

RV Ramblings

Middle School

Rishi Valley School

August, 2013

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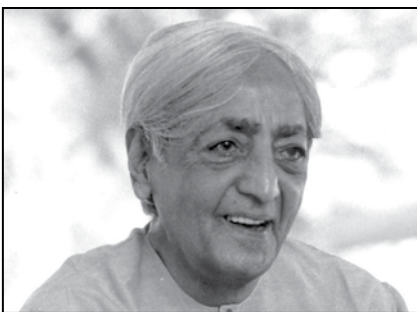
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No one, especially nowadays living in a free society, likes rules, but rules become totally unnecessary when you and the grown up educator understand, not only verbally and intellectually but with your heart, that certain disciplines are necessary.

— J. Krishnamurti

Editorial...

This is the first newsletter of the 2013-2014 school year. We cover a variety of events that have taken place at Rishi Valley. There has been a lot happening this term, like the freshers' events—the hike, the assembly—annual events that bring new students together with the returning students. Tree surgeons recently came to Rishi Valley to take care of the banyan trees. We also bid farewell to Bahadur Anna, who is returning to Nepal after working here for many years. We will miss him very much and hope he will enjoy his retirement. We hope you enjoy this newsletter and its many articles!

— Class Eight

Tree Surgery to Rescue our Banyan Trees

by Swayambhu Sudyut

The famous Banyan Tree of Rishi Valley (also known as the Big Banyan Tree, BBT) is known for Krishnamurti meditating under it. Its presence also led him to select this location as the ideal place to build a school.

In addition, there are two smaller banyan trees--the Small Banyan Tree (SBT) and the Krishnamurti Banyan Tree (KBT), which legend has it were planted by Krishnamurti himself. At one time, the BBT and the SBT were young and healthy, at their peak.

Now these two trees have started to deteriorate. One of the problems with the SBT was that some of the wood allowed water to seep in and that rotted it. Additionally, the tree developed dead branches. This got in the way of its growth. The main trunk of the BBT simply died and its aerial roots were left to form new trees. The cement stage built under the tree was removed to give the tree a chance to recuperate. The KBT is only around fifty years old; its dead and dying branches were easily removed.

According to Mr. Sailendran, Rishi Valley School hired a tree surgeon from Auroville to help treat these diseased trees. Tree surgery is an art that examines the tree and cares for it accordingly. These tree surgeons are quite well known as they also worked on the famous Adyar Banyan Tree in Tamil Nadu.

Tree surgeons use whatever materials they find close at hand, such as bamboo poles, grass-woven baskets and jute bags. At Rishi Valley they sawed and cut dead branches and painted the stumps in black. They also used cow dung and cement to plug water seepages.

The tree surgeons have completed their work on campus for now. But before they left they taught the school gardeners how to maintain their work. The gardeners are now carrying on this treatment of the trees. At the moment the SBT and the KBT have a good chance of survival. But the main trunk of the BBT is dead. The chances of its aerial roots forming into independent trees will need some care, time and the right conditions.



