

# THE VALLEY

Rishi Valley School - Newsletter



There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.

J Krishnamurti

## Editorial

The second term of 2018-19 was a culturally enriching one for the school as various teachers and students collaborated to bring a myriad of art forms before the rest of the establishment, including dance-and-drama, poetry, music and displays of students' works in the Art Department, culminating in the annual art exhibition and semi-annual Musical Evening. However, apart from organizing these customary events, the school also provided students with a previously-unparalleled degree of exposure to the fine arts.

While, second term in R.V usually heralds the coming of the much-dreaded exams for the Sr. School, this year can only be described as leisurely for the 9th and 11th grades who bounced from excursion to activity to holiday with mild bouts of serious academics interspersed through the term. While the 9th began its term with excursion, the 11th had to endure a week of pre-series preparation, having arrived on campus seven days early.

Likewise, the Jr. School enjoyed a spell of mild deviation from studies, devoting a whole month to a careful analysis of winter-time in Andhra Pradesh; an overview of folklore, customs, festivals and food that ended with a morning of showcasing their findings in a joint assembly. As part of this study, the school also invited two troupes of folk artists to present local styles of singing, dance and drama to the students.

In other demonstrations of Indian art, there was a concert by the Vadasseri brothers, who played the nadaswaram and thavil, traditional temple instruments and an evening of dance by Odissi maestro Sharmilla Mukherjee and her ensemble.

Earlier January and February meant visits by the acclaimed poet, Dr. Gieve Patel and a consequent poetry workshop. However, while he has been unable to frequent the valley in the last few years, Dr. Patel hasn't been forgotten and the school still has poetry workshops in mid-January. This year's poetry week coincided with the visit of a poet named Rebecca, who did a workshop with both Jr. and Sr. Schools.

The annual visit of students from R.Vs' sister school, Oak Grove saw another break in the repartee of Indian culture and another memorable New Year for the 11th grade hosting it. The cultural term concluded with the Jr. Musical Evening and Srujana Art Exhibition.

Apart from a massive influx of culture and arts into the valley, the school also saw a couple developments on the Zoological side, notably with the visits of herpetologists Gowri Shankar and Ishan Aggarwal, the latter being an ex-student and another fruitful session of the annual Great Backyard Bird Count.

For the newsletter, this term has been an extremely busy albeit fruitful one. Here's to another great year.

Siddharth Natarajan

News from Rural Education Centre: The second phase of the collaboration with the A.P. government for improving 1300 primary schools across the state could not be launched as per the plan due to several delays on the part of the state government in signing the MoU. It will now be commenced in June 2019.

## COUNSELLING

### LOOKING BACK & LOOKING FORWARD

As has been reported earlier, after extensive research it was decided to appoint a visiting counsellor for the school students commencing with the current academic year. Parivartan was chosen as the organization that would provide the counsellor who would visit twice a month and would also be available on Skype. As the academic year is coming to a close the programme was reviewed recently. The following are the statistics:

1-3 sessions: 43 students  
4-7 sessions: 7 students  
8-11 sessions: 3 students  
12+ sessions: 1 student

These counselling sessions have proven to be of great value just going by the numbers that have accessed these services. We will continue this service.

Some future plans include creation of a Wellness Space wherein children could come and feel free to express themselves using various instruments such as painting, music etc. We also hope to request NIMHANS to visit the school and conduct a workshop on adolescent brain growth, how to pick up early signs of possible Internalising or externalising signs which could then be addressed appropriately.

## TANA BANA

### POETRY AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

Over the span of one week, January 21 -28, Rishi Valley hosted a poetry and music festival. Organised on this scale for the first time in recent memory, the week was an extremely eventful and memorable one. Filled with moonlit poetry sharing sessions, piano and violin recitals, Carnatic and Western vocal performances and much more.

The week began with an assembly where students from classes 9, 11, and 12 performed piano and violin compositions along with some poetry reading. The repertoire of the poems and instrumental pieces were wide in range and style.

On the second day of the week, Siddharth Menon took a poetry reading session marking the sad occasion of Mary Oliver's recent death. In her memory, he read a few of her poems attempting to encapsulate the essence of her writings.

On Wednesday, the fledgling Class 11 band comprising members Maqbool (pianist), Kirthana (singer/Kazoo), Sanjushree (singer), Abhiraj (guitarist), Bilva (singer/guitarist), Anshul (percussionist), and guest member Raheem who features in one song as a violinist. Their performance was a blend of contemporary Indian and Western music, which brought forth all their musical talent.

On Thursday Aditya Pandav gave an offbeat assembly on Hip-Hop culture and spoke at length on one particular aspect, the music genre known as rap. It was an attempt to address many of the prejudices one commonly holds against rap. He spoke not only of the social significance of rap, but also the personal relevance it holds in his life.

On Friday, three Senior School music students (Kirthana, Sruthi and Mahati) performed a few Carnatic pieces accompanied by Seshadri sir on the violin and Phani Kumar sir on mridangam.

