

#PARENTING

Shaping Your Kid's Future

The key lies not in protecting children from challenges but in equipping them with the tools to face them head-on, learn from them, and emerge stronger.



Many parents are reflecting on the lessons learned last year, as we move into 2025. Parenting is an evolving journey, and with each year comes new insights and strategies that may come in handy. In 2024, a common focus was on raising strong kids who can cope with challenges and bounce back from setbacks. Here, we share some deeper details and insights about a few lessons to keep in mind as we move on.

Set Digital Boundaries: Children now need to learn not just how to use technology but how to control it. Setting boundaries around screen time is less about restricting limits and more about teaching conscious choices. This involves helping kids understand when technology helps or hinders their goals, and encouraging them to make intentional decisions about their digital engagement.

Focus On Emotional Literacy: The emphasis has shifted from simply managing emotions to understanding them. Children who can name, understand, and process their feelings show greater resilience in challenging situations. Teaching them to recognize emotional patterns and develop coping strategies has become a crucial life skill.

It is Okay To Fail: The approach to failure has evolved beyond simple encouragement. Parents now focus on teaching children to analyse setbacks, identify learning opportunities, and develop action plans for improvement. This structured

approach to handling disappointment builds resilience and problem-solving skills.

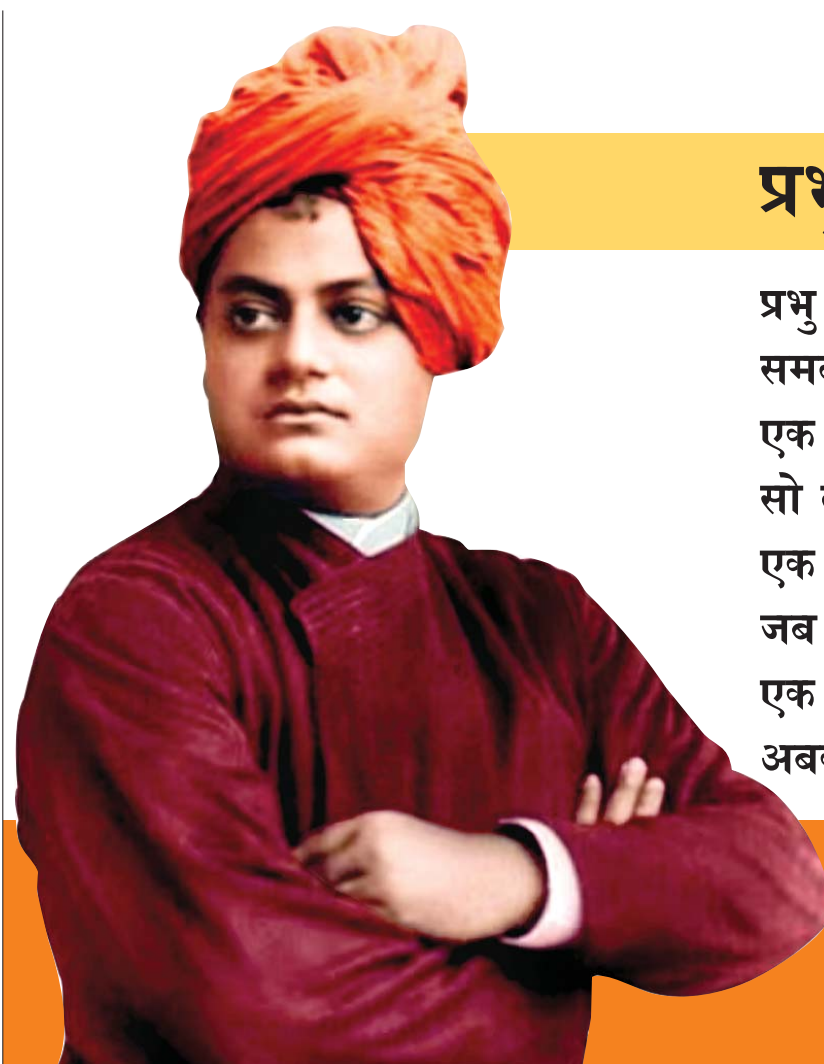
Importance To Social Skills: In an increasingly digital world, helping children maintain meaningful in-person relationships has become vital. Teaching them to navigate social situations, handle conflicts, and build genuine friendships provides a support system that strengthens their resilience.

