



AMHS CONNECT

The Alumni Newsletter

April '26

Editorial

Dear Modernites,

We proudly present to you the 20th issue of AMHS Connect. What started as a means to keep up morale and stay in touch with the alumni network during the locked down months of the pandemic, has now become one of the many regular features produced by the Alumni Association of Modern High School for Girls. Coincidentally,

this year is also significant as our beloved MHS starts the countdown to its 75th anniversary.

The school, and also the world around us, have naturally gone through some imperceptible, and some significant changes over the last 75 years. In this issue of the newsletter, we look back at our school across the seven and a half decades of its existence through the eyes of our alumnae. Eight ex-students, each of whom have graduated from MHS in a different decade, have written to us describing something memorable that happened during the decade in which they ruled the school grounds. Through these articles, you will perhaps spot the changing pattern of our surroundings, and also the invariant thread of loyalty and friendship that binds all of us Modernites together, whether 80, or 18 years of age.



Syantani Sen
Class of 2005

President's Report

Dear Modernites,

It gives me immense pleasure to address you all through this year's annual newsletter. I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to each member of our alumni community for your continued support, enthusiasm, and active participation in our events. Your involvement is the strength that keeps our association vibrant and growing.

The past year has been exceptionally fulfilling. One of the highlights was hosting Alumni Idol – Season 10, a landmark edition of our flagship event in July. It was truly gratifying to see such overwhelming participation, with alumni associations across Kolkata eagerly taking part.



The 10th season witnessed record-breaking engagement and was a resounding success. Organizing a unique and cherished event of this scale year after year would not have been possible without the unwavering cooperation and support of MHSI, our gracious venue partner.

Following this, we turned our attention to the AMHS Winterfest, another milestone initiative held in our school grounds in December. This day-long event in December was a first of its kind—an engaging carnival combined with a warm and nostalgic reunion. We were delighted to welcome our fellow Modernites along with their families and friends. With stalls hosted by our own alumnae, the event beautifully blended the spirit of our school with the cultural vibrancy of Kolkata, making it a memorable experience for all.

Adding to our diverse range of activities, we also organized a unique Nolen Gur Walk in January '26 into the marshlands where this seasonal delicacy is traditionally made. This early morning guided tour offered participants an insightful and enriching experience into the process of Nolen Gur production.

AMHS also actively participated in inter-alumni events, including the lively Funtakshari hosted by the Birla High School Alumni Association and the quiz organized by the alumni of St. Xavier's (ALSOC). These interactions strengthened our bonds with other institutions and showcased the dynamic spirit of our members.

Overall, it has been a fulfilling year. As we move forward, we aim to grow further by welcoming the younger generation into our committee, and evolving with the times, while keeping the spirit of MHS alive.

I encourage all Modernites to actively come forward to make our alumni association stronger and more impactful with each passing year.

Thank you for being an integral part of this journey.

Warm regards,
Sushma Mimani Nevatia
Class of 1989
President, AMHS

The 1950s in Modern High School, *Calcutta*



In March 1952, my father took me, then a small girl of six, to an old two-storeyed building on Camac Street, number 28, to be precise, with the intention of admitting me to Modern High School for Girls, which had just opened on 3rd January, 1952. The Headmistress, Mrs. Violet Clarke cordially received us, and, when my father had stated the purpose of our visit, she gave me a small test, in order to see which class I would be fit for. She dictated a small passage from “Radiant Way” Step 3, the opening lines of which were, “One day, a little girl named Kate went to wade in the sea...” I was also given four sums to do – addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Fortunately, I passed the test, and was admitted to Class K.G. (Kindergarten) III/ Preparatory Class. I learnt later that it was equivalent to what is now Class II.

Our Class Teacher in K.G. III was a very kind and gentle lady, Mrs. Murray Smith. We were all very fond of her. After attending school for a few days, I found that in the English class, some girls studied “Radiant Way II”, others Bk. III, which meant that some children were a little ahead of the others. I was asked to read Bk. III, but I could not understand a word of what my classmates (who spoke fluent English) said.

There were a few chairs outside the class, and I was asked one day by my Class Teacher to bring one of them into the class. Not being able to understand spoken English at all, I went out and sat on one of them!