The week concluded with the annual Junior Musical Evening, bringing the first Taana Baana to a meaningful and remarkable end.

Durga

## STAFF MATTERS

Lekshmi Chandran has won the Dr Nasreen Ahmad Memorial prize for her paper "The Matrilineal Households within the Brahmanical Social Order in Precolonial Kerala" in the 78th session of Indian History Congress at Jadhavpur University.

Anagh Purandare's article "The Chemistry of Life" was published in I Wonder.

G Rangacharyulu and Venugopal Rao S have been training rural school children and students from orphanages during winter vacation. The puppetry show and folk dances were well appreciated. Rangacharyulu was also awarded Telugu Book of Records for convening 30 monoacts in 180 minutes.

Rajagopal, Tanuj and Ramola continue to be Marathon enthusiasts.

Dr Harikrishnan who joined Chemistry faculty at the beginning of the academic year resigned shortly after the first term.

Rajan Chandy, Swathi Kumari and Anantha Jyothi attended "Doing projects with purpose": workshop conducted by P.Sainath.

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

### Odissi Programme by Sharmila Mukherjee

Sharmila Mukerjee is an odissi Dancer and Choreographer, a disciple of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. She is the founder and artistic director of Sanjali Centre for Odissi Dance, Bangalore which was established in 2004. She is the recipient of the Mahari Award. At the age of 16, Sharmila Mukerjee played the lead role of 'Prakriti' in Tagore's dance drama 'Chandalika' during the poet's birth anniversary which caught the attention of critics for her grace.

She and her ensemble presented many dances on January 12th which were explained and demonstrated with a lot of poise and elegance.

### Nadaswaram Kacheri

On the 2nd of February, there was a concert of the Nadaswaram instrument. It is an old South Indian instrument, which is used during the performances of temple rituals and marriages. The concert was put up by the Vadasseri brothers, T. Shivadasan and T.Sethumadhavan. This was a first of the kind concert in Rishi Valley School and it was greatly appreciated.

Rishi Valley School was invited to join as a member of Krea University School Council.

Jyothi and Afshan attended the Global Launch of SEE Learning under the auspices of His Holiness Dalai Lama on April 5 and 6.

### Junior Musical Evening

In the midst of excursions, Project month, the students got busy practising for the junior musical evening. After a special dinner on January 26th different houses, classes, special groups and solo performers regaled the audience with a variety of songs from different languages.

### Watching King of Snakes with Gowri Shankar

Gowri Shankar from Kalinga Centre for Rainforest Ecology (KCRE), located in the tiny village of Guddukere in Agumbe, which actively advocates conservation and educates people about snake ecology showed his film 'King of Snakes'. The filming was followed by question hour.

**This Newsletter is brought to you by the Newsletter committee:**

**Aman Rameshwar Krishna, Prahlad Biswal, Aditya Pandav, Siddharth Natarajan, Durga Chereddi, Rhea Sojan, Sanjushree and Ashani Padhye**

# MAHESH PANDEY

## CAN ART AND ACADEMICS COME TOGETHER?

For the past two years Rishi Valley school has been honoured to host Mr. Mahesh Pandey. Being an alumni of the school, Mr. Mahesh joined in the year 1983 in sixth standard and passed out six years later after his tenth standard. While in school he passionately pursued Bharatnatyam, religiously studied Carnatic music under M.L. Vasanthakumari, and learnt yoga from B.K.S. Iyengar. Folk dance or "Folkie" as many students call it was being taught by Jayprakash sir at that time. Jayprakash sir had learnt all the dances from a frequent visitor, Jim Fowler, and used to hold folk dance sessions every weekend for the senior school. It was during one of these sessions that Mr. Mahesh was introduced to folk dance and truly discovered his love for the artform.

Recognising Mr. Mahesh's immense talent for the artforms, after graduation Rishi Valley, his parents encouraged him to join a fine arts college in Chennai—Kalakshetra. In Kalakshetra he completed a four year course in Bharatnatyam and on receiving a government scholarship went on to do a two year advanced course in the dance form. During his initial years he was tutored by Sharada Hoffman. Her guidance and dedication to the artform only helped inspire Mr. Mahesh and strengthened his resolve further.

Originally being from Maharashtra, Mr. Mahesh had several problems staying in Chennai. One of his issues was the south Indian cuisine. Mr. Mahesh was often unhappy with the cuisine especially after a daily work out of six hour and longed for home-made food.

Searching for a suitable hostel, Mr. Mahesh approached Radhaji (then head of theosophical society, Chennai). Radhaji agreed to have Mr. Mahesh on campus and in return of the favour, Mr. Mahesh contributed to the society by starting an orphanage. As Mr. Mahesh now recalls, with a faint smile and a twinkle in his eyes—he was only eighteen years of age when he took up responsibility of eleven young boys picked from Colonel Allcot school for underprivileged children.

