



Mainstreaming : USA Style

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From the Editor's Desk

South Asians who arrive in America leap into uncharted waters where they can become disoriented because American culture is soooo different! It takes a few years before nuances of American culture can be fully understood and integrated. The gap often leads us to snap judgments and labeling American culture as materialistic, superficial etc. without fully grasping its bases.

A culture is a “hard-wired” system that provides quick behavioral reference for responding to situations one faces in daily living. Culture evolves from a land’s geography and history, giving rise to traditions that provide ready-made answers. However, living bi-culturally requires a deft mixture of finding common grounds in both and differentiating appropriately. Adapting to American culture is hard on South Asians because South Asian cultures discourage personal initiatives, risk-taking and independent decision-making; all necessary skills to survive and lead a happy life in America, whether raising a family or working outside. It is important to preserve our core cultural values but if we wish to avoid feeling rootless and isolated, we must open ourselves to American experiences and adapt to a hybrid lifestyle that accommodates both cultures. As an Indian sage said,

“Sadhoo aisa chahiye jaisa soop subhay, sar sar ko gahi rahe,thotha dai udaay”

(A wise person keeps all that is good and blows away that which is insubstantial, just like the soop - a utensil that separates wheat from the chaff.)

I have a message for the newly arrived South Asian women (and men too!). You MUST cultivate independence and autonomy as soon as possible for your own and your family’s sake. America promotes self-help; you will not have the luxury of someone driving you, doing your chores or protecting you. The sooner you shed inhibitions, the better off you will be. Do not worry about your English speaking ability! Broken English is fine, initially. You will be understood! My mother once told my son’s teacher when she phoned and asked to speak to my son’s father, “Your father not home now” And the teacher got it! She called back later.

Here are things you must do to merge in the mainstream of America as early as possible:

- Learn driving as soon as you can so that your going out is not tied to your family members’ driving you. It will benefit you all with less stress and time to relax and enjoy rather than running around doing chores during your family time.
- Enroll in English as a Second Language (ESL) class, even if you can speak in English because you will learn proper accent, inflections and correct usage. This will boost your confidence immeasurably! I once saw an amusingly perplexed look on my friend Jane’s face when Suneeta, my Indian friend praised her by saying, “You are so homely” when Jane thought she looked gorgeous!

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SNEHA At A Glance

- ◆ A Not for Profit 501(c) 3 organization serving South Asian communities in CT, NE and USA for the last 24 years.
- ◆ Focus on women and families, and seniors who may lack network and family support.
- ◆ 24/7 Support Helpline maintaining utmost confidentiality.
- ◆ Provide referral services to mainstream government and private organizations that support family, legal and immigration issues.



Voice of SNEHA

Suneeta meant to compliment Jane by saying “You appear to be so at home and family loving!” In the correct English and American language homely means plain or ugly! (Just peruse the classified in India Abroad matrimonial to see how many parents want a homely girl for their 29 year old “boys”!)

- Get involved and be connected! Find common interests. Do not worry about your English speaking ability. America forgives imperfections. We all need friends to laugh, cry and to break bread with and even gossip about the latest movies or celebrities! They do not have to be necessarily from South Asia. I know a woman friend in New Jersey, who picked up Spanish just through neighborly contacts and now enjoys Latino programs on TV as much as ZTV.

⇒ If you are single or a home-bound spouse, find book clubs organized by the library or join newcomers’ club, YWCA/YMCA or volunteer at hospitals or local shelters. Start a gourmet club or book club.

⇒ If you are a parent of school-going children, sign up to be in Parent Teachers Association, volunteer at school, set up play-dates for your children so that you can have adult interaction with other parents. Join adult education classes on week-ends.

⇒ If you are a degree holder and have permission to work, find out what groups are organized at work and join them. Some employers have Diversity forums where you will meet other people from other countries with whom you can connect. Some have groups for women. Join professional networks. You will feel empowered.

- America is steeped in Sports. It is a culture that values action, motion, speed and physical vitality. If you want to break the walls and glass ceilings at work, learn the language of sports even if you don’t play one. Whether you are a woman or man, talking sports and scores will win you a right to be in the inner circle. You must know about the political and economic clout soccer moms exert!