Amongst other teachers, there was Mrs. Ranjana Roy (née Das). She is probably the only teacher of mine, who, though very old, is still there with us and able to recognize me, whenever I visit her.

In the 1950s, our Headmistress, Mrs. Clarke wrote a few plays to be enacted by small children. One of them was “Princess Tiny Tot” and another “Winter”, as far as I remember. I was given the leading roles in both. Our annual programmes were staged in the New Empire Theatre.



The author on the extreme left with Mrs. R. Roy (right) and other alumnae at Modernite '17.



The author in the centre as “Princess Tiny Tot” in a school programme in the 1950s.

Source: AMHS and MHS archives

Mrs. Clarke was not only a strict disciplinarian, but she also took great pains to see that we pronounced English words correctly and spoke the language well.

In 1968, I joined MHS as a teacher of English. I retired in 2008. I am extremely grateful to the school for instilling in me the traditional values in education and discipline, which stand one in good stead in life.

Supriya Bhattacharya (née Bagchi)

School Life in the 1960s



The words “school life” bring back such special memories which are not always easy to capture in words.

Homework, charts, projects and exams were part of our daily routine. They were not welcome then, but today they seem to belong to simpler times.

The little things stand out more clearly — sharing our tiffin, whispering secrets during class, and those hushed conversations about someone having a “secret boyfriend”. In those days the very mention of the word “boyfriend” was both thrilling and scandalous!

Our school years saw us being guided by several headmistresses — Mrs. Clarke, Mrs. Pastakia, Mrs. Reberio, and Mrs Wilson-deRoze. Each had their own unique personality, yet all shared a wonderful balance of strict discipline and kindness.

Apart from studying, we had art, needlework, P.T., and for those who wished, Girl Guides on Wednesday afternoons after school. Basketball too was a favourite activity. Inter-school events were not as common then, but Girl Guide rallies were eagerly looked forward to — and of course, we won!

One of the most memorable highlights from those days was our trip to Bakhreshwar. We were given a little freedom, with our teachers’ watchful eyes always on us, but even that felt like a grand adventure!

Our teachers were kind, but they believed firmly in discipline. A very special mention must be made of Miss S. Bose, who stood at the foot of the steps every morning. Nothing escaped her sharp eyes — neatly tied hair, clean shoes, socks of proper length, skirts that were not allowed to be too short.

The prayers we sang together in the morning assemblies still remain etched in our minds to this day. The school song came later, but it too became a part of our identity.

Life in school was disciplined and structured. We respected our teachers, never thought of answering back, and did our best to achieve good marks. But more than academic lessons, it was the values we learned there that stayed with us long after we walked out of those school gates.

Looking back now, those years seem filled with such memories that time can never erase. They shaped us in quiet ways and helped make us the people we are today. And perhaps that is why the memories of those days remain so warm and precious, even after all these years.

Kavita Khaitan Poddar
Class of 1966



Source: MHS archives

Being a student in the 1970s

We finished school in 1974 — in an era when most of us were not sharply focused on “career goals” or five-year plans. We drifted a little, trusted fate a little, and trusted our parents a lot. It was nothing like today, when children seem to have career graphs etched out before them from Class IX.

But it was also a politically charged decade. In 1970–71, the Naxalite movement shook the city. Campuses were not just places of learning; they were battlegrounds of ideology. I remember my parents pouring over newspapers, worry lines deepening on their foreheads. The question wasn't “Which college is the best?” but “Which college is safe?” Educational institutions had become targets. For us as teenagers, that did something profound — it stripped away innocence early. We learned that ideas have consequences. That slogans can spill into streets. That youth is powerful, but also vulnerable.

Around the same time came the Bangladesh Liberation War — a war that resulted in the birth of a new nation in 1971. Borders shifted. History unfolded in real time. As Class XI students, we were taken to Delhi to watch the Republic Day parade and later had the extraordinary opportunity to meet Mrs. Indira Gandhi on the grounds surrounding her residence.

At 16 or 17, what did all this mean to us?

