Moments For Life

A Memoir by Senior,
Shikha Gupta
INTRODUCTION

My life, now, has more meaning to it because of the people who I have had many experiences with. My friends and family have inspired me to become a better person everyday and I owe them as much as they have given me to help me succeed and be on the path I am today. I have moved around a lot due to the circumstances in my life, however this has taught me how to get along with various types of people as well as adjust to all kinds of environments. After coming to America and living with my mother, I have learned to be confidant in any work that I do. Moreover, when I was enrolled in Jain International Residential School (JIRS), I learnt the true meaning of friendship. To this day, I hold all of my friends to the highest regard and do not take our relationship for granted. Because of past experiences that have shaped my life, I have grown to accept any and all challenges that come my way. I chose to write about my years in boarding school for this memoir as that is the sole reason I have been able to achieve many great qualities in life. It has taught me a handful of things and if it wasn’t for that school, I probably would never have been this strong, independent, bold and out-going. As you can tell, it has really had a huge impact on me and I appreciate this opportunity to share it with you. I hope you feel the same connection through my writing as I did with the school.
CHAPTER 2

ONE LIFE, ONE LOVE, ONE JIRS

I was twelve when my parents enrolled me into Jain International Residential School, a private residential school in Bangalore, India, to bring some consistency and stability in my education. The three years that I spent in Jain International have had the greatest impact on my life. The school’s goal is to prepare students to be leaders with mental and physical toughness and to excel both in academics and extracurricular activities. The school’s environment is also highly challenging and competitive. The campus life is outstanding and the student-oriented facilities are world class. All of this has helped me gain immense knowledge and has made me a strong and independent woman today.

Living in a boarding school has taught me a lot of things. I learned how to play a variety of sports - excelling in tennis, badminton, swimming and bowling. Staying in dorms with kids from different parts of the world, I learned the art of sharing, giving, and helping. Having teachers, wardens and counselors constantly looking over us and being there for
us whenever we needed them really gave us the confidence we needed to take risks and chances even though we were away from our parents.

The School provides us with World-Class facilities in many areas. The sprawling 350 acre campus, with 160 acres devoted solely to sports, provides an amalgamation of more than 30 playing areas for almost all major indoor and outdoor games giving the school sports a dominant appearance. The indoor stadium houses several badminton courts which is where I would find one of my very close friends all the time. He was a national level badminton player. He spent most of his free time playing badminton and he is the reason I am such a good badminton player today. I would play a game that went on for hours every Saturday while holding normal and important conversations with him. Those courts are very special to me as I felt I could connect with him on a different level when we were on it talking to each other. The Bowling Alley was like my "getaway." I would go there anytime I felt like as it made me really happy. I LOVE to bowl and being on the national level team in school made me feel really proud of myself. With a score of 244, I had the second highest score among all girls in the whole school! I was surprised myself when I found this out but I knew that I had earned it.

The campus also has 4 Olympic size swimming pools – children’s pool, one 8 lane 25 meter pool, one 8 lane 50 meter pool and one diving pool. I used to be a good swimmer when I was younger. As I got older, the smell of chlorine started getting to me and I didn’t swim as often. During one of the competitions, I volunteered for my team to take part in a swimming competition as one of the other members fell sick and dropped out. This changed my life at JIRS drastically. At the competition, I had won 1st and 3rd place. Weird? I know. I was confused too. I had participated in the backstroke category.
According to the rules, at the end of a backstroke, you are supposed to do a flip and end normally (as in right side up) for it to be counted as a complete stroke. I did not know that and neither did any of the other 3 competitors. So, the people who came first and second got disqualified as they didn’t finish the stroke ‘completely’, which put me (having come in 3rd) into 1st position. I was really confused about what they were talking about as I didn’t know I was doing a flip at the end. According to me, I was just turning over. But anyways, my win got me a spot on the school’s swim team which just added to my social life and my list of extracurricular activities. At this point I was on the school’s bowling team, swim team, dance team, tennis team and throw ball team. It certainly was a pleasurable of activities to handle, but I enjoyed every bit of it.

An important characteristic of JIRS is that, it believes in the fact that good education can be derived by playing sports. We were made to follow an everyday routine that required us to wake up at 5:30 in the morning with sports and end at 8:30 with dinner. Our days were long but the activities were spread out. Breakfast was at the same time for everybody. The best part about the food system at our school was that there would always be a variety of items to choose from for every meal and none of it would be repeated during the week thanks to the wonderful buffet system our school followed.
Also, since we were living in a boarding school, we would never get any homework! The nights were very relaxing after such long days like that!

In addition, to the astounding first-class sports facilities provided for us, there are also other entertainment resources that are open to the children of JIRS. One popular selling point of the school is that we had our very own movie theater! Every Saturday night, our dinner was held an hour earlier as after dinner, we would all go watch a movie! JIRS offered various kinds of pizza for dinner and the movies that were shown would be one of the very latest. Saturday nights were very relaxing as our weeks were so long, stressful and hectic. Our school celebrated every festival in every religion due to which there would be a celebration almost every month and sometimes even two-three times a month! There would always be some kind of competition for every event that is held giving us a reason to constantly be up on our feet and moving around. For big events there would be dance competitions that would keep us busy with rehearsals for a week at times. Other times we had singing competitions, talent shows, and a variety of other performances that allowed for children to focus on other things other than books or sports. This really helped me in coming out and participating in many activities as I love to dance and would never miss an opportunity to do so.

