

Newsletter

News from Rishi Valley Education Centre (RVEC)

In January 2008 the State Government of Andhra Pradesh took the singular step of declaring Rishi Valley and its environs a specially protected zone. A Special Development Authority (RV-SDA) has been set up (Order No. Ms 97 dated 24 January 2008) which, apart from the Chittoor District Collector, and the Panchayat Heads will include representatives from the Krishnamurti Foundation. The objectives of this pioneering initiative are to (a) protect and conserve Rishi Valley's rich and diverse environment from being degraded, through unrestrained growth; (b) bring about sustainable development; (c) promote inclusive growth to all its stakeholders; and, (d) preserve Rishi Valley's sanctity as a heritage site.

The generosity of Rishi Valley alumnae during and after the 75th anniversary celebrations, in 2006, will see a new science laboratory, a larger guesthouse, a new dining hall and refurbished kitchen on campus. The well-known architect Shankar from Kerala has designed all these buildings.

With financial support from former student, a hydrological survey of the Valley was conducted to map the underground streams, wells, check dams and recharge points on campus. The internationally known hydrologist Dr. Vishveshwaran headed the team. Dr David Stacey from England assisted by Sunil Thomas and Kartik Kalyanram, teachers of Rishi Valley, and with local farmers, mapped the terrain. The major recommendations of the report include changing cropping patterns and clearing out existing water channels.

News from the Rishi Valley Study Centre

The annual KFI Gathering held at Rishi Valley towards the end of November drew an audience of about three hundred persons from different parts of the country. The theme for the Gathering 'The Path and the Pathless' was intended to be a study of the relationship between J. Krishnamurti's two major statements, 'You are the world' and 'I want to set man unconditionally free.' Implications flowing from the theme were explored in multiple ways: through texts and texts attributed to Krishnamurti prior to his dissolution of the Order of the Star; through Krishnamurti's interpretation of *karma*, which is probably the only concept from ancient thought he adapted; and through the idea of 'total responsibility', which is one of the hidden meanings he distilled from the statements. Videos of Krishnamurti in discussion with Pupul Jayakar and a talk given by him in Washington D.C. were shown to spotlight various facets of the theme. The talks were followed by animated, even vociferous discussions.

Teachers from the school meet regularly on Tuesday evenings around readings from "Letters to the Schools," which has recently been published in a re-edited edition.

Sunday evening discussions continue. Students, teachers and visitors participate in these free ranging discussions.

Three issues of the KFI Bulletin were edited for publication.

The psychiatrist and filmmaker Pierre Anglade who is making a film on Krishnamurti spent several days with his team of cinematographers in the Study Centre. Cecilia and Miguel, Spanish-speaking filmmakers visited the center along with several guests from around the world.

News from Rishi Valley School

Gieve Patel the eminent painter, poet and playwright has been conducting poetry workshops for students at Rishi Valley, ever since he first visited Rishi Valley, in 1997. An anthology of the students' work during this period was published in December 2007 by the Sahitya Akademi, whose Director Shri Keki Daruwala is himself a poet of standing. *Poetry with Young People* is an elegant book with illustrations by some of the county's most

prominent artists, Atul Dodiya, Anju Dodiya, Nilima Sheikh and Sudhir Patwardhan. Their artfully understated illustrations create a wonderful affinity with the students' youthful writing without overwhelming it. In his introduction to the collection, Mr. Patel's looks beyond the parents and teachers of Rishi Valley to address areas in present day education that are disappearing from view. He spurns poetry induced by 'high emotions' ('a false adult notion of what goes on in young minds.'), such as heroism and patriotism, in favour of poetry that reflects genuinely felt emotions, even anger but also empathy. Above all, he does not condescend to his audience. He 'read to them from the masters': 'Sangam poetry from the first and second centuries in south India, Wang Wei, Francois Villon, Shakespeare, Robert Frost, A. K. Ramanujan . . .' The following poem by Bilawal Singh Suri is an example of what students learned from Mr. Patel:

I used to be a man well off
Going about my business,
But now I have a job no more
And I'm looking out for a business.

I go walking looking for a job
But I've been walking so long, looks at last, dear reader,
That walking is my job.

Arun Swaminathan, a practicing architect from Bangalore joining the school as teacher, has created a new course in Design and Technology. The course bridges the gap between Art, Mathematics and the Humanities. The medium of work is generally paper, cardboard, newspaper and junk. 'Students are encouraged to reflect on their work and discuss amongst themselves as well as see what they could do in the future with their line of thinking,' says Arun. Mrs Vijaya Santhana Gopala Krishnan, who has several decades of teaching history, has joined the school; besides teaching she will hold the additional responsibility of looking after the senior school library. A young couple – Roopika and Rishi with masters degree in management – joined the school this academic year. While Roopika teaches English and Social Studies in the Junior School, Rishi teaches Computer Science and Geography. Mr. Santhanagopalakrishnan, formerly of the Government of India Revenue Services, has joined the school as teacher of Indian history at the senior level and as a senior administrator. Mr. Santhanam will be the liaison between Government and Rishi Valley for the RV-SDA programme.