Say Yes To Physical And Mental Wellbeing: The connection between physical activity and mental capability has become clearer. Regular exercise, outdoor play, and movement breaks are now recognized as essential tools for building both physical and mental strength in children.

Adaptability Is The Key: It is imperative that children learn how to handle change gracefully. This involves exposing them to new situations in safe ways and helping them develop strategies for adapting to unexpected circumstances, and learning to navigate through them.

Staying Connected: In our increasingly connected world, helping children understand and appreciate different perspectives and cultures builds both empathy and adaptability. This awareness helps them navigate diverse social situations with confidence.

The Bottom-Line: The key lies not in protecting children from challenges but in equipping them with the tools to face them head-on, learn from them, and emerge stronger.



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PART:1

THE SWAMI AND SINNERS



Swami Vivekananda's marble bench at Dr Sen's garden.



A HOLY ALLIANCE OF A SAINT AND SINNERS

12 January 2024 is the hundred and fifty first birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. Incidentally, it also happens to be my birthday. This is not the only connection I have with him. My family's connections with Swami Vivekananda go back to the time of my great grandfather, Raja Umrao Singh of Kotla, who had met Swamiji during his visit to Agra, when he was touring India as penniless wandering ascetic. These associations of my ancestor were told to me by my grandmother, but were put in cold storage in a deep recess of my memory.

Some months ago, my wife and I had called upon Dr Gautam Sen and Dr Mrs. Nirmal Sen, when they showed me a marble bench in their garden from which, during the time when Dr. Sen's grandfather was the Prime Minister of Jaipur State, Swamiji used to deliver his sermons. Swami Vivekananda was a multi-dimensional man of many parts, spirituality was just one of them. His spirituality was not exclusive to ascetic holy men but included every imaginable type, including prostitutes, philanthropists, scientists and men and women of the arts. This is what makes him truly great and a universally revered personality, who is, if I may say so, the *Raj Guru* of modern India.

ENCOUNTERS WITH COURTESANS

Swami Vivekananda, along with some other European ladies and Sister Nivedita during a trip to the Himalayas at the Naina Devi temple, Nainital, met a group of dancing girls of the Maharaja of Tehri. Whilst the Europeans took them to be respectable ladies, there was a storm in the town at Swamiji not turning away from the nautch girls.

That made Vivekananda recall his experience with the courtesan in the court of the Raja Ajit Singh of Khetri, a *thikanedar* of Jaipur State, where he was a guest of the Raja. He had been angry at the invitation to attend a *mujra* by a famous dancing girl and refused to come out of his room. The dancing girl was well-versed in not only arts of entertainment, but also in matters of spirituality. The courtesan, learning of this, sang this melancholic song of Surdas from *Sursagar*, which



RUINS OF HAWA MAHAL KHETRI.

#STRANGE ENCOUNTERS



PARVEEN RAI AT AKBAR'S COURT.

compelled Vivekananda to come out of his room and thank her for enlightening him.

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A rough translation of the above, for those not familiar with *Brajhasha*, is, "O Lord, please ignore my faults. You are known as being impartial and love every one equally. If you wish, then kindly bestow your grace upon me. There is an iron that is used in the holy worship while there is another that lies with the brutal butcher. O Lord, you are that 'Paras' that turns base metal into gold. On one side, there is a river and on the other, a drain. When both meet with the Ganga, they are known as the *Ganga*. The Holy River does not differentiate between the two. There is one entity known as *Maya* and the other is known as *Brahm*. However, there is so much dispute, and O Lord, I am confused and dependent on you for your grace. Now, this time, do not delay it. I cannot cross the ocean of this material world by myself."

Hearing these words Vivekananda came out of his room. He had been defeated by a courtesan. That night, he wrote in

his diary, "A new revelation has been given to me today by the Divine. I was afraid, must be some lust within me. But the woman defeated me completely, and I have never seen such a pure soul. Sitting near her, I became aware that it is not a question of what is outside, it is a question of what is inside. Now, I can even sleep with that woman in a bed and there will be no fear of lust." Similar sentiments have been expressed by Mahatma Gandhi in his "Experiments with Truth."

Mahatma Gandhi had great respect and admiration for Vivekananda. In 1921, during his visit to Belur Math, he wrote, "I have come here to pay homage and respect to the revered memory of Swami Vivekananda, whose birthday is being celebrated today. I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand fold. I ask you, young men, not to go away empty-handed, without imbibing something of the spirit of the place where Swami Vivekananda lived and died."

