

Hello everyone!

I'm Vishalakshi M. I want to tell you a little about myself and the relationship that I share with Shishu Mandir.

I was 6 years old, when I first joined the Shishu Mandir School. That day I consider to be the luckiest day of my life, because a lot of things could have gone haywire, if I had not been admitted at the Shishu Mandir School. When I was 8 years old, in 2006, I lost my mother. She committed suicide by setting herself on fire. She took this drastic step, because she was unable to bear the daily torture that she received from



my father, who was a drunkard and used to harass her every day. I have two siblings, one elder brother and a younger sister. Our mother's death affected all the three of us deeply. I still remember that night, when we were sleeping, and my mother and father got into a heated argument. My mother threatened to set herself on fire. It was not the first time she said this. She had said this several times, sometimes she would take all the three of us to the kitchen and used us to threaten our father. That day she was alone, because we were all sleeping. It was most unfortunate that she got burnt to that extent, when she actually did not intend to die, but actually only wanted to threaten my father. Even my father did not bother to stop her, because even he thought that, like usually, she was just threatening him. Since we all were sleeping in the hall that was right next to the kitchen, my dad saw the reflection of her burning on the television and heard her screams and panicked. My brother, sister and I woke up immediately hearing all the screams. We were all extremely scared, because we couldn't understand what was happening. We could only hear the screams of our mother in the fire, we couldn't even see her. Some neighbours who had heard the screaming, came to the house and took us to their house. They did not want us to see it. My relatives, who live on the same lane, immediately came to the house and rushed my mother to the hospital. The doctor said that she had suffered more than 75% of burns and hence could not survive.

After my mother's death I was called to Shishu Home, so I did not miss my family very much. But my brother and younger sister continued to stay with my father. Without any caring hand and with my father continuing to drink my brother soon dropped out of school, and even my sister's schooling became very irregular. My father married once again, because he wanted someone to take care of my brother and sister and of course also himself. But after the marriage my brother left the house and used to come home only once in a while. He was just 14 years old. A lot of problems arose between my stepmother and my sister, they always got into arguments, sometimes they even used to cook separately in the same house. None of my relatives was willing to offer any help in handling the situation. After the death of my mother, my father did not beat us, but he still continued to drink and nothing I said made him stop it, though I tried very hard. Still I liked my dad, I am not sure whether it was because he was the only parent I had at that time or because I did not have any strong memory of my mother anymore. I love my mother, because she did her best to protect us from our father's harassment every day. During the nights when my father sometimes threw us out of the house, she used to take us to a relative's house so that we did not have to stay on the street in the cold night. She put us in schools, because she wanted us to get education, so that we would not have to suffer like how she did. In 2012 my father passed away. After that even my sister came under the support of Shishu Mandir.

As I was already in Shishu Mandir School and Home, my sister was sent to another boarding school to complete her education. I was very happy that even my sister also was able to get education. Being clever as well as hardworking, she managed to get good results in spite of the irregularities and

sufferings in her earlier years under my father. I also worked hard and right now I am doing my bachelor's degree in the field of Microbiology, Chemistry, and Botany. I hope to do my master's degree as well.

From the age of 6 until now Shishu has always been with me. It is the place, where I learnt the meaning of 'family'. It is actually my family, my big family, and I am emotionally very much attached to the place and everyone in this family. Growing up in the Shishu Family I learnt that one need not be connected by blood to be a family, one needs to be in Shishu, and there one can experience the warmth and care of people who stand behind you through thick and thin. Shishu has taken care of all my needs and educational expenses. Moreover, it has taught me so many values of life. It has taught me that being a girl does not make me stand secondary to men, girls have equal rights as men. Shishu has taught me to be independent and work hard for the future. In fact, Shishu has given me everything I require to set my future right and I am trying to make the best use of this opportunity to come up in life and make Shishu and Mama, who has always been my inspiration, proud.

It's only because of Shishu that I can actually think of a future. If Shishu had not been there for me, I do not know where I would have landed up. Thus I would like to thank Mama and Shishu Mandir for being such a vital part of my life journey. I would also like to assure that, when it is my turn, when I have completed my education, I will definitely give back to the society, what I got from Shishu.