The results of the ISC and ICSC examinations were on the whole very satisfactory. Everyone passed with high averages. One notable achievement is the following: with 25 students sitting for the ISC examination, the average grade obtained added up to 89%. Outgoing students from class 12 have found seats at St. Stephens, Miranda House, Lady Sri Ram College, and Sri Ram College for Commerce in Delhi; St. Xavier's in Mumbai, at the newly established center for the humanities at IIT, Chennai and at the National Law School in Bangalore. A few students have gone abroad, to Amherst, Mt. Holyoke, and University of Michigan in the United States, to the University of Waterloo in Canada and to Warwick in the United Kingdom.

News from the Community Mathematics Centre (RVCMC)

Our former principal Dr. Shailesh Shirali returned to Rishi Valley in 2007 to set up a Community Mathematics Centre. Its purpose will be to serve as a resource centre for teachers, to produce enrichment materials that can be used across the country, and to create teacher networks that will enhance peer learning through the culture of problem solving, problem posing, and sharing of materials.

To date he has taken part in the following:

Conference held in IIT-Mumbai for Mathematics Teachers to highlight the use of technology in Mathematics education

AMTI Mathematics Teachers Conference, conducted in Warangal (28-30 December, 2008)

Workshop for Mathematics Teachers conducted in Mumbai under the auspices of CERE (28-29 March, 2008)

Workshop held in Pune by the Maharashtra State Government, for Mathematics and Science teachers (9-10 May, 2008)

Coaching camp for math Olympiad students held in HBCSE (4-25 May, 2008)

Workshop for Mathematics teachers conducted by IIT-Mumbai (26-30 May, 2008).

Visit to Sahyadri School, KFI (11-18 July, 2008), featuring interactions with mathematics teachers and extended meetings with members of the Sahyadri Math Club "AfterMath".

A website is under preparation, and should appear soon. It will feature articles, problems, solutions, questions from readers, answers, responses from other readers, and so on.

Apart from working in the RVCMC, Padmapriya Shirali, who had earlier been associated with the development of mathematics materials for the 'School in a Box' created by the RIVER programme will be working on the Middle School Curriculum in Mathematics and Telugu language studies.

News from the Rishi Valley Institute of Teacher Education (RVITE)

Some of the activities undertaken by Rishi Valley Institute for Teacher Education (RVITE) during the year 2007-2008 are described below:

Conducting 'Teacher Development' sessions as a series of interactive workshops with the teachers of the Rishi Valley School. Two themes were explored: 'planning for teaching' and 'correction and feedback'.

Organising two subject based workshops as outreach programmes. Participants included teachers from a range of different schools in Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad and Coimbatore. The first workshop, for English teachers, was on 'Strategies for Language building, and Teaching of Comprehension and Writing in English'. Rohini Oomman, an experienced teacher and teacher educator from Bombay and Ishwari Chandramauli, from our school were the resource persons for this workshop.

The second workshop, for Hindi teachers, was on 'Strategies for Language Building and Teaching of Hindi to non-Hindi speaking Children'. Chandrika Mathur was the resource person.

A workshop for KFI School teachers on 'Curriculum and Teaching in the Social Sciences' drew teachers from Sahyadri, Rajghat, the Valley School in Bangalore and The School in Chennai.

Initiating a project for curriculum and material development for teaching Science at the middle school level, for the Rural Education Centre

Continuing a project for curriculum and material development for teaching Hindi to non-Hindi speaking children at an intermediate level. Work at the middle school level was also initiated in collaboration with Anjali Noronha from Eklavya, Bhopal.

Organizing and supporting a study-cum-planning visit by a group of teachers and administrators from the Anubhuti School, a newly established residential school in Jalgaon, Maharashtra.

Participating in a series of four workshops (and hosting one of these) for the reformulation of the 2-year B.Ed programme of the Regional Institutes of Education, NCERT

News from Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre (REC)

Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Research has trained around 1000 persons belonging to various agencies in India, and Nepal. Trainees from Sarva Siksha Abhyan from Goa, Samavesh of Madhya Pradesh and Srujanavani in Vishakapatnam participated in the programme along with teams from Azim Premji, Natco and Satyam Foundations, Somaiya Trust, Mumbai, SCERT, Raipur and America India Foundation, New Delhi.

Professor Ralf Girg from Regensburg, Germany, and Rishi Valley Education Centre organized a joint seminar on 'A Sane Society through Inner and Outer Education'. Professors Meenakshi Thapan from the Department of Sociology of Delhi University participated in the seminar. Mr. Padmanabha Rao, Mrs. Rama Rao, Dr. Chandrika Mathur, Mr. Alok Mathur, Ms Kavita Krishna and Dr Radhika Herzberger represented various units of the Rishi Valley Education Centre.

Padmanabha Rao, Rama Rao, accompanied by T. Venu, E. Ramu, Y. Krishnappa and G. Anil, spent 20 days in Ethiopia. The team for several years has been working with a group from Dembi Dolo on a multi-grade programme in the local Oromoo language. In the course of the visit they set up Model Schools and conducted Teachers' Training courses.

A team from REC went to