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As I look back at life in the rear view mirror, I see with clarity what I already know in my heart - my school years are the firm foundation on which I have built my life.

The gift of knowledge is the greatest gift. Late Shri G.D Birla has left a legacy and gift of learning that is unique and impactful. Vidyapeeth's '*Vidya Vinayen Shobhate*' embodies the spirit of education in both depth and breadth.

The exposure our school gave us to both science and the arts opened up our young minds to the possibilities the world has to offer. We learned maths and science by hands-on experiments at our labs. We read great literature, learned to appreciate poetry, and became fluent in multiple languages. Every effort was made to teach the right things and to teach them right. I still think about the documentary *Walter and Connie* series that taught us how to speak English with the correct diction.

There was an endless choice of extracurricular activities for us to participate in: various sports, NCC, Marching Band we were so proud to be a part of we would not want to miss a single day of practice. How proud we were to represent our school and the state in the Republic Day Parade!

We learnt instrumental music and played in orchestras and bands. We learned classical dance forms and sang. We put on amazing performances, used our creativity to organize sets for plays and colourful and spirited folk dances that took one's breath away. Every time I see a Broadway show, I marvel at what we achieved with our limited resources and am filled with renewed appreciation for the Dance Dramas, classical and folk dances that were choreographed at our school.

Our school had a diverse population of children from various states and religious backgrounds. We learned acceptance and appreciation of all cultures, to respect differences and to appreciate diversity. We understood through example and experience that there can be oneness in diversity. We learned to overcome differences amicably and find middle ground. We celebrated the small joys in life – festivals, birthdays and singing songs together loudly and joyously on our school bus rides with not a care in the world! We forged deep bonds of friendship and trust that have lasted us a lifetime and are our support system in facing the vagaries of life.

These experiences have helped us to integrate well, build bridges, make friends and achieve success no matter where we are in the world. We learnt the subliminal lessons that are so important- team work, passion for doing something well, perseverance, being in the moment - the key ingredients of success and happiness in life.

Our rich and varied school experience has helped shape who we have become as adults - socially conscious, kind, hardworking, confident, willing to push the envelope and unafraid to explore un-chartered territories.

I remember my venerable teachers worthy of respect, with gratitude and love, who made a positive and lasting impact on my life and I am sure countless others. I owe much of what I am today to my teachers - my gurus - my school.

My joy for learning has remained with me and flourished, making my quest for knowledge a lifelong one. My dear school has given me wings to fly as high as my quest for learning will take me. So today while I provide direction for Software Engineering and Cyber Security at work, teaching, learning and growing every day, I also continue to build cultural bridges by sharing the joy of our rich cultural heritage through dance performances, to audiences in Corporate America.