- Become familiar with the family laws of the land. Many a thing, which is condoned by South

Asian societies by looking the other way, could land one in jail here because what constitutes abuse here is defined very differently. Hitting a child at home or abusing spouse or household help can result in cooling heels in a prison cell or intervention from the state’s Children and Family Services or Affirmative Action officials. The school’s social workers, doctors, hospitals and even neighbors are required by law to report abuse if they suspect it. Become sensitive to the affirmative action and sexual harassment rules at work. Telling an off color joke can result in being called by personnel for reprimand.

Be open to American experiences! After all, we chose to come here; no one forced us! Every time you are tempted to compare American culture with your own, just remember that there is nothing inherently bad or good when put in the context of the history of a nation. If we choose to be here, then it is imperative that we find common grounds and merge in the mainstream instead of spending our lives as bystanders. We will not be diminished, only enriched in the quality of our experiences here.

Two books that demystify the nuances of American culture, are, “The Culture Code” by Clotaire Rapapaille” (Broadway Books) and “Class” published by Ballentine books. Both will make you really “get” the American culture and remove the possibility of a faux-pas.

(Editors’ note: Domestic violence often thrives when a woman or man feels isolated and disconnected. The sense of helplessness often prevails when language represents a major barrier and access to help is often restricted where mobility is dependent on others. All of these factors lead to a sense of alienation not only with social surroundings but even within the family.)

-Pratima Mehta

Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity, in the comparison and conciliation of differences. [Mikhail Gorbachev](#)

As quoted on www.betterworld.com



A Letter To Sneha Supporters From The Co-Presidents

This year Sneha cases have gone up by 10%. We have deployed more Board members to help with cases. Many more people call about help with mental health issues and we have supported them by getting psychiatric help. Sneha also helped pay for lawyers and health-related costs for its clients this year, thanks to contributions from the community.

Our outreach to different communities (not just Indian) is bearing fruits, as other communities from the subcontinent approach us. With the bad economic situations, family finances are stretched, and we get calls about finding employment too.

The people we help have complicated needs and we work with them over many months. In our work with women dealing with dowry-related problems, the need for 'revenge' is strong, and tempting. However, Sneha's aim is to discourage the revenge aspect while empowering these women to make them independent through cultivating self-reliance and self-confidence. This takes courage and the women who do go ahead with their education and employment are successful in their lives. Most of Sneha's cases are complex and there are no simple solutions as they involve cross countries' laws related to marriage, family and child custody and immigration issues, in addition to the psychological and culture based issues.

The welcome change this year is the involvement of community groups coming forth to help within their capacity to help. If you have ever wondered where your contributions go and how it is utilized, just read the letters on page 4 from two women who had sought help from Sneha and you will feel good that you, through your financial support and support in kind, have helped a few women in turning their lives around. Thanks to all our corporate and private donors and members for your support in 2007-2008. (*see page 12 for the list of donors*)

We have expanded our outreach to other community groups like SAALT ([www..saalt.org](http://www.saalt.org)) whose aim is to encourage greater participation of South Asians in political and civic activities to affect the policies. Sneha represented the South Asian s of Connecticut at the Indian Consulate in New York as the Indian Government tries to determine resolutions for the worldwide problem of Indian brides' abandonment by grooms from countries like USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, who marry under family pressures, only to "dump" the brides later on after they arrive in these countries. (see MOIA Schemes to Help Abandonment Cases on pg. 8). Grooms go underground with impunity leaving the brides financially and legally destitute. Currently, because of the lack of reciprocity such cases fall through the cracks. We also have represented our community by liaising with CCDAV (Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence) and installing a Sneha board member on their Board. We continue to support Connecticut's Department of Children and Family Services as needed.

In 2007-2008 season, we held a fundraiser with an evening starring Shazia Mirza from London and Sureele Spane, from New Jersey performing hit songs of current and recent past Bollywood movies. The evening was a success and resulted in a solid community outreach.