After six years of caretaking, studying and performing during his graduation ceremony, Mr. Mahesh was extremely lucky to receive three offers from foreign countries. He was approached by the embassies of Singapore, Canada and Netherlands. Intrigued by the Dutch culture, Mr. Mahesh left to work in Holland. During his stay in Holland Mr. Mahesh helped set up a dance institute called Kalasurubhi (fragrance of art) and simultaneously performed in concerts across Europe and Scandinavia.

Separated from his parents for a long time, Mr. Mahesh decided to pay a surprise visit to his parents. He returned to India to spend a six month vacation with them.

**During his stay in Holland Mr. Mahesh helped set up a dance institute called Kalasurubhi (fragrance of art).**

However, after four months, the demise of his father left his devastated. Now bearing additional responsibilities, he severed all ties with Kalasurubhi and stayed home to tend to his mother's needs.

Soon after, Mr. Mahesh received a letter from Patwardhanji of KFI foundation requesting him for help in the set-up of a new school. Mr. Mahesh took up the responsibility alongside Uma and Thomas akka in starting Sahyadhri school on the 10th of September, 1994.

The school kept him busy for the next six years where he taught dance, yoga, Marathi, Hindi, helped with houseparenting and worked on the admission committee. It was during this time period that Mr. Mahesh started going the world and started gathering knowledge about the folk dances he learnt in Rishi Valley. Now Mr. Mahesh works as a resource person for schools, conducting dance and yoga workshops in schools throughout the year. Rishi Valley is one such lucky school which has been graced by his presence. On conversing with him about the current state of folkie in Rishi Valley, Mr. Mahesh emphasised that revival was necessary. Students for decades have been performing dances with no prior knowledge or background of the cultures from where these dances originate. This year too, he has taught the eighth and ninth graders a repertoire of more than 35 dances. Mr. Mahesh Pandey's aim as a teacher is to ensure a smooth marriage between art and academics.

Aditya Pandav

# ASSEMBLIES

## A POT POURRI OF INSPIRATION, CONTEMPLATION AND FUN!

### Junior Assemblies

There have been a rich array of junior school assemblies across languages and genres. The month old Andhra Winter project too saw many special assemblies. There were special Hindi, Telugu, Social Studies and 7th drama class presentations. There was a bonanza of student-scripted plays by 6th and 7th with its typical earthy humour of students. The end of the year saw a spectacular production of Phantom's Toll Booth By Sita Akka's students.

### Special Project Month Assemblies

The junior school students spent a fruitful project month learning about various aspects of Andhra such as its festivals, litterateurs, artists, local festivities. Three special assemblies are worth the mention.

The traditional Harikatha and Burrakatha artists from Madanapalle regaled the juniors with mythological tales interspersed with wit and humour

of modern lifestyle. Even the younger students were able to enjoy the humour and were fascinated by the instruments used by the artists.

Kollatam is a dance native to the villages in parts of Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh. The students of RV had the privilege to watch two Kollatam dances on the twelfth of January this year. The dances were performed in circles with groups of around forty people participating in the first dance and about thirty in the second one. Among the dance group were twenty children, including boys and girls ranging from seven years of age to fifteen or sixteen years of age. These intricate dances were performed in circles with each participant holding on to one rope hanging from a metal frame. The dancers then danced to a rhythm produced by three musicians playing the keyboard, the drum and the Chidathalu. The dance was such that the ropes that the dancers held on to would come together to form a plait giving it the name jada kollatam. The dance then ended with the ropes disentangling. The children participating in the dance know how to make five types of plaits with the ropes. They performed two for us.

The different types of dances belonging to the 200-year old tradition include Kollatam, Kulakabhajana, Jadakopu and Sita-Rama Chakala Bhajana.



The last of these assemblies ended with a fantastic visual display of rangolis made by children themselves, a doll exhibition, fancy dress competition, textile displays, herbal plant display among others. There was a festive look about the place. There was also a traditional folk dance in which some of our support staff and students danced together. It was a delight to see the young and old dance in perfect harmony.

### Middle School Assemblies

Siddhanth, of class 8, did an assembly on 'The Internet of Things'. This term refers to the interconnection of computing devices which are embedded in everyday objects. It also covers digital assistants like Siri and Alexa. The assembly ended in a lively debate amongst the juniors, who wondered about the practical applications of this topic in RV. One popular notion was that digital assistants could eventually take over the roles of house-parents.

Tashi, also of class 8, showcased a documentary he had made over the holidays. The subject of the documentary was his grandfather, the celebrated film-maker Aloor Gopalakrishnan, with whom he discussed his career.

Riya and Lalith of class 7 took an assembly on the vast topic of climate change. The main idea they picked up and talked about were greenhouse gases, and how climate change can be prevented.

Devesh of class 7 took an assembly on Turkey, where he had gone during the holidays. He talked in detail about various places of cultural and historical significance within the country.

