

Guiding the Girls

Sobia Usman

Apa Shamsa was our camp commander in a Girl Guides summer camp. She had strictly told us not to call her 'Miss' or 'Madam' or 'Teacher'. She wanted us to think of her as an older sister and so we called her '*Apa*'.

Apa Shamsa stood for values such as discipline and integrity. She had trained us to follow her strict regimes to perfection in the very first week of the camp.

"You are going to be mothers one day, and if mothers aren't disciplined, what's going to happen to the rest of us?" She would tell us.

We fully realized how she had transformed us when we returned home after the end of the summer camp. She had trained us to wake up before sunrise, go for patrolling, have breakfast and then either sweep the grounds ourselves or get them swept under our own supervision. Then each one of us had different tasks assigned. The magic of her warmth was such that each one of us happily did all this, trying hard not to displease her in any way.

We fully realized how she had transformed us when we returned home after the end of the summer camp. It was because of the poise that the summer camp taught me that I was able to become the Head Girl of my school.

Today when I myself am a teacher, I deeply cherish her memory as a teacher who was warm yet disciplined. When my students say I am their 'Favourite teacher', it reminds me of my favourite teacher whose training brought me this far.

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