

Friday, 2nd February 2007

Dear Mr. Nalin **Satyakam** Kohli:

Very many congratulations and best wishes on the first anniversary of your school, Vidya Sanskar – International School for Holistic Learning. I applaud your successful first year with a heart full of joy and appreciation. My heart leaps with joy when I see a genius, an extra-ordinary person like you take on the praise worthy mission making institute that grooms International Leaders for tomorrow.

The keywords given by you for your school are: “Vidya”, “Sanskar”, “International” and “Holistic Learning”. I love this excellent mix of East and West. Eastern theory and objectives of Vidya and Sanskar with adopted best western practices for education and developing future of India. Like many of your employees, I have read and memorized your school’s mission statement. I hope this permits me to take liberty and discuss on how we can increase the magnitude of application of these keywords. Keywords for which your school stands, works and for which parents send their children to your school. My intention is to reinforce the Godliness of/in education and highlight higher purpose of educational institutes for society and country, than seeing them as business ventures.

Please do not take this letter negatively. I am not questioning or inquiring school’s integrity but trying to align your school closer to the vision and direction described in your schools first prospectus and what your school name and mission describes. In simple words: encouraging you to walk the talk or in your favorite TV terms – matching school’s video with audio! ☺

Your three highlights are: One - you believe in Holistic Education, Two - You are or want to be (as of now) an International School by standards of education, facility and services and Third – Your school is committed to a mission, to groom global leaders. In fact you have also gone a step further and agreed on essential basic qualities that these leaders must have such as, they should be knowledgeable and ethical, sincere and compassionate, responsible and confident and they should work for common good. Good enough for first year, now let’s apply these!

1. International School: at least it means international standards of quality in parameters such as “facility/infra”, “services” and “education”. Point one of “facility/infa” is only a matter of time and money, but by standards of education and services such as accommodation, food, student lifestyle, educational environment and learning facilities can be worked upon.

2. Holistic Education: I googled on internet to learn that “Holistic Education” is a philosophy of education based on premise that each person finds identity, meaning and purpose in life through connections to the community, to natural world and spiritual values. You are aware, that the **difference between traditional and holistic learning is** that holistic education pays attention in

more than academic performance, it means over, which **includes intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials**. Students are actively engaged in learning process and are prepared for “responsibilities” of life.

My question: If only having weekly classes for art, dance, music and yoga etc is holistic education, then many local Faridabad schools can also claim on Holistic Learning, right? Perhaps the difference is of a degree and not of kind. An inquisitive mind would frame the question - What is this holistic approach to education for? What is the Goal? What is the education aimed for? If your answer is Vidya Sanskar’s mission statement, or harnessing potential to become global citizens; lets double check how much of our educational philosophy, facilities, decorum, curriculum and teacher time are in accordance with the same?

3. Vidya and Sanskar stands for of Spiritual-ness and/or Indian-ness/Hindu-ness. Your understanding of importance of these two words is second to none. However, I can not stop my self from offering one point, which is about **India and Religion:** As a citizen of India, the religious and spiritual nature of the country is a part of us, our very existence. India is a country, where scientists and religious leaders are treated with equal respect; where there is no conflict between science and religion, where religion or spiritualism is not from one person or one book. Living life under such inherently secular umbrella, can we afford to rule out religion out of student life, fully knowing that not going closer to God and/or India-ness will NOT be good for them?

You may ask **why my school should take more responsibility**. What particularly bothers me is, when a child lives in your hostel, it becomes school’s responsibility to give them a learning and living environment, which represents the country, culture and society it belongs to. A child who is spending childhood at Vidya Sanskar must also become an individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole. Atleast he should become good Indian citizen, if not global citizen.

I read it somewhere - Education is first for Character, then for good manners and third for academic knowledge. What we also need is to give a good education or at least introduction to all religions rather than being overly cautious and deleting God/religion related topics out of our school context due sensitiveness of subject. **I ask you my friend**, why should we not make Christian students better Christians and Hindu/Muslim students better Hindu/Muslims?

Real world case: At home, parents and family community and interaction with people of various age groups helps a child grow, understand and see various aspects of life. In a school hostel, it is a very controlled and restricted environment, where life experience will always be limited and incomplete. Permit me please to give a bad example. Considering population of India, death here is like a daily event, news about death of some one or the other unfortunately comes to my ears, 5-7 times a year. This encourages young minds to think - who will cry when I die? Or what do dying people want? Hostel students are cut off from many such life events. However, it this also gives school an

opportunity to strongly enforce positive and good thoughts in their hearts, for betterment of world and their own self.

Beep Beep....My cell phone is ringing, please excuse me. Meanwhile Sir, Please take a break and check your pulse. I hope it is running after having read this long and boring letter. *Smile*

I'm Back: Well... I know I am often too passionate, aggressive and at times insensitive to good manners but I will apologize for all my mistakes later, when it is our time to tell stories to grand children or later in grave. But Sir, I sincerely acknowledge that you have been more kind towards me, always more than you could have, at times more than should have and certainly much more than what I deserved. I deeply appreciate and I thank you, kindly.

Maharishi Patanjali, the great compiler of Yoga Sutras observed, “When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bonds: Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great, and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.”

William James noted, “Most people live – whether physically, intellectually or morally – in a very restricted circle of their potential being. We all have reservoirs of life to draw upon which we do not dream.” **Mother India calls upon you to make Vidya Sanskar an extra-ordinary garden,** a small world in itself, and realize vision of Lord Buddha, Tagore, Gandhi - A world where mind is without fear and head is held high, where world is not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls, and words come out from the depth of truth, stretching arms towards perfection.

Nalin ji, my presentation, letters and suggestions are all borrowed seeds of thoughts. I do not claim any originality or want credit but I do hope and pray that some of these seeds will become flower plants in time to come, some will become trees. May be some not grow at all. That's God's job, Time will do its duty. But sunlight (vision) by management, effort from teachers like water and fertilizer of efforts from all students and staff is definitely required for the Garden of Vidya Sanskar to grow...

Let us follow the mission of Vidya Sanskar as our purpose in the way Swami Vivekananda took his mission of educating Indian Spiritualism to the world. Let us like him work together, march onwards and move forward toward this mission. We shall not stop till the goal is reached. So what if the wheels don't move? We shall put our shoulders to the wheels.

Congratulations once again, for God to speed your Vidya Sanskar mission is my prayer today!

In the name of good education, making future of India and grooming international leaders.

- Mr. Somebody , whom you can surely meet in hell, Jai Hind! ☺