

## VOICE OF WOMEN ( MARCH , 2010 )

### CAREER CARE • WOMAN AT WORK

#### Guardian Angel

**Bina Basnet (Baiju)**  
**Founder/Chairperson, Orchid Garden Nepal**

When a child is two and a half years old, s/he is sent to a playgroup to shape his/her future. I came across a playgroup - a little different - and very special. It is for children of daily labourers, small vegetable vendors, and housemaids while their parents work.

I had never imagined someone could care enough to open a day care centre for children living in dire poverty by giving them nourishing food, quality education and a good environment, but I have to confess that after getting candid with Bina Basnet, the extraordinary lady who founded the first day care centre of this type - Orchid Garden Nepal (OGN), I was overwhelmed.

On our arrival at Orchid Garden Nepal, we met Sharda Lamsal, a social worker plus owner of a small vegetable shop in Kalopul, who inspects and gathers children whose parents are daily labourers, small vegetable vendors, rag pickers and housemaids and brings them to OGN for a better life. "Bina didi is a God-sent angel for us. I had to leave two of my children at Bal Mandir as I didn't know where to keep them while I worked. Both of them got adopted and have gone abroad. I feel happy for them because I see their bright future, but still as a mother I cannot console myself for my loss. I have to suffer in silence. If only there were such day care centres like OGN back then, I wouldn't have put up my children for adoption," shares Sharda.



Fondly known as Bina didi, the lady with a golden heart says, "The main purpose of founding this organisation is to make the parents of marginalised groups realise that these 'orchids' aren't a mistake, to provide them with a ray of hope that their children will be given proper care and love and quality education. OGN will help children grow, learn and discover in a sound environment."

Before initiating OGN, Bina didi worked for seven years at Bal Mandir, an orphanage where she saw a majority of mothers leaving their young ones behind. She says, "I heard complaints from young mothers who had to work as labourers since their husbands were alcoholics and they had to work to make ends meet. Most of them could not get work with children clinging onto them. So they left them at Bal Mandir as they didn't have much choice. Under such grim situations, enrolling their children in a day care centre was just out of the question!"

Not able to bear the forcefully broken relationship between a mother and her child, Bina didi founded OGN three and a half years ago. She recalls, "I wanted to help these mothers by looking after their children so that they could work freely while their children got nourishment and quality education in a safe environment."

"The beginning was the most difficult phase as I had to start from scratch. I had to look for a place, and then came the food dilemma. I had a tough time, yet I didn't give up easily. My family, especially my maternal side used to tease me saying 'Bina, the beggar' but I never felt ashamed to receive whatever they would give me, for they knew the motive behind all this."

This forty-year-old guardian angel informs, "I didn't know from where I would get the money to meet the daily expenses. I just did what I had to do, and left it all to Him. God is there for his children who help others with their good deeds. We now receive generous aid from people and organisations for the welfare of our children. Whatever we have received for the children is being utilised properly for their education. Today, we are looking after 60 children ranging from six months to five years at OGN, and we're also sponsoring over 80 children in private boarding schools so that they can have a decent future." She further adds, "One of the main motives of OGN is to prevent these children from going back to the street."

She says, "I still have more to do. We are in the process of opening more branches all over the city so that we can reach more poor and marginalised families."



She mulls, "Who does not face financial crisis? I still face financial crises now and then. There were times when I used to steal money from my husband's purse while he slept. When he found out, every time before he went to sleep, he would count his money in front of me and place it back into his purse and sleep. I had no other means to support my organisation then. Now I am grateful to many individuals and organisations for helping us with funds, sponsorships and other aid. Without their help, all this wouldn't have been possible."

A strong will power, honesty and cent percent hard-work are the driving forces to success, says this determined mother of two. She shares, "After finishing my schooling, I got married. After 13 years I wanted to study again, so with the support of my husband, I graduated from Padma Kanya. I believe



it is never too late to learn. Education is a must."

(If you want to support Bina didi's efforts, contact her at 4430407)

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