

The Art of Public Speaking

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I had a long history of deprivation both at school and at home when I met Sir. My parents divorced when I was three years old. My mother took me and my little brother and moved back to her parents' house. My mother's brothers and their wives were kind to us, but there were still unpleasant times and hurtful things said to us. Our mother showed patience in the face of it all and so did we.

My mother was illiterate but she still sent me to school, or perhaps that was why she sent me to school.

I was basically a shy child. Then I found teachers who were harsh if a child made a mistake. The combined result of all this was that I started to hate school. Each time I spoke to any teacher I could feel my heart beat, I would be so nervous. The less I spoke the more they thought I was a below average student and the more they would yell at me, and I would keep getting quieter and quieter. The vicious circle continued until...

Sir Abrar was my teacher in FA. He too noticed that I was very silent in class. He started to pay me extra attention and would not miss the slightest opportunity to appreciate anything positive that I had done. This was all new to me. No one had treated me like this ever before. He even appreciated my silence, where everyone else had chided me for it. He would say that silent people are very wise, and there are so many things you can do. Some might say that feeling happy at such remarks was a bit childish for a

student of FA; I am sure many teachers think that. I know that praise has worked wonders for me, no matter what age I was and I think this is true for other people too.

I had waited twelve years for a teacher like Sir Abrar. I who was unable to have a normal conversation with any one was now participating in speeches and competitions, all because of his genuine appreciation.

A special incident that I have even noted down in my diary is how Sir Abrar encouraged me to go on stage for the first time. He wanted me to be the compere for a college event. My first reaction had predictably been, “Who me? On stage?” But it was also like a dream come true, like living a fantasy. I had never thought that I would be the focus of attention like this, on stage. I learnt my lines well and got a lot of praise from everyone for my performance. This gave me the confidence to participate in other activities too.

Today I am a doctor. But I had made up my mind after meeting Sir Abrar that whatever else I did, I would always be a teacher, the kind of a teacher he was. I teach in the morning and go to my clinic in the evening. For me it is important that all my students are able to speak in public, to express themselves with ease and I invest a lot of time teaching them these skills like someone had taught me to speak and to stop being afraid of the sound of my own voice.

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