

Pratima Bahadur



MEMORIES DOWN THE LANE

We often hear people say that the childhood years were the best years of one's life. It has undoubtedly been the same for me since our association, with Prem Dan which we lovingly call the Garden School. I can vividly reminisce my classroom environment as a student in standard II with Ms. Fernandes as my class teacher.

I always looked forward to coming to the Garden School early in the morning for that mug of hot milk and relishing croissant breads. My teachers were simply awesome. They always made us thorough with our phonetics and that helped me sharpen my speech as most of us came from lower middle class backgrounds with parents who spoke Hindi or the mother tongue.

During those early years, the Garden School was limited to Std. II and from there on the journey began in going to elite Convent schools where only a handful of us got an opportunity and would otherwise only have dared to dream.

How could I forget to mention the pioneer behind this wonderful school, our dear Mother Felicity who shaped and moulded us to make the individuals we are today.

Mother Felicity provided me with everything that was required for a child to take to the school on my first day. She became my guardian from there on. I continued my studies at St. Anne's High School, and Convent of Jesus and Mary. Mother provided us with sponsors so that the expense of tuition fees would not fall on our parents. She arranged for a tutor to aid me in my studies. Mother also provided us with nourishing food and showered her affections on all those who sought motherly love.

Years rolled by and suddenly we grew up to be teenagers. Most of us were living in a single room which was approximately 150 to 200 square feet. Mother Felicity knew the difficulties we faced and hence provided us with accommodation in her Convent. Mother Felicity was a strict disciplinarian. We stayed in the Convent as boarders, so time management was essential. I also realised the importance of prayers. I gradually learnt to say my rosary before going to attend Sunday Mass. For me the Garden School was a home away from home. I spent 15 years of my blissful life there.

The Garden School touched the lives of many people and has given a platform to thousands of under privileged children. I was the chosen one to be part of this beautiful institution by God and I thank Him and Mother Felicity for their blessings in all my endeavours.

My vocation as a teacher had taught me to be humble and kind towards the poor, not forgetting my old mates - my Garden School which has embraced me with love and compassion and made me the person I am today.