



Education and the processes of living, in our view, are inextricably linked. When we say living, we mainly mean relationships at work, at home and on the street. Relationships seem to constitute such a large chunk of our daily human experience. And their influence reaches further than just our own particular lives. Our search for security in relationship impacts the world at large. To us, it is obvious that education should aim at unravelling the subtleties and complexities of human relationship.

We often say that man is a social animal; we like to live in groups. Humans certainly need each other, and warm relationships are said to be one of the ingredients of a 'happy' life. We all experience supportive periods with close friends or family, times of great affection

and reaching out. But this same companionship is also the source of much pain and distress, because there is a strong whiff of separation in every relationship. Thus our lives are a strange mixture of the affectionate and the antagonistic, the lonely and the multiply connected.

Everyone has their own 'coping strategies' to meet the difficulties in relating: avoidance, aggression, submission or gossip. Some believe that relationships are strengthened by conflict, or at least that relationship is all about ups and downs ("Wouldn't life be boring if we always got along?") Yet these personally held theories never seem to set the mind at rest; it seems that we have always sought systemic guidance in this realm. Witness our complex kinship structures that have dictated rules for interaction over genera-

tions, and, for better or worse, still do so. More recently, we are seeing a proliferation of the therapy industry and of relationship gurus. In this new paradigm, emotional literacy and interpersonal intelligence have become trainable skills. These are all set to become categories of assessment for school children across the country! All this shows that there is a widespread need for something beyond the coping strategies we instinctively fall back on.

This skill-based approach, in our view, is terribly misguided. Is relating something to be 'good at'? Is it a skill to be mastered to achieve particular goals: a happier marriage or a better workplace? The complexity of relationship seems not to lie in the reason that it's just a difficult skill to master. In fact, making it a skill



masks the roots of the problem. Learning how to negotiate and navigate our way in social situations doesn't address the bottom line: we find it very difficult to move away from viewing the world from a narrow perspective, our own.

When we observe ourselves, we encounter a very deep self-orientation through the day. It's all about me somehow. There is a fragility in here—a readiness to bristle, to disagree, to affirm one's own position. Paradoxically, we are always a little rattled when someone else displays the same behaviours! In this somewhat negotiated terrain, we use shortcuts that we hope will help us, such as forming quick reference directories of people, a code-book, a manual to deal with a variety of situations. In the long run, however, these techniques miss the mark. The code-books acquire a reality of their own, all the more powerful because of their invisibility. We are rarely aware of the way we prejudge people, anticipating their responses and formulating our own beforehand. We rarely see people and situations afresh, as they are.

But why is a school newsletter discussing this rather amorphous issue? To us, relationship has everything to do with education. These are the realities that get glossed over in daily living. They are not given explicit attention, yet they are the basis of every life situation. At CFL, we would say that we keep relationship at the heart of our curriculum. Not with the intent to 'improve' relationships, which is just tinkering at the edges of the problem. Rather, relationship, in the manner of a hologram, reveals everything about ourselves and our world. So in daily transactions, we give importance to this over getting the job done, or getting the student a rank or a pass. Together with our students and colleagues, we learn about the strong need to make finer and finer divisions between ourselves and others.

It goes without saying that nothing about this approach easily guarantees peace and harmony!

Attention in the moment to the totality of our situation: can we ask this of ourselves? Absentminded, mechanical processing appears to be a deep habit, a default mode that precludes this attention. The most we can perhaps do is to caution each other—and ourselves—when we fall into predicting and explaining the world in the same old ways. Can we make a shift and see our emotional movies as mere movies? Not always as justified and inevitable as they seem, but simply projections of thought, desire and emotion.

We seem to have a choice in the way we perceive difficulty in relationship. Going down one path implies finding fault with everything outside 'me'. If we reject that path, what are we left with? Not self-blame certainly, but the possibility of clearly seeing the extent to which we are—very deeply and subtly—creating the difficulty. This is far from a cliché: we feel that some perceptions have the power to transform us, and this is one such. Our habitual thinking about our lives carries the primordial drive for security. We believe in a world of people out there whom we have to control in order for us to feel at peace. What if we're wrong?

Our students are very much a part of this enquiry. Their brand of philosophy is not analytical or complicated, but they come to the heart of the matter swiftly and directly. In terms of relationship, they amaze us with their ability to drop their images and to try to live harmoniously with each other, overcoming conflict. In our complex social world, they offer a possibility of what it might mean to tread lightly in the realm of emotion and identity.