As part of our community outreach we also held a seminar on "Money Matters" an informational event where Speakers Joseph Kavampurath, Pratima Mehta and Attorney Rabia Chaudhry spoke about the Financial Planning, Practical considerations for women in managing their finances for secure future including estate-planning implications for non-citizens and the legal aspects of marital property. It was well received by the audience. Considering that we are all volunteers, with many holding fulltime jobs, we are proud to have met our goals. We could not have done it without your support. Thanks.

-Malavika Vidwans and Mira Patel



Heart-felt Thanks from Sneha Clients

Dear Sneha Volunteer,

This is (name withheld), Hope you remember me. I called 'Sneha' during the year xx regarding a problem with my husband when I was there. I talked to you about my situation, that my husband is not letting me leave USA and threatening to take legal action if I take my child along with me. He had also forced me to sign a paper holding me responsible for breaking my marriage.

You were a great support during that crisis. I talked to you almost every day. You gave me courage and suggestions regarding how to handle the situation. I had no one in that country that I could talk to except you. I have never met you but will remain grateful forever for the support you gave me when I needed it most.

Without you, Attorney (name withheld), and the appointee from the Indian High Commission and volunteer of 'Sakhi', I could never gather courage to decide to leave USA with my child, especially with the mindset I had at that time; I was so scared and threatened! The confidence you gave me helped me make an independent decision keeping in mind the wellbeing of child and myself. Now, I am with my parents in India. I have put my daughter in a school. I am looking for a job currently.

I wanted to let you know that I am so grateful to you for giving me courage to take charge of my life. Looking back, I feel that I had got in touch with the right persons at that crucial point of my life. Thank you for giving me the right direction and I hope I will be able to live up to the opportunity you all have given me. Thanks again and keep up the good work!

Dear Sneha volunteer,

I can't express in words just how happy, relieved and grateful I am. Finally after almost 2 years, there seems to be a break through. Just today, I spoke to the lawyer who is handling the transfer petition in the Supreme Court in India and she told me that my husband's lawyer has taken 6 months to file his counter-suit. I was really dejected, but nothing can be done, that's how things work here. I surely hope all our efforts don't go to waste and something comes out of this case in USA.

If I can get some immediate financial assistance from my husband for raising my daughter, it will make a huge difference. Right now, I have to think before I buy eatables, clothes, toys or anything for her. So many things I can't afford! Even providing decent education is difficult. I will get in touch with the my child's lawyer (provided by Sneha's support) about signing the retainer letter and any other information or document he might need. After repeated requests, my husband has agreed to send my daughter's birth certificate. If he actually does send it, I will mail a copy to the lawyer.

I visited the Sneha Inc. website today, its heartening to know about the good work you are doing. Kudos! And keep it up! No matter what the outcome of the case, my parents, my daughter and I have the deepest gratitude for your support and understanding. In future, I would like to be a part of your network & contribute to it in whatever way I can.

Warm Regards.



The World of humanity has two wings - one is women and the other is men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly...."

-A Bahai Saying



SNEHA INC. Intervenes to Help Families: A Typical Scenario

(Editor's note: All names are fictitious, any resemblance is purely coincidental but the scenario is typical.)

Sheena & Krish begin a life together

Sheena, a 22-year-old Indian woman, in the process of completing her MBA accepted a marriage proposal from a young software consultant with a good job. Sheena knew of his family as they lived in the same city. Her family gave her a grand wedding though it meant going in debt for them. The dowry demands were modest and were met by Sheena's younger brother and her paternal uncles as her father had passed away earlier.

Sheena and Krish enjoyed a great time during their engagement with frequent contacts with each other. After the wedding the couple went to live with Krish's parents adjusting to their life in a joint family. Krish contributed to the family's expenses. Sheena initially stayed home planning to look for a job soon. However, her in-laws were demanding and exacting in their expectations about her duties. In time, a gradual shift started to take place in their relationship due to inherent power struggle between the new entrant and the in-laws with Sheena succumbing to the ever evolving demands on her time and relinquishing possession of her jewelry to her mother-in-law for "safekeeping".