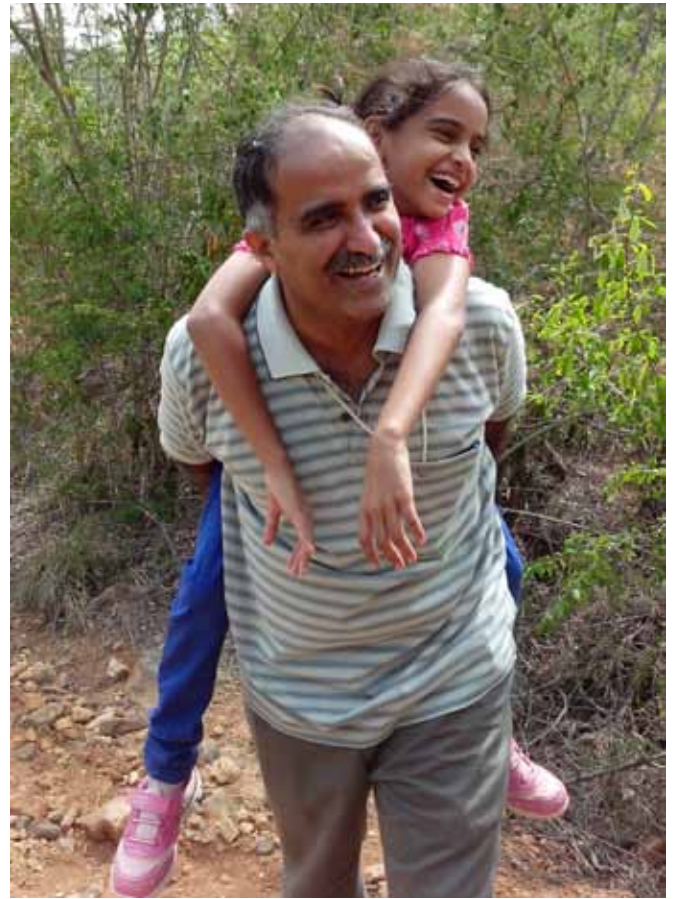
A Fresh Start

by Pia Malhotra

This term a lot of exciting and fun events were held for the freshers. These were the Freshers' Assembly, the Freshers' Games, and the Freshers' Hike, all annual traditions at Rishi Valley School. The purpose of these events is to make freshers begin to feel comfortable with the atmosphere around them. The freshers are made to feel welcome by students and teachers.

The freshers' games were held on 20 June on the football field. It was organized by the eleventh standard students. The freshers assembled on the field at 4:30 PM. The eleventh grade organisers made them play many games which they had planned. The first game, Simon Says, carried on endlessly! It was followed by Dodge Ball. The freshers ran around madly in the havoc and chaos, dodging balls pelted at them, squealing upon getting hit! They were also made to play Chain. A few seniors began the game as one chain and kept increasing its size by catching more people. As the chain became larger, it kept getting broken up into smaller chains, making it more difficult to escape. After the games, freshers were given sweets. One fresher commented, 'The freshers' games were really enjoyable and we played lots of exciting games.'

The Freshers' Hike was held on 22 June. The new students, accompanied by a group of teachers and eleventh standard students, went on a long, adventurous hike to the point on the top of a hill, known as '360', named for its panoramic view. They set off early in the morning with much excitement and exuberance. The freshers



were split into groups guided by the eleventh graders. It was a one-and-a-half hour climb to the top, with many breaks in between and a lot of panting and groaning! The freshers, however, enjoyed





themselves thoroughly, chatting non-stop with the seniors and classmates. Even though walking up hill was exhausting, it created a sense of exhilaration in them.

Upon reaching the windy peak, there was a huge bout of cheering and whooping. Dosas and musambis were distributed to the ravenous freshers. They sat and admired the breathtaking view of the entire valley that spread out below them. They revelled in the feel of the cool, strong winds. When it was time to go, everyone protested and grumbled, not wanting to leave. The trip downhill was quite fast and much less challenging. The party arrived by 10 AM and much to their delight they were treated with chocolate fudge! It was a wonderful experience with rich memories and a truly great adventure. Mini Akka, who accompanied freshers on the hike stated, 'the seniors were cooperative and the freshers and teachers enjoyed themselves. It was a very pleasant day and the hike was not too tiring'.

The Freshers' Assembly was held on the 8 July and 10 July in the senior auditorium. The teachers in charge were: Vishwanath Sir, Parita Akka, Meena Akka, Raja Sekhar Sir, Roopika Akka, Radha Akka and Seshadri Sir. The performances held included an English song, an English play, a Hindi play, a Telugu song, a Telugu play, a Bhanghra dance, a raga and poetry recitation. The English song was composed and sung by Uttara. The English-language play, *Queen Luis of Katstein*, was a hilarious skit about a queen and her silly airs, graces and the result of such behaviour. The Hindi play, *Banya Tree ka Bhoot*, was about two students who forgot to complete their holiday homework and came up with a hare-brained scheme to get out of trouble. The Telugu song was sung by Vaishnavi and Tejasvini.

The Telugu play, *Namaskarala Ramadu*, was another humorous play about a landlord and his servant.

The Bhanghra dance was a colorful display of Punjabi culture. A raga composed by Tansen was sung by Achintya. Mohnish recited a poem that he composed. The assembly was a creative display of talent and enthusiasm. A great amount of effort was put in by both teachers and students to host this assembly for the rest of the school. The costumes worn by the freshers were selected by Parita Akka and Meena Akka.

Movie Reviews

by P Maneesh Kumar

After I watched *Hotel Transylvania* I felt it was a bit babyish for eighth standard students and should have been shown only for the seventh and below. It was shown in the senior audio visual room on 29 June. It was about a human named Jonathan who accidentally ends up in a place called *Hotel Transylvania*, which is meant only for non-human, beastly creatures.