With providing wonderful facilities and spoon-feeding us with opportunities to grow and succeed how can one not fall in love with a school like this? There are so many things I have done in life but I can say that this is one of my greatest and most memorable experiences. I have made use of every facility and have taken every opportunity given to me at that school because of which I have become the person I am today. If it weren’t for JIRS, I would still be that little girl who shies away from many
things in life, not taking risks or chances of any sort. I don't see why someone wouldn't enjoy living in a resort like that. If given a chance, I would definitely go back and relive every moment all over again. Two things that still remain with me from my days in boarding school are the many tear-jerking memories that were created and most importantly, my friends—my JIRS family.
A Glog of some of the most important people in my life.

PLEASE CLICK HERE FIRST
The good thing about boarding school is that it is really easy to make friends. Everyone has a welcoming and friendly nature that fitting-in isn’t an issue for anybody (even if they join in halfway through the year!). The thought of boarding school can be pretty intimidating to some, especially to international students like me, but with the help of teachers and matrons everything becomes easy. Making friends was a little challenging at first, there were so many people from so many different parts of the world that I didn’t know who I should approach first and what they would think of me. The first people I spoke to were my roommates. There were four of us in one room. This was their second year in the school so they obviously were more settled in than I was. All of them were already friends from last year and I was the “new girl” in the grade.

The first year went by quickly in getting used to the idea of boarding school and understanding what it was like to make friends that you want to be around day in and day out. We used to hear the words “choose your friends wisely” A LOT. As the years went by, the relationships with my fellow classmates got stronger. Our grade was very united so everything we did, we did it together. Initially there were many little groups of friends but towards the end of the year, we all would get together and enjoy our last few days as a class. This taught us a lot about the other people and what kind of person they were. I learned how manipulative people can be and how there are some who would go to great extents to get what they want.

Among all the different people I have met, there were some that got very close to my heart. For example, in the picture in which my friend and I are standing head to head, you can tell that there is something more to us than just friendship. I met her in boarding school. She is from Virginia and I was from Ohio (at the time). She was there
only for a year, in fact not even for a full year (she came a month or so after school began). We got introduced to each other as she was the new girl in my dorm and I was asked to show her around and make her feel comfortable. The first day we spoke, I showed her around school, introduced her to other children in her grade (she is two years older than me) and told stories about the school. Soon, I found out that she is also from America and that she spoke the same Indian language as I did! We felt the connection immediately. Moving forward, our relationship got deeper and deeper and before we knew it, we became sisters. We were inseparable. She was with me through my ninth grade and left at the end of the school year. Tenth grade was going to be impossible without her. It was just as hard as I had thought, but I made it through. Now she is a sophomore in Virginia Commonwealth University and is working her way to becoming a doctor.

That school has taught me many “survival skills” and how to be independent. I’m sure many of you have heard the saying “your friends define who you are.” Well, yeah, that was another thing we heard every so often. It took me a while before I knew who my real friends were - friends who were closest to my heart and friends who would do as much for me as I would do for them and more. Friendships are hard to make but easy to break. That’s one thing I learnt very well in boarding school. What’s most difficult is staying strong and holding your head up high. But lucky enough for me, I never had any major issues with anybody at that school. I was friends with everyone and developed a close relationship with each of them in a different way.

I love the friends I made at JIRS. They are like my family and will remain close to my heart forever. Things happen when you don’t want them to, but just like always, the show goes
on. It's been two years since I have left that school and I am still in touch with all my friends. Our friendship hasn't died even a slightest bit. It has only gotten better by the day. This was proved to me when one of my closest friends told me that she was coming to America for her college just so she could be close to me again. She had been my roommate in my last year at JIRS and was one of my closest friends for all three years. If something were to happen to me, I can close my eyes and say that my friends will always be there for me whenever I need them. They all have a special place in my heart and that will never change.
EPilogue

My past experiences have been life changing. Some of them have even helped me shape who I am to this day. I've learned to stand up tall and be strong. The memories made, the friends created and the lessons learned will never be forgotten as they all have a special place in my heart. I am very thankful to my parents for giving me everything they have and getting me to the place I am now with a lot of love and support. As life goes on I'm starting to learn more and more about responsibility and I realize that everything I do is affecting the people around me. So as senior at Ridge High School, I reminisce on the things that I have done and look forward to the things that haven't occurred yet. The next four years of my life will be spent at Rutgers University studying something that I have loved ever since I was a little girl; Computer Science. To all those who have left a hand print on my heart, thank you all so much and I wouldn't have got where I am today if it wasn't for each and every one of you. I have gotten so much in life I just can't wait to give back. Thank You.

The End