

Let Love Work

the story

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‘Superb lecture!’ I complimented John.

‘Thanks, Kev!’ Friends often drop the letters from our names just as they please.

‘When are you visiting India again?’

‘Winter, marriage season.’

We crossed Jamnagar bypass. Suddenly, John said, ‘Before I forget, I need to make a suggestion to you.’

I really lap it up when friends like John come up with suggestions.

‘Please shoot!’ I replied eagerly.

‘Appoint an associate. I can see you have teaching potential. When one is good at anything, they need to spread the light around.’

‘You serious, John?’

‘Yes. Raise your bar. Focus on the tricky ones. Your associate can look after the simpler ones.’

‘Won’t it be interference?’

‘On the contrary, it will be constructive. As you know, we are more careful when we know someone looks up to us, like, as a role model. That way your own standards will go up too. It will be a win-win situation for both of you.’

‘The way you did to me, inspire, I mean.’

‘Exactly. I could only do it long distance, sitting in my office, a few thousand miles away. And yet, as you say, I inspired you. Imagine how much you can achieve when someone is observing you from up close.’

We reached the airport. Over coffee we had some small talk, picking up old threads, remembering this one and that one- our old acquaintances. We said our ‘byes when John’s boarding was finally announced.

Now, I always take John’s suggestions seriously. So the very next morning I posted a note in all my social media groups saying ‘Associate Dentist Required’. I received three

applications in response. I saw the candidates one by one. More than anything else I rely on my gut feelings, my sixth sense so to speak, to pick up the vibes from the other person. I found one candidate that had those vibes. Preeti looked innocent and sincere. I had a hunch that she would be an asset to my set up. I generally mull the things over before taking such decisions- like allowing someone into my personal or professional life- so it was almost a week before I informed Preeti about her selection.

She joined my clinic the very next day. She was there at the exact scheduled time, wearing a neatly pressed dress. I was a little late myself. I promised myself to add punctuality to my nature. Here I was, supposedly the mentor and I was already learning good habits from my associate! John was so right, I thought.

I started by talking about the patients scheduled for that session: their complaints, the diagnoses and the treatment plans. Over

the next few days, that became our routine. Though Preeti was a qualified dentist, clearing examinations and actually handling patients clinically are two totally different things. So I designed a curriculum for her. I encouraged her to develop her hand skills and mind in such a way that even the unpredictable problems cropping up during clinical dentistry can be handled like routine, predictable issues. I kept reminding myself to be the mentor and not the boss.

She worked with our set up for about two years before she left.

Then, a few weeks short of three years, she was at our clinic once again. She told us that she was pregnant. We were happy to hear this piece of good news. We chatted for a while and then she asked me, 'Sir, can I join the centre again? In my last trimester, that is.'