Cracks in the Relationship

Due to the household demands Sheena could not find time for job-hunting, which put a strain on her relationship with Krish, who was becoming distant too. Soon, Krish was transferred to another big city. Sheena followed, hoping that things would get better. However, six months into the marriage, Sheena became pregnant facing many pre-natal problems and was advised bed rest. Her mother came to help the young couple.

Krish became even more distant and fought over trivial matters, at times resorting to slapping Sheena only to repent it later. He would bring flowers and apologize profusely. Things would be great the next few days. A baby girl was born to the couple and on Krish's suggestion, Sheena went to her mother's house to stay for a few weeks. Originally, she was to return in a few weeks. Sheena's in-laws, unhappy that the first born was a girl showed no interest in their grand daughter. Krish called her every few days sometimes arguing over the phone, and then would not call back. His calls became infrequent. Soon, Krish's calls stopped. Sheena's calls went unanswered eventually leading to total lack of communication between the couple and the in-laws.

After 7 months of living with her mother Sheena filed a complaint with the police in a newly established "Women's complaints' department. The police contacted the in-laws, and they were asked to provide the address of their son. The police's intervention, resulted in Sheena finding out that Krish was now in the US and had plans for taking his wife and daughter back with him. He was coming to visit his family the same week.

Once back in India, Krish met with the police and Sheena. He was very repentant and claimed that he was misled by his parents who wanted him to divorce Sheena but he had no intention of doing so. He was lonely in the US, and wanted his wife and daughter back with him. He showed the police officer the tickets he had purchased and the visa applications he had made.

Violence rears its ugly head

Sheena arrived in Connecticut in a few weeks, just in time to celebrate her wedding anniversary, and her daughter's first birthday with Kris, hoping for fresh beginnings. However, arguing started again soon about his family and how Sheena did not show 'enough respect' for them. He would be critical of the way Sheena dressed, and did not give her any money at all. She could not leave the house without him. Sheena wanted to get a driving license but Kris did not want her to drive. *Continued on pg. 7*



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SNEHA INC. Intervenes to Help Families: A Typical Scenario *(Continued from pg.5)*

She soon became a prisoner in their apartment. Gradually the arguments escalated to physical fights. One day during a particularly heated argument, Krish threw Sheena against the wall, and started to choke her. She managed to run out of the apartment to her neighbor, who called the police. The police arrested the couple. Krish claimed that Sheena scratched him, and was physically hurting him also. Both were charged with criminal charges. That night, the police moved Sheena and her baby girl to a hotel and gave her the phone number of Sneha, Inc. Sheena had some money that she had brought from India, which used to pay for her hotel.

Sneha Inc. steps in to help the family

The Sneha volunteer advised her to stay with Sheena's family friends in a neighboring state for a few days until the couple could think of a resolution. Sheena left with her baby the next morning.

Sneha, Inc. contacted a lawyer who advised Sheena to come back to Connecticut to file for a divorce or try reconciliation. He agreed to represent her to fight the criminal charge as well. Sneha, Inc. paid the initial fees. Sheena came back and accompanied with the Sneha volunteers went back to Krish's house. The volunteer explained the situation to Krish. Sheena wanted a few days to think over her options as well. Krish expressed remorse for his actions and wanted a reconciliation. He agreed to attend counseling sessions. Meanwhile, the criminal charges were up and the court ordered both Sheena and Krish to take group-counseling sessions. Both attended these. Sneha, Inc recommended that both start attending marriage counseling sessions and put them in touch with a South Asian counselor. The counselor assigned the couple things to work on. Sheena was to start looking for a job, start working towards obtaining a drivers license and asked her not to 'provoke' arguments.

After a few months, things deteriorated again. Krish became secretive, would sabotage job interviews that Sheena managed to get. He talked with his parents secretly and started sending money over. They got into serious arguments again.

