

Shining the light, showing the way

Amruth Iftaquar

There exists a stereotypical view that youngsters today are lazy; they love to while away their time playing computer games, surfing the Net and hanging out with friends. The reason this view exists is because all around the world this is all adults see most youngsters doing. The image of the lazy adolescent has become so commonplace that many people simply assume that being lazy and unmotivated is a natural consequence of adolescence. Being a teacher, however, I know how misguided such thinking is.

I teach graduates, undergraduates and students with different IQ levels and I have been witness to the fact that if properly guided, an adolescent can constructively handle his/her energy. In fact, I believe, teenagers are some of the most hardworking members of the society.

We should not forget that long before the era of shopping malls and computer games, young people were expected to work with adults, either taking up the family trade, or working on a farm or factory, learning to cook or keep house, striving to prove themselves because these tasks were real jobs that needed to be done, preparing them for the future and they understood this and valued their work.

A lot has changed today, but despite all the changes, youngsters are essentially the same. What has changed the most is the context in which they grow up and the significance of what they are expected to do.

As a teacher, I have come across innumerable students who long to feel significant. They want to show themselves and the world that 'they matter' and are capable of making a difference. I was fortunate enough to

witness many such students who have impressed me, humbled me, and have made a great difference to me as a person and as a teacher. I will always remain grateful for my association with them.

Every child is gifted and special, and each child has carved a niche in my psyche, but there are a few I will always remember for positively inspiring me. I vividly remember a young girl of about 16 years, she was paralyzed from waist down. Her right hand was completely dysfunctional. In spite of her disabilities, she was prompt to school, dedicated, preferred to write the notes all on her own with her left hand. An angelic child, ever smiling, she dazzled me by her dedication and zest for life. She was always among the top five students in the class. She finished her college and has a great job today. She is a good example of a hard working, dedicated teen who left a great impact making me believe that one's shortcomings cannot deter one from achieving one's goals. I also cannot forget a youngster who greatly humbled me. He was autistic yet could score top marks in maths and computer science. These are two extraordinary examples from the long list of youngsters who have inspired me throughout my life and helped change my perspective towards life.

As a teacher I can only conclude that young people aren't leaders of tomorrow, they are bringing about changes around us even now. Whether through social media or hashtag activism, writing online or in their paper about a cause, or taking part in a protest, there are many ways in which young people are bringing about change and making a difference to the world. Who can forget a 19 year old Rani Lakshmi Bai, who matryed

herself for the freedom of our country or Malala Yousufzai a Nobel Laureate at 17, fighting to achieve universal education for the girl child, at the risk of her own life.

Kudos to these great youngsters who have made such a huge impact on my ability to comprehend things in a far better light.

The author is a teacher in Chirec International-Kondapur. She can be reached at amruth622003@yahoo.com.