The adventure he has in the hotel is very interesting and humorous. It was also emotional and romantic. I felt that the most emotional part of the movie is when they talk about the baby vampire girl's mother's death.

The movie would keep anyone watching it wide awake and attentive. It might also make them a bit sentimental. The movie did a good job, even though it was not based on a book or a novel.

The Hobbit is a movie everyone should watch at least once in their lifetime. It is pure adventure, action-packed and has non-stop fights. This movie was screened in the senior auditorium on 22 June. The movie talks about a hobbit called Bilbo Baggins and his adventures.

Bilbo Baggins is on a quest to save the dwarf kingdom from a dragon called Smaug, who is guarding gold inside the fort. The surviving dwarfs battle it out against the fierce dragon, even though they are fewer in number. They make Bilbo join them and go to the fort to fight back. It is not a comedy, but there is enough action to make up for that.

The movie has a very gripping ending, and there is even a sequel. Though the movie is long, it is not boring at all. The movie is based on the J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Hobbit*.

Does the Drought Threaten RVS' Survival?

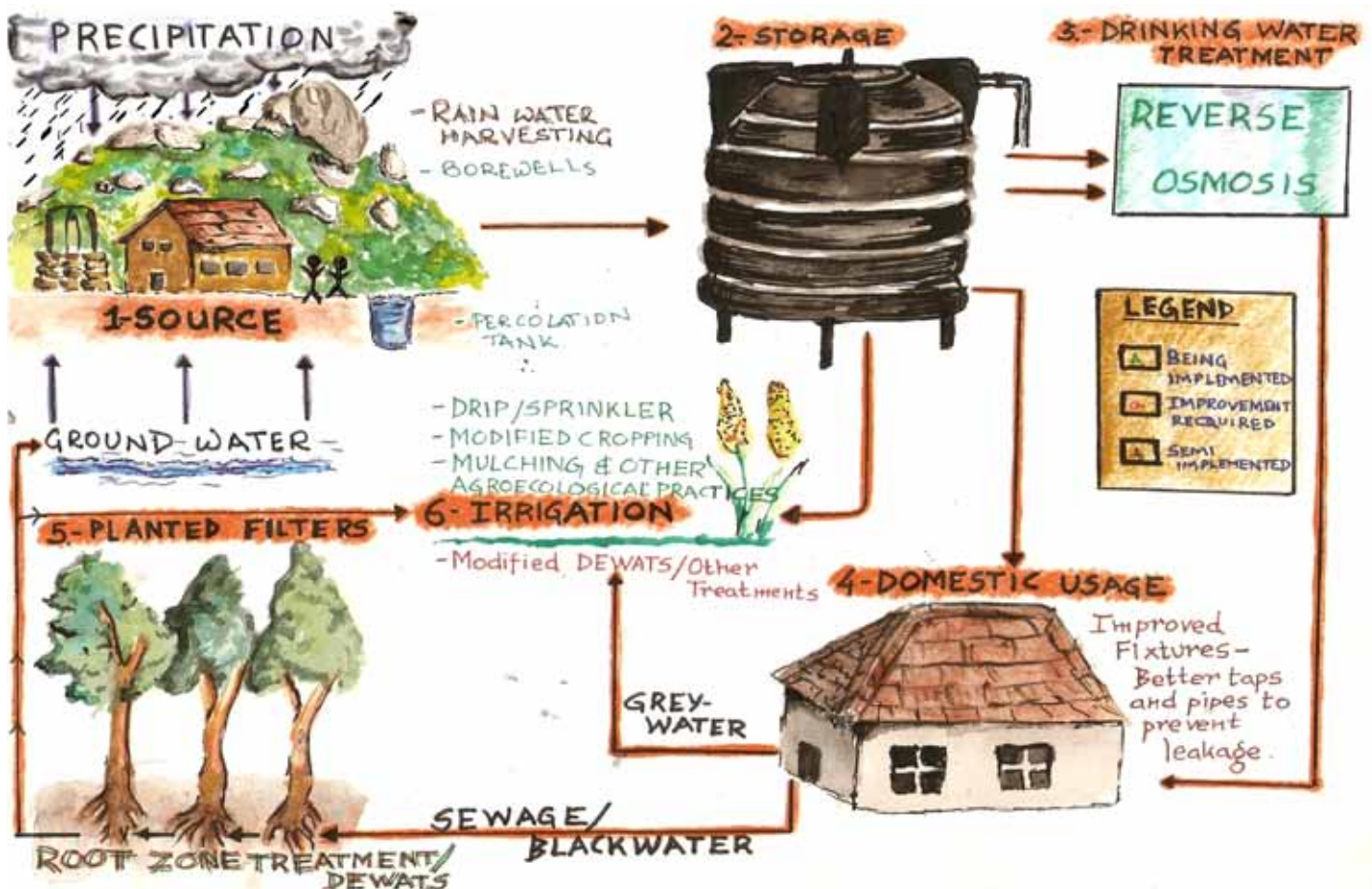
by Anirudh Raman

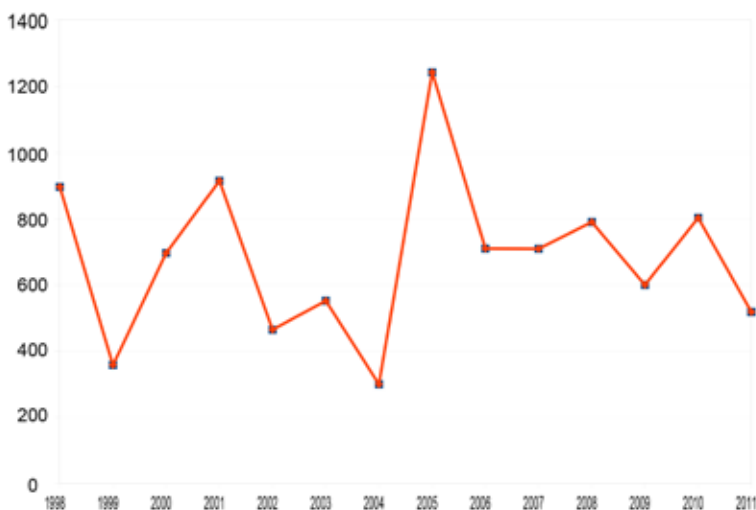
Water at Rishi Valley School has become scarce--so scarce that it threatens the school's survival. What is meant by this is that the school could be forced to shut down in the years to come. The lack of water is natural, since the valley in which school is situated lies in a rain shadow area.

Even though this valley's drought has long existed, the water issue has become crucial. Over the past forty years or so, the farmers have moved on to using ground water for their crops, as opposed to the old method of cultivating with rain water. There is a shocking dip of over 500 feet in the level at which ground water is available now, as noted in the Andhra Pradesh government's water surveys conducted over the last few years.

