



VALENTINE CARDS: In the 17th century, men expressed themselves to the one they openly or secretly admired with their own Valentines using original or copied poems or verse. In 1840's Valentines were made of fine paper, ribbons, or lace with pictures of turtledoves, bow and arrows, and cupids. Later, booklets were sold with verses to copy that men would send in anticipation of a favorable response. Today, home-made cards are becoming popular through the craft of scrap booking. The primary buyers of commercial Valentine's cards are now women, while flowers, jewelry and chocolate are often the gift men give. CAT ROONEY/THE EPOCH TIMES

The History of Valentine's Day

By ERIC CECH

February 14th, the holiday of Love! Every February, across the country, candy, flowers, and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. Who is this mysterious saint and why do we celebrate this holiday? The history of Valentine's Day—and its patron saint—is shrouded in mystery. St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. The Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. Here are a few possibilities of the source of this wonderful day.

Most scholars believe that the St. Valentine of the holiday was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. During this time around 270 A.D., Emperor Claudius II prohibited marriages for young men, claiming that bachelors made better soldiers. Valentine continued to secretly perform marriage ceremonies but was eventually apprehended by the Romans and ordered by Claudius to be put to death. This St. Valentine could be posthumously recognized for his commitment to the formal bonds of love.

Another legend has it that Valentine, imprisoned by Claudius, fell in love with the daughter of his jailer who visited him during confinement. Before he was executed, he allegedly sent her a letter signed "from your Valentine" an expression that is still used today. This may have been the first Valentine's Day.

And another plausible story surrounding St. Valentine is one not focused on Eros (passionate love) but on agape (Christian love): he was martyred for refusing to renounce his religion. Thus the love of Valentine's Day may have originally been a devotion to one's god, rather than one's human partner.

It could be that we celebrate Valentine's Day on the 14th because this is the day that a St. Valentine died. However, some believe that the celebration of Valentine's Day was an attempt by the Church to civilize the celebration of the pagan Lupercalia festival. The Festival was held on the 15th of February. Lupercalia was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus. Pope Gelasius declared February 14th St. Valentine's Day around 498 A.D., and the Lupercalia festival was outlawed.

The oldest known written valentine note still in existence is a poem written by Charles, Duke of Orleans to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. The greeting, written in 1415, is part of the manuscript collection of the British Library in London. And this tradition continues strongly today: According to the Greeting



ROSES SYMBOLIZE VALENTINE'S DAY: Queen Elizabeth roses bloom in the Mughal Gardens at Rashtrapati Bhawan—The Presidential Palace—in New Delhi. RAVEENDRAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Card Association, an estimated one billion valentine cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year. (An estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent for Christmas.) The first commercial Valentine's Day greeting cards produced in the U.S. were created in the 1840s by Esther A. Howland. Howland, known as the Mother of the Valentine, made elaborate creations with real lace, ribbons and colorful pictures known as "scrap", similar to the one's schoolchildren across the country make every year.

Sending Roses on Valentine's Day

Why should you send roses to your loved one this Valentine's Holiday? The rose is the symbol of love, of magic, of hope, and of passion, perfect to let your loved one

know how you feel about him or her! The rose represents ultimate beauty and perfection. It is the messenger of Romance!

A dozen red roses remains the classic Valentine's Day favorite (though chocolate may secretly be the more cherished gift). However, many women report that they adore roses in other colors just as much. There are hundreds of colors to choose from. The choices are endless and it's easier than ever to select a rose that is as unique as your sweetheart.

However you celebrate this Valentine's Day, we hope we've been able to shed a little light on its possible origins!

Eric is a friend to the rose growers at <http://www.rosefarm.com>. Permission to reprint given by creativehomemaking.com.

Pakistani Girl's Talent Nurtured

13-year-old Arfa Randhawa continues to develop her gift with computers

By MASOOMA HAQ
Epoch Times Staff

LAHORE, Pakistan—Many people with a Microsoft Professional Certificate are in their 20s, with the exception of Arfa Randhawa. In 2004, the young girl who lives in Pakistan made international news when she earned the certificate at the age of nine.

Arfa's achievement was so unusual that it set her apart from the majority of young girls in the world, let alone Pakistan—a country where over 50 percent of young girls her age are illiterate. At the same time, Arfa's success is also a testament to her family who saw her abilities and nurtured them.

Now 13, Arfa remains a very confident and articulate person. She welcomed me into her family's living room in Lahore, where we sat down to chat about her success and future plans.

According to her grandmother, when Arfa was two-and-a-half she could memorize written and spoken passages in different languages. At the age of eight, her father noticed she was able to do extremely advanced tasks on the computer, like operate Microsoft Office fluently. He took her to the local computer institute in her home city of Faisalabad, APTECH (Applied Technologies) Computer Institute.

At the Institute, her talent was quickly recognized and soon she was teaching other, older students basic computer language. In 2004, a teacher, Mr. Sohail, encouraged Arfa, who was nine at the time, to take her first exam to get a Microsoft Professional Certificate.

