

Memories of Duke of Gloucester School, Nairobi: 1954-57

Much has happened in our lives in the past fifty years. It is not surprising therefore that memories of schooldays in Nairobi have been virtually obliterated. Only the most momentous events now struggle to surface against the powerful forces of aging.

For the first two or three years of my time there school ended at lunchtime and there being no on-site catering, pupils went home for the rest of the day. Some returned in the afternoon to play sports, facilities for which were limited to football, hockey and cricket. I was, and remain, probably the worst games player, and therefore spent more time watching or keeping the score for cricket than actually playing.

This was exclusively an Indian boys school but because of inadequate provision in their own schools, Indian girls were admitted to the sixth form from around 1956. It was about this time that the name of the school was changed from Indian High School to the Duke of Gloucester School and, on return from a visit to the UK, our principal, Mr Amar, told the school assembly that we were a grammar school, a term which did not mean anything to any of us.

When school hours were extended into the afternoon the pupils walked out and gathered on the playing field. To my consternation I was identified as the instigator of the rebellion, which I most definitely was not! However that is what I had to live with for the rest of my time and not even falling off the climbing frame and breaking my ankle badly brought forgiveness. Much time had to be spent in hospital but there was no great concern about me getting behind with my studies. I was thought to be a bright pupil, coming in the first three in annual examinations, with Vijay Ghai always coming first. But we were both pipped at the post in the finals (Cambridge Overseas School Certificate) by a middle order classmate. Many congratulations to him if he is reading this memoire.

My father, who was also the careers master, encouraged me to apply for bursaries with the East African Railways, where I had done a work experience placement, and the oil company Shell. Concurrently the East African Standard reported that local people of all races were to be permitted to apply for commissions in the King's African Rifles. I applied and was successful.

Was this a good school? In those days it was the only academic school. The other school for Indian boys in Nairobi was technical. So there was little choice. Education has come a long way since then.

Suresh