These results have astounded the entire valley, motivating people to try their best to conserve and collect water. RV, in particular, took it very seriously, building fifty-two check dams and thirty-six percolation tanks. In addition to these indirect methods of water collection, there are four rooftop rain water harvesting systems, which have been installed in the hospital, Palm House, the office and the new guest house. This is a more direct and faster way of collecting water.

Despite these efforts, the water level is still declining. In the school, water is used for drinking, bathing and cleaning clothes and hostels. To conserve water, RV sends grey water from washing clothes and homes to be used for irrigation. The vegetables grown on campus are spread out over a sixteen acre vegetable garden. Some of the food grown here includes millets, sugarcane, bananas, turmeric, jamun and sapota.



Trend in Rainfall (mm) in Rishi Valley (1998-2011)

It is difficult to believe that the scrubby, arid area that Rishi Valley now is once had a river flowing through it. According to Radha Akka, this river used to run from the hills Bodi Konda and Rishi Konda. It was called the Rishi River and was still flowing about fifty years ago. It is now not much more than a river bed. It probably dried up due to the felling of trees that held the soil back from the river bed, explained Radha Akka. The lack of rainfall, and also the over usage of water by farmers who use it to build dams and channels to irrigate their crops, is making the problem worse.

Some farmers in the area grow water intensive crops like paddy. The Rishi Valley Special Development Area project, is trying to encourage water conservation through the cultivation of the indigenous millet crop, which consumes a lot less water than rice. The farmers are also being encouraged to convert to a drip irrigation system.

The increase of borewells on the campus, the rain shadow region in which we are situated, along with the careless handling of pipes and taps have led to the massive amount of pressure on the water table today. This has resulted in a situation where the Rural Education Centre (REC) has had to purchase water. This highlights the fact that RVS is in a very delicate position in terms of the world's most precious resource: water.