Daksh B. and Manan of class 8 took an assembly on electric cars, their history and possible future developments. They also spoke about electric cars in relation to diesel and petrol cars and their advantages and disadvantages in comparison to each other.

Daksh M. also of class 8, recreated the game show 'Minute to Win it' in an assembly. Various people were called upon to carry out specific tasks in under a minute in order to win.

Naail of class 7, took an assembly on the Soviet-German relationship in World War 2. In it he explained the Non-aggression pact between the two countries, as well as operation Barbarossa, the military invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany.

Tanishk and Agastaya of class 8 took an assembly on the Asterix comics. They also talked about the lives of the author and illustrator of the comics – Goscinny and Uderzo.

Vihaan of class 7 took an assembly on the graffiti artist Banksy. He talked in detail about the anonymous artist's social activism and his activities in places like Palestine. He also had a slide show of various works Banksy's and he pointed out and explained the social commentary behind each one.

Atul from class 8 took an assembly on the current Venezuelan crisis. In it, he gave details about Venezuela's history, key figures and personalities and the current status of the various sides in the conflict.

A group of children from the 7th grade carried out the performance of a play that was written, produced and directed by them. They were aided in the endeavour by Kusum akka.

### Senior School Assemblies

Poorv of class 11 gave a comprehensive and an absorbing assembly on science fiction, a genre he was very interested in and wanted to introduce to those who didn't know much about it. He explained the relevance and appeal of science fiction in the real, modern world, taking inspiration from a TedTalk he had watched, along with his own experience reading the works of some pioneers of the genre, including Isaac Asimov. Poorv introduced the audience to some very interesting theories of and about science fiction - such as that 'Star-Wars', a movie series, may have had a significant role to play in the Cold War between the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R!!

The next assembly was on the 9th of February, by Durga, Ganya and Sanjushree, of class 11. It was the second part of the two assemblies based on the excursion to Madhya Pradesh the eleventh grade students had gone on in early December. On the excursion, they had been granted the opportunity to talk to the inhabitants of a few different villages in and around Hoshangabad district, including farmers, fishermen, daily-wage earners and labourers. They also stayed with an NGO, Eklavya, that works with primary education in rural India, and were able to hold lengthy discussions with its members. Based on the information gleaned from these interactions, and added inputs from teachers and other sources, the students presented an assembly summing up the various problems faced by the Indian agricultural sector and agriculturists.

The expansive assembly gave a historical backdrop to these issues, talking about the colonial policies with regard to agriculture and revenue which had laid the foundation for them, highlighting their root causes and factors that aggravate the situation. Moreover, the three students provided plausible and practical solutions to some of them.

Shriya, Kshitija, Anunya, Nandita and Madhura of class 10, dressed in red and black, presented a collection of songs on the themes of love and heartbreak, with reference to it being Valentine's Day. While the songs were mostly modern, the added Elvis Presley number kept the old-music lovers engaged, too. The melody of Kshitija, Shriya and Madhura's voices, combined with Nandita's guitar skills and Anunya keeping the rhythm, provided for a lovely start to the day, with everyone humming the tunes long after the assembly.

Anagh sir took an assembly on 'Indian Ocean', an Indian rock band who are widely recognized as the pioneers of the rock fusion genre in the country. After an informative talk on the band and its constituent members, he played some of their songs, which struck a soulful chord with the audience.

Ria, of the eleventh grade, spoke about the problems with the system of primary education in India, based on a chapter, called 'The Centrality of Education', in a book named 'An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions' by Amartya Sen and Jean Drèze.

She gave an in-depth analysis of the current situation in primary education in India, emphasizing the point that centralization of the system of education was the only way it could survive, as proven by the example of almost all developed nations, regardless of the type of government or economy prevalent at the time. The presentation, covering social, political, historical and economic aspects of the education system in India, was exhaustive and very informative.

The following assembly was taken by Anssh and Arnav, also of class 11, who gave an assembly on Blockchain Technology, the technology behind cryptocurrency, its dangers and its usefulness in life today. They asserted that, because a blockchain is, by design, resistant to modification of the data it carries, blockchain technology is an incredible tool that has widespread applicability in our systems of communication and economy. They also gave the alternative viewpoint, covering scams and thefts that are possible because of the very nature of the technology and the digital currencies that derive from it. Arnav and Anssh were certainly very helpful in increasing our knowledge about this tool that is of rising importance and relevance in today's highly digitalized world.

In a surprising turn of events, the Assembly Committee took an assembly - on assemblies! The presentation sought to share knowledge gleaned, from the members of the Committee's experiences screening assemblies for two months, and discussions with a wide range of teachers about what a good assembly constitutes and how one can improve their public speaking skills.

