



Moral anchors

It seems so very trite to state that we humans approach our world with moral stances. Obviously, these stances, or rather nuggets of attitudes, moral tastes, make up the very core of our being. Philosophers have argued over the ages that they constitute the essence of what it means to be human. Yet our moral anchors are also deeply problematic. When my sense of what is right clashes with yours, in any realm, conflict ensues. Moral anchors can be interpreted as what may bind us together within communities, but also, and to a greater extent, what divides us as nations, religions, castes and ultimately as individuals.

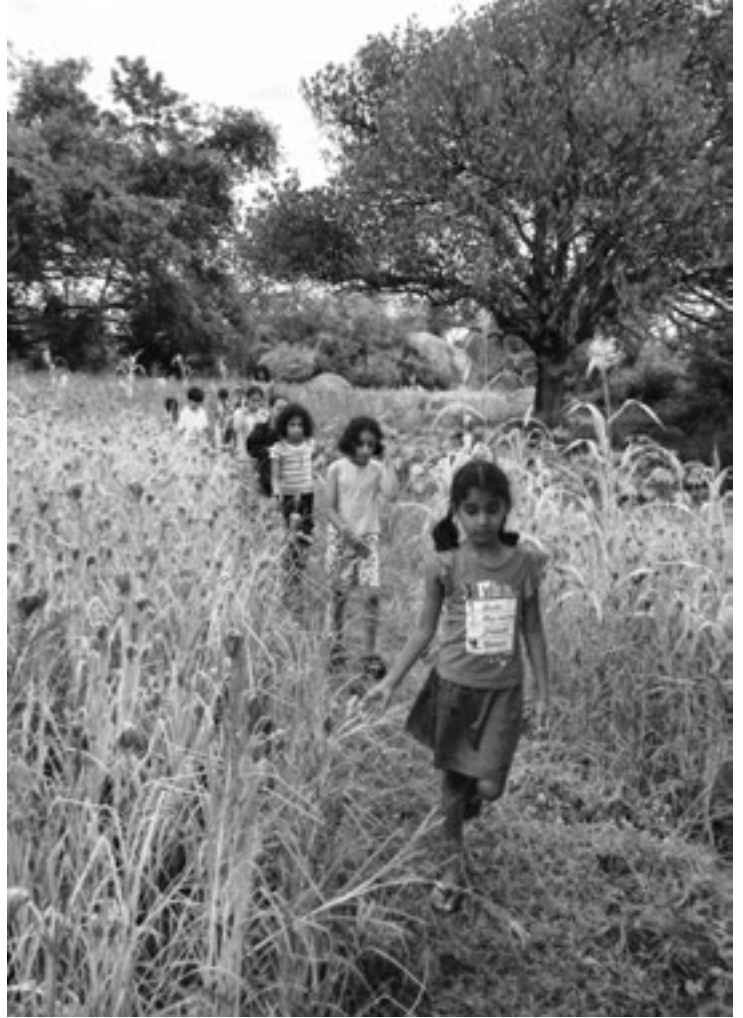
Our moral anchors range from the very subtle to the most grossly obvious, and they also dominate our conscious-

ness from a very young age. Young children argue fiercely about which superhero they prefer (is there any more potent symbol of moral strength than the masked men of steel of the 21st century?) and the qualities they represent. They will take sides in classroom conflicts, arguing the finer points of precedence, justice and fairness, as well as the negotiations leading to compromise and peace. They will also reach out and demand that the injured receive empathy and the space to recover from hurt. As children grow older, more and more of the world around is consciously brought within the ambit of the inner moral life. The school environment is a complex moral space, and the assumptions behind belief and action are what make this space so rich in potential and at the same time so problematic.