Excursions

The excursions this year were varied and exciting, as usual. The Sarala-Mahua students went to Honey Valley in Coorg and to Gudalur, where they enjoyed the hospitality of Rama and Ramadas. The Bilvas visited Honnemardu, home of the Adventurers, and coracted, swam, hiked in the forests and generally enjoyed the backwaters of the Linganamakki dam. The Tamalas travelled to Goa. They had many adventures and nearly met a queen! They stayed in a three hundred year old house, spotted the elusive Malabar trogon in the Bondla forest, and hiked many, many kilometres. The Ashwatha-Palashas went to Ajanta and Ellora. They also visited the quiet beaches of Chiplun in coastal Maharashtra and the hills of Goa, where they stayed with families in a Goan village. The Aksha-Ketakis did a long trip to Orissa, where they learnt about Olive Ridley turtle conservation, watched Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilka lake and crocodiles at Bhitarkanika. They learnt about the plight of communities affected by mining in Orissa and also about the issues facing the handloom industry. They also managed to visit Buddhist sites at Ratnagiri and Udaigiri! Finally, the Parijatas, Mallikas and the Sevantikas did a coastal trek from Honnavar to Gokarna (in Karnataka) and stayed at Vanastree in Sirsi. They acquainted themselves with the work of Vanastree and learned about issues faced by the people of the Malnad region. A highlight of their trip was that they all stayed in the homes of local villagers.

Campus news

We were very happy to welcome musicians T M Krishna and Sangeetha Sivakumar to CFL for a two day workshop. This was their second visit to the school and they interacted with children across all age groups. Yet again, they generated much excitement and energy around Carnatic music. We hope to see them often in the years to come.

The Akshas had the opportunity to interact with students of the school run by the Association of People with Disability in Bangalore. Seventh standard students from APD spent a day in CFL following a programme of activities designed by the Akshas. The Aksha and the Ketaki students visited Wayanad for two weeks as part of an ongoing interaction with the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary. We thank our friends at the GBS for all their support and inspiration over the years.

One evening in March we witnessed an amazing performance of Yakshagana, brought to us by parents of the school who are working actively to keep up the tradition of this particular form of dance drama. The audience comprised all of us, some parents and a good number of residents of Varadenahalli village. We were all enthralled by the skill of the players, and the dramatic costumes and make-up that take hours to put on!



At the end of their CFL education, the graduating group, the Sevantikas, each did an internship programme for about a month in an area of their interest. Some students interned with NGOs, others in scientific laboratories or with architects and designers. Studies apparently show that young people exposed to the working world often develop cynical attitudes to it! So we were relieved to note that our seniors greatly appreciated the work and the people they encountered, and expressed how inspiring their time had been.

Over the past few years, CFL students have interacted closely with Vanastree, an NGO based in Sirsi, Karnataka, that works with food security and women's issues. Interns from Vanastree interested in education are now beginning to spend time at CFL to learn about educational processes at work here. The first of these to visit was Dana Christmas, a student from the USA, who was at CFL for about two months in the third term.

Gerard Bayle has become such a regular and welcome visitor that it is difficult to think of a CFL calendar without remembering him! He was with us for a few weeks in February, working with theatre activities. We would like to thank him again for sharing so much of his energy and experience with us. Sakkar Tejani, a very old friend of the school, visited us for a couple of days after many years.

Wipro Applying Thought In Schools held their three day conference on our campus, this year on the theme of evaluation and assessment. The Network of Alternative Schools, a group of like-minded educators from South India, also held their annual gathering at CFL.

During our *mela*, two friends of the school, Anil Ananthaswamy and Vishakha Chanchani, interacted with students, speaking about science, art and craft. We thank them for their presence in school.

Kumar, an artist from Tiruvannamalai, who specializes in nature illustration, worked in school for two weeks creating an 8 ft mural for us. It is placed at the beginning of our sanctuary and has a brief write up about our philosophy of conservation and land use, as well as a note of gratitude to our supporters.

Two students from the Azim Premji University, Shahin and Swati, were at our campus for two weeks during the time of the mela as part of their MA internship. Roland Bal, an old friend of the school, visited CFL for a week. He worked with students on exercise and fitness. Leela, a teacher from Chirag (a rural development organisation), spent two weeks with us, observing classes and interacting with staff and students.

For the past two years, we have initiated alumni gatherings on campus in June and December. Former students spend a night on campus, and there is an atmosphere of fun as well as a serious sharing of questions and perceptions. These sessions have been very valuable for us all.

Piles of elephant dung near our gate, assembly hall, art room... In early March, we had a very different set of visitors to campus! The elephants seemed to have wandered off their regular beat in search of water in a very dry summer. We hope they found it.

This year onwards, after giving a lot of thought to the matter, we have decided that the entry age for students to apply for CFL will be eight rather than six years of age. We all enjoy the affectionate presence of six and seven year-olds on campus, and value the opportunity to work with them. However, the demands of caring for children this young, with all the responsibility that it entails, have been consistently very high over the years. It was a difficult decision, but it made sense in the long term.

We would like to thank all parent volunteers who gave generously of their time and energy towards helping the school in many crucial areas.

Varadenahalli school mural

Last year, one of the teachers was invited by the Varadenahalli government primary school to make a mural on their outer wall. Working with the Ketakis, the plan was to portray living creatures in and around Varadenahalli environs. This was especially to bring to view creatures that aren't often spotted, or that don't form a part of everyday creature-talk, such as the slender loris or the giant wood spider. Murralling involved a few steps. First, they made a large template which detailed some main areas: a large tree, a stream, rocks, sky. In a brainstorming ses-

sion, they made a list of creatures that live in these spaces. After doing a few small studies, work on the wall began. They worked with acrylic emulsion paint for large surfaces and acrylic artist paint for smaller areas. The work was absorbing and challenging. For a couple of sessions they worked in near total silence... and decided that this, too, was a good way to paint!