It meant growing up alongside history. It meant understanding that the world was larger than exam syllabi and report cards. We saw courage and conviction — but also fear and uncertainty — in the adults around us. We sensed that leadership mattered. That decisions taken in high offices could alter destinies across borders. That citizenship was not an abstract word in a civics textbook, but something alive and urgent.

Perhaps that is why, even without neatly mapped careers, we carried something else within us — a sharpened awareness of the times we lived in. We may not have known exactly what we wanted to become, but we knew we were living through moments that would be written about one day.

And maybe that, too, is a kind of education.

Shampa Mukherji (née Dasgupta)
Class of 1974



Class XI students of MHS with Mrs. Indira Gandhi at her residence. The author is seated in the 2nd row, 5th from the right.

Source: The author

Lessons in the 1980s



MHS gave me a beginner's manual – my first map through what often felt like a minefield.

In Class VIII, as teenagers brimming with angst and raging hormones, a few of us scribbled "I hate Mrs. X" on a torn sheet of paper. Our class teacher, Mrs. X, seemed particularly unkind – or so we believed at the time. We slipped the note into one of her exercise books. As fate would have it, she found it and promptly marched us to Mrs. Wilson-deRoze. There was no scolding, no dramatic reprimand. Instead, Mrs. Wilson-deRoze said calmly, "Hate is a strong word. Please don't use it like a loose cannon. You could say, 'I dislike Mrs. X.'"

That single sentence opened immense possibilities of expression. Its impact was far more enduring than any punishment could have been. Since then, I have often joked that I leave "hate" to nations at war, reserving for myself words like dislike, disgust, or revulsion. Beneath the humour, however, lies a lasting lesson: choose words carefully and deliberately.

One of the most defining moments of the eighties was the assassination of Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. We were in school that morning as Kolkata erupted in Hindu-Sikh violence. Our school bus drivers were both Hindu and Sikh, yet at 3 P.M. sharp, every bus departed to take us home. Not a single student was handed over to the frantic parents who arrived to fetch their children before school hours were over – some even escorted by the police. Those who lived in Hind Motor and Batanagar were taken instead to Birla House for dinner and an overnight stay.

That day, MHS demonstrated composure, resilience, and quiet authority. It adhered to a uniform process that championed safe delivery amid absolute mayhem. I learned a great deal – to witness a nation in grief, stay unwavering in duty, and to respond with kindness. It was a masterclass in embracing adversity while remaining deeply human and purpose-driven, a lesson no curriculum could ever offer.

Shravani (Shuvvy) Datta

Class of 1989



Midget show on Teachers' Day in 1983



The author in the 1980s

Source: The author



British Council play in 1987

MHS in the 1990s

Tchaikovsky and a Friend



The author (left) with her friend and co-actor Pallavi Roy in recent times

The year was 1991 and we were in class XI. We had a strange kind of freedom. An air of imminent adulthood but with the carefree fearlessness of teenagers, without the sobering shroud of ultimate responsibility. We were seniors. There was an aura of reverence, dare I say, from the batches younger than us; perhaps we were the same way of our seniors. Now we floated on air!

The 40th anniversary of MHS was the following year, and Tchaikovsky's 'The Nutcracker' was to be performed. Mrs. Diana Biswas, the legend who inspired all who entered the hallowed portals of MHS for eons, chose me to play Drosselmeyer, the eye-patched magician/Godfather, and Pallavi Roy, the Nutcracker/Prince. I had to rehearse with the eye patch, because till you do it, you do not realise, how perception literally changes – your sense of space and distance alters – hence the stairs to be climbed on stage while you flourish your cloak, may end in comic disaster. The final scene teetered between being the grand climax and an unmitigated farcical fare. When the stage was plunged into pitch darkness, Pallavi and I were to enter from the opposite ends of the stage and embrace as the spotlight picked us up. Now, with my one-eyed vision, my estimations were well off.

That embrace could easily be us – with outstretched arms, in the crescendo of Tchaikovsky's genius music, walking right past each other looking quite the clowns! The darkness was pitch-perfect and we saw nothing, the spotlight blinded us till the last few seconds! Hence with only two 'full' rehearsals with lighting, on the day as the moment of reckoning loomed, Pallavi and I swept in from either ends of the stage, hissing out each other's names under our breath while managing our theatrical smiles. The joy of spotting each other in the very last seconds culminated in an embrace so heartfelt that we have not let go ever since. That rhythm of a close school-day friendship – through peaks and troughs – planning to be tottering centuries together – is unique, unparalleled and exquisite.