However, this piece is about adults and our inner moral certainties. These play themselves out on almost a moment-to-moment basis, in all arenas of daily life. Food, for example; perhaps among the most contentious and emotional issues in daily living. We instinctively split food into two categories: “our” food (probably the best in the world!), and “theirs.” “Ours” seems easy to understand (even this category collapses under investigation), but “theirs” rapidly spirals into incoherence. Are “they” the West? (American, British, English, French, Italian?) Or is “theirs” referring to north/south India? Food from religious communities other than ours? Veg or non-veg? Organic or pesticide ridden? Wholesome and “natural” or genetically modified? Onion-free? An intuitive anchoring in taste and identity then spills out into moral certainties: what is healthy and what is junk food, what kinds of food erode our cultural values (and, by implication, what kinds of food endorse them), what constitutes authenticity. A syncretic mix and match attitude tries to solve the problem but only plays with its surface. Bringing various closely-held moral positions together does not necessarily ease the tensions between them. Another seemingly trivial example: music. Is music “meant” for mere pleasure? Does it have political significance? Religious and spiritual dimensions? What is “our” music and what values does it uphold? Crucially, which of these meanings, for us, overrides the others? Every social and cultural realm contains, embedded within itself, the seed of moral certainty.

If such moral certainties lie beneath the surface of everyday activities, we can see the problems escalate in more abstract and overtly moral spheres such as religion, sexuality, education, the project of nation-building, political ideologies and the use of language. Few of us could claim that we do not hold strong moral certainties in these realms. These certainties are probably the outcome of our conditioning and upbringing rather than, as we might like to believe, choice and rational thought.

One problem is that most of our moral codes are abstractions. The philosopher Immanuel Kant apparently held that to lie is wrong, even to lie to a murderer as to the whereabouts of his intended victim. This is abstraction taken to its logical end. By abstraction we mean an unwillingness to consider the specifics of a situation, to see real people in real contexts. In the field of education this abstraction is evident. Two teachers may wish with all their hearts for the well-being of a child who has some particular difficulty, but both may have quite different diagnoses of the problem and its “solutions.” Let’s say a child is unhappy in school due to her interactions with her peers. One teacher might locate the problem in “bullying,” while another might be equally convinced that the child is “soft” and needs to be tougher. These



root orientations might lead them into quite different strategies and judgements. Even though at an intellectual level the two might try to accommodate each others’ ideas, there is a strong emotional attachment to the original perception and evaluation, which springs from personality, conditioning, ideology. In this anchoring, the ability to see the “real” child, to listen deeply to her perceptions without either indulging or dismissing them, to bring the class together in a sensitive manner, without taking sides, is generally compromised. The abstraction looms larger than the reality, and the potential for healing is thus lost.

We will always face the following dichotomy: are moral stances “worth it”, for all the cohesiveness they seem to bring in society, or are they intrinsically divisive at all levels? How shall we resolve this dichotomy in daily living, in the face of moral choices we have to make? One way is to assert our values and try to organise our social, political, economic and emotional lives around their expression (to the extent that this is even possible). This assertion will perforce take place in the face of the deeply held values of others. At this point the argument is generally for *tolerance*, which means giving all groups an equal chance to create their own moral spaces in society. However, as our moral choices are at the very core of our being, we are apt to be deeply threatened by the values of others. The social atmosphere, while superficially tolerant,

is thick with mistrust and violence. We see this every morning when we open our newspapers.

This brief essay is a plea for an alternative path: doubt, and holding values lightly. Then there is the possibility of creative and cohesive lines of action emerging from tentative positions and a deep listening to others, particularly in troubled times.

This is certainly not easy to do. It requires tremendous patience and a sense of non-judgemental affection for the individuals one encounters either intimately or casually. It requires taking ourselves, our emotional reactions, lightly. More seriously, it requires a recognition that one's self is meshed with others to the extent that boundaries are arbitrary. As Krishnamurti has often stated, it requires a deep and visceral understanding that *you are the world*. Psychological and social forces conspire to pull us way from this insight. We may grasp it in flashes, when we see society embedded in our consciousnesses and, equally, our thoughts projected upon the world.

What will deepen the quality of our collective understanding? This is an open and meditative question. We need to hold this question shining in our consciousness, not

grasping for easy answers, and we need to see it unfold in daily living, both at the personal and the structural level.

The move towards doubt is not an argument for complete moral relativism. Some attitudes, core stances, are more logical, creative and inclusive than others. The problem does not lie so much in the intellectual content of the moral stance as with the ways in which it defines the self and its boundaries in the emotional realm. It is here that doubt plays its crucial role in loosening the grip of the value system.

