and saw nothing to betray her status. Her sari uniform was neatly pinned to her shoulder and as well draped as any of the others in the office. Her hair, partly grey and in need of touching up, was nonetheless pinned to her head in a close bun. Her eyes were bright and her smile ready.

She saw me looking at her and taking in the details. "I came here for a job, and they said, "you are only 10th pass", and they put this broom into my hand. That is all I have been doing since," she said.

I wondered how she could be so sanguine about it all. Her knowledge was formidable; her conversational skills were good; she was affable and spoke clean, good English. The loophole she fell through was one of formal education. To me, she was more "educated" than some of my colleagues with higher degrees. I wondered, too, if her daughter worried about her job and its reflection on her own status among her peers.

This lady was definitely not of the same ilk as the others who were helpers there. Though they wore uniforms, there was a distinct difference in their approach to their work, in their view of life. But, to the outside world, they were all of one station.

I wondered, too, if she had been forced to take up this job to educate her daughter. Was she the one bearing the financial burden of a professional education so that her daughter never had to pick up or wield a broom, at least not in public?

It was very mystifying. She did not seem to belong to a broom-



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wielding background. Was there no way an organization could change its employment rules to make concessions where needed?

As the day ended, she got ready to leave. She emerged from the changing room in a *salwar-kurta*, which was pretty. She held her hand out in goodbye. And, as I took it, she leaned forward and kissed me on the forehead. "It is so nice to meet a new friend", she said, smiling warmly. She picked up her bag and prepared to leave. "I will be back only on Monday, when you won't be here," she said. "But I will tell my daughter I met you. I felt my throat constrict. I had been giving lessons all through on self-confidence, but had learnt a lesson myself. About the dignity of labor, of never being ashamed of a job as long as it was well done. As I watched her retreating back, I took my imaginary hat off to her.

And in the wake of her dreams, she left something more profound than we often perceive. Slightly awakened by her immense motivation, I want to say that the teamwork between the home and school can do miracles.

(Adapted from 'Me' Jan 2006)

With that, I'd like to share a poem written by an anonymous author.

I dreamed I stood in a studio

And watched two sculptors there,

The clay they used was a young child's mind,

And they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher; the tools she used

Were books and math and art;

One a parent with a guiding hand,

And a gentle, loving heart.

Day after day the teacher toiled

With touch that was deft and sure,

While the parent labored by her side

And polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when at last their task was done,

They were proud of what they had wrought,

For the things they had molded into the child

*Could neither be sold or bought.
And each agreed she would have failed*

If she had worked alone,

For behind the parent stood the school

And behind the teacher, the home.

Phalguni Kikani

Announcements

- Summer Classes will be offered on 3 Sundays in June and 4 in July - 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
(Information /Sign-Up at Front Desk)
- Workshop – "Understanding our Children" – May 14th at 10 AM (New Date)

Forward Planning

At the end of this month our first year of regular Sunday classes will be over. Looking back we can have some satisfaction that at least we had a very encouraging start. We got support of caring parents, volunteer teachers and strong financial supporters. We have been able to broaden our faculty and students and we have been able to offer more and more courses. That being accomplished we need to take a careful look at the future and design strategies which will enable us to sustain our growth and in the end produce the



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desired results. In my opinion we need to do at least the following:

A Broaden our faculty with teachers from other races and backgrounds.

B Broaden our student base with other ethnic groups interested in Indian art and culture

C Lower the average age of our student body.

D Make efficient use of classroom facilities we have.

E For certain classes we may have to resort to Saturday or Sunday afternoon sessions.

F Encourage many more individuals to become volunteer teachers.

G Plan more workshops on wide variety of subjects to provide useful knowledge.

H Install play-ground equipment and basketball hoops.

These are just a few thoughts that come to mind. We seek input from our teachers and parents and see what additional measures they

would recommend to strengthen Vallabh Vidya Mandir. If you have any suggestions, please feel free to call Phalguni Kikani (281-565-2996) or me (832-603-1850).

Sureshbhai Patel

Special Thanks...

- Dr. Kokila Parikh for conducting a successful workshop on “**Women’s Health**”

Important

Last Day of School –
May 28th, 2006

1st Day of New School Year –
September 10, 2006

VVM Special

- Registration for all NEW & RETURNING students will be on August 13th and 20th. Please Come-by and register your child
- No Newsletter will be sent in June, July and August. Please look for the Newsletter in September

Summer Classes

(Sign-Up at the Front Desk Now)

June 4th
<i>Art & Painting</i> – history, techniques & media
<i>Woodwork & Carpentry</i>
<i>SAT</i>
June 11th
<i>Dance (Girls & Boys Separate)</i> – Introduction to different styles of dances – hip-hop, Garba, Bhangra
<i>SAT</i>
June 18th
<i>Fabric Painting</i>
<i>Great Leaders of India</i> (Literature – Tagore, Political – Nehru, Science – Ramanujam)
<i>SAT</i>

** July Sign-Ups available at VVM Office by June 18 or contact Phalguni Kikani by phone or e-mail