Sushmita Dutta (née Dutt) Class of 1992



Pallavi Roy (right) as the prince in the MHS production of 'The Nutcracker' in 1992



Sushmita Dutta as Drosselmeyer in 'The Nutcracker'



'The Nutcracker': curtain call

Source: MHS archives

The 2000s

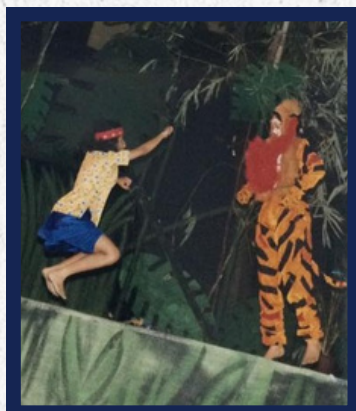
Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Modern High School for Girls, *Kolkata*



My year of graduation from MHS was coincidentally also the 50th anniversary of the school. My years in school were always filled with mischief and mayhem. My parents were told at every parent-teacher meeting how my mind was wandering in class, as were my feet. I was popularly known as ‘the grasshopper’ due to my inability to stay still! Those qualities played a role in me scoring one of the highlights of my life, my role as Mowgli in the musical – *The Jungle Story* (based on Rudyard Kipling’s book), that the school produced as a form of celebration that year. If my memory serves me right, about 1300 kids participated in what was the mother of all productions! We rehearsed hard for nearly 6 months – and for the first time in our school lives, all classes were shortened by a few minutes, and a whole new period – the “Practice Period” was added to our timetables. The school was transformed into a giant stage with groups practicing their roles in different areas all through the day. The actors had to learn to mime the actions on stage, while there was a separate group of girls providing the “voice” in the background. We were also taught a special dance form to portray the fight sequences, and that required so much work to master. There was a scene where the “monkey people”, enacted by girls in middle school, would carry Mowgli off on their shoulders. They actually carried me during the show, and I feared for my life every time that happened!

As I reminisce, the song ‘Those were the days’ by Mary Hopkins pops into my mind because it encapsulates pretty much the last few months of my glorious years spent in the best school ever! Ironically those friends that I made in school continue to be my closest friends to this day, even though we are now spread over 4 different continents and 7 different cities.

Joyita Piersma (née Dutta Gupta)
Class of 2002



The author as Mowgli in a fight scene with Shere Khan (Riddhi Tulshan) in the MHS production of ‘Jungle Story’ in 2002

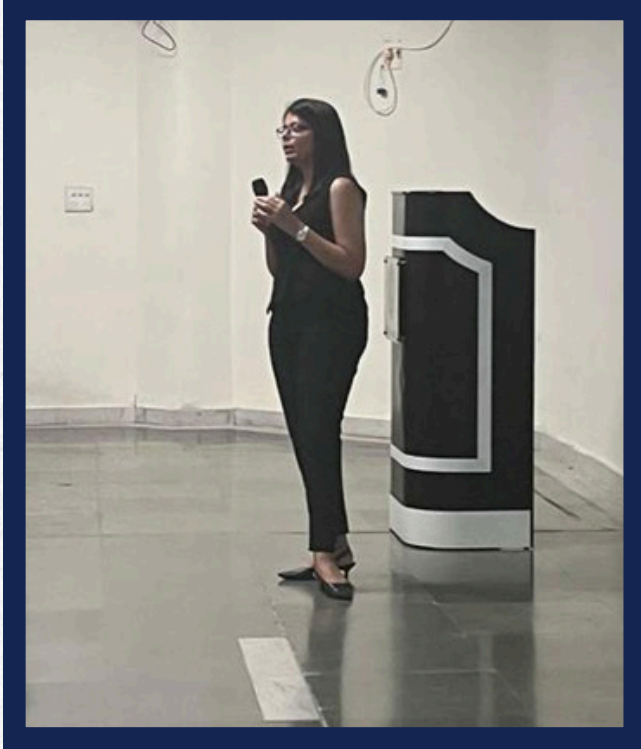


Jungle Story: curtain call

Source: Ms. S. Mukherji and MHS archives

The 2010s

The Joy of Making Others Shine



Some of my most vivid memories from school aren't the personal milestones themselves — they're the joy those moments brought to the people around me.