Can there be a universal morality that is not based on specific ideas but on attitudes and processes? A moral code based not upon its content but upon its orientation towards the world? Certainly, a stance that emphasizes compassion over specific outcomes in challenging circumstances allows us to take others into account as well as opening up the field of action to many possibilities. Questioning the impermanent dissolving self pulls the rug from under our feet and enables us to interrogate the world and live in it with a sense of freedom. These questions—empathy, insight, the emptiness of selfhood—can act, if not as moral anchors, then at least as moral pointers in the complex field of daily living.

In a land far far away

In a land far far away is a house set in a beautiful countryside, with creepers on the walls and stone benches beckoning to passers by; with birdbaths to peer at, and views of the sunset that take people's breath away. The mornings

begin with the twittering of sunbirds and sometimes the calling of peacocks from the nearby rocks. But the evenings end with hooting and screaming that perplex the simple country folk who happen to be having, what in that land was called, 'Quiet Time'. The land? CFL. The house? Inchara.

Every June, a group of children and adults come together to form a hostel-community of sorts and every March, the group dissolves. So what is it that develops over the year to constitute a feeling of hostel life? Does the variety of experiences contribute to a sense of place, a sense of home? Of course it is an unwieldy number of members to be thought of as a family. Yet adults and children do experience traditions, gatherings, relationships and routines that feel like living in a family.

Inchara, which houses the youngest children of CFL, and the largest number of adults, produces the most amusing tales and events. Like waves come and go, certain trends come and

go, but while each trend lasts, there is passion, and single-minded focus! Among them are the following: one July evening a teacher hears elephant trumpeting sounds but realises it is just bunk beds being moved to create dressing and changing room spaces. Soon, one sees sheets hanging between the beds and children disappearing behind them. Then there are the spontaneous skits that emerge a few minutes to dinner-time, where towels become turbans and sheets, dhotis, and where drama-dialogue collapses into giggles. A perplexed audience finds itself giggling too! Some fads, however, are not so public, like the 'bed-libraries' that emerged all of a sudden with children frantically creating mini shelves of books on their beds from the pile of common books in Inchara. Similarly, there is a tidal wave of fluffy and cuddly toys that come in, occupying spaces and helping the children feel at home.

Even though living on campus is an essential part of a student's life at CFL,





the adults don't consciously sit down and discuss how to create a particular atmosphere or experience of 'hostel life'. It is shaped every year by those living in the hostel, visitors both human and animal, routines that emerge into being for a particular year, issues that unfold as the year progresses and so on. Like many things in CFL, there is clarity about what something is not, rather than an urge to define something by what it should be. Of course, every world has hidden stories: the case of the disappearing pebbles, the case of the disappearing biscuits and the case of the overturned milk (well, that was the cat!). When an incident happens that temporarily shakes trust or friendship or a sense of cohesiveness, then we respond through a conversation with the children, bringing 'living together' into focus.

Relationships across the ages form a backdrop on this colourful and eventful stage that is Inchara! Twice a week parents come to spend a night with the youngest children and as evening approaches, there begins a guessing game as to whose parent he/she is: the 'pasternal' care (a term coined by them)

has arrived, they announce. Soon an elaborate interviewing process ensues where the parent navigates questions in all shapes and forms. 'Why have you come?' 'How old are you?' 'What kind of phone do you have?'. As the day draws to a close, this parent goes on a walk through the land with the children, helps with bath time (the time of the 6pm hooting and screaming!) and accompanies them through dinner. In some children, we notice a locating of security in this adult, as night approaches. In others, this is just another set of hands to pat them at night. And, speaking of the night, full moon or not, occasionally children have been seen climbing on the parent, begging for shoulder rides, and tickling them. This brief but playful burst of relating gives the children a chance to get to know an adult in a different scenario. Meanwhile the groggy and hobbling parent bids farewell the next morning and goes to their work.

