

Respected Principal, Teachers & Old Boys,

Old students are an integral part of any institution, especially in a residential school like Birla Public School, Pilani. Today, as we have stepped out into a larger world, we cherish the time spent there all the more. In fact, Vidya Niketan was like a second home for us. Starting off, with such elementary things like tying our shoelaces to unfolding and appreciating the mysteries of various subjects under the watchful guidance of our teachers, BPS was and still is more than a family.

Among the many, those who have spent their best part of their life in this school; I too, spent the most cherished moments of my life in this institution. Needless to say, our dedication, sentiments and commitment towards this institution have been unflinching. Whenever any crisis looms over the institution we have always jumped to its aid. We have always done and we will always do it. Only time, stands testimony to our commitment and sincerity towards the growth of this institution.

In order, that this institution develops and reaches its optimal potential we have been offering our suggestions to the school in various areas. Old students in the past & me personally for the past 13 years at least, have been constantly offering our suggestions to improve the infrastructure, ranging from mess facilities, basic sanitation and hygiene, hostel amenities and much more. Our concern for this institution is paramount. Assuming the role of elderly family members we have shared our knowledge and acted as the medium of communication between the authorities and the students. We have, as always, shared our experiences to solve the riddles of their age and have tried to help them in ways more than one.

Not content, with all the above, we have tried to organize get-togethers and functions like Silver Jubilee, Golden Jubilee, Old Boys' Day and likewise to further strengthen the threads which have held this institution through time. Like any good boarding school, in order, that we may never forget the time that we so cheerfully spent here we had prepared souvenirs and memorabilia in the Golden Jubilee Year to remind us of those unforgettable moments when we pass out. On suggestions of the students and approval from the Principal we got some souvenirs in the form of T. Shirts & Caps made for the school which were kept in the school Tuck-shop. After about 6 months we were told to take back the Souvenirs as the management had not approved the same.

Indeed, it is very disheartening to see that our sincere efforts in cultivating pride among the BPS community have met with such wanton treatment. Instances like, asking the Old Boys to take back the souvenirs and mementos, workstations (gifted by the 1982 batch on the occasion of their Silver Jubilee) lying disused have all added a pall of gloom over the enthusiastic approach of the Old Boy's community for the development of this institution.

So much so that the school has not even respected its former teachers by a small gesture of remembering them on the functions like Annual Days, Silver, Golden and Diamond Jubilee celebrations. On the occasion of Diamond Jubilee celebrations, when I asked for the addresses of the old teachers from the school, surprisingly, I was told that, the addresses which were more than about 10 years old are not available. Indeed, it is very disheartening to see that the links which bind the institution are slowly, but surely, becoming weak.

Most importantly, we all understand that a good financial health is one of the numerous factors which promote the growth of any organisation. In this aspect, we had suggested that the VINOBA membership fees be raised from Rs.500 to Rs.1000 and that it be made compulsory. As we are, more or less, all aware that reputed boarding schools like, Scindia School, Lawrence School, Sanawar and even some of the Sainik Schools have kept their membership fee above Rs. 1000/- After years of pursuance, several rounds of discussion & wait, it was made possible for which I am thankful to the authorities. In fact the funds so collected are only utilized for benefit of the School and its staff and nowhere else. VINOBA also wishes to start some scholarships, benefit programs etc. for the students and staff of BPS. I would like to request the authorities to give their consent and necessary approval for the above so that we may plan on the same lines.

Surprisingly, in spite of all that we have done eyebrows were raised questioning our commitment towards the institution. Rumors have been floated due to our enthusiastic participation in the development of our alma mater. Needless to say, it hurts immensely when our honesty and integrity is doubted. To question our credibility would be like questioning the identity of this institution.

I would like to highlight that, sometimes back when it was voluntary to become a member of VINOBA, it so happened that the House Masters or some teachers had influenced the Principal not to make certain students members of VINOBA because of some reasons best known to them. (In fact not more than 25%-to-30% students were being made members every year). However, as old boys, we think otherwise. Denying the membership of the Old Boys Association to an ex-student is not correct as we would be cultivating hatred in the mind of the students. A child might have misused his liberties in school but once he passes out of the school, the attitude always changes to one of repentance and the same student respects the teachers as well as the institution. Children are but children and it is for us to see how we tackle them in today's scenario. Moreover we always should learn to forgive.

Of late anonymous letters have been written to the authorities about the enthusiastic participation of the old boys in the development of the school. This, I would like to mention, is not a very commendable way to resolve miscommunications. It is rather appropriate to settle such matters through a democratic process. I am sure that, such processes would clear the mist of ambiguity between the concerned

parties. We must not overlook the fact that the future generation should not suffer. Rather, they should be proud to be a part of this institution.

Moreover, I would like to take this opportunity to focus on certain areas where my integrity has been questioned. On issues, presumably based on rumours my motives, behind such active interest in the development of my alma mater were queried on many occasions with complete disregard to my sentiments. However I bear no ill will against any and will never do so. But, I would like to remind the authorities concerned, that, I was and still am a VINIAN since 1964. Therefore, needless to say, anybody commenting on my love for this institution would have stayed for a shorter duration to doubt my integrity. At heart I am a VINIAN first. This can very well be gauged from the book on, "Life in boarding school", which I have been penning for quite sometime now, where the best part is dedicated to my times at BPS.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer a humble request to certain sections to refrain from any unethical politics which would discourage us from being an active participant in the development of this dear institution. After all, our prime concern is to watch the future generation of this institution command applause in their respective discipline in the years to follow.

As it is said Old Boys Associations are an asset to the Schools. It is true and numerous examples can be given of Mayo College, The Scindia School, The Daly College, Indore, RIMC-Dehradun and the list would go on. These schools share rich experiences of the Old Boys from various walks of life and positions. Old Boys from various walks of life take out time from their hectic schedule for the benefit of the school without considering their personal benefits. At no point, should an Old Boy's commitment towards this institution be made the subject of unethical controversy and discussion. As much as it pains an individual to be denied an active participation in his family so does the same happen to old students of BPS. This institution was and still is our second family. We are VINIANS first as always.

All good institutes need to change and keep pace with time. With changing times BPS also needs to change. We, being the members of VINOBA, were always there with suggestions and best practices, but unfortunately they were never heeded or taken seriously. One who doesn't change with time is left behind. During our times BPS was compared with the best of the boarding schools in the country and we need to uphold the legacy. The amount of exposure, the quality of infrastructure, the visibility of the school, the quality of the communication materials and a host of other things needs to improve over a period of time.

Over a period of time, the old students have gone into various walks of life and made a name for themselves in the administrative services, defense services or the high voltage corporate world. Old Students are always keen to share their experiences with the school and help the students and schools in the best possible manner. Old students are in the best position to provide a true and critical analysis

and suggestions to its alma Mater. Please feel free to approach us for any assistance. We shall all be honoured and go a step further to assist within our means.

We sincerely suggest the management of this institution, that the Old Students Association, VINOBA, should have some kind of representation in various committees of the school for its development. Needless to mention, the rich experience and vast knowledge of the old students would enhance immense benefits for the development of this institution. After all, the benefit of the future generations is of paramount importance.

Finally, I would like to offer my sincere apologies if I have hurt anybody anytime. My intentions as always would remain true to the VINIANS and the school.

Thank you and God Bless.

Yours Sincerely

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