The first half of the assembly was a demonstration on how not to take assemblies, whereas the second part focused on how to correct the mistakes demonstrated initially. Some of the common errors pointed out had to do with a speaker's body language, voice modulation and eye contact. The committee members also spoke about how to select topics and content for an assembly. They iterated that public speaking is a skill useful not just in school, but also in the wider world, in almost every sphere of one's academic or professional life. The tips diverged by the committee members were certainly very useful and helpful, as was their assurance that improvement will come automatically if one keeps practising.

In a fill in assembly, Anagh sir, once again introduced the crowd to a musician - the Hindustani singer, Malini Rajurkar - and played some of her music. It is often difficult to find a brand of music that resonates across cultures and ages, but it is safe to say that the skill and talent of the vocalist certainly took everybody's breath away.

Compiled by Adi, Siddhartha, Ashani, Rhea, Aman and Prahalad

**Gurvinder Singh and Ms Sisodia took two rock-climbing workshops for few Class 8 students.**

## Tuesday Assemblies in Junior School

Music was a predominant theme of the Tuesday assemblies this term. Apart from that we had presentations by different teachers and visitors in the form of poems, stories dances, talks, etc.

To mark the commencement of the tuesday assmeblies,we played beautiful Veena compositions by Chitti Babu and Jayanti Kumaresh. Following this was the customary welcome talk by Rajashekhar sir. He also went over the regular reminder/reiteration of the physical boundaries of the school beyond which students aren't supposed to venture without adult company.

In the second week, Ranjit sir regaled the audience with a few melodious Oriya songs. Latha akka, Vidya akka and Nandini akka sang three nice vernacular songs in Marathi Kannada and Garhwali.

On the eve of Christmas Geetha akka read a few interesting stories and played beautiful christmas music on the theme of love.

Sreevani akka read out a few interesting stories, with emphasis on the relevance of the lessons at the end of each tale, in our lives today.

Marathi poetry for children was presented by Anagh sir in view of the poetry week this term. Next Aniket sir played some delightful folk music from different parts of the world.

A poet cum musician called Rebecca, from Peru serenaded the audience with her mellifluous rendition of Spanish and French folk songs.

She also taught the children some songs which we sing often in our classes.

Anushka akka's demonstration on how to read different kinds of poems and the art of performing poetry was well received.

Vijayalakshmi akka sang a few melodious Kabir bhajans Meera bhajans and a Baul Sangeet compositions.

Joshi sir and Ramola sir read Hindi poems – both serious ones and Hasya Kavitha, satirical poems based on the quests and challenges of daily life. Ranjit sir followed suit with more songs. He spoke about lake Chilika and the Konark temple in Orissa and shared some interesting legends, before presenting two songs on the same topic.

The next assembly was a dance performance by the children of grade 4 and 5 and the REC students, trained by Mahesh Pandey sir and organized by Jaishree akka.

Jyothi Akka spoke about the change of seasons and its manifestations in Rishi Valley.

## Tuesday Assemblies in Senior School

An old student Suren Vikas spoke about his experiences in and after Rishi valley. He sang some of his own compositions. He also taught some of the students the songs.

Maitri spoke about counselling. Derek regaled everyone with his stories. Santharam Sir spoke on bird ringing. George spoke on Tibetan literature.

Lekshmi Akka spoke on history of bharatanatyam. Jyothi Akka spoke on freedom.

Oak Grove School students introduced themselves and sang some songs. Rebecca sang some songs and spoke about music and poetry.

Rajagopal Sir spoke about the Jatayu incident in the Ramayana and its rich portrayal in Sanskrit literature. Harleen Akka spoke about her experiences in Rishi valley.

## Special Music Assemblies

This term we also had some special music assemblies presented by both girls and boys of classes 7 to 11:

The boys presented a Marathi abhanga, a Kajri 'Barsan lage'. 'Lab pe Aathi, Hai dua..' by Iqbal and the familiar song of 'Allah hu' by Nasrat Fateh Ali Khan.

There were solo presentations by Mahati, Shruti and Keerthana who sang compositions of Andal, Thyagaraja and Annamaya respectively.

Apart from this, other groups presented Purandaradasa's Bhagyada lakshmi Baramma, Kanchi Sankaracharya's 'Maithrim bhajatha' and 'Garuda gamana thava' a song written by Sringeri Bhavathy Tirtha Swami.

Finally, there was a solo presentation by Seshadri Sir and Keerthan comprising compositions of Dikshithar and Dr Balamurali Krishna.





## SPORTS THIS TERM

Football: Three weeks of Football coaching for Boys and one week for girls was held. Mr Ramkumar, a coach from Chennai, trained both boys and girls of 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11th classes. Along with coaching they played some external and internal matches:

Rishi Valley School (Classes 9, 10, 11 and 12) Vs RDT (from Ananthapur). Rishi Valley School won. Score: 1/0

Rishi Valley School (Classes 9, 10, 11 and 12) Vs RDT (Anantapur). Rishi Valley School won. Score: 7/1.  
Dazer, Manan, Praneeth, Siddharth, Navneet, Bilvasai, Adithya Honnur, Varun Reddy and Jigmet played well.