Other visitors to Inchara who make an impact are the senior school children who come twice a week to read a bedtime story. Well, that is the plan anyway but what happens is a lot of tucking in of children, massaging of aching legs, pacifying, and long drawn out negotiations of who will sit where and how many inches away from the senior. Finally there are a few minutes left for the story! Again we notice how this relationship with older children forms a part of the larger spirit of relating across ages in school, which happens in lunch conversations, free play, community work, sports, walks and chats on the bus.

From what has been said so far, it might seem like the hostel only comes to life around 6pm but that is not so. Through the day, children weave in and out, check on their cuddly teddy bears, quickly slap lip balm or lotion on themselves, and find pockets of time to huddle and chat. A child with a head-

ache or fever might be wrapped in a quilt reading or staring at the ceiling. It is largely silent through the day though, perhaps broken by a cat's meowing or a shrill bird's call. Being the last hostel before the sanctuary, wildlife ventures close: a family of boars has a nest nearby, mongooses pass through the gardens around, and a cat visits when the door has been left open in a hurry.

We've almost forgotten about the adults who also live in Inchara. Those adults who switch hats every few seconds from teacher to surrogate-parent to colleague to friend to doctor. Over the years, the occasional CFL visitor, and a teacher applicant has also stayed in Inchara and experienced the life after children go to bed. Post 9pm, a different rhythm clicks in with herbal teas, adult conversations and sharing of the day's stories. There have even been dance rehearsals for an upcoming event (shhhh).

Children and adults in the hostel create meaning and memory in spaces, bonds in relationships and traditions out of spontaneous events! It is eye opening to see what children do to make a space their own and feel at home. So creating an atmosphere or culture in a hostel is a dynamic process which involves observation, letting waves come and go, talking with children about norms and, at the end of the day, just sitting back and enjoying the shared space!



Excursions

This year, the Mahuas and Bilvas spent time in the Varanashi farm near Mangalore with Kamala, Diba and parent Naveen Chitram, and participated in a Yakshagana performance near Bantwal. The Periodi family were most hospitable! The Tamalas went with Keerthi and Rupa to the Nilgiris and visited Gudalur, Mudhumalai, Ooty and Coonoor. The group interacted with people of the Thoda tribe and with Accord, an NGO that works with *adivasis* in the area. The Ashwathas travelled to Kerala with Srinivasan and Shashidhar, trekking in the Nelliampathy hills, exploring the waterfalls and forests in Vazhachal, and meeting artisans in Kochi and rounding off with a ride in the Alleppey backwaters. The Palashas travelled to Madhya Pradesh with Yashodara and Ashok, visited Bhopal city, the magnificent stupa at Sanchi, interacted with Eklavya, an NGO involved in education at Hoshangabad, walked in the forests of the Satpura range at Pachmarhi and ended up at the breathtaking marble rocks and rapids of river Narmada near Jabalpur. Nagini and Rohan accompanied the Akshas to Sirsi where they visited Vanastree, a women seed collective, and stayed in the homes of the members of the collective. They explored the rivers and landscape of the nearby Sonda forests before heading to Mathighatta on the crest of the Western Ghats and trekking down to Gokarna on the coast. They continued the trek from Gokarna to Honnavar on the coast before heading back to Bangalore.

The Ketakis and Parijatas went on a cycling excursion

with Venkatesh, Krishna and former student Nikhil Ram Mohan in Ramanagara and Mandya districts in south Karnataka. The cycling circuit began at Varadenahalli, and took them through Huliurdurga with its fort, Melkote with its historical temples and the Janapada Seva Trust, Srirangapatna with Tipu Sultan's legacy in the colonial times to the rice and sugarcane bowl that it is today, Somnathpur with its magnificent Hoysala temple, Maddur and back to Varadenahalli via Huliurdurga. They endured hard cycling, staying in warm and welcoming homes in villages along the route and learning of the history and people in the landscape in an inimitable way. The Mallikas and Champakas travelled to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in northeast India with Thejaswi, Sandilya and Sruti. After a three day train ride and another day on the road, they trekked in the bird-rich forests of Namdapha National Park, travelled down to the historical capital of Assam in Sibsagar where they encountered brick ruins and visited an oil rig, traveled by barge to Majuli island on the Brahmaputra river (where they stayed in a Vaishnavite monastery, the home of the Sattriya dance), and rode on elephant backs and jeeps to see the flood plain grasslands and one horned rhinoceroses at Kaziranga National Park. They ended the excursion with a visit to a school in Guwahati and a day in Kolkata. The trip was an attempt at exploring a complex landscape rich in history, sociology and biology and connecting the past with the present through observations and discussions with people who know the region well.



