



A Story of Success

Kamu squeezed into the tiny room for one final class. Tomorrow would be her graduation, and today she had the task of sewing her very own graduation uniform. Five treadle sewing machines lined the walls with the fifth in the center, and Kamu immediately took her seat at the one in the far corner.

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What should I create? What goes on a graduation uniform?

She had asked the same question many times to those around her, both teachers and students, but they had all told her to make something that reflected who she was. So, Kamu quit worrying and started to measure out a design that had been in her head from day one. First, she measured and drew out the design in her sample book then, once she was satisfied, on a large swatch of cloth she had taken and measured from the materials at hand.

Blue, that would work best. A bright blue Sari with designs in bold black across the front. Yes, I like that. But what will the designs be?

She continued working like this until she had marked up where she needed to cut the fabric and again where each design would go on the front. It took her and the others many hours, but finally, Kamu and her classmates had graduation clothes.

I cannot wait to wear this!

She folded up the sari with de-

liberate care and made the short trek back to her home of the village square.



Tomorrow is the day! I cannot wait!

Morning came and, striding confidently, she wore her sky-blue sari as the students-turned-graduates gathered in front of the school building. Four months had passed since the day they began and now, the time had come. They stood in a row, all colors of the rainbow, and waited with some expectation as the teacher and master tailor stood in the square facing them.

He looked somber as he stood there before them, and then a broad smile broke across his face. “You all know

why we're here today. It's graduation!"

They all cheered, and Kamu joined in with them.

"Yes! Celebrate! Each one of you has excelled in the designs given you from baby clothes to the beautiful work each of you has put into their graduation saris. We have certificates for all of you. Please step forward when I call your name. Kamu..."

I cannot believe it! I'm first! Me!

Kamu stepped forward and looked at the beautiful, wonderful piece of paper with her name spelled across the front. With all she had learned, displays of her

room with five rented sewing machines fitting inside. Our students are super excited when the time comes for graduation, in part because they

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learned enough to work as a tailor or seamstress, but also because they get to design and sew their very own unique graduation uniform. The varied colors and designs worn at graduation are a testament to



the skills they have learned and a mark of pride to them and their community. These ceremonies are a joyful time, and we get to be a part of one every four months!

The students keep their sample books and decorate them on the outside cover with strips of cloth and fun designs. These books are used by each woman to show to tailors for steady jobs or for showing at any street corner to sell their clothes. Tailoring is a skill allowed to all low and middle caste and so provides a unique opportunity to teach the low caste and give them a skill that can raise them out of poverty. One of our women went through the course five years ago and now has a thriving tailoring shop and business. She uses treadle sewing machines bought in India, which are produced in-country.

Written by, Michael Eash



quality of work like her sari, and the sample book she would be allowed to keep with all her designs, the future was looking much brighter.

Our tailoring schools usually take the form of a borrowed or rented