As news spread about her achievement she was invited to visit Microsoft's headquarters in Redmond, Washington, where she met Bill Gates. She was interviewed by many international news agencies and received numerous prestigious awards at home.

After meeting Arfa, Mr. Somasegar, Senior Vice President, Developer Division at Microsoft, wrote about Arfa on his blog. "I had a lot of fun in meeting Arfa and getting a chance to understand what motivated her to strive for such an accomplishment at such a young age," reads Mr. Somasegar's blog. "My hat's off to Arfa's parents for nurturing her passion and talent and providing her with opportunities to learn and excel."

Arfa's parents were indeed instrumental in more ways than one in helping her to develop her talents with computers. Arfa's mother, Mrs. Randhawa, exudes an air of calm and determination, especially when it comes to her children.

"I don't work outside the home, but am devoted to meeting the needs of all three of our children so they can reach their highest potential," says Mrs. Randhawa.

Mrs. Randhawa shares that she used to drive Arfa one hour each way from Rawalpindi to Pakistan's capital city of Islamabad so she could attend school. In order to save money and put it toward her children's education, she chose to drive the children herself. In Pakistan, most women don't drive such long distances and are more likely to employ a driver.

Arfa's father has sold much of their property to pay for Arfa's education. He also recently retired from the Pakistani military so the family can be in a position to immigrate to Canada for the sake of their children's education.

Leaving Pakistan is not Arfa or her family's first choice, but they understand that Arfa and her brothers need resources and an environment that will help them develop their talents. They feel that the quality of education, for the most part, is not as good in Pakistan, as in the United States, nor is it recognized internationally.

"Gifted children need to be

challenged, otherwise they will get bored and [get] into negative things," says Arfa.

"Pakistanis are not bad people, they are just not farsighted," comments Arfa on her thoughts about why the Pakistani government has not supported her financially or otherwise. Mrs. Randhawa thinks Pakistan, as a nation does not understand the importance of nurturing and supporting talented youth and what it can mean for the country's success.

Arfa is on a fast track to finish her high school degree in Pakistan, and then she hopes to attend MIT or Harvard University in the United States.

She now wants a mentor, like her parents and her earlier teacher, Mr. Sohail at APTECH, to guide her on the rest of her professional journey.

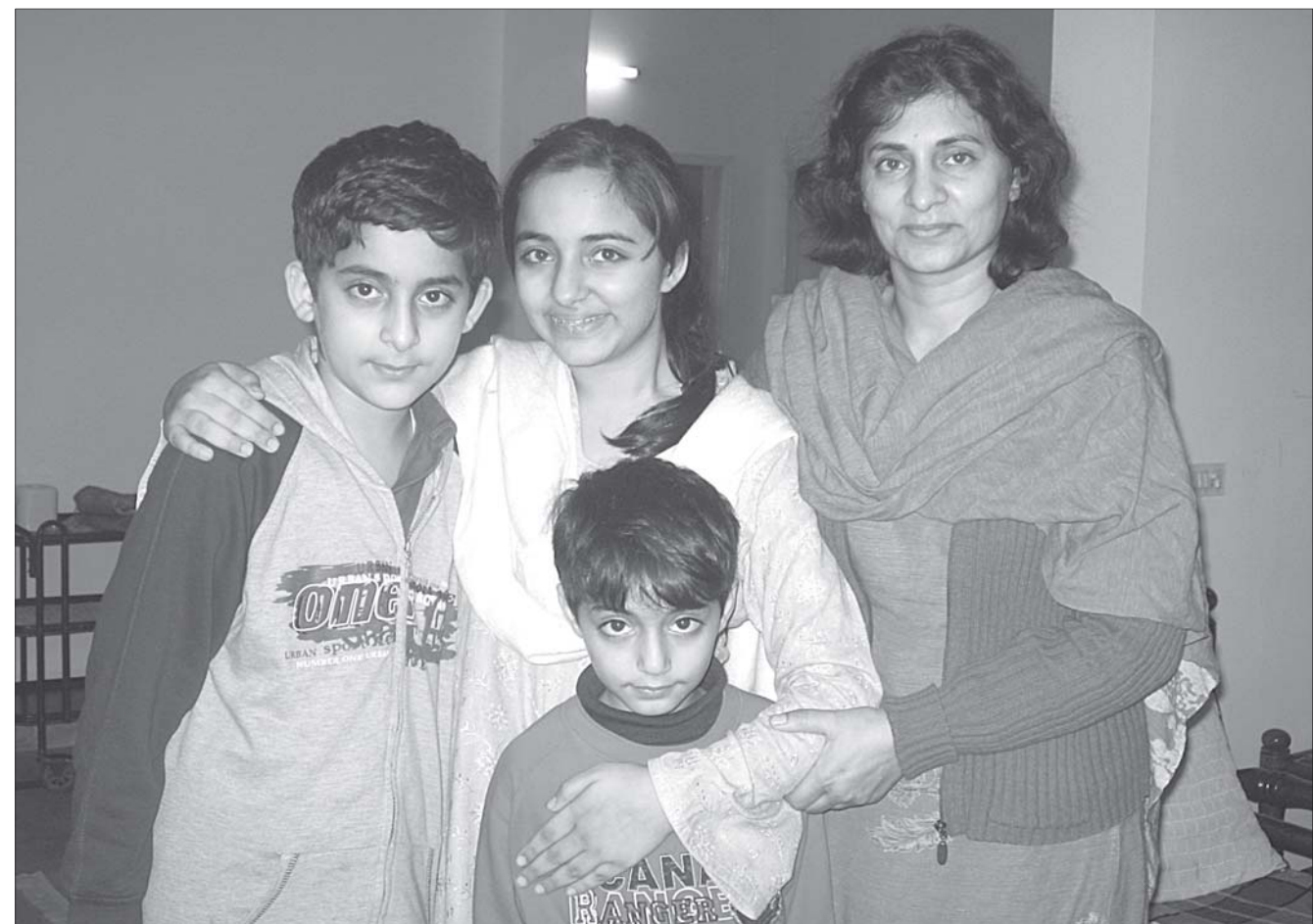
"I need polishing, like a black diamond needs polishing so its true beauty can be seen," exclaims Arfa.