New ESL programme

Seven high-spirited children walked, most times ran the path to CFL every Thursday to work with two teachers. The ESL programme for our neighbourhood Varadenahalli children began in September and continued until March 2013. Each session had the following components: conversation, phonics, vocabulary, rhymes and a story. The first week went quite well. So did the next. In the third week, a child mumbled "aunty, yenadhru aata aadona aunty!" only to be joined by his peers in a chorus. Soon aata found place in the programme: origami, drawing, games, making booklets, and so on. Often, the children stopped work to notice a "suntru gaali" (whirlwind) in the games field, to report a really large snake whose deathly jaws they escaped from while getting to CFL, or just to fight, get even with each other!

The accepted rule was that everyone spoke English and if appropriate words were not known, then we found out and learned how to use them. Teachers needed to guard against the tendency to converse in Kannada. While helping children find the right English words, teachers' vocabulary in Kannada had markedly improved. This interaction with children and English will continue next year too, with the reassurance of sufficient doses of 'aata' in the programme!

Women's space

Beginning last June, a group of CFL and Varadenahalli resident women have been meeting every month. The original impetus came from some of us looking for ways to contribute to the



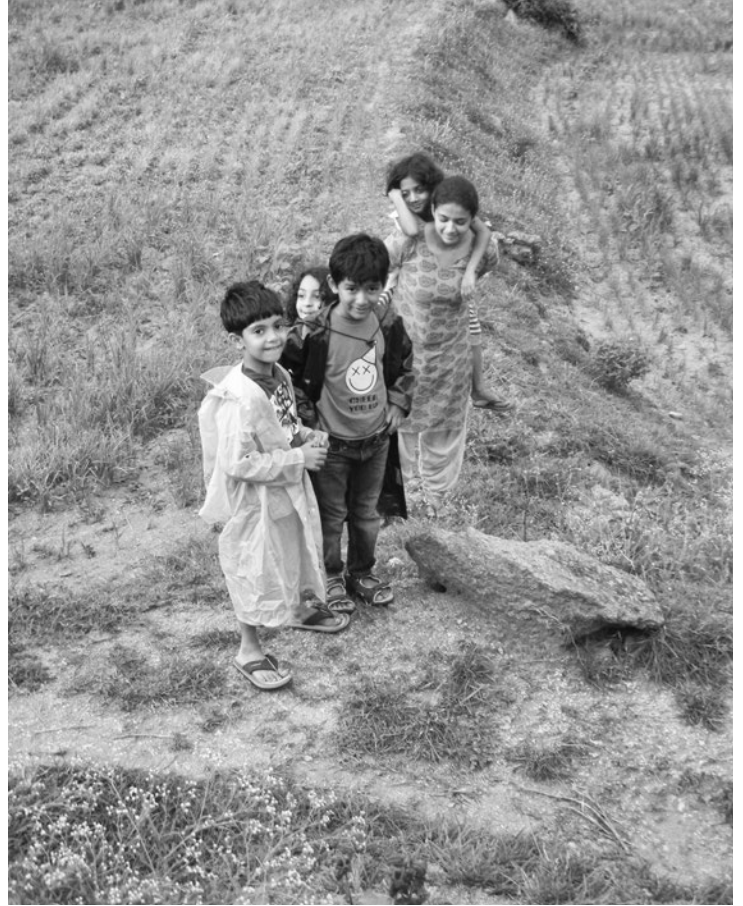
area of women's healthcare in our neighbourhood. After a series of dialogues with Vijaya, Vani (CFL parents) and Lakshmi (an ex-student), we decided to begin by simply offering a 'space for women' to get together and talk about a variety of things. Naturally, their children come too, and several CFL parents have helped engage them in creative activities during our meetings. Ten sessions later, we have settled into a small group of around 15 to 20 women. Things are still in too amorphous and fluid a state for us to say any more than this right now! We have relied on the assistance and expertise of many people so far, and are deeply grateful to them all.

Land and water

Our growing season was cut short drastically this year, owing to the poor rains around here in Varadenahalli. Yet we did manage as usual to grow some vegetables, and plant some trees, not all of which survived. Removal of invasives continued, further reducing the lantana and eupatorium menace to encourage regeneration of native plants. Soil and water conservation work received a boost of energy and attention. Thanks to a grant we received early in the year, we have been able to complete several projects.

Our campus slopes down around 150 feet in a south-north direction, and over the decades soil erosion has been checked using bunds. When we made this place our home, our roadways (only a few, but significant nevertheless!) became areas of severe soil erosion. One necessary task completed this year was to ramp these larger roadways using waste granite slabs (a waste slab is the last and 'unusable' piece from a large commercial slab), giving proper drainage for water along the side. Soil and water are also lost along nalas, running south to north right through the campus. At the bottom of the nala running along our northwest border therefore, we erected a large gully plug with an overflow pipe. The top of this plug is also a part of the boundary trail that goes around the campus, so on your next visit make sure to walk the plug!