I am a little surprised at Vivekananda's initial hesitation in meeting the courtesan at Khetri, when his own *Guru*, Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, had no such hesitation, and who, on several occasions, bowed down to them respectfully and acknowledged them to be manifestations of the Divine Mother.



This incident reminds of an incident involving Rai Praveen, who was courtesan of Rao Indrajit of Orchha. Rai Praveen was no ordinary courtesan, she was not only beautiful but also an accomplished dancer, singer and poet in her own right. She had been tutored by *Pandit Keshavdas of Orchha*, who along with his grandson *Bihari of Jaipur*, are considered to be the best all-time Hindi poets and authors of works such as *Rasikpriya*, *Barahmasa* and several other poetic works. Akbar, hearing of her beauty and accomplishments, desired her to be presented at his court. This was not something that Rao Indrajit could ignore and Rai Praveen was compelled to appear before Akbar. But her heart was with Indrajit.

Facing Akbar boldly, Rai Praveen opened her performance with this couplet,

‘निर्वाती सुनो राय प्रवीण हो, चाह सुनान,
जुधि वातर भक्तन हे, बयान वैन।।
Translated, it means, "Listen to the appeal of Rai Praveen, O Great Emperor; only low castes and scavengers eat the leftovers from the plate from which others have eaten." Akbar was indeed Great. Hearing these words, he had her returned untouched to Orchha.

His meeting with courtesans at Khetri and Nainital was not the only time when Vivekananda had an encounter with such ladies. In 1900, returning from his second trip to the West, Swami

World Day for War Orphans

Extending a caring hand to the innocent souls, who bear the heavy weight of conflict's aftermath, offering hope and healing. Each year, war makes orphans of many children all over the globe. In fact, UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) estimates that approximately 150 million children worldwide are orphans, and many of these are due to deaths caused by war. The World Day for War Orphans is observed each year as a time to raise awareness about the plight of these children, and also to find opportunities to provide them with resources to help overcome this trauma.



Swami Vivekananda's marble bench at Dr Sen's garden.

Vivekananda, along with some of his western followers, stopped at Cairo. One day when they were walking down a road, they somehow lost their way and entered the "Red Light Area." Some scantily clad women came out and started soliciting them. Vivekananda looked at them with compassion and muttered, "Poor children! They have put their divinity in their beauty." He was feeling so sad that tears rolled down his eyes. Now, the women, who were earlier making fun of him, now started feeling ashamed. One of them tried to hide her remorse, another knelt down, and holding on to his feet, wiped her tears with his robe. In blessing these ladies and not condemning them, Vivekananda was following the example set by his own *guru* Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Max Muller, the famous German Orientalist, has written in his *Life of Ramakrishna*, "Ah! How sweet are these words, they remind me of one of the prostitutes Amrapali, and the object of Lord Buddha's divine grace and of the Samaritan woman, who won the grace of the Lord Jesus."

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Impressed by Swamiji, Raja Umrao Singh introduced him to his friend, Raja Ajit Singh of Khetri, a premier noble of Jaipur State. Ajit Singh, too, was spiritually inclined, and like Swamiji, was interested in the arts and modern science. The two became close friends, a friendship that was to last till the end of their very short lives, both died at the age of 39. Ajit Singh's support was to play a crucial role in the life and mission of Swami Vivekananda. Ajit Singh was a member of the