Arfa also says she wants to use her talents to better humanity.

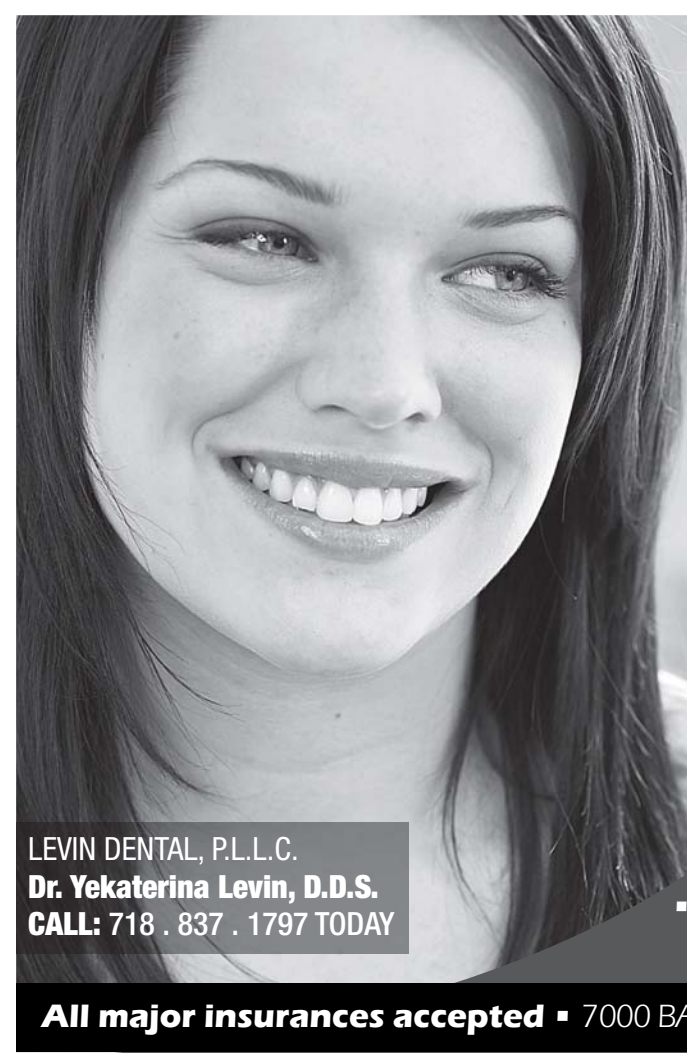
"My aim is to get into a position that can enable me to help the people, especially the children of Pakistan," states Arfa.

In fact, the Randhawa family has already begun to help Pakistani children. Arfa and her parents started a nonprofit organization called The Arfa Kiram Welfare Foundation in her family's village, near the city of Faisalabad. The foundation provides computer education to young school-aged girls, and has a fully equipped computer lab run by a female teacher at the local girls' high school.

Though Arfa's story is uncommon, it is not hard to imagine that there are many more potential girls and boys in Pakistan that might blossom if given a nurturing environment, resources, and family that recognizes and supports their talent.



NURTURING FAMILY: Arfa Randhawa's family: her brother, Sarmad, Arfa, her mother, Samina Amjad, and her brother, Dawood. Mr. Randhawa was at work at the time of the interview. MASOOMA HAQ/THE EPOCH TIMES



Because you never know who's gonna fall in love with your smile.

Let my 15 yrs. of experience enhance your smile

We cover all aspects of general dentistry

- Fillings ▪ Root canals
- Crowns & bridges
- Denture ▪ Gum Treatment
- **1 hr. teeth whitening**

Say NO to toothaches

- Painless dentistry ▪ Friendly environment
- Kids and adults welcome ▪ Located in a modern office in the heart of Bensonhurst

LEVIN DENTAL, P.L.L.C.
Dr. Yekaterina Levin, D.D.S.
CALL: 718 . 837 . 1797 TODAY

All major insurances accepted ▪ 7000 BAY PARKWAY SUITE 'C' BROOKLYN, NY 11204