RV Assemblies

by Ramavatu Kaushika Naik

Assemblies at Rishi Valley have an important role. They help students learn about new things and build their curiosity. They also help people get over stage fright and share information about their interests. Assemblies are part of the culture of Rishi Valley, a tradition that began under the Big Banyan Tree with Krishnamurti looking on.

The senior assemblies this term included: Art in the Valley by Rishi Sir; Tulasi Das presented by Nirmala Akka; a seed bank by Radha Akka; Roald Dahl's stories by Merab and Gautam; observations about life and death by Harsh; oil mining in Saudi Arabia by Rakshit; and the Sadhana Forest by Urvashi. We also listened to meaningful songs played by Parekh Sir.

The middle school assemblies started off with Jyothi Akka explaining to students how one

must present an assembly. Later, Subam, Parthiv and Immanuel did an assembly on yo-yos. Diya, Nikita and Veda organized an assembly on Art in the Valley. Finally, Veeksha and Spruha talked about Tanzania.

The junior school assemblies were very interesting. Sudha Akka sang the whole Ramayana in seven different tunes. The fifth and sixth standard students presented their holiday homework of limericks and recipes. Jyothi Akka read out *Tommy Nobody*. Some of the sixth standard students spoke about their grandparents. Ramola Sir spoke about his childhood. Hans Sir and Radhika Akka related a few of their life's stories. Krishna Menon Sir talked about Abraham Lincoln. Kieran gave an interesting assembly about skiing and shared his personal experiences. Rukmini, Riggyal and Prudhvi played a few songs they has composed: Rukmini on the flute, Riggyal and Prudhvi on the guitar. Sita Akka played five songs for her assembly. The fifth graders presented information about Antarctica. Finally, three German students, Stephanie, Louisa and Teresa talked about their stay at Rishi Valley.

The assembly I enjoyed was the one held by Subham, Parthiv and Immanuel. It was held on the 27 June. They gave the audience some entertaining background about yo-yos. Subam showed us a few stunts with the yo-yo. He displayed acrobatics, which he had made up: 'baby in the cradle', 'around the world', 'rock the cradle', 'Gangnam style', and lots more. They also showed a video clip of a Japanese yo-yo champion doing tricks.

The other assembly many people liked was the one in which Stephanie, Louisa and Teresa shared their experiences about their stay at RV. They are from southern Germany and they taught at the REC satellite schools. They went back to Germany to teach there. They shared one of their songs, which means happiness, blessings, success, health. They thought they had received all four things from Rishi Valley!



A Recognition

by Mahitha Reddy Takkasila

There are many people in the world who strive to help others, for nothing in return. They're just ordinary, everyday people like you and me. Such people might do small things like giving money to a beggar on the street or big things like donating many lakhs to charities or orphanages. Dr. Radhika Herzberger, Director of our school, is one such person.

This year on 26 January, Republic Day, Radhika Akka awarded the Padma Shri Award. The ceremony for this and other civilian awards was held in Delhi in April. She was chosen by the Indian government out of hundreds of other people who also did many great things. The men and women who have received it in the past deserve the award for their great work.

Radhika Akka came here thirty years ago in the winter of 1982. She moved because she had relatives here, though she didn't study here because her family preferred day schools. *RV Ramblings* recently interviewed Radhika Akka and this is what she had to say.

*She has been
dedicated to
education for
thirty to forty
years, not only in
urban areas, but
also rural...*

What inspires you?

My book, *Bhartrhari and the Buddhists: An Essay in the development of Fifth and Sixth Century Indian Thought*, was inspired by Krishnamurti. I was able to collect enough evidence to understand him. He can be a bit difficult to interpret, but he is very inspiring.

What do you enjoy doing?

I enjoy being here at RV, but I also like going out. I also like applying for funds and writing history, especially about the school. I loved teaching history, but now I can't because I can no longer remember the dates. I'm getting old. I like to write. I wrote *Ancient History*, the book used at RV, but I don't think it's that good.

Have you received any awards like this before?

No. The Rural Education Centre (REC) received something called the Global Development Network award. It was given by the Japanese government and was sponsored by the World Bank. It also won the Indira Priya Dharashini Vriksha Mithra Award and the Schwabo Award.

How have RV and Madanapalle changed while you've been here?

When I first came here, it was much more isolated. There was no bus service. There were dirt roads and hardly any electricity. We had to study by lantern and candles at night. There is much more prosperity now. The rural school wasn't very developed. It's much more urban now with people selling their lands and buying scooters and autos. There used to be much less water [than now]--at about 70-80 feet, now we have to go down to 800 feet. The teachers' salaries were so little, but they worked so hard. Those days colleges used to be inexpensive, but no longer.

