GORDONSTOUN
Plus Est En Vous

Shomie Das

Former Staff

Recognised for advancing education by championing holistic, student-centred learning in India, inspired by the Gordonstoun ethos.

Shomie Das was an Indian educationalist who devoted his career to leading and developing some of India's most prominent schools.

Born in Kolkata in 1935, his father was a lawyer and his mother a highly educated and well travelled woman. Education ran through his family even at that time, as his grandfather, Satish Ranjan Das had just founded the Doon School. His mother chose to homeschool Shomie through his primary years, preparing him for life at Doon for secondary school.

After graduating in Physics from the University of Kolkata, he moved to England to study natural Sciences at Cambridge. In 1958, he graduated and took up a post at Gordonstoun, becoming Head of Physics and remaining on staff for 15 years. In 1961, he returned home to be married, but soon brought his new bride back to Gordonstoun where they had three children.

In 1969, Shomie returned to India with his family, going on to take Headmaster posts at three of the top schools in India: Mayo College (1969 - 1974), the Lawrence School (1974 - 1988) and finally returning to his alma mater the Doon School (1988 - 1995). He brought with him some of Kurt Hahn's principles of education he learnt whilst at Gordonstoun and promoted all three schools to be early members of the Round Square Conference.

After retiring from Doon, he became an educational consultant and contributed his educational vision to more than 70 other schools all over India. He was instrumental in setting up Adamas International School at Kolkata and was the Chairman of Oakridge International School in Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Mohali, and Bengaluru. These international schools were at the forefront of the introduction of the IB into India and all bear the hallmark of Shomie's experience at Gordonstoun.

He died in 2024, but his children Shiraz, Rohit and Nishad remember him.

Shomie was highly influenced by Kurt Hahn's approach to education - it's why he went to Gordonstoun in the first place.

He loved his time there - as did our mother - and although Hahn was no longer head of Gordonstoun, he was still there, and our father spent a lot of time with him, playing tennis. He was very influenced by the idea of experiential education, particularly the outward bound and service elements. In fact, by the time he left and took up his first headship at Mayo College, one of the first things he did was lead an expedition of boys to help with the Rajasthan floods. Another thing that impressed him hugely at Gordonstoun was the sense of morality and honesty among the students. He was astounded that you could leave a classroom and none of the students would confer or cheat, and this honour among pupils was something he was keen to instil in Indian schools.

His biggest impact was perhaps the fact that he opened up the Indian system to a "world education" view.

In India at the time, the school sector was a very closed system, but Shomie had a lot of young teachers in his schools who were very influenced by his methods. He broke open that closed system, sending teachers abroad for experience, opening their minds to ways in which to progress education and move things forward.Those teachers went on to lead other schools and through that, he expanded his influence and succeeded in breaking ties to old traditions, helping many schools avoid being stuck in the past.

Finally taking up a Headship at the Doon School felt like his destiny in many ways.

Whilst his grandfather had sadly died before it opened, he had been absolutely instrumental in setting up the school.Shomie's own father was away at University at the time in England, but received numerous letters detailing how the project was coming along. His childhood was about preparing him to become a pupil there - and Doon then had a part to play in his early career too. His housemaster - a close friend of Kurt Hahn's - introduced Shomie to Gordonstoun.The two schools were founded at the same time and he was so taken by tales of Hahn's impact in the UK, he chose to begin his career there. It does seem that his life came full circle by returning to the school his Grandfather founded, to lead it in his own way.