Sports at CFL

Sport and all its attendant joys: running, dodging, smashing, scoring, passing, dribbling, delight at having won a point over a rival, being pleased at having won a match. Wait, hold on! Aren't we supposed to be an alternative school where notions such as competition, contests, winning and ego-tripping are frowned upon and questioned? Sure, we are, and the ego, the mind and thoughts are constant objects of observation and reflection. Then where does sport, with its inherent competitiveness and attendant self-aggrandisement, fit in? Let's explore.

Why do humans aim to excel at activities that could really be seen as non-essential for survival? Is it the human body's need for exploring movement? Perhaps, and also because of the need to develop motor skills of particular kinds. The emphasis on physical skills might be due to the body's response to evolution: these were required in pre-settler days, the need gradually dwindling as settlement increased. Is it a continuing need for competing against each other? While in earlier times competition was for resources, has this instinct been partly directed towards the sports arena? Maybe it is the need of the mind, which started having more free time for itself, to be entertained and engaged in leisure driven activities. I suspect it probably is a combination of all of these.

Coming to the CFL context, what do we do in sport and physical fitness and where does it fit into the framework of the school? Sport as an activity starts early. Children, from the time they enter the school at age eight, have sports periods in their timetables. At the junior school level, children play games which aim to develop physical movement, balance, and eye-hand coordination. They play games which require them to run, dodge, start and stop, change direction.



This would also mean introducing them to balls and other sporting equipment, so that they can pick up skills to throw, pass and catch. A combination of movement-based skills along with ball skills gets them on to the sporting road! Another focus is getting the children to play team games, which means pushing them out of their comfort zones of playing non-competitive games and getting to play as a team. This is further developed in the middle and senior school levels, where there is more focus on developing skills, improving fitness and playing more team sports.

But then, wait a second. Introducing competition where there was none: isn't that contrary to what CFL stands for? At a very cursory level, yes! But if we dig deeper we will find that the sports field does offer valuable opportunities to learn about our behavioural patterns.

In the heat of competition and under the not-so-benign sun, the carefully embroidered curtain of one's image starts to part, revealing not-so-pleasant behaviours. Aggression, anger, sulking and even violence start peeping out from behind this curtain of the self, so lovingly nurtured over the years. In that sense, the sports field offers an excellent arena to understand one's own patterns. In the time that I have been with the sports programme at CFL, I have seen this curtain part for different children at different ages, starting from age eight and going on till eighteen and even in the adults. Of course, the intensity and spontaneity of displays of emotion seem to subside as the children grow older. These displays can be seen as windows to enter into psychological realms, not on the sports field but in dialogue classes at a collective level or talks with children individually.

The challenge that the sports programme also offers is of how one can improve skills in sport and movement as well as increase fitness levels without indulging and nourishing the ego. While it is nice to improve skills in particular sports and increase fluidity and efficiency and quality, does this



necessarily have to result in one-upmanship and conceited exhibitions? I don't think so. The improvement in the quality of skills and the subsequent elevation of the sporting experience can be enjoyed for what it is, without necessarily leaving large residues in the ego. Will that happen on its own? No, it needs constant working on by the individual and, in the case of CFL, by the teachers working with the children. Can one applaud others' performances even if they are in a rival team? Surely! I have seen this happen, as the sense of connection with others is not limited or guided by teams that they happen to play in. It certainly helps that there is no fixity in the teams that play each other; there are no 'houses' or inter-house competitions.

To sum it all up, is it possible to play sports, learn the associated skills and get fit without necessarily tying one's ego and all its responses closely into the process? Well, it's work in progress....



