

23 Years later...



DAY 1

I travelled from the Kolkata Howrah station on the overnight train to Ranchi to spend 3 days in the city of my birth. My parents have been OM workers all my life and I was nearly 10 years old when my family left Ranchi and moved to England.

As I stepped off the train I recognised a friendly face looking at me saying, "Hello Heather!" and I realised that Auntie Lata had come to meet us. This was a real blessing as I didn't even know if she had even received confirmation of our visit. After 23 years I could not remember any of the Hindi I used to speak as a child, but I was amazed by how familiar things looked, although they seemed to have shrunk considerably. We moved on to visit Auntie Rosie, who had been my Hindi tutor. It was lovely to see her again, and she looked very well for her 76 years. She even got out two letters my Dad had written to her many years ago. It was lovely to see how much these were appreciated and treasured.

I was surprised by the things I had

Heather Powell is teaching at LAMB English Medium School in Bangladesh as an On Tracker.

remembered and also by the things I had forgotten. The buffaloes which had been a familiar sight have now been banned from the city and there was much less rural scenery than I remembered. As we moved around the city I noticed how it is now very built up, and much wealthier than in the past.

DAY 2

My old neighbour Shalini took me to see our old school. She told me about her memories of my first day of school when it was her job to take care of me (I was 5 years old). At the boys school we even found my brother Philip in 2 class photos which they have displayed on their entrance board!

After lunch together Shalini took us by car again to drive to another place with many memories – a large old house, which used to be the OM team house. I remembered many walks around the dam area where we used to pick up tiny fish from the fishermen's nets. We would take these to Muni, our cook who would fry them for a tasty snack. I remembered really enjoying crunching them up bones and all.

Shalini kept saying, "Who would have thought I'd be sitting here with grown-up Heather!" I was equally amazed to be with my childhood friend in Ranchi again after 23 years.

DAY 3

After breakfast we were again picked up and taken across the city to visit our old friend Mrs Chowdhry. She is a faithful prayer supporter and it was so encouraging to hear how active she has been over the years in discipleship and with the local church. She still has a fellowship meeting regularly in her home since, at the age of 80, her health does not allow her to get out easily.

Just before we left, Auntie Tara popped by to say hello. She was the wife of the Brethren pastor who had gone to heaven a number of years ago. She was excited to see me all grown up and we had a lovely conversation during which she demonstrated her faithfulness in prayer for me, and our whole family! In her 80th year she is still active in service for the Lord. She had a lovely smile to match her loving heart.

It was with tears in my eyes that I left them all later that night to catch the train to Kolkata and then travel on back to Bangladesh, hoping that it is not another 23 years before I visit Ranchi again! ■

Please pray:

- for the children of Christian workers around the world.
- for Indian Christians whose faithfulness is so inspiring.