

Never Say Quit...

By Sijal Tauseef Khan

It was the first day of my first job as a teacher in a private school in Lahore. I was extremely tired. I thought I would not be able to continue. 'Just go through the day somehow and say goodbye to the job tomorrow', I said to myself.

As a new teacher I was being sent to different classes to substitute for absent teachers. "Just keep the kids in the class till the next period" was the advice I got from the teacher who handed me my day's schedule.

The first class was enough to throw me off balance. It was a Grade-6 class with very active boys and a few girls who were being given a language lesson on a computer. The young instructor was helpless in the face of their shouting, fighting and throwing chairs. I sat there as a helpless spectator, stunned by the students' attitude and unable to bring any order in the class.

I moved on to the next class after this, hoping for calmer students. This was Grade-4 with students who very gladly misguided me, telling me that their teacher had left no plan for a substitute teacher. I spent all the time handing out extra stationery to half the class and generally just settling their disputes. I thanked God when the bell rang.

The next class was no better. And the next. I was starting to think that teaching was not my cup of tea. Things were very different now from when I used to be in school. Children were very bold now. They were not to be taught by a novice teacher who was unsure of how to handle them.

By the time I was sent to Grade-1, I was so tired I could not think straight. I had resolved to quit. I entered the class. I just sat down, and looked at the 15 or so children, wondering what trick they had up their sleeve.

Surprisingly, this was a much calmer class. It was their arts period. They had their sketch books out and were working on an assignment given by their regular teacher. This was a group with younger and sweeter kids. I gratefully sat quietly in my chair, thinking what an eventful day it had been and how I will not have to go through the same tomorrow as I had decided to quit.

Just then two little girls came up to me,
'Miss', one of them said, 'What is your name?'
'Sijal', I told her,
'Can you write it down for me?', she asked.
'Sure', I said and wrote down my name for her.

She went back to her desk and started drawing. The class was miraculously over without any major disaster. It had in fact been quite useful as the students had made some drawings. 'Miss', the same girl came up to me 'I made this for you'. I took the paper from her, intrigued

It had a flower in the centre, a butterfly, the sun, trees, birds and something scrawled in the corner. I tried hard to read it. It said "I love Miss Sijal". Just looking at the drawing I felt so happy. I forgot my frustration and my desire to quit. "Will you come tomorrow?" The girl asked me "of course", I smiled.

...Teaching is not all that bad. I thought to myself...

And I am not going to give up that easily!

Sijal continued to teach in that school for two years. Currently she is the Additional Director (Training & Coordination) at the National School of Public Policy, Lahore.