Water conservation projects included regrading areas of land and redirecting drains, so that now a substantial amount of the water from the assembly hall end of campus will flow toward the kitchen area, and enter a new percolation tank created just below this. This brings us to some news about our water situation. For 15 years we have met our water needs from a single borewell with a moderately good yield. Every year, it struggles around March, and we are reminded to be even more careful with water use than usual. This year given the poor rains it literally dried up; we had to buy tankers of water every week, and then every day. We have been talking for years about the possibility of rain-water harvesting, but kept running into problems of storage tanks (a huge expense) large enough to be useful in the dry months after the monsoon. This April we discussed



again the need to try a single system, drawing rainwater runoff from a few buildings and supplying by gravity perhaps two hostels at the 'bottom' of the campus. Work is in progress to find the money and a good team to execute this for us. Another idea is to line our new percolation tank and use that stored water for agricultural needs in the third term. Meanwhile, we also decided to dig for water. In our area, borewells have been going deeper (around 700-800 feet) before hitting sources that vary wildly in yield. It is difficult to find a pattern in these wells that would tell us anything about the waterways so deep below the surface. And it turns out that the hydrogeology of it is also very complex and far from an exact science. Yet we managed to locate a professional who suggested a few points, and, as of April, we have borewell water again. None of this reduces the urgency of conserving water and going ahead with the rainwater storage plans.

Other land-related news is that the wall has been completed; if you have visited us anytime in the last year and a half, you understand what we mean! It is a work of art, but also a very useful place for meetings and conversations in the shade. Our thanks and appreciation to Sandy who spent many back-breaking hours in the sun coaxing stones into just-so shapes and sizes to create it. Meanwhile, some remaining slabs have been made into wide benches around campus, where we can sit during quiet times, and to create steps in those areas where accessibility was difficult. Every set of steps also has an alternative ramp route allowing wheelchair access to all buildings and spaces on campus.

Story mela

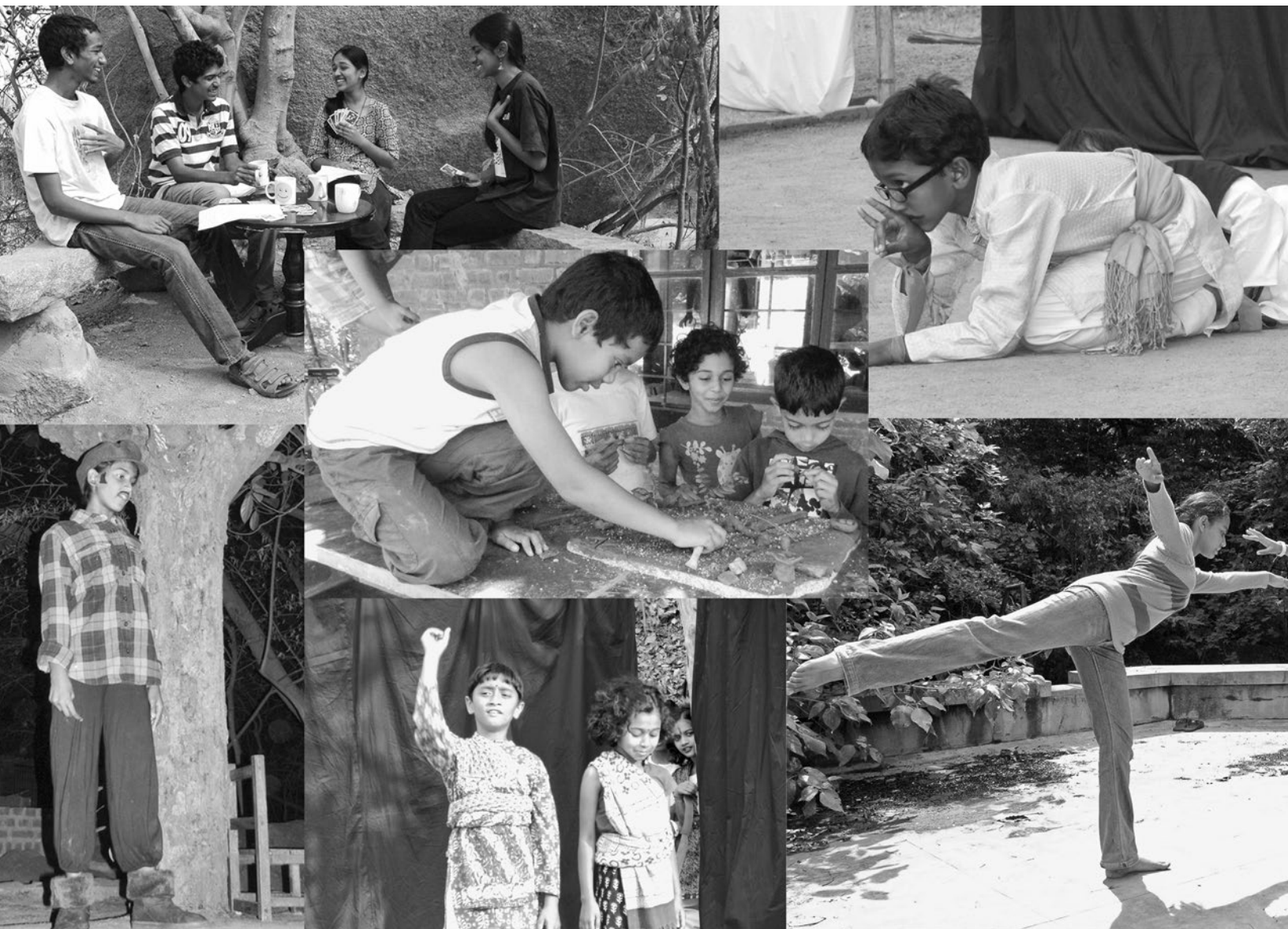
Looking back over the wide variety of melas that we have worked on over the past several years, what stands out is the very deep sense of engagement and pleasure that the work of the mela evokes in all of us. Sure, there is some grumbling about the hard work involved! But when we stand back and look at the processes, the sense of cooperative learning and excitement is palpable. These are the memories that stay with us.

