

must play fair. We must not try and work to build up feelings of hatred and think that other people are out to get us. Even if they ARE out to get us, they too are human and may, perhaps, be persuaded to behave differently. I am happy that one group of British soldiers have now gone home from Iraq because the town they were occupying is now in the control of its own townspeople who are soon going to have the first democratic elections for 37 years, to elect their own town government. It is the first and only town so far to do this, but we hope that, slowly, the whole of Iraq will be self-governing as soon as possible so all the soldiers can pack their guns away and go home.

It is very important that a country has an army that knows how to fight – but only as little as possible and only because it is sometimes the only way to overthrow evil leaders and bring peace. There have been just a few countries in the world where it has been possible to overthrow a bad government without the use of any violence at all and that must always be what we aim for. But in our private lives, when we find it difficult to get on with people, it is much better not to fight. Remember – Lower your guns and smile! God bless you.



## **COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARENTS!**

*Assembly 74 – May 21<sup>st</sup> 2003*

In every country, parents who love their children are very happy when they can go to school. In every country, when children come home from school, parents ask, “What have you been doing today, dear?” In every country, children say, “Huh! Oh, I don’t know – just this and that –” and they throw their schoolbag down and disappear. Parents everywhere ask themselves, “Why won’t my child talk to me?”

Many parents try and provide nice things for their children. Many of you have beautiful homes, beautiful clothes, beautiful toys and computers, cars with drivers - but one thing that money cannot buy is a good relationship with your parents. That is priceless and that is developed only by attention and care and love – and a lot of time. In any relationship, the most valuable gift you can give, is your time. If your parents have always given you plenty of their time, and helped you to express yourself, helped you to talk about what you do and what you feel, then you are very lucky. Some parents are more busy or shy and do not know how to help you to be more communicative. Do you understand this word ‘communicative’? It means you are able to communicate. It is very important to be able to communicate with people. In school, you must communicate with your teachers, to share with them what you do not understand, what you enjoy and what worries you. You must learn to communicate with one another and not fight and squabble. But it is also important for you to communicate with your parents. This is a skill you need to learn and to practice. It is only half your responsibility, of course, – the other half of the responsibility is your parents’. If your father has died or works in Saudi Arabia or is living with someone else or never comes home until 10 o’clock at night, then there are difficulties – I know. But why not write him a letter or telephone or email him if your lives do not cross very often? And you have to work hard to show that you appreciate those times when you CAN be together. Use your meal-times together as times when you really talk and share your lives and ask each other’s opinions on things and what they feel about things. Don’t just eat and go.

In England, the big family meal of the week used to be Sunday lunch. That was often the only meal of the week when you had roast meat – you put a big piece of meat in the oven and, at the meal, took a big knife and fork and carved it into thin slices. You had vegetables and a wonderful sauce made out of the meat juices called ‘gravy’. This was the meal when a family really felt like a

family and you would take time eating and talking with one another. But now a lot of people work on Sundays and Sunday has become, for many, just like any other day of the week and family life is suffering. However, some parents are very strict about the family eating together for certain meals. You turn the television off and you talk to one another. Some parents say, "This is a home, not a hotel. You don't just sleep and eat here. We have to make time to communicate with one another."

A Bangladeshi father said to a friend of mine what many sad fathers in many countries are saying, "I have a teenage son and I have nothing to say to him and he has nothing to say to me." Family life can get like that – no communication. I hope you are saying, "I will do all I can not to let that happen to me! I am going to learn to be communicative!" How lovely it is when family members really talk together and even argue together and share their lives and show they care by being interested in one another. I will tell you tomorrow some things you can say to show you are interested in one another. Remember some of the things that happen during the day in school and share these stories with your parents when you go home so that they know what you have been doing all day, in school, because you are communicating. God bless you.



## REJECTING 'BAD CULTURE'

*Assembly 75 - May 26<sup>th</sup> 2003*

Let us think of the way in which the slogan on this poster "None of us is as smart as all of us" applies to men and women, boys and girls, working well together and treating each other as of equal value and status. In all countries, developed and developing, there are men and boys who behave very badly to women and girls, but

it is a major problem in many of the poorer countries. As you may imagine, I have been very shocked to read of the abuses of the human rights of women and girls in Bangladesh. I want this school to do all it can to help both boys and girls to be informed, aware and thinking about this matter. Of course, you must respect all that is good and true and noble in your own culture, but also have the courage to ask some major questions about some cultural practices here that hurt women. In every culture, people must ask, "What is good in my culture that I shall choose to practice? And what is bad in my culture that I shall choose not to practice?" There are good and bad things in my British culture also that I have had to think about in my life.

Millions of Muslims live in the UK and recently, the police have said they are very worried that the number of honour killings is rising. That is, Muslim women are being killed by their fathers, brothers and other male members of their family who say they have brought shame on the family and must die. On a BBC Worldservice programme last Friday, the British Muslim man who is head of the Islamist Centre in the UK was asked by the interviewer what he thought about this. He said that honour killings were very wrong. "This is nothing to do with the teaching of the Prophet," he said, "This is a bad part of our culture and it must stop. In my mosque, I speak out in my sermon (*upodesh*) and tell my people so."

In the same way, good people are needed to speak out against the dowry system - you understand 'dowry'? Again it is cultural and not religious. If you take the Daily Star, look at Friday's copy and read about a young Indian student, Nisha Sharma, whose wedding (*biye*) was about to take place and suddenly her future husband, Munish Dalal, and his family demanded dowry of over a million rupees. At first she was afraid but then she was angry, very angry. How can you begin a good marriage if the people you are going to live with do not see you as a person but only as a purse - a moneybag? She had had enough of this way of men