New Additions

by Veda Shivakumar

Avdyushka (Avi for short) Gupta was born on 20 October 1999 in Delhi. She lived there until the age of four and then shifted to Kolkata where she lived for six months. Later she moved to Goa for another six months before moving to Gurgaon where she studied at Shikshantar until her seventh standard. She says that Shikshantar wasn't very different from Rishi Valley and liked it there. Now Avi studies in class 8A at Rishi Valley School. She wants to grown up to be a writer for all ages.



What made you come to Rishi Valley?

I liked Rishi Valley when I came to visit. I liked it because it is green with trees and it's eco-friendly. I love it here! Everyone is really nice.

Most freshers feel homesick, Do you also feel homesick?

Yes, I occasionally felt homesick when I was bored and had nothing to do.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

I like reading adventure and fantasy books.

Why do you like these particular kinds of books?

I like them because they let the reader escape from the real world.

Do you think that having a newsletter at RV would be a good idea?

Yes, I think it would be great as we would know what is going on in various parts of the school.

What do you like eating? Why?

All sorts of stuff because I love eating!

What do you like playing?

Basketball. I like it because I can play well and enjoy it.

Do you sing? If yes, what kind of songs?

I love singing. I mostly sing new English-language songs.

Do you like it at RV?

I love RV! I think it is perfect.

Srivani Akka was born on 29 June 1974 in Hyderabad. She studied in a school in Anajpuram until her fifth standard. Later she studied in another school in Bhongir until her twelfth standard. After school she studied at Sreevani College for Women in Hyderabad. She studied M.S.C. Sc. Pharmacy and took an exam to study M.B.B. S. She received admission into an Ayurvedic University, which she did not join. Later she became interested in chemistry and did her Ph.D. in organic chemistry at the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology in Hyderabad. She also went to France to pursue further studies in chemistry. She had thoughts of becoming an artist, but her parents told her that she wouldn't get a steady income if she became a full-time artist and encouraged her to study chemistry. Now she teaches at Rishi Valley School in classes nine, eleven, and twelve.



What made you come to Rishi Valley?

I came here because I like this school and also like teaching. I felt excited to come and teach here.

Did you think RV would be different before coming?

I know it is different from other schools and this school met my expectations.

Did you teach before?

No, I was working in research and development.

What did you do?

I did a Ph.D. project in which we had to develop new synthetic methods for organic compounds. I have four publications in international journals.

Where are you from?

I am from Hyderabad.

Do you think that having a newsletter at Rishi Valley is a good idea?

Yes, I think it is a good idea because it spreads information about the school, around the campus, and outside.

The Custodian of the Main Gate

by Nishant S. Agarwal

The guard who watches the school's main gate is an important person on campus. Bahadur Anna was known as the Main Gate watchman. Now he has left the school and returned to Nepal, where his family originally comes from. He is as old as the school: eighty years. One day he had to retire. Bahadur Anna joined the school on 26 January 1979. When he came he didn't like the school too much because of the forest around. When the forest cover reduced, he starting liking the school. He recalls seeing Jiddu Krishnamurti five times, and also different principals: Mr Narayan, Mrs R Thomas, Dr S Shirali, Dr Kumarswamy, and our current Principal, Mr Siddhartha Menon. He fondly remembers that Krishnamurti was happy and loved the children.

Bahadur Anna knows Nepali and Hindi. He learnt a little Telugu and English from the students and the Papamma Akkas. He was married, but he is now a widower. He has a thirty-seven-year old son and a thirty-year-old daughter.

Bahadur loved the weather, food, and the children here. He said 'I am going to miss RV'. We will miss his warm greeting and his cheerful presence.



Down at the D.H.

by Nakul N Patwardhan

From the outside it looks like a cowshed, but inside is what we all need: food! It has simple decor with neat tables and benches. The school's Dining Hall (DH) is an integral part of our lives. I personally didn't like the food at first, but later realized it's better to eat than starve.

The DH serves four meals a day. For breakfast, the DH sometimes serves bread and jam. At other times we eat an Indian breakfast including upma, idli, or dosa. For lunch they serve chapatis, subji, a dry curry, a dal, rice and curd. Our favourite lunch is paneer butter masala with chapati, served on Tuesdays.