Over the past year, our mela was about “stories,” and, given our almost instinctual human desire for narrative, this proved a rich theme indeed! Since the theme is so broad, each group had to find some meaningful entry point into the ideas involved. We worked on many aspects of the broad idea, and what follows is just a snapshot.

The younger middle schoolers—the Tamalas and Ashwathas—took the direct approach: they practised the art of storytelling itself, as performance. Each child chose a story and found a way of narrating it, either in costume or with the help of beautifully painted illustrations. They worked hard on dropping their inhibitions, and telling a tale in a way that would

grab the listener’s interest. The stories narrated were from all parts of the world—India, China, North America—and were full of twists and turns and insights into human nature. There was the story about a king who loved gardening. When he wanted to find a successor to the throne, he gave all the young people in the land seeds, announcing that the one whose plant grew the best would inherit the throne. The story followed the fortunes of one young boy who, try as he might, could not get the seed to germinate. Along with all the others who had grown beautiful plants, he sadly carried his empty pot to show the king anyway. The king embraced him and declared him the next ruler...because he had given everyone roasted seeds to test their honesty!

The senior school used that other ancient template, drama, for their exploration. They rewrote three classical Greek myths: the stories of Echo and Narcissus, of Pandora’s Box, and of Prometheus and his theft of Fire. Prometheus was depicted in a puppet theatre (the real story was how the students managed, against all odds, to make and learn to manipulate large puppets, with no prior experience!) The students scripted and dramatised



everything themselves, giving the presentation some contemporary twists, such as a ritzy dance number. As always, when our seniors 'dress up', we all suddenly realise they are actually young adults...and wonder at the years flying by.

The older middle school group tried an interesting experiment. They played with the concept (part fantasy, loosely tethered in quantum physics) of parallel universes. This is the notion that there are, at this very moment, multiple yous and mes acting out our lives on the basis of choices that the "real" you and me haven't made. The students created a story that branched out into multiple possibilities for what happens to the protagonist. They then created a maze that reflected their story, in which the audience could choose a storyline to follow. The students also worked on shadow puppetry, on narrating a story through song, and on drama and mime. The shadow puppets in the moonlight were simply unforgettable.

The juniors did a dance drama on the life of a river, and also filled the assembly hall with a dozen absorbing activities and mini-presentations that could have occupied people for the entire evening. While the rest of the school tried to put in four

shows, the juniors were able to do only two, but that ensured them packed houses! They enacted the story of a river that begins its life pure and clean, and encounters 'adventures' along its journey such as pollution and damming. Eventually, as the people realise they are the cause of its destruction, they resolve to change their ways and take better care of the river. The sight of our eight-year-old rascals solemnly promising to change the world elicited a lot of laughter; but also goosebumps and a lump in the throat.

For the day of the mela presentations the entire school campus (the built-up area) became a stage for the presentations of the various groups. Indeed, we had to schedule multiple performances of each show, as there were around 400 visitors. Our guests were to be seen dashing in different directions, forever feeling they were missing something just around the corner. And yet, everyone seemed to be having a good time, from buttermilk in the hot afternoon sunshine, to the simple meal at the end of the evening. After everyone left, we cleared up four acres of entertainment. And if you listened carefully, you would have heard us going 'whew' at 9pm that night.



Cycling

The open road, fresh air, the sun rising to greet us just over the horizon. A monsoon drizzle or winter morning chill to snap us out of our sleep. It is 6.30 am on a Tuesday and the Mallikas (first senior school year students) are hovering around the bike shed excitedly, enthusiastic about the bicycle ride ahead.

Well, all quite accurate, apart from perhaps the enthusiasm and excitement! But more on that later.

We are lucky to be located in an area that offers quiet roads with breathtaking scenery. When an avid cyclist and friend of the school, Georg, offered to take a group of children cycling once a week, we of course jumped at the opportunity. Georg, a few keen teachers and the Mallikas launched a cycling programme.