Juniors (Classes 6, 7 and 8 along with Class 9). Rishi Valley School Vs Arogyavaram. Score: 4/4 – Match Draw.

Rishi Valley School Vs Sriveda School. Rishi Valley School won Score: 2/0

Rishi Valley School Vs Sriveda School. Rishi Valley School won Score: 2/0

Rishi Valley School Vs Sriveda School. Rishi Valley School won Score: 4/0

Rishi Valley School Vs RDT (Anantapur). Rishi Valley School won. Score: 2/0. Suchir, Saaketh, Raheem, Abhinav, Srivar, Manan, Surya Veda, Mokshit, Manjunath, Lalith, Krish and Panav have played well.

Cricket: Udaykumar from Vayalpad trained our boys of classes 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11. During coaching they played few external and internal matches.

Internal matches:

6th and 7th boys played an internal match. 6, 7, 8 and 11th classes also played an internal match.

External matches:

Rishi Valley School (8, 9 and 11th) Vs Vayalpad Team. Vayalpad team won.

Rishi Valley School (6,7,8 and 11th) Vs Vayalpad Team. Rishi Valley School won.

Basketball:

No coach available to train children. We trained boys and girls, and played few matches during this time.

Girls:

Rishi Valley School Vs Vasishta School. Vasishta school won.

Rishi Valley School Vs Vasishta School. Rishi Valley School won

Rishi Valley School Vs Chittoor Team. Chittoor Team won.

Boys:

Rishi Valley School Vs Chittoor Team. Chittoor Team won

Rishi Valley School Vs Madanapalle Team. Match stopped due to rough play.

We also trained girls in Handball game and played internal round Robin Tournament. Our School team was very good and we are not getting teams to play external matches. Next academic year we should take team to play matches in Bangalore.

We have trained 9th class boys in Volleyball for three weeks. We have played match with Poojarivaripalle. Poojarivaripalle won the match.

## RHC NEWS

cVEDA (NIMHANS): The recruitment phase of the project comes to an end on 30 April 2019. Follow up of randomised participants for the next two years is pending approval by ICMR. This will involve one staff member to conduct a telephonic follow up of these participants.

The project has been well received by the families of the participants. Many of them were groping in the dark with their children's problems and were at a loss on how to deal with them. We have been able to help them resolve conflicts, deal with children differently.

Now the plan is to train two lay counsellors, drawn from the project staff, over the next few months. We are in touch with NIMHANS on sending a team to be trained at the institute.

Vascular Diseases Project: The next phase, which entails following up of our previously recruited participants, is scheduled to start from the 3rd week of June. Prof. Amanda Thrift and one of her Ph.D. 6 students will be coming to conduct the training. The expected duration of this phase is 18 months.

# SRUJANA ART EXHIBITION



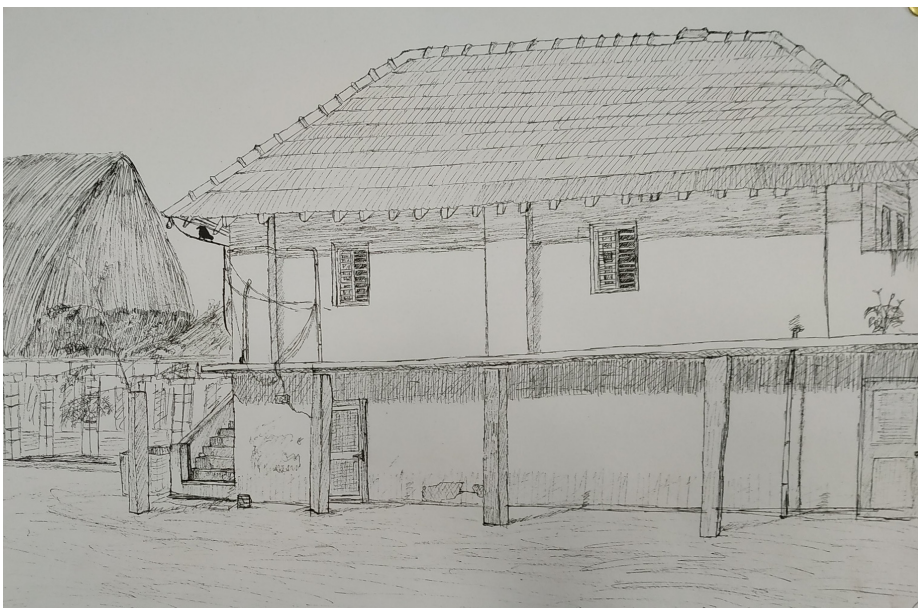
In the pottery section, several sculptures stood alongside countless other pieces, from cups to pen-stands from clay sea shells to pot.

Needle craft had a wide array of lovingly designed bags, wall hangings, pencil pouches, files and even various articles of clothing, such as dresses. In the neighboring rooms, the Batik section had huge kalamkari pieces with intricate detail as well as a multitude of wall hangings, dupattas and saris.

