



Comparative Cultures

Unconditional Love

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

My lovely Ayaana,

I wrote to you first when you were inching towards the two-month milestone, and I write to you today as you gallop your way to your second birthday. It has been an amazing two years, and we, your parents, cannot believe how fast you have grown and how well you have adjusted to the ways of this world.

We try to make you learn by setting a good example and in return, you reward us with your own little teachings. You are a bundle of joy that came with her own set of life lessons, and while you learn from us, we learn from you.

You're a lesson in sensitivity. Your heart goes out to Dora The Explorer if she's in trouble and to every grieving face on television. You come running to point them out to us so we can help, and are sometimes in tears yourself. We're amazed at how your little heart is capable of an emotion as big as empathy.

You're a lesson in good manners. The simplest joys are in being at the receiving end of good manners. I've never been thanked in such a heartfelt manner for just handing out a cup of milk or helping with

a tower of blocks that just won't stand tall. And I've never heard profuse apologies like the ones that come so easily to you. You say 'sorry' for every little 'mistake', be it dropping your stuffed duckie, tripping over our feet or forgetting to include your doll in the sleeping game. Sometimes, you even apologize for our mistakes and say thank you when we should have, reminding us that a thank you or sorry is never out of place.

You're a lesson in equality and inclusion. If it's a game, every one of your stuffed toys must be given equal attention, and if we're making up a song about our family, every person - including your grandmas and cousins in India - has to be included. Even if we're giving each shampoo bottle an owner, there must be one for everyone. And when you feel like sharing your goldfish crackers, you take the trouble to go to every person you see and hand one out.

You're a lesson in being uninhibited about joys and miseries alike. You break into a dance when the title song of your favourite cartoon show comes on, and jump around when you feel like it during your library programs without worrying

about what you look like to others. (You, of course, end up looking very cute and get smothered). As for grief, you have no qualms about breaking into a loud wail if a particularly interesting task like splashing water around the house gets interrupted. You also don't care if we're in a public place like a restaurant and we try to keep you tied to your high chair. For you, freedom means everything and you shall have it at any cost.

You're a lesson in unconditional love. There's no greater joy than the feeling of being indispensable to someone. That is the joy I feel when I come home after an errand and you come running to me with open arms. That is the happiness that warms my heart when I get hugged for no reason and kissed spontaneously. I feel fortunate that I have the option to be at home and care for you while you reward me with the kind of unconditional love only a child can give its parent.

May God bless you always.

Kinjal Dagli-Shah is a full-time mother and part-time teacher. She teaches English and Creative Writing to children and youth ages 6-14. To enquire about her workshop, email kinjal.dagli@gmail.com

Ruth Ann Onley invited to speak at Chamber Lunch

The Whitechurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce, together with the Town's Economic Development Department and the Whitechurch-Stouffville Public Library, is holding a luncheon in celebration of International Women's Day on Friday, March 8.

The event is being held at Meadowbrook Golf Club, 11939 Warden Avenue, and will begin at noon. The Honourable Ruth Ann Onley, who is well-known both as a speaker and a singer, has been invited to speak at the lunch. Hon. Onley's faith has led her to a ministry of music as a successful recording artist and performer. She takes part in many activities of her husband, Ontario Lieutenant Governor David Onley, and has embraced her public role with enthusiasm.

Tickets for the event are available from the Chamber office by calling (905) 642-4227. Net proceeds will be donated to women's charities.

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For making 2012 such a successful year!

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www.latchamgallery.ca

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