



PRAVEEN N.

I am Praveen an alumnus of Jyothiseva School for the visually impaired. I was born to a middle-class family In Bangalore the capital of the southern Indian state of Karnataka. It was a bit of a jolt to my parents when they realized that their last child (that is myself) was a visually impaired. My mother was sensible enough to seek the opinion of several doctors with regard to my disability and she was told that my case (defect in the optic nerve) was beyond any medical cure at that time and it is still the same now as well.

I was sent to school at the age of three and for nearly seven years, there was nothing significant in my student life.

In fact, in one of the well-known schools in Bangalore, I was considered a failed case (mentally retarded) and thanks to them, I was fortunate enough to move to Jyothiseva School for the visually impaired for my studies.

Ever since I joined this school, I have never looked back, I have gone on achieving many things and I have tasted success both academically and culturally.

Jyothiseva is a residential school run by the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross.

From my experience, this is the only school that contributes to all-round development of a visually impaired person and I'm proud to say that I have been lucky enough to be counted among such persons!

Considering the ignorance of most parents of the visually impaired in India, schools play a vital role in the child's up-bringing and Jyothiseva has done a commendable work in this regard.

A typical blind child when he or she comes to a school like Jyothiseva will actually be lacking in many things.

Love and understanding from the parents; low level of confidence due to the discouraging tendencies around the child's family, Loneliness due to the lack of friends or siblings who could be the child's best companions if the child was able to see; and many such other factors make the child feel un-accepted among the people in the main-stream society.

So, the first and the most difficult thing is assure the child that he or she is acceptable to everyone and despite the visual impairment, there are people who would still be there to love the child.

My school made me feel loved, and acceptable in spite of the difficult childhood I had prior to coming to this school.

In fact, the sisters instilled in me an amazing sense of self-belief and confidence which has made me today whatever I am, (a banker and a musician!)

I was taught that being educated does not mean only knowing how to read and write, but it also means that we should know how to distinguish between what is right and wrong.

I studied in Jyothiseva for eight years up to my matriculation.

The sisters and teachers gave their best to mould me into a better human being keeping in mind the fact that the ultimate purpose of education is to make us all better human beings.

The sisters and teachers also stressed on the importance of working hard at what ever we do. This was quite an important lesson because being brilliant is one thing, but if we work hard, then even the poorest student will be able to do well in life.

Apart from regular schooling, I was also provided with opportunities to excel in other activities as well.

I took piano lessons, and I also received exposure to western classical music.

I'm still continuing my piano lessons and the sisters have been kind enough to let me practice though I'm not a student any more.

I very recently sat through the 4th grade piano exam and passed out with a distinction securing 90 percent.

The sisters realized my passion for acting and I was given a chance to act in some of the popular plays like Mr Scrooge, little prince and Sound of music.

In whichever roles I have acted, they have all moulded me in to a better character and I must thank the sisters for having confidence in me that I could act some of the most difficult characters.

I matriculated in the year 2006 with high first class (80%) and it was time for me to step out into the world.

Since I had the advantage of studying in an integrated school IE studying with the sighted children, I managed to mingle well with other students in the college.

I completed my college education that is up to my graduation at ST. Josephs College Bangalore and I graduated with first class.

One of the major challenges that a visually impaired has to put up with is that the kinds of attitudes teachers and students have toward us. All I can say is that it is in our hands to change people's attitudes by actively engaging with the main-stream world which can only be possible by bringing awareness about the visually impaired community.

At present I'm working for a public sector bank (State bank of Mysore) as a clerk. I deal with loan defaulters, handle complaints and prevent them from further escalation, marketing the loan products, and guiding the customers.

I'm provided with a computer and I manage to do most of the things using the screen-reader with some exceptions like cash transactions and paper work. Prior to this, I worked for a private education consultancy as an online coordinator and it was quite an exciting work!

I have a great desire to be a pianist, and I have been working hard in this Endeavour.

The sisters are still helping me to achieve this cherished wish of mine.

I must also confess that I do love teaching the little children of my school and the sisters have been kind enough to let me share my musical talents with them.

I train the Junior choir and I still sing in our institution choir.

I have gained a lot from my school which has made me a valuable citizen of my country. I'm in a position to give back to my school and the society in general whatever I can to the best of my ability.

My ardent wish is that my school which has given me so much should outlive me and that it should continue to nurture many more students to make them useful and burdenless members of the society for generations to come.



Received two awards: Rachel Morgan Junior Pianist Award & Kawai Promising Pianist Award.