Apart from being a lot of fun and an excellent way to exercise, cycling offered other unexpected learning opportunities. However much fun it was once we were on the road, it was not easy dragging ourselves out of bed and onto a cycle early in the morning week after week. Thus, cycling gave the students and teachers yet another opportunity to examine resistance and motivation!

In the time available to us, we were able to ride up to 25 km on a range of routes through the landscapes around campus. There's nothing like a downhill stretch on an open tarred road after an arduous uphill climb. We became part of the scenery over the weeks as people greeted us with familiarity and warmth. A puncture on the road was not a concern with helpful local people coming out to watch and offer help, and, on one occasion, even invite the whole group for "kaapi"!

Apart from the rides, a few of us also learned to change tubes, fix punctures and slipped chains. We hope to do more on the mechanics and physics of cycles in the coming year.

Overall it was a valuable pilot year for the cycling programme, and we learned a lot about what works and what we can improve. This coming year we look forward to opening the activity to a more diverse age group. See you on the road!

Middle school projects

In the middle school years (roughly equivalent to the 5th through 8th standards), students have 'textbook' classes only for English, mathematics, Kannada and Hindi. They are not timetabled for separate classes in physics, chemistry, biology, history, civics and geography. Ideas and themes from these disciplines are introduced through twelve term-long projects, following a curriculum we have worked out over the years. Some project topics have fallen within subject boundaries, such as Civics or Ancient Civilisation, but many of these are wider in scope, such as Music and Easter Island.

Here are the principles we have found that work well in such courses. The teacher uses multiple sources of knowledge and understanding, such as library books (fiction and non-fiction), encyclopaedias, interviews with people, selected films, observations of objects or monuments and the results of laboratory experiments. We have not felt it neces-

sary as yet to turn to internet research for these age groups! The students use their imagination and guess-work freely in these classes, before seeking the 'right' answers from a reliable source. While we do encounter a fair amount of content, the bulk of the students' work is to process information of different kinds in different ways. They read text and summarise, do experiments and analyse the collected data, write their own questions and seek answers, analyse charts or diagrams and write a report based on the information depicted, illustrate situations with sketches, imagine themselves in a different place and time and write letters or newspaper articles or diary entries, and act out little impromptu scenes from descriptions in a book. When they are older, they research in the library with a little guidance, and use the information gathered to create a thesis paper, a handmade book or a semi-formal presentation. Sometimes we focus on hand-work, as when we do physical geography (making models, drawing maps) or natural science (sketching). At other times we focus on travel and interviews, as when we do the history of Bangalore or a local village. Whatever the nature of the class, participative discussion is always a big component.

So what do the students take away





from these courses? A lot of memories, though not of the kind that would help you win a general knowledge contest! An appreciation that there are different kinds of knowledge and different ways of understanding. A feeling that learning about the world is an investigative and joyous process. And along the way, they get to practice and hone the skills we believe are very important for lifelong learning.

Aksha Kannada

For years, we have discontinued the teaching of Kannada at the end of the Aksha year (eight standard). The students' time becomes very tight in the last two years before their first examinations, and one of the sacrifices has been to remove Kannada from the timetable. We briefly toyed with the idea of ending with a Kannada examination of our own making, but discarded that idea primarily because it was so unimaginative! So last year, we have begun to think of ways to round off their seven years of reading, writing and speaking Kannada with some special experiences. The Akshas went around the village interviewing some elderly members of the community, using a questionnaire they had earlier prepared. After a couple of visits to their homes, the students wrote rough and final versions of their mini-biographies,

added some photographs, and made little books. Toward the end of term, they made rava laddus and presented the books along with the laddus to their elderly friends! The Akshas also spent several sessions (around 15) this year with the fourth and fifth standard children of the Varadenahalli government primary school, doing clay work, dancing, and teaching English.

Woodwork classes

A long central work area, with a beautiful balcony facing the games field, a moderate materials store room and a growing

tools repository. A space away from the classrooms where students may freely make a lot of (required) noise! For noise is unavoidable while toiling away in the woodwork shed. One can often hear the rhythmic hammering of mallets, the rasping of sharp saws and students chatting. We can see wood transforming itself into designs under dexterous or fumbling hands. Though the shed is hardly a year old, much has happened under its roof.

Many of the middle school students and some of the high school students have had woodcarving and carpentry classes here. Students have carved designs ranging from the real to the surreal, and have learnt basic carpentry and joinery work. The A-level Design and Technology students too have used the shed for their projects. Much of the shed's work is done on cheap teak and other waste wood.

There seems to be a growing interest in children towards working with wood as the word has spread about the 'fun' these classes can offer. It is fun indeed, once students think they are good at it (and definitely not so much fun when hard work does not promise beautiful products and the wood cracks defiantly beneath the chisel!)



General Studies

The general studies programme for the senior school in the first term was a twelve-week survey course of the environmental history of south Asia. The reading and discussion-based course covered topics from the ancient Indian outlook to forests to Mughal paintings that captured the landscape from medieval times, and forest policy, agriculture, dams and industrialization in colonial and modern times. Students experienced reconstructing history by interpreting different sources, and presented a term paper on a selected topic in environmental history.