The Painting section was full of artwork of unimaginable variety, of brief sketches and laboriously painted papers, displaying the peaceful surroundings of the valley, as well as the imaginative minds of the students.

The annual art exhibition took place on the 22nd and the 23rd of February this year, and was as usual, an extraordinary display of the work done by students of various classes throughout the year. Outside the painting section, was an assortment of origami pieces by the junior school

children as well as a magnificent rendering of cave rock, on canvas by senior art students. The woodcraft section was full of carefully crafted pieces, that ranged in size from a large foosball table to the most minute and delicately carved spoons.



# ISHAN AGARWAL & THE GECKO WALK

Dr. Ishan Agarwal is an Indian herpetologist specializing in Geckoella who as part of his post-doctoral with the Department of Biology, Villanova University, USA, has discovered 3 new species of Indian Cyrtodactylus or Bent-Toed Geckoes after a period of 130 years (the last discovery was of 7 species between 1870 and 1885).

Geckos are lizards known from tropical and subtropical habitats globally. Most geckos are nocturnal and are found in a variety of different habitats including forests, trees, mountains, plateaus, etc. Geckoella (a subgenus of Cyrtodactylus) are a group of bent toed, ground dwelling geckos endemic to India and Sri Lanka. They fall under the family Gekkonidae, the largest family of geckos in the world. Agarwal's interest in lizards began in 2002, when as a college freshman he came across the Deccan ground gecko (Geckoella deccanensis) while out on a hike. Agarwal pursued his PhD on the biogeography and systematics of Indian bent-toed geckos from the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science.

C. srilekhae, commonly called Bangalore Geckoella, was first spotted in 2007 by Ishan Agarwal, in his Bangalore home. In 2010, a juvenile specimen of C. rishivalleyensis or Rishi valley Geckoella, was found by Agarwal's IISc colleagues. The first is named after Agarwal's mother, Srilekha Agarwal and the second after his Alma Mater, Rishi Valley School. Both new species are endemic to the country, and have highly restricted ranges that are limited even within the Mysore plateau with C. srilekhae's range being

restricted to within 60 km of Bengaluru city and C. rishivalleyensis' has an even more restricted range than the Bangalore geckoella only found above 1000 m and in a specific type of Reserved Forest on that one isolated hill range. Both lizards were first described in the journal, Zootoxia. In 2016, Agarwal co-discovered in another geckoella species Mumbai, named Cyrtodactylus varadgirii, after Sanctuary Award winner Varad Giri. Cyrtodactylus varadgirii is a small, nocturnal, ground dwelling gecko. Its length is about 5.6 cm (excluding the tail). Unlike other Geckoella species, this species is found to be present in areas outside forests such as human modified landscapes and can be identified by its conspicuous color pattern. Despite its irregular distribution over its range C. varadgirii is only known Geckoella species with a range, of greater than 100 - 200 kms.

Earlier in March this year, Dr. Agarwal and his colleagues visited the school as part of a study of the local lizard population, particularly the Rishi Valley Geckoella and its brethren. Dr. Agarwal, or Ishan as he likes to be known kindly consented on taking interested students on a night walk to identify the local reptile population as well as search for any new species of Geckoella that might inhabit the area. The motley group of 8th graders, 9th graders and the odd 11th grader met outside the dining hall at 6:30 on a Friday and under Ishan's lead set course for the slopes of cave rock where his colleagues had already begun their hunt. The first casualty of the evening was a Bark Gecko in the volleyball courts. After being subject to much torch-flashing and high-spirited

behavior among the younger adventurers, the obviously flustered mottled lizard was allowed a hasty retreat into the safety of a Copper-pod's ample foliage. Traversing the path to the Sunrise-point, Ishan was able to 'bag' several unidentified specimen and a few identifiable ones, the latter of which he released following their close inspection by intrepid Rishi Valleyites who may have later claimed to have handled baby dragons or alligators (ironically despite them being from different reptile families, alligator in Spanish translates to 'The Lizard' ). On the summit the group managed to spot the commonly seen Termite Hill and Rock Geckoes as well as the behemoth( as the name suggests ) Giant Gecko, which is large by gecko standards and can deliver a nasty bite if cornered (all captured geckoes will bite but lack big or sharp teeth). Other highlights of the evening include Agamid lizards and the petite, albeit deadly Saw-scaled Viper. Ishan and his Colleagues will pickle the species they captured in alcohol, preserving them for identification at the IISc.

After a short stint in the valley, the group returned to Bangalore for further studies on the nature of the lizards and their habitats.

