

Interview by Noyonika Gupta a student of 8th standard of The Mother's International School , New Delhi.

In the month of November my friend Sonali Shahane a student of class 9 of my school told me that she was planning to run the Delhi Marathon along with her brother Salil for a cause. When I enquired about the cause she told me about an NGO which is located near Dehradun, which runs a school by the name 'Purkal Youth Development Society'.



Sonali had the opportunity to visit the Purkal Youth Development Society (PYDS) school in Dehradun since her parents work as volunteers for this organization. PYDS is a school for under privileged children. In this school children are given education. Along with academics the school also gives vocational training. The children are also given their daily meals to ensure their nutrition requirements are complete. All children are compulsorily required to participate in sports daily for a minimum of one hour.

Sonali was impressed with the curiosity the children showed for learning, and was determined to help the institution in her own way . During her last visit she met the CEO of PYDS Mr Swami, who suggested her to run the Marathon and collect funds for the NGO in the form of sponsorship if she was really keen on helping the school.. Incidentally Mr Swami was also planning to do the same for a second time. This motivated Sonali immediately, since she has always loved the children from this place a lot.

Sonali's mother whom I call Sangeeta aunty suggested her to prepare a power point presentation and then take appointments from people over the phone and finally go to their offices/ residence and inform them about PYDS and the excellent work being done by the NGO.

Besides this she also told them success stories about two girls from PYDS namely Shiksha Pundir who is presently in China on a student exchange programme and the other was Kritika who is presently pursuing her graduation from an All Women's University in Bangladesh.

She also shared activities of the students, such as carrying out the assembly, the one hour compulsory sport activity with a very active sports teacher and the meals as well as a fruit break being given to them on a daily basis. Such inspiring stories and colorful examples along with Sonali's enthusiastic description and enthusiasm to not only share the information with people but also the will to run the marathon and support the NGO brought in an overwhelming response from the people who heard her out.

I am sure there is something to learn for all of us from Sonali and her family, and that is, 'Let's all start thinking about doing something good for the society'. After watching her presentation and all the effort that she had put into this I decided to go to the Jawahar Lal Nehru stadium on the day of the marathon and cheer Sonali and her brother Salil for running the marathon for a good cause. Also this was my way of thanking Sonali for making me a part of this kind and thoughtful act. Sonali gave this experience an motto 'Yes I can'

I was impressed by Sonali's commendable efforts and was keen to know more about the entire experience. I also went to the marathon to cheer Sonali and Salil.

Excerpts of the interview:-

Noyonika - What inspired you at PYDS that made you take up this challenge?

Sonali - What made me take up this challenge for PYDS and what inspired me at PYDS was actually the effort of the children studying there who are working hard day and night, the teachers, and everyone who is a part of the Purkal Youth Development Society. I thought of doing something good for the school and children so that the school develops more and the children have a better future. I would also like to tell you what inspired me was that the money for educating the children was not taken from the children. Everything was free for them and they also got three meals every day to keep them healthy. All the children played for 1hour everyday which kept them fit .

Noyonika - How did it feel running the marathon?

Sonali - I felt great running the marathon as I was running for a good cause which involved a better future for the poor children. After the marathon I felt proud when I handed the money to Mr. Swamy and was so happy that I decided to run the marathon next year as well.

Noyonika - What were the challenges you faced while this presentation was going on?

Sonali – One challenge was to cover Delhi acquaintances. Since going to Delhi from Gurgaon took a lot of time I had to give a lot of presentations in one single day and that was really tiring for my mother and for me but as I am very attached to PYDS I took it up as a challenge.

Noyonika - What are the learnings from this experience?

Sonali – I learnt to think about children who come from poor families and help them to get a better future. I also improved on my confidence since I went to give these presentations to people who were not known to me.

Noyonika- Any experience that you would like to share?

Sonali- Yes. I met some wonderful people during this activity. When I gave this presentation to one of my mother's colleague her daughter Aaloka was also listening and afterwards she gave a separate sponsorship for my run out of her own pocket money. In fact she turned out to be the youngest one to support my cause.

Noyonika- How supportive was your family in your effort?

Sonali- Well best part was that my brother Salil, my mom and papa were all into it from day one. But I was thrilled to find that my uncle Prasad Karnik who is a Trainer with Max New York Life motivated me a lot and also got me a couple of appointments with other trainers from Max. One of them has promised to help PYDS in the setting up and running of library at PYDS as his father heads an NGO which is into this kind of activity.

Noyonika- Did you feel nervous at any point of time during the Presentation?

Sonali- I think I was not at all nervous rather I was enjoying every bit of it. One occasion that I was really nervous was when I had gone to one of our family friend Mr Ashok Majumdar's office to give a presentation. What happened was that uptill then my presentations were always for a maximum of 3-4 people but in uncle's office he made his entire staff sit and his wife and daughter who are very dear family friends also came to join the office staff. I was appreciated by aunty and uncle later which means nobody noticed my nervousness.

Noyonika- Can you share your experience of being a part of this Airtel marathon ?

Sonali – It was a great feeling to be part of such a huge crowd on the day of the marathon. Mr Swami was also there and of course Salil and myself had a lot of fun in the beginning but after 4 km I started feeling a little tired but Salil motivated me and both of us completed the run. In fact one of the participants in the Delhi Half Marathon who sponsored my run was Ms Barnali Gupta who ran the whole complete half marathon of 21 km.

Noyonika- What would you like to tell the people who sponsored your run?

Sonali- First of all I would like to thank all those who took time out of their busy schedule to listen to my presentation and also supported the PYDS cause. I would like to thank Mr Swamy for giving me this opportunity to serve PYDS and also my family members for standing besides me and motivating me. All of them motivated me and made me believe in the motto 'Yes I can.'