Meanwhile, Sheena's family, concerned for her safety offered to support her in any decision she made. She finally decided against a reconciliation, and filed for divorce. Krish pleaded with her not to do so, and that he would change his ways. However, Sheena was determined. She contacted the lawyer again, and the divorce was granted a few months later. Krish did give Sheena permission to take their daughter to India. Sheena is now working and supporting herself and her daughter. She lives with her mother. Krish was ordered by the court to pay monthly child support, which is taken off his paycheck directly to an account in India. Krish visits Sheena when he is in India. He continues to repent and wants Sheena to remarry him. Sheena continues to maintain contact with her Sneha volunteer. Through all this, Krish and Sheena have become friends, and continue to keep in touch.

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Voice of SNEHA

MOIA on Women's Abandonment

Plans to Involving Women's Organizations

Sneha was invited to a meeting by the Indian Consulate of New York on June 18, 2008 to discuss issues pertaining to the abandonment and domestic abuse of Indian women in the United States. The Indian government's decision to assist abused overseas and local Indian women comes in the wake of increasing number of complaints of Indian women who are abandoned or ill-treated by their husbands in a foreign country.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) has introduced a scheme of providing financial assistance to empanelled women's organizations for initiating legal proceedings against those husbands, who have abandoned/deserted their Indian wives.

Prior to the meeting, we got an opportunity to meet with the Consul General Ms. Neelam Deo. She encouraged organizations like Sneha and appreciated the work we did for Indian women and their families in the United States.

Counselor Dr. Neena Malhotra leading the initiative explained the objective as well as the scope and eligibility of the scheme. The scheme will cover Indian women deserted in India or overseas within two years of their marriage and divorce proceedings initiated by the Overseas Indian husband within two years of marriage.

The objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance for only advisory and legal services to women of Indian origin through credible Indian women's organizations. The Indian Mission will give the empanelled women's organizations and NGOs financial assistance of \$1,000.00 per case. The organizations will be expected to provide documentation of the legal proceedings for that case.

Seizing the opportunity of the meeting, participants brought up the following points of discussion and sought the assistance of the Indian Consulate:

- The disparity of US and Indian laws make it

particularly challenging to resolve long distance or transnational disputes. Information was sought on Indian laws pertaining to such issues.

- In cases involving children, complications are far more due to the US laws involving rights of both parents in relation to their children. In such instances the woman cannot return to India even if she wishes to because she is not able to take the child/children with her.

- In cases where the woman is in India and the spouse has left the country, the women seek assistance in locating their spouses. It is very difficult and often impossible to locate spouses due to the privacy issues in the United States.

- How can we involve employers of husbands holding H1 visas who refuse to either bring their wives to the US or have refused to extend their H4 visas upon expiry?

- Concern in regard to filing a case in the US, for those women who were abandoned but not abused, if the marriage lasted for a short period. Under local laws, a marriage needs to last for at least two years for the wife to be eligible for alimony.

Some of the challenges were lack of awareness in Indian women about their rights, sponsorship/fundraising and lack of manpower.

- Introduce some flexibility in disbursement of funds under the MOIA scheme.

- The Consulate could compile a list of Women's Organizations in India and post it on the Website.

Board members Malavika Vidwans, Uma Narayanan and Jyoti Ramesh attended the meeting.

Representatives from Sakhi (NY), Manavi (NJ), Sneha (CT) and Asian Women's' Safety Net (NJ) also attended the meeting.

All of the participants in the meeting requested the Consulate to provide them with a list of Organizations in India who deal with battered women, to coordinate in respect of some of the cases received in the United States.

-Jyoti Ramesh



An Interview with Rishi Reddi

Author of Karma and Other Stories

Perhaps, it was the sharp contrast in the way of life in America and India observed by young Rishi that planted a yen for writing and telling stories. She pretty much shaped her dream to be a writer. Rishi, “Always had an urge to write,” even when she was as young as 9 years old. Her parents thought that writing was a good avocation but will not allow her to “stand on her two feet”, so she prepared to be a lawyer. She is currently working as a lawyer in Boston area but still pursues writing with a passion. Pratima interviewed Rishi for Sneha’s Voice.

P: Talk to me about your journey to success as a writer?

R: “I always had an urge to write though I am not from a family of writers –no one older in my family is in any creative field. My father is a doctor and my mother is from a farming and political family. My grandfather was a Member of Parliament but while he traveled back and forth to Delhi, my mother and her siblings stayed in Hyderabad. So I grew up in a typically conservative family. My father, a doctor, is quite ambitious, so we moved from place to place. As such, I never got a sense of belonging to any place and being an only child I spent time reading all kinds of books.”

“My parents did not take my desire for writing seriously. In their eyes, writing was not something you did as a profession. My father wanted me to pursue a medical career, so when it was time for college, I told him that I preferred studying law -- my own small rebellion of sorts— but it was a profession that will allow me “to stand on my two feet,” so my parents went along.”

“In college, I took writing as an elective course and enjoyed it tremendously. After I started working as a lawyer, I started taking evening classes in Creative Writing and realized that it is indeed a craft. Before this, I knew that I wanted to be a writer and wrote a few stories but had no notion of how to get published, how to find an agent or how to actually get a book out. Then a friend alerted me to a writing program being offered in town - A Masters of Arts program for writers, where I got a

validation from peers and professors. I thought if these other people can do it, there is nothing I can not do. I can be one of those people too! May be I can be a published writer.”

P: What was it like your first book being such a success? Did you expect it to be so huge, being compared to F. Scott Fitzgerald?

R: “It was Euphoric! When my first story was published, I could not even find an agent to represent me. I have a box full of rejections. I even got rejections from agents, let alone publishers. But then I found an agent who was quite experienced and took me as a client. My life is full of rejections, a boxful! But you just can’t be a writer if you can not take rejections. Criticism still hurts but getting good reviews helps to balance. As for the book being huge, I don’t know about that but the book has gone through two reprints I hope people like it because they can react to the truth. Readers can sense when the writings reflect truth because it feels real.”

P: In your bio, you mentioned that learning Bharatnatyam offered you “a place of freedom” can you expand on that idea?

R: “Any form of art allows you creative freedom; no one tells you this is the Indian way to do it or the American way to do it. You perform or express it the way you understand it. Bharatnatyam has beautiful stories about Krishna and Radha in the forest, but if you take away those labels they could be the stories of romance between any two lovers anywhere in the world. It is the universal human experience. That is what I mean by a “place of freedom”. Artists in any culture work independent of political, religious and social boundaries. Mythology is about deeper psychology, so, expressing it in Bharatnatyam offered that to me.

P: You display an amazing depth of understanding of Telugu culture; the characters in your stories feel so real! Having grown up in USA, at what point did you develop such in-depth understanding?

R: “Part of it is familiarity with culture and part growing up and developing maturity in understanding human emotions.

- Continued on pg.10



Voice of SNEHA

An Interview with Rishi Reddi *(contd. from pg.9)*

When in school, I went to Hyderabad every summer so I spent time there. I picked up a lot then about the way Indians live and think but the other part is that as you mature you realize how human emotions manifest in behavior, for example, very often shame or embarrassment that one feels in a situation will result in anger, as in case of Justice Murthy story or as in the Karma story, in a sense of displacement and confusion manifesting in efforts to find a place or give meaning to one's existence."

P: How do you come up with the ideas? Are there other works in progress?

R: "I read a lot and when I find something useable it finds a place in my writings. The story of Justice Shiva Murthy found its seed in a news report about an Indian man who was quite upset when he found out that he had been consuming fast food French-fries under the misguided notion that they were vegetarian and then he found out that

chips were fried in lard. This violated his core belief in vegetarianism and he may have felt ashamed at not having realized this early-on. So he decided to file a lawsuit against McDonald.

The Karma story idea came from a news story in "The Wall Street Journal" about a man who founded a non-profit organization to help the wounded birds who lost the sense of direction during the migratory flights and ended up bumping in to the skyscrapers. He invited volunteers to walk in the morning among the Toronto skyscrapers and collect and resuscitate them.

As for the work in progress, I have been fortunate to have Ecco/Harper Collins purchase the rights to my next two books. I am currently writing about the early wave of Indian immigrants, who came here in the 1910s. I hope to see it published in 2010."

P: Any word for the new immigrants?

R: "Live bi-culturally. It is hard to do but it can also be enriching."