[Note to readers: Despite its apparent inhumanness, the pickling of these animals is being done for scientific purposes. Recognition of these Geckoes as entirely new species will contribute to their conservation, especially for vulnerable ones such as the Rishi Valley Gecko and prevent future collectors from taxidermy them. Ishan also assures us that the lizards are eliminated in a completely humane manner]

Siddhartha Natarajan

## EXCURSIONS

The second term is always a busy term, but what stands out for the non-board students are the excursions. The fourth graders visited the Lepakshi temple, famed for its giant Nandi, monolith structures and hanging pillars. The fifth grade went to Kaigal. Kaigal is in Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh, is known for its ecological importance and is a part of Krishnamurti Foundation initiative. They stayed there for two days. The area was dry due to the failure of the last monsoon. On their excursion, the children interacted with tribals at a school, among other activities.

The 6th grade went to a town called Sreekalahasti, near Tirupati, on their excursion. On their first day they interacted with Gurrappa, who works with Kalamkari artists. He has also received a Padmashree award for his work in the area. After this the children visited a regional science museum where they spent a few hours. They also visited a planetarium. At night the children and teachers stayed at the Mamenduru forest lodge which is situated in the Venkateshwara Abayaranya wild life sanctuary. The next morning the children went for a hike in the forest after which they headed back to RV.

This year the seventh grade went on an exciting excursion to Mysore and Coorg. In Mysore, they visited the famous Mysore Palace, as well as the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary. Travelling to Coorg, they visited coffee estates, and learned about the entire process of coffee-making. They also went on a hike that briefly took them into the state of Kerala. Finally, they visited the Bylakuppe monastery, where

they were treated to a traditional Tibetan meal.

The eighths had visited temples in the previous term as a part of their History study trip. In the second term they visited the Agasthya Science Foundation. The architecture of the Agastya campus was exemplary, the accommodations were comfortable, and the hosts were very warm. Students took part in several science-related sessions, some of which (the chemistry session) were described as quite profound.

The ninth usually doesn't go on a single excursion. Instead the class as a whole is divided into three to four groups and is taken to different places of ecological/ environmental importance. This year the ninth went to Kumta, Agumbe and Valparai. Kumta is a village on the coast of Karnataka. The children and teachers stayed with the Panchabhoota organization, which is an NGO set up to promote the conservation of the biodiversity of the area. The children had the chance to interact with the local communities which consisted of

both farmers and fisherfolk.

The 11th grade went to Madhya Pradesh on its excursion. The children went to Hoshangabad, Panchmadi and Bhopal. In Hoshangabad, the children stayed at an NGO called Ekalavya run by a parent of RV. The organization is an educational institute which tries to enhance the learning experience of both first-generation learners and their parents. The children had several discussions about education as well as other subjects to do with social welfare in rural areas especially in Madhya Pradesh. Children also had the chance to interact with farmers and give an assembly (in RV) about their suffering and cycle of debt. The children also went to Panchmadi, a hill station in Madhya Pradesh. In Bhopal the children visited several museums including the Museum of man, the Tribal museum and most importantly, The Bhopal Gas Tragedy Museum. The children also visited an NGO and a non-profit hospital that worked with those affected by the Gas Tragedy of 1984.

A group of enthusiastic bird watchers along with Shantaram Sir and Jyothi Akka visited Nelapattu and Pulicat lake sanctuaries.



# CAMPUS BIRD COUNT 2019

Rishi Valley School participated in the Annual Campus Bird Counts this year between 15-18 February 2019. All students from Classes 4-7 and interested birdwatchers from Classes 8 -11 participated in the event apart from visitors, parents and a few staff members.

Eighteen checklists were submitted and a total of 108 bird species were recorded. The details are summarized below.

The Laughing Dove, Green Bee-eater, Rose-ringed Parakeet, House Crow, Large-billed Crow, Red-rumped Swallow, Red-vented Bulbul, White-browed Bulbul, Common Tailorbird, Tawny-bellied

Babbler, Yellow-billed Babbler, Indian Robin, Common Myna, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Purple Sunbird and the Tree Pipit were among the birds that were seen in good numbers (>20 individuals). Amongst these, some species were commonly roosting birds or birds seen in flocks and so their numbers are higher (eg crows, bee-eaters, rose-ringed parakeet, Tree Pipit and Babblers). However the cattle egret appears undercounted since I have seen over 150 birds flying past over the campus at dusk. A few birds were seen congregating on trees or areas having abundant food resources (eg. Sunbirds, flowerpeckers, laughing doves).

Amongst the uncommon/rarer birds seen during the count include: White-tailed lora (Marshall's lora), Black-hooded Oriole, Hair-crested Drongo (Spangled Drongo), Yellow-throated Bulbul, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Oriental White-eye (not often seen in the campus), Blyth's Pipit and Common Rosefinch.

Birds of prey were poorly represented in the count - only two species were noticed: Shikra and the Short-toed Snake-eagle. Waterbirds too were scarce due to the drought-like conditions prevailing in the area.

## Summary

	Feb 15	Feb 16	Feb 17	Feb 18
Number of Species	72	77	63	59
Number of Individuals	546	345	410	459
Number of Checklists	5	3	3	7