General Studies: livelihood

The General Studies courses with the seniors this year included studying the local landscape from various angles (such as water, vegetation, settlements), interacting with the children from schools in the neighbourhood and most recently, a course on livelihood, introduced this year.

In the livelihood course, we focussed on three aspects of livelihood choices: the enjoyment, motivation and satisfaction that come with work, ethical issues around livelihood choices and in workplaces, and the economics of making livelihood choices (including basic introductions to the sociological structures around work, and the structure of the global economy). It was clear right from the start that the course should begin with, and be structured around, questions that the children might have on these issues. We began with some questionnaires and discussions around their responses to their own questions. These were followed by sessions with various resource people on 'enjoyment', 'ethics' and 'economics' of livelihoods, each of which were interactive and guided by the students' questions on livelihoods. Some students at the end of the course felt that they were still confused regarding their future choices, while others responded that the course helped clarify their approach to considering livelihood options, even if the options weren't set clearly at this time of their lives. In our view, the course was part of a wider approach to livelihoods that included meeting people engaged in different livelihoods (either visiting the school or *in situ* on field visits and excursions), and a dialogue with the children on the structure of society and its connection with our psychological movements, a dialogue that is central to the school's educational philosophy.

Creepy, crawly, surly, burly

If we wanted to have an idea of what kind of wildlife could be found on the campus, where would we start or what would we look for? The first thoughts will definitely be about the larger mammals. Are there any elephants? Bears? Leopards? Yes, these do come through once in a while. We know when the elephants come through because they leave enough traces, but we don't know how often the others come. These others leave few or no traces. What we do see are pug marks (when the ground is soft from rain), scat or scratch marks. We know that wild boar live and breed on campus. They have recently made a 'nest' next to the junior hostel and a whole family of them come into it regularly (including more than a dozen piglets). All these animals seem to come through the campus only at night and apart from the boars, we only see traces that the animal has left behind. There are several others like civet cats, mongoose, lorises and jungle cats which are either residents or frequent visitors.

So is that all the wild life there is? What about birds, reptiles, amphibians? These are also found on campus. Then there is also the world of the insects and other invertebrates, which if one starts to dig into and explore, the CFL campus becomes a vast universe.

Yet in our daily lives we encounter very little of the wildlife that exists on the campus. There is a sense that we are aware of very little of the other inhabitants on this land. There may be the occasional group of babblers and crows that hang around the buildings who are loud and prominent.

Sometimes someone spots a chameleon or a snake and many people gather to view it, but they are there all the time; we don't know about it until one of them is brought to our attention. This is true of the reptiles, amphibians and the invertebrates. Sometimes there may be a few students and adults who develop an interest in a particular group of creatures (typically butterflies or snakes), and they become very aware of what lives where in that particular group.

The campus has many different habitats and because of this there is plenty of diversity in wild life. There is a rock pool where a lot of the mammals and birds come to drink, and if you look closely, there are also frogs and a host of insects like dragonflies that live and breed there. The other major habitats are open grassland, tree clumps with or without boulders and open scrub.

So if we want to have an idea of what wild life lives on campus, we need to just have some time and go for a walk and look and listen. Look on the tree trunk and you will find that the tree trunk is a habitat in itself. Go for a walk in the night with a bright torchlight and you will see things you will never see during the day. A couple of examples would be the little lorises who are never seen during the day but seen easily at night walking from tree to tree, or the chameleons whose skin glows and stands out from the foliage when you shine the light on them. The more you pay attention, the more will be revealed to you, the worlds within worlds that exist in the wilder parts of the CFL campus.





Comings and goings

We welcome Navneeth Thirumalai into the community. He is interested in the middle school Social Sciences, and will also be engaged with senior school Biology.

In the beginning of the academic year, our sports programme was enhanced by Joe Skeet's ideas. An undergraduate student from the University of East Anglia, "the sports guy" as we all fondly remember him, Joe evoked considerable enthusiasm from all ages towards fitness and sports. Anjappa (alias Anji) found a cricket soul-mate in Joe and they communicated, mostly non-verbally, about the latest news and effective techniques in the sport!