In the second term, we embarked on a course which we felt was urgently necessary for young people (and ourselves) in an increasingly media-dominated environment. A short description follows.

Media literacy

Surely, it is an easier world we inhabit now. So many things to buy, places to visit (both real and virtual), lots to learn and what not. Much of living today is eased with things that we can't deny ourselves the use or support of: gadgets like TVs, cellphones and computers, and media like the newspaper and the Internet. We feel completely in control, that we are above the media we use and that these exert little influence on us, even though we are constantly flooded with stimuli from this world. At the same time, we also hear recurring laments that the media has created a climate of consumption, insatiable wants and unlimited anxiety.

Where does the truth lie? In the goodness or the problem of it all? Could it be that the press, the social networking sites and the new media are just new faces of consumption and anxiety? After all, the media too are created and inhabited by the same human brain (with its age-old habits) that consumes them.

How might we live in a world that is filled with media? The clever advertisement of useful products, the important news and showy lifestyles, all disseminate

opinions and attitudes, instill ideals and ideas. What would it mean to understand ourselves from what surrounds us? These questions inspired the media literacy course of the general studies programme for the senior school.

We began by defining media literacy for ourselves as a process of waking up to the dynamics of this powerful world of the media. Its key players - corporations and products and purchasers. Its primary games - the use of human feelings like desire, fulfillment, well-being and happiness. It is a world of profits and losses, of products that cater to people's emotional rather than physical needs, often even creating these needs in individuals by repeating hypnotic jingles and ad-mantras.

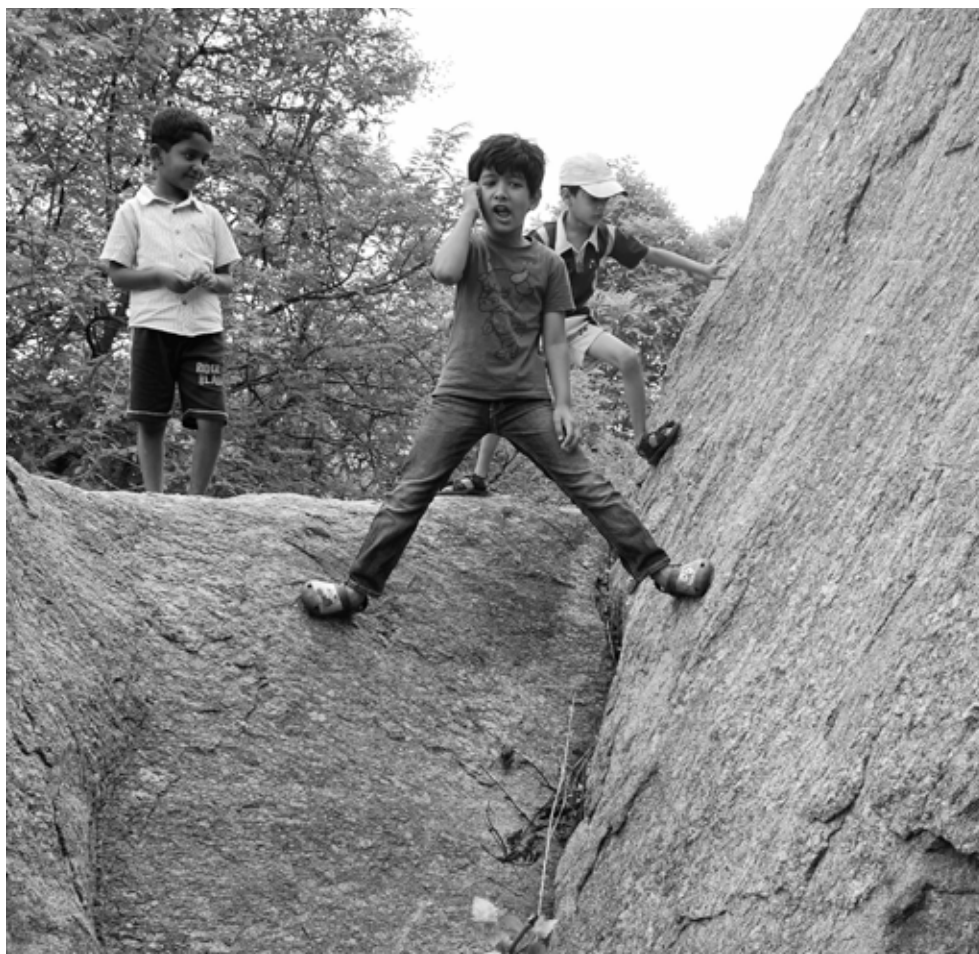
Is it possible to learn to reflect about all this, however deeply enmeshed we may be in this world? Can media literacy be about attempting to understand a world that the media is simultaneously creating and referring to? A world we inhabit with ease, a world we have not created individually, but recognize collectively? Is it possible to evoke our

capacity to be mindful in this new world: while buying products and surfing the net? These were our questions as teachers and students, as consumers and demand creators.

