

## **Class of '82 (1)**

### **Udgam School for Children**

I joined Udgam School for Children sometime in 1970, and completed my junior KG from here before shifting to two convent schools for a couple of years, only to return back to Udgam to finish my middle and high school.

My first ever teacher was Arniben Unwala. All I can remember of her from this time is her arm up my dress caressing my back. It was a very warm feeling and a comforting one for an only child at that point and away from Mum and Dad for the first time. Clear in mind are also the sessions of peeling boiled potatoes, which were later, used in our “nasta”. The second teacher who remained in mind was Mafatbhai the arts teacher; he would line us up at the back or side of the school with our individual easels, big aprons and long brushes. On the easel would be newsprint paper on which we were made to paint lines, my start to a life long affair with art.

At the time it was just fun peeling the warm potatoes and getting sticky fingers. The pedagogy / psychology of it was totally lost on me, or probably many more children before and after me who carried on this tradition at school.

I still have my first ever report card, which remained pretty much the same for many years to come. A card folder with loose pages within held together by a kind of shoelace. An Udgam report card is incomplete without Dr. Somabhai Patel's medical examination, everyone must have this remark: eat more green vegetables & fruits. The examination was simple and involved a “nasta” spoon in your mouth, a look in the eyes, a stethoscope and pulse monitoring. The boys had to go behind a screen for some reason and they dreaded the medical examination the most.

The report used to be quite descriptive. It reported a child's physical development, personal cleanliness and eating habits. Further it described what one's muscle training is all about, sensorial development, preferences and the domestic chores one can perform. Looking at it now it is like a fortune forecaster of the person I was to become.

## **Class of '82 (2)**

### **Udgam School for Children**

I returned to Udgam sometime in 1974, joining midway the 4<sup>th</sup> std., which was deep in preparations for the Annual Function. I seemed to attract a lot of attention from my seniors as I was the “Bombay returned” and still in my Convent of Jesus & Mary uniform. Everyday I got thrown out of the queue after assembly heading back to the class by Rama, the class monitor for being out of uniform.

By then the class was already divided into Gujju class kids and the special Hindi class kids. The first sorting out factor being BOY & GIRL.

My first friend Priya Bannerjee, the class diva who had starred until my arrival as the main attraction of every play, and now in the role of Cinderella.

The school was a compact building that somehow managed to cover the needs of an educational institute and substitute as a second home as well. The constant over the years has been the Jungle Jim standing in the middle of the sandpit. “You ain’t been to Udgam if you ain’t been on the Jungle Jim,” it could have been the school motto and logo and everyone would have recognised it as such.

Some years the pond with gold fish and lotus blooms in front would be central and then again covered up for another couple of years. At such times assembly service would move to the back of the building where finally it was to stay with the building of a permanent stage maybe around 77-79.

By this time my younger brother and mother had also joined the school, we avoided each other completely except when the canteen had something irresistible and access to cash necessitated approach.

I was also re-introduced to my first ever teacher Arniben, who I now discovered had the ability to shout / scream loud enough to shake anybody out of coma.

My class was an amazing lot of boys and girls. At this tender age there were clear groups formed amongst the girls. You had the Misha – Chaula gang. The Priya group which was essentially those of us who attended special Hindi and then a group of the silent one’s who did not come into their own till much later. The boys were a more cohesive lot. The one thing we all loved was a performance of “inhi logo ne” by Mangesh. I was called “Gauri the dreamer” after a story already covered by the time I joined school.

### **Class of '82 (3)**

#### **Udgam School for Children**

Having joined mid-way and preparations for the Annual function being on in earnest I had to find a role for myself. Since I had never been exposed to the “garba” or “raas” there was no chance of joining in. So Cinderella was where I went. I bagged the role of the messenger who took the shoe around town trying to find the princess who had lost it at the ball. I also doubled up as a member of the ball and helped many a classmate get their waltz and cha cha cha steps right. Practise was mainly near the front gate and the final performance at Tagore hall.

My task was to blow on a bugle and announce the presence of the shoe for trial. It was a small but great role and it got me on stage. Until then I had always been a choir person and had rarely gone on stage, whenever I did something went terribly wrong. In those days I was terribly shy and suffered from incredible stage fright making me forget my lines. This got me my confidence and also some position within the class hierarchy.

In those days we had two big built kids in the class, Jigisha and Raghvendra. After some concurrence with Raghvendra I can give a run down of the star cast. Renu Premchandani was queen to Jigisha the king. Their courtiers included Premal, Raghvendra and Vishwanath (the last still a clear memory for Raghvendra, because Vishwanath used his rouge and his second bow tie). According to our memories

Anisha and Reena played the two stepsisters (Vivek one of the beau's, probably his twin Reena's) and Mangesh was the Prince for Priya as Cinderella.

Another member from the play who is clear in my mind's eye was Dharmain, also the son of a teacher, incredibly shy and with eyesight problems. He always wore glasses, one eye covered completely by a kerchief, like a pirate. We were the two pages taking around the precious glass slipper.

Thereafter, we did many plays, skits and dances over the years. Went on stage at the Tagore, Jay Shankar Sundari & Premabhai Hall but also under the tree at school. We played in the school band often performing for the governor as one of the best school bands in the city.

Often ego's clashed and like all children we shifted loyalties from friend to friend. Some old one's left and new one's took their place, yet when one looks back it is amazing how many details you can still remember. And collectively quite a large part of the jigsaw can be put together.

Jigisha, was one of my first friends who left school sometime in the 5<sup>th</sup> Std. following her father's sudden demise and Raghvendra with whom I was often teased in school has become my best buddy.

**Class of '82 (4)**  
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