A friend of 50 years

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By Zubeida A.Dossal

This article is my loving and fond tribute to Anita — Anita whom I was honoured and privileged to have as a friend for more than fifty years. She was indeed a friend in every sense of the word — loving, appreciative, caring and ever so helpful. Her many gifts of head and heart have helped many a person and friend. She made happy things happier and sad ones a little less so by her sympathy and her sharing and care, which she did so gracefully.

What I enjoyed was her joie de vivre, which she passed on to those around her. Here I recall my first meeting with my friend. Very vivid till today (50+ years later) is my meeting or rather my first view of Anita Ghulamali.

I was then the headmistress of the SMB Fatema Jinnah School and had been asked by Mrs Zaibunissa Hamidullah the editor and owner of the Mirror, to interview Anita Ghulamali. I did not know her, but rang her up to request an interview. I told her I was new to Karachi and did not know the roads very well and might be a little early or late.

Surprisingly she told me “Don’t worry, I am an old Karachiite. I know your school very well, and will come there myself”. So we arranged the date and time. She came exactly on time. I saw her from my office and walked towards her, meeting her halfway in the large school compound.

She made a very charming and unforgettable picture in a bright yellow cotton saree. I think we both saw a person we liked. I know I did.

I took her into my office where we sat and started talking. It seemed very informal and friendly. It was as if we had known each other for long. I realized also that she was the grand daughter of the Chairman of the Sindh Madressah Board, Mr Nuruddin Ghulamali.

To digress a bit, he was my friend at the Board and at every meeting he would keep his attache case on the chair to his left. As soon as I came in he would beckon me, lift his bag and make me
sit next to him and tell me, “Sit here! I don’t like to sit next to old fogeys!” though he was the eldest by far. Probably at least 10 years older than the eldest there!!

So I got along fine with Anita and her grandfather. Both were prized friendships, which I enjoyed and valued much. Over the years we became closer because our interests and work were so similar. Our friendship grew for which I am very grateful. I feel blessed and fortunate that we had many happy working hours together as well as some friendly meetings.

You were truly a woman of substance, Anita. I’m sure in heaven too you must be working, for idle you can never be! God bless you.

All who knew her will miss her greatly and deeply.
Many are our prayers for her as she so well deserves.
Rest in peace dear friend.