Theo de Schutter, a senior school student from Europe, stayed with us for a good part of the first term, attending classes and getting a basic exposure to CFL. The third term also had three young adults participating in the life of the community. Dionis and Gregor (former Brockwood students) participated in many areas of the school. They took music assemblies, assisted in music, math and project classes for various groups and cooked in the kitchen. Siddharth (a former student of CFL), who runs an eco-tourism business in

Ladakh, stayed with us too. He accompanied us on the tabla in our singing assemblies, a much needed support! He also helped with activities such as pottery, craft, art and land.

Dr Revathi, a dentist from Bangalore, made an assembly presentation on dental hygiene and visited the Vardena-halli government school to talk about the same subject. Dr Shanti Hegde, a gynaecologist who works with Doctors Without Borders, visited us and spoke of her projects in Sudan, Nepal, Burma, Chhattisgarh and other places. Dr Chitra Dinakar, Associate Professor in the department of pediatrics at the St. John's Medical College Hospital, spent half a day with two groups from the middle school speaking with children on adolescent sexuality and related matters. The senior school students had an interactive session with Dr Bharath Reddy, who presented his research on substance abuse and drug use patterns in teenagers from Bangalore. We thank them all for sharing their valuable insights.

We were happy to host Gyaltzen, an officer at the Department of Education, the Central Tibet Administration,

Dharamshala. He was here at school for a week to observe, share and discuss ideas in education. Many children got to speak with him and listen to the heart-rending story of the Tibetan people. We also learned from him a few celebratory, traditional Tibetan dances.

Derek, Wendy and Steve, long standing friends of the school visited in January. Derek, as usual, enthralled the young and the old with his stories and sound effects from a collection of musical instruments.

To the excitement of many bird-watching enthusiasts, Samira Agnihotri visited the school in August. She presented her work on birds in the B R Hills in an assembly. She also had an interactive ESL session with the Vardena-halli school children. Former student Ilango gave a presentation on his work studying wildlife in South India and Borneo.

Two groups from the middle school were involved in a puppet workshop. Uma Periodi and M Ravi (parents of the school) and Sarvesh (their associate) helped the children learn how to make simple, low-cost puppets. The students





also learnt to use these puppets in a presentation.

The school kiln got a face-lift under the expertise of Mr Ullaskar Dey, a retired ceramist from the Ceramics Department of the Regional Design and Technical Development Centre. He advised us on various aspects of glazing pottery. Roshan Sahi, a free-lance artist, also spent a day in school helping us learn the technique of glazing clay work.

Other visitors included two students doing their Masters degrees in Education from the Azim Premji University. Sowmya spent a few weeks in school attending math classes and closely observing teaching practices. Preeta Rajan visited for two weeks of observation, to understand the philosophical underpinnings of an alternate school, as part of her course.

As part of the library programme in the senior school, Hema, co-founder the Association of People with Disability (and author of *Wheels of Destiny*), and Srinath Perur, author of the recently-published *If it's Monday it must be Madurai*, interacted with the senior school students.

We had a lecture-demonstration on Odissi dance by a young artist, Meghna

Das. The beauty of the style and the *tribhargas* kept the audience rapt in attention.

We would like to thank all parent volunteers who gave generously of their time and energy towards helping the school in many crucial areas such as the kitchen, pastoral care, games, General Studies (GS) programmes and land care.

In the first term, as part of the general studies course on water, four resource people visited school. Muthatha Ramanathan gave a presentation on the sociological aspects of rainwater harvesting from traditional to modern times. Dilip da Cunha and Anuradha Mathur spoke on the changing ideas regarding water flow and use in India and around the world. Dhyan Appachu interacted with the students on the use of GIS in studying catchments and water use patterns.

Eminent physicist, well-wisher and grandparent of the school, Dr N Mukunda of IISc, Dr Arjun Jayadev, former student of CFL and professor at the University of Massachusetts, and Lavanya Keshavamurthy, a friend of the school, interacted with students as



part of the livelihoods course, a General Studies programme in the third term.