For dinner students eat a variety of things, but sambar and rice are always included. Every day for lunch and dinner we also have a choice of rasam, buttermilk or curd and rice. Like most students, I too like the Thursday dinner the best: tomato rice, paneer or egg curry, raita and papad.

According to Hareendhran Sir, the DH Manager, the school serves us healthy food. They use mostly organic vegetables. Even the rice they serve is hand pounded and half polished. Some of the interesting things they prepare here are their homemade peanut butter and a jam made from vegetables and, rumour has it, banana peels.

Art in the Valley

by Nikita Nath

Art in the Valley is a chance for the rural children to do art (which they've never done before) and for people who live in Rishi Valley School to give and contribute artwork. In this activity, students and teachers instruct the Rural Education Centre (REC) students in eight different art forms. Around twenty students go to the REC every Saturday afternoon to create art together.

When some of the Rishi Valley students realized that the Papamma Akkas and Annas have never touched a paintbrush in their lives, they talked to some teachers and decided to spread art from the school to the rest of the valley. This plan was first put into action at the beginning of 2012.

Last year some ninth standard students and older students went to nearby villages and the REC to teach sixth standard students art forms like making friendship bands, mosaics, weaving paper and paper cutting. This year, however, it was decided that the seventh standard students would be taught as well and they were enthusiastic. According to Rishi Sir, who is in charge of the activity, more volunteers were needed and so eighth standard students also got involved. Additional art forms being taught this year include: drawing, needlecraft, clay work and origami.

Rishi Sir also created a website for art in the valley so students can gift their artwork. He explained that art can be of any form--clay,



origami, papier mache. The artwork featured on the website can be retained or given away to show that one need not always receive something in return for what they make. This idea was inspired by the juniors who give each other cards they make for their birthdays and other such occasions.

The REC children are fast and able learners. Some of them are very keen to grasp the techniques quickly. The only hurdle is that most of RV students don't know enough Telugu. But there is someone in every group who helps students communicate the instructions and it's a fun experience. Deepak Sir and Rishi Sir are a great help in assisting with the programme in many ways.

Sports - 'Football Fever'

by Vairag Sharma

Rishi Valley's first football game of the year took place on 23 June. That was not a fortunate start to the year as we lost with a score of 7:1. The singular goal was shot by Rithvik Dutta. It was a big loss. Daanish (ninth standard) did not give us a single one of his promised goals, but he did his best. Raghav, on the other hand, did a good job with assists.

Rishi Valley's B Team for football performed well in their second match of the season. They won the match against Zilla Parishad High School, with a final score of 3:0. The first goal of the game was an unfortunate self-goal on their part. The second and third shots were made by RV's star player, Subam, the youngest in the RV's B team.

Interview with Coach Venktaramulu

Were we over confident or was the other team just very good?

We were not well prepared and underestimated the Tirupati team. I can't say they were good because it was my team! Underestimation is never good.

How is this season of football coaching going? Are you facing any difficulties?

Football coaching is going well, though there are some people who think they are already too good and don't understand.

What do you think we should do to improve?

We should be mindful not to underestimate people and learn to pay attention to people who are trying to teach something.

Riddles

by Pratikshit Bhardwaj

1. What's a gate you can't enter?
 2. What is a room that only microorganisms can enter?
 3. What is a city that you can't enter?
 4. What happens to a grandpop when he lands on a star?
 5. When does a teacher wear sunglasses?
 6. What is worse than two kids playing bagpipes?
- 1) Colgate; 2) mushroom; 3) electricity; 4) He becomes a pop-star; 5) When her students are too bright; 6) Three kids playing bagpipes.



Check your I.Q.

1. Find the correct word and find the odd one out:
blow, nopos, letap, dhatumb
2. Complete this series:
18, 10, 6, 4, ?
3. Complete the series:
W, T, P, M, I, ?
4. Find the missing number:
6, 11, ? 27
5. Complete the series:
1, 8, 27, ?
6. What is the speed of a cheetah in three seconds?
7. What is the capital of Germany?
8. Which is the smallest nation?

Answers: 1) bowl, spoon, plate, mud bath (odd one out); 2) 3; 3) F; 4) 18; 4) 64; 6) 90 km/h; 7) Berlin; 8) Vatican City.

The Great Banyan Tree (1928)



8. The Great Banyan tree & First tent
in Rishi valley
MAY
1928.

Rishi Valley School,
Rishi Valley - 517 352
Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh