

Arifa at CDI, Srinagar

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Today I received a mail from 'Arifa' with a request to look at

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/opinion/story/214478.html>

Arifa was one of the first batch students at 'craft development Institute, (CDI) Srinagar'. Few years back a unique course in Management and Entrepreneurship started at CDI. I was in the team of 'Designers and Management Experts' who have been invited by Sharique Farooqui who was the director of CDI. The Meeting for '3' days was at the initiative of Chief secretary of Jammu and Kashmir, it was an interesting group with majority from N.I.D back ground. This was also the first time in my experience, a group meeting with 'no hidden agenda' was held seriously for '3' days. We were sitting in a Hotel with a beautiful view of Dal Lake! We came to a conclusion that 2 years post graduate course should be offered with 'Craft' as center covering 'Design,Technology and Management'. The Course started without any recognition. I had the privilege of leading the presentation to chief Secretary, a group of officials and local business leaders concerned with Craft. I gave the example of the course which I went through, the first PG Diploma in Product Design, which was not recognized. I assumed them that if the course is good enough it will establish itself.

Fortunately enough provision was made for resource persons to design and deliver the various modules in the course. I took the very first module on 'Creative Thinking' for the first batch. And Arifa was in the very first batch! Though the course was in 'English', Hindi became the language of communication. Coming from a Craft family supported by Mother, she was worried. She was shy and unable to speak publicly in the class. They had never been asked to talk about their work or solutions in their graduation, this looked like a great hurdle, especially for those coming from a social class where girls or even boys are not encouraged to address themselves in front of elders! Arifa almost went into a 'crying mode' when her turn came to speak.

We had personal talks with each student in the evening. Listening and empathising with their personal problems, assuring them that the course is good for them which helped lot. Sharique also assured financial support from CDI for few students like 'Arifa' who had no home support!

Astonishingly 'Arifa' was the one who spoke confidently when big group of Craft- persons were called to come and participate in CDI activities. The meeting was arranged by Sharique at my suggestion. This was to change the perspective of Craft community towards CDI which was a Govt authority!

Arifa became an entrepreneur and the article tells her story. The course got recognized by Kashmir University with a lot of struggle. A master degree gets awarded by the University now! But it tends to attract people who are interested in degree rather than entrepreneurship now. CDI itself has got into several problems due to non-implementation of Govt commitments like 6th pay commission . An official from state Govt functions as 'Director'. which is his additional duty after the earlier director left due to several problems. Yet among all these clouds ' Arifa' stands out like a star in the sky! We do need these models to emulate!