As Head Girl, I cherish Sports Day more for seeing my parents being felicitated as Chief Guests, their faces lit with pride as they handed out medals to our star athletes. I remember pouring all our energies into crafting an unforgettable farewell for the outgoing batch — yet I barely recall my own farewell. We were the first batch to organise an award function with fun, personalised odes to every single student — because everyone deserved to feel seen.

At the time, I could never have realised this common thread. But life has a way of revealing patterns — and with each passing year, this one has only grown clearer and more certain.

A decade later, as a director of one of Asia's leading consulting firms, the same truth holds. Most careers begin as individual pursuits, but the further you grow, the more leadership becomes about enabling others to thrive.

Watching a team member receive praise, crack a tough problem, or reach a new height — that gives me a deeper sense of achievement than any personal milestone.

And it isn't just professional. In our personal lives too — with parents, partners, friends, children, or even a stranger on the road — the moments that stay with us are rarely about ourselves.

As our school celebrates 75 remarkable years, I invite you to pause and notice your own pattern. In a world that feels increasingly individualistic, I truly believe our instinct to lift others hasn't faded — it just needs a little tending.

So go on — make someone smile.

Anisha Kakarania
Class of 2015



The 2020s

A Virus Ate My School Life



Yes, I'll admit. I was that kid.

The one who barely came to high school. The one whose report card always carried an "irregular."

And then, in 2020, right in the middle of my Class X boards, a mysterious virus started appearing in headlines. COVID-19, they called it. It felt distant. Almost fictional. Something that happened elsewhere.

Until one day, it didn't.

A press release later, school "temporarily" shut down, and I shut my Geography books faster than I ever opened them. A break, I thought. Lucky me.

What I didn't realise was that "break" cost me my school life.

The next time I saw my classmates was, ironically, for board exams again. Two years later. Same uniforms, different people. Some with coloured hair, some with secret tattoos under their sleeves. Sitting in the school shed, mask covering my face, I looked around and saw a room full of young women. We had grown up. Just not together.

Somewhere between invigilators walking past and answer sheets being distributed, it hit me. How much of school had quietly slipped through my fingers.

The faint trail of a teacher's perfume as she passed your desk.

The inevitable fall of chalk dust on your nose.

Standing just a little too long outside the staff room for cold AC air.

The laughter that filled the corridors. The fights that felt like the end of the world.

All the things that felt so ordinary then. All the things that, somehow, were the whole point.

And then, just like that, it was over.

It was only when I left. Left the school, the city, the comfort of it all, that I understood what MHS had really given me. The confidence to speak without shrinking, the ability to carry myself with assurance, the skill to hold my ground in unfamiliar spaces. What felt normal there turned out to be assets that made me stand out everywhere.

It's funny how the places you try to escape end up shaping you the most.

I spent years not showing up to school. And somehow, it showed up in everything I became.

~ *I promise, in my next life, I'll finally stop being "irregular".*



Meet the AMHS Committee



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Sushma Mimani
Nevatia



VICE PRESIDENT
Vasundhara Sawalka



SECRETARY
Sayantani Sen



JOINT SECRETARY
Payal Khetawat



TREASURER
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Ritu Singhania



Shailja Mundhra



Joyita Lakhmani



Harshita Goenka

Alumni Idol Season 10



AMHS Winterfest



AMHS Winterfest





Nolen Gur Walk



AMHS Team at Funtakshari



AMHS Team at ALSOC Quiz



AMHS Annual General Meeting 2025

MEMORIAM

We Remember....

MRS. SUCHORITA DAWN

Junior School Teacher

She left us for her heavenly abode on 21st December, 2025. May her soul rest in peace.

FEEDBACK CORNER

Enjoying the Alumni newsletter?

Share your feedback and comments and we'll publish the best ones in our next edition. Write to us at amhsconnect@gmail.com

BECOME A MEMBER

Fee: Rs. 6500
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