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Hello! Can We Talk?

(Editors note: Recently a few young people who were the first generation (gen 1) born and brought up in USA gathered for a focused discussion on what it is that they wish they could share with their parents. Following is a compendium of their thoughts that our young reporter Prachi Vidwans summarized below. It is an earnest attempt by these young people to be heard!)

Gripping about parents is something that all teenagers do, but with Indian children it's taken to the Olympic level. Among the Indian friends, we have a sense of camaraderie, as though we're fighting this war against restrictions hand in hand, on the same side.

The worst excuse any generation 0 (parents who migrated here from India) give for the rules that drive this war is, "You live in an Indian household!" We think that this is as lame an excuse as, "My dog ate my homework"- 'clichéd, overused, and inflammatory.

We all have concluded at this point in our lives that these rules have nothing to do with being Indian. They have to do with the rules our parents were brought up with and with their fear of a teenager's ability to do stupid things. After going to camp with other Indian teenagers and hearing them talk about all the parties they go to and all the misadventures they've endured and how they can tell their parents about all this, we know that it's not an Indian thing. It's a strict thing.

We understand that living in this country gives us of gen 1 different expectations. We don't think that the 10:30 curfew is reasonable by any means. We think that telling each other your opinions, even if they're different, is the first step to reasonable compromise (a parent's overriding of our opinions can be very frustrating!) We think that driving is a generally acceptable thing for people who have their licenses.

But we also agree on a lot of things with our parents! And *that* idea gets lost in the parental effort to eradicate teenage rebellion. Like them, we also think that grades are immensely important, and we do like to learn. We also think that the chronic drinking and getting high that goes on with a lot of local teens is not okay, we also don't think that it's a good idea for a person our age to go out at night or indulge in promiscuous behavior.

Knowing this, you'd think we would have a working relationship at home. We are the type of young people, after all, who would rather hang out with a friend or two for a few hours at night instead of going to parties. We *are not* but even if we were the typical teenage stereotype, we still think that the rules our parents give us are ridiculous. We worry that now when we go to college we may unwittingly make all the dumb mistakes that teenagers normally make when they're in high school because we may not recognize such situations as we have never dealt with them. We haven't made enough of those mistakes to know better, after all.

Teenagers are supposed to make mistakes. They are supposed to be able to have fun with friends late at night during their senior year. They are supposed to fall into teenage love. We understand that our parents might not have completely similar ideas about what teenagers should and should not be able to do, because they grew up with different ideals in India.

If anything, the existence of the war between generation zero (first generation to migrate) and generation one is the result of poor adaptation to life in the U.S. Generation One just can't be blamed and punished for growing up as normal, American teenagers!

-Prachi Vidwans

When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.

~Mark Twain, "Old Times on the Mississippi" *Atlantic Monthly*, 1874-

As quoted in
www.thequotegarden.com



Hope On The Horizon For Victims of Domestic Violence

The government's recent directive, passed in April 2008 will benefit thousands of immigrant women. It will allow battered immigrant women and children the opportunity to apply for a "green card" regardless of their manner of entry into the U.S.

This directive, interpreting the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), carries out Congress' intent to protect immigrant victims of domestic violence from further harm by clearing their path to legal permanent resident status. Congress has recognized that many immigrant women live trapped and isolated in violent homes, afraid to turn to anyone for help. They fear continued abuse if they stay, and deportation if they attempt to leave. The law allows battered immigrants who are married to abusive U.S. citizens or permanent residents the right to apply for lawful immigration status independent of the cooperation of the abuser.

This memorandum makes clear that battered immigrant spouses and children who satisfy other legal requirements are eligible to apply for lawful permanent residency even if they entered the U.S. without official inspection.

-Rubina Islam

You Show Others How to Treat You.

This is so important and true, for me when I stayed after my husband called me awful names I showed him it was okay. Then when he hit me and I stayed, again, I showed him it was all right. When I finally told the police he tried to kill me and I was able to have him physically removed, I showed him how to treat me and that it was no longer allowed.

Anonymous, As quoted in The Last Straw., www.thelaststraw.com on quotes about domestic violence



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