Campus Happenings

As part of an increasing awareness of and concern for water conservation, various activities took shape this year. The Palashas constructed two pit toilets along with tippy taps over the third term (at minimal cost and using recycled material). The senior students also set up a drip irrigation system in two areas of the school where we hope to maintain fruit groves.

The cycling programme continues to see more takers over the last two years! There was also the problem of a



growing number of cycles on campus with no proper place to store them. The Mallikas built a cycle shed over two weeks as a hands-on experience in building. The shed now safely houses many bicycles and components.

An evening of performance and fun marked the third term. We had an Open Mike programme where parents and students shared some hidden talents. Many individuals sang, danced, enacted pieces and performed on various musical instruments. This was followed by a full-community gala dinner.



Drama through the ages

Whether it's a short skit in a class, an assembly presentation or an end-of-year evening show with parents also in the audience, drama has always been a part of the curriculum at CFL. This year there was a range of such presentations across the age groups.

One evening in March, the curtains opened and we all settled to watch the laziest crocodile in action, or rather, in his hammock! The play had elaborate props and papier-mâché crocodile masks made by the children, fitting music, dance and even a moment where a child demonstrated a headstand in the middle of the stage! Gregor and Siddharth had worked all term with the Bilvas on these aspects as well as drama skills.

Eight Tamalas sat still with scripts in their hands and ready to tell us the story of 'The Twits' by Roald Dahl. Their seriousness spread to the assembly audience but soon we were to hear of the horrific lengths Mr Twit went to irritate his wife and vice-versa. We collapsed into laughter but the Tamalas kept to their clear diction and stern faces, making the performance all the more humorous!

The assembly bell rang one morning, and we all gathered to see two plays in Kannada that children had been working on all term. The Ashwatha children had worked on a Kannada musical called *Matsya*, written by Leela Garady, a former teacher of CFL. In the process of preparing for the play, children learned songs and made

many large and colourful props. The second was a Palasha production in a traditional style of storytelling called *hari kathe*, on Krishna-Sudhama. This 'Hari Kathe' was also written for the children by Mrs Leela Garady, (based on the book *Krishnacharitre* by Pu Ti Narasimhachar).

After a term of reading, listening to, and enacting scenes from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Akshas presented the play, getting into their roles and evoking laughter from the audience. Memorable moments included Puck jumping onto Bottom's shoulders, characters speaking from halfway up a ladder and choral readings from the wings, whenever the spell of love was being cast!



We invite applications from individuals interested in self enquiry, who have specific skills to offer in terms of teaching, administrative duties and pastoral care (our needs may change from year to year). Applicants should be excited by living on a campus in a rural setting. If you are interested in working with us, please visit our website (<http://cfl.in/working-at-cfl/>) and follow the procedure outlined there.

We are in the process of consolidating our database. If you have received this newsletter as a hard copy (through the post), please do email us at info@cfl.in (with 'Database' in the subject box) in order for us to have your email id. Please also send us your current phone number.

As in previous years, this year too we have received generous support from all our friends across the world. This commitment makes many aspects of our work possible. Thank you.

We continue to depend on such goodwill, in particular for our long-term financial needs. Any support we receive goes a long way towards sustaining our work. If you wish to contribute, please visit our website (www.cfl.in/donate/) or email us at info@cfl.in, with 'Donation' in the subject box. We will get in touch with you to initiate the process.

Donor information: Centre For Learning is a registered charitable society. Donations to the society are exempt from Income Tax to the extent provided for under section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961. If you wish to avail tax exemption in the USA, please email us for details.

Design : beetroot
Photo credits: Amrutha, Diba, Krishna, Nagini, Rukmini, Rupa, Sandilya, Thejaswi
Compiled by Kamala Mukunda, Keerthi Mukunda, Krishna H and Venkatesh Onkar

Campus: Village Varadenahalli, Magadi Taluk, Bachenhatti Post, Ramanagaram District 562 120, Karnataka, India.
Phone: +91-92415 81342 / 81345, +91-80-27705749
Mailing address: 2, Good Earth Enclave, Uttarahalli Road, Kengeri, Bangalore 560 060, India
email: info@cfl.in, website: www.cfl.in