

Autobiography – Nazia Sondhi

I was born in Kenya and was brought to the UK when I was only six months old. Although I have had an upbringing in the UK I am very happy that was born in Kenya. I have always considered that Africa is quite unique and beautiful.

I have had quite a structured life and upbringing so to speak. What I mean by this is that I went to primary school, secondary school, sixth form college, one university, another for my masters and since then I have been working.

I don't have fond memories of my primary school experience. In fact I hated it. Looking back, I found it quite a culture shock. I still remember feeling different and inferior. I also don't think that I will ever forget my first lunch time. I hated the food! I guess I had never eaten English food before. I remember that the dinner lady was trying to coax me to eat and I just wouldn't. Then I started to eat a boiled egg and I was horrified that it was cold, because I had never eaten a cold egg before!

I also remember that my teachers were not very nice to me. I recall being told that I was not clever when I did not understand something. I was frequently told that I was naughty and I would often find myself wondering what I had done that was wrong!

My secondary school experience was a complete contrast. I absolutely loved it. I had excellent friends with a good set of teachers and, above all, I did really well. I know that my secondary school experience was a turning point, whereby, with the help of my teachers I became very confident. I still remember the day that it happened. It was a parents evening. I was preoccupied with my friends. It was always exciting to come to school in your own clothes. My parents had just sat down to talk to my science teacher, Mr Brockwell. He was an old man. I wasn't really listening to him, then all of a sudden I heard him say, that I had been noted to be one of those pupils that if I worked hard, I would be able to make it to university. I will never forget that. I couldn't believe it. I had such an inferiority complex that had been pushed at me at primary school, that I did not believe in myself and now I was hearing otherwise - and what did he say? That I had to work hard. And, you know what, I did!

After university, I had a number of different types of jobs. One of my most memorable was when I worked with abused children. These children no longer had a place in mainstream schooling due to their disruptive and sometimes violent behaviour. This was a really challenging time and at the end of each day I remember feeling really emotionally drained.

I think one of my most developmental moments was when a 14 year old girl wet herself in the class. As soon as she started, because it was so unexpected and sudden, once I had acknowledged my split second feeling of shock, I was about to speak to her abruptly and tell her off. However, my colleague, who was an Educational Psychologist, raised her hand, and said very firmly but kindly, 'Its alright, I know you haven't done that on purpose'. Its amazing how by being calm and firm and really nice, she controlled the whole class. She completely prevented any other pupil from laughing (which is incredible) and made the girl feel better. It was such a demonstration that by being cool, calm and collected, you can exert control, effectively, even in the most extreme situations. I have never forgotten the lessons that I have learnt from this.

Now, years later, I have a little girl. I have to say that I wasn't really bothered either way whether I had children or not. But now that I have, it's the best thing that could have happened to me. I find it really delightful to be a mum and I am certainly having the best time of my life. It is actually my daughter's influence that has inspired me to undertake this course in teacher training.

Apart from being a mum, I have a number of other interests that range from Karate, jogging and cycling, to name the physical side. I also enjoy reading, sewing (although I am really bad at it!) and I am also studying Arabic. My husband and I, have a small holding. So I also have a few goats, geese and some chickens to look after. I am always busy doing something or another. Saying that, however, I have to admit that the thing that I love to do most, is nothing. It is so relaxing to sit and do nothing. I don't have much time to do nothing, but when I do, I really enjoy it!