We spent our class time analyzing advertisements, the marketing strategies of corporations and, ultimately, our own needs. We read critical essays on the positives and negatives of the new media, and on how we humans may also be divided as being 'digital immigrants' and 'digital natives'. We had many discussions on the influence of the Internet and its activities on our social and psychological world. In the third term, the students presented what we had learned in this course to the entire parent body.

CFL and the Earthian Programme

Over time, we have developed a kind of place-based education, a curriculum rooted in the campus and its surroundings, while at the same time looking at larger questions of a global nature. In this context, when the Earthian initiative approached CFL to be a partner in



a countrywide programme to share our experience in sustainability education with other schools, we readily accepted.

Earthian, an initiative of Wipro Applying Thought In Schools, aims to bring in sustainability education to mainstream schools by selecting and engaging with a certain number of schools every year, over three-year periods. As a part of this project, CFL organized and hosted a weekend workshop in November on place-based education. Ten teachers from five different schools across the country participated in two days of activities, discussions and field trips. We shared our approach to nature observation (developed in association with the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary in Wynaad, Kerala), working on the land, the general studies programme and nature walks through the Savandurga forest. We discussed challenges faced by schools in an urban context, and in motivating teachers from many schools to be interested in the concept of place-based education. The participants appreciated the leisurely nature of the workshop, the sustained documentation of CFL's work in various areas, the beauty of the campus and landscape, and the discussions on the importance of an emotional connect to the world around us.

Science workshop

For many years, we have wanted to host a workshop on science education for government school teachers from the neighbourhood. We made use of a grant to organise and host such a workshop in September 2012.

For our part, we learnt a great deal from this workshop. It was heartening to see the enthusiasm with which the teachers participated in the workshop: they gave up a weekend to do so. They were a demanding lot, constantly asking questions and spending time in the labs. During discussions, we learnt about the difficulties and pressures under which they operate. Yet their level of personal involvement was striking. As one of them

said, "I get a good salary, and it is not so difficult to spend a thousand rupees or so to buy material to replicate these experiments."

Our approach to learning was reflected in the structure of the workshop. There were minimal formal introductions and speeches. The sessions were conducted in small groups, with participatory hands-on activities rather than lecture-demonstrations. This meant that we could do fewer activities, but we felt it was valuable. We also gave long breaks and scheduled time for walks. During the feedback session, it was good to hear that they appreciated the time to reflect and consolidate their learning. They felt that, although fewer topics had been covered, the fact that they handled the equipment themselves gave them confidence. And they absolutely loved the demanding trek up Savandurga.

(The details of the workshop have been shared on our website).

Visitors through the year

Many people like to visit CFL. People who want admissions for their children may be the most obvious category, but there are quite a few other reasons for visiting the Varadenahalli campus. Some are interested in the philosophical moorings of the school. There are the 'incidental' visitors who seem to lose their way to Magadi or to a nearby farm, and decide to stop by anyway! Many others are part of educational institutions, or are interested in starting out new schools. Some, students of education, would like to observe educational practices that seem more relevant in today's complex society. Such visitors may be curious about our approach to children, the role of dialogue in education, the absence of competition, reward or punishment in the educational process, and details of curriculum and pedagogy. Some visitors are former students from CFL, or are from other Krishnamurti schools, keen to experience another school with



similar approaches. We also invite teacher applicants who are interested in working at CFL, and who spend anywhere between a day and a week meeting with us, experiencing life in the school and exchanging thoughts on the nature of thought! People also visit as participants in conferences or workshops organized by the school, or hosted on the campus. Visitors come from Kumta, Karnataka to Bhuj, Kutch and Sitla, Uttarakhand. They also come from Lebanon, Argentina, Thailand, the UK and many other countries in Europe and North America. They come in the monsoon, winter and summer. They come for a few hours to a few months. There are many more people who request a visit, but are either not able to make it during term time, or miss their visit dates, or who we decline to host, such as people who might mistake the school as a religious retreat centre or a marketing target! There are other visitors as well - summer visits by the leopard and the yellow-throated bulbul, the winter migrants in the numerous warblers and the occasional blue-throated flycatcher, the visits by the village women to wash clothes in the rock pool, the cattle grazers and their cattle, and the rain that comes and goes with the seasons.



Help us strengthen the “Friends of CFL” programme

This is a brief update on the “Friends of CFL” programme that we had introduced in last year’s newsletter. As we had mentioned, we are looking to cover a deficit of about 20 lakhs annually, which means that through our “micro charity” programme, we are looking for 400 donors who can contribute Rs 5000 (less than \$100) per year. We are excited that we can solve CFL’s long-term financial needs through this simple approach!

Last year, we have found about 50 Friends of CFL, and we have raised approximately Rs 5 lakhs through their generous support. We are now looking to consolidate and extend our micro charity programme. If you are interested in supporting us, please visit our website (www.cfl.in/donate/) or email us at info@cfl.in, with “Friends of CFL” in the subject box. We will get in touch with you to initiate the process.

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. Please email us (subject: Teacher Application) if you are interested in working with us. Please send us a brief write-up with your background, explaining your interest in education generally and in CFL in particular.

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.

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