

The Gem Connoisseur

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After I did my intermediate and left my studies, I was later compelled by my friends' great performance in academics, to seek admission in a college. This was a dream for the realization of which I had to face many hurdles, turn towards factories to find work, begged and pleaded.

My circumstances forced me to temporarily forget about my desire, because time was not to change its mood, until...

After working for a few months I saved money to take admission in regular college classes. In order to introduce myself in the new atmosphere I desperately needed a support. Other students displayed their talents in the most innovative ways which was a ray of light for me. I often tried to keep company with the brighter students in class so I could sit and study with them in the front of the class but I couldn't endear myself to them with my quiet temperament. As I was not very intelligent, I really needed a teacher who could instruct me and guide me on how to live a successful life.

I spent some days in disappointment because my passion for learning was at its peak. I barely passed the first monthly test. A few days after that we were all required to give a speech on our favourite personality. It was extremely difficult to speak for the first time in front of the students, and more so in front of the teachers. I kept thinking that maybe I shouldn't give a speech, what if the other students laugh at me? What if I forget the speech?

I pepped myself up and went to college the next day. In class that day all the students gave out their speeches fearlessly. When I stood up on my turn, my legs were

shaking, my heart was racing, my teacher encouraged me and then I started to speak. At first I spoke haltingly and then I gained a flow in speaking. . After class ended some of my class-fellows criticized my speech and said that the topic I had chosen had lost its importance. I was very disappointed. I had spoken on the poetry of Mirza Ghalib.

The next day I reached class late. When I asked for permission to enter, all the students turned around and looked at me. I felt deeply embarrassed. Then Dr. Khalid Nadeem, our teacher, stood up and announced the names of three students and I was one of them. Completely confused to hear my name, I stood up. I didn't have the courage to step forward. All the other students were staring at me, since they knew what I was like. Following directions I finally went forward. I couldn't understand anything in this confused state of mind. Just then my name was announced again for securing the second position in the speech contest! My speech was then appreciated by everyone.

Sir Khalid, a PhD himself, addressed me in front of the whole class and said that he saw in me a future officer. This statement was a very valuable gift for me. I suddenly realized that I had become the person that I had started to chisel in a dream in order to present him in front of the world.

The announcement had left me in shock. The rest of the class was surprised too. They were probably amazed because they didn't think I was that bright.

I met Sir Khalid informally in the college library for the first time. He appreciated my speech and then added that I was an uncut stone that had not dust but gems hidden inside it. His comments were of immeasurable importance for me.

He would address everyone by the Urdu pronoun for 'respected you' (*Aap*). His personality was very distinct in the entire college. All the students now started to respect me because he had complimented me, and I was proud of this.

Sir Khalid was extremely pleased when I got a good result in the December tests.

The fervour for getting the college magazine published was at its zenith. Every student was eager to have his contribution selected for publication.

I loved poetry but writing short stories was the real test. I was elected to be a member of the Art and Literature Club. . The short stories I had written were greatly appreciated. . Over time, Sir Khalid kept giving me nice books as presents and recommended books from the library for me to read, such as books to polish one's personality, such as *Lataif-o-Nawadir*.

There were several other students, apart from me, in whose life Sir Khalid was adding beautiful colours. After I graduate from college, he would still send me the books he had authored and I would proudly show them to people, telling them how it was my teacher who had written them.

While education was my field of profession, I was immensely interested in literature. After I graduated from college I paid him a visit at his home. The amount of books I saw there was mind-boggling.

Seeking an employment was now my primary responsibility. My needs made me forget about my desire to go to university. Following his instructions, I applied in offices and colleges, and not in factories.

After a few days I got an interview call from a college that is affiliated with the Punjab University. The training that I had received from Sir Khalid, and the advice that I

had incorporated in my life, greatly impressed the Principal of the college who interviewed me. Thus I was hired as a teacher. The guidance and the enjoyment that Sir Khalid provided my every step of the way, is matchless.

The author is..