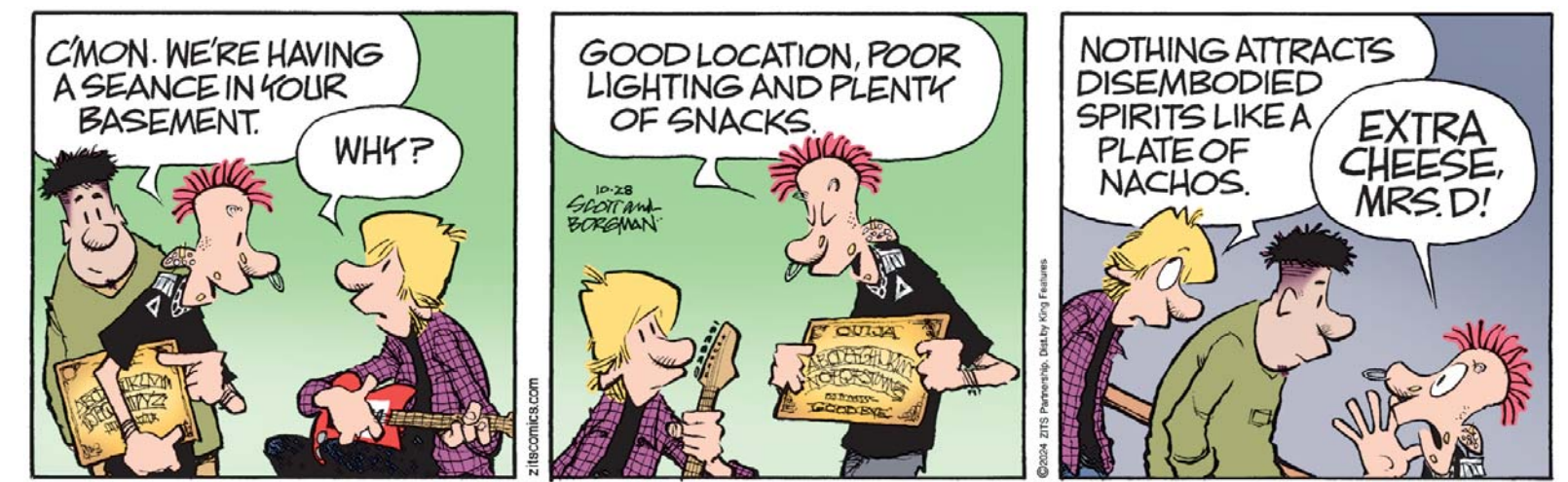
VIVEKANANDA MEMORIAL AT KHETRI.

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS

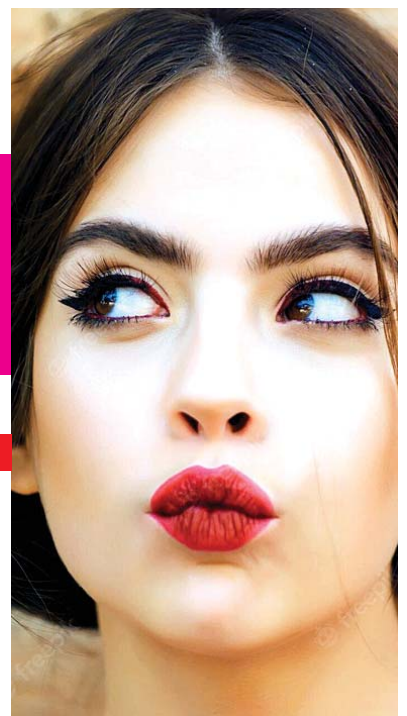


By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

#J'ADORE

Gorgeous Lipstick Shades

Be the talk of the town with these glamorous shades that will instantly glam up your winter.



Winter is all about looking rosy fresh, and we all know that the perfect shade of lipstick can turn around your entire look and just brighten up your day! Rich scarlets, deep reds, maroons and creamy hot chocolate shades are the way to go this winter. We're going to help you choose the right shades of lipsticks for you to flaunt this season! Read on!

Go Brick Red

This bold and vibrant tint is for today's independent and self-assured woman and is a colour with just a hint of brown and no shimmer at all! This bright shade is a cult favourite and perfect for the dull winter months. It gives a pure matte finish along with good coverage. Just a swipe is enough to brighten up your face!



Tone It Down



This exceptionally gorgeous lip colour is a matte finish liquid lipstick and is the hottest colour this season. It is the perfect warm brown shade that'll suit every skin tone. This will bring some much-needed colour and has superb staying power. It doesn't even smudge after heavy and oily meals. So yay, there's no need for touch-ups!

Go Bold



Soft Matte Lip Cream in the shade Budapest is a red-brown shade that goes on smoothly. The formula is extremely light and smells like cupcakes. Lovely ladies, try out this gorgeous shade this winter that'll glam you up instantly, and we highly recommend this shade for those misty, winter parties!

Pop It Up



One shade that has managed to transition from summer to winter is orange-red! You know, that bright colour that just pops out! While this colour was traditionally restricted to summer months, this winter is all about breaking the rules and orange shades have been accepted into winter makeup kits. When you swipe this one on, just make sure your makeup is minimal and neutral!

Bobbi Brown Raisin



Who said subtlety doesn't go a long way? This gorgeous lipstick with red tinge will make you the talk of the town because that's how pretty it looks. Bobbi Brown is known for her semi-matte formulae that gives a beautiful sheen and not just a simple matte look. The creamy formula doesn't dry your lips and is a great choice for a longer wear!