

Life After MRSS - Stories of our past graduates

Padma Lee

Padma joined MRSS in 1991 having begun her Steiner education at the Carnegie Steiner Kindergarten and prep year in the Moorabbin Heights Steiner Stream (Now East Bentleigh SS). She completed year twelve in 2004. Padma's hobbies and passions include travel, music and art/crafts .

Indian culture is part of her heritage and something she has always been drawn to. Two things that have remained a constant in her life are Indian devotional music, also known as bhajans and Indian classical dance. Padma does a style of traditional Indian dancing called Odissi which originated in the temples of North East India. She also learnt Bharatanatyam which is another classical form of Indian dance that comes from the south of India.

She has completed a one year certificate course in yoga at a Swami Vivekananda Ashram in Bangalore, India.

Since MRSS Padma worked in retail for about six years while she studied and worked out what career path she wanted to pursue. During that time she completed a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in sociology and philosophy at Monash University. She then undertook a Diploma of Primary Education at La Trobe University. Her studies led her firstly to casual relief teacher for a year and a half and, for the past two and a half years, a full time position at Vermont Primary School teaching Foundation year.

Padma is currently undertaking the part-time Steiner education course at the Michael Centre and hopes to work in a Steiner school eventually.

She says of her Steiner education:

"I really loved my primary years and have many fond memories. I thoroughly enjoyed the richness of all of the epochs that were brought to us and the many creative activities that were woven into them. Dressing up as Vikings in class four and carrying flaming torches. Having an Indian monk come and tell us incredible stories in class five. Learning Greek dancing and wearing togas to our own version of the Olympics in class six. I loved music and the amazing opportunity to be part of an orchestra that travelled to New Zealand. We were given the opportunity to create truly beautiful things. We were so lucky to always be given the best materials to work with."

Padma says she always felt very grateful for her Steiner education and that she has a lot to say whenever anyone asks her about it! She decided to become a teacher because she wanted to give back, in some small way, what she was lucky enough to have received.

This was deepened when in her mainstream teaching experience she noticed the poor quality of materials provided to students with only small budgets allocated to art and craft. She felt that this resulted in the loss of pride, perseverance, quality, beauty and deep purpose that were an integral part of the curriculum she had experienced as a young person.

Padma loved the children she taught and became inspired to fill what she saw as a gaping hole. When she became a teacher she used her own resources of pastels and watercolors and replaced all the plastic in the room with natural materials. She says "It felt better, but so much was still missing. I wanted to give the children so much more, but didn't know how to."



This led to her enrolling in the part-time Steiner primary education course. She is now in her second year in the course and feels for the first time, that she is being opened up to a whole new world and being shown how to give something to the children that truly nourishes and enriches them. “Even though I experienced Steiner education first hand, I felt the richness but never knew any of the knowledge and purpose behind it. Which was just the way it should have been, because no belief system was ever forced upon to me. I was given so many rich world views and the freedom to find myself and my own beliefs.”

So Padma now includes as many stories as she can in her teaching and can clearly see the difference in the way some of the children speak, the way they play and imagine. “Something as seemingly simple as telling children stories, has helped me grow as a teacher too. The exchange that has happened between the children and I has changed us somehow ... My education has impacted my life immensely and brought me to a point where I finally know what I’m passionate about ... I have never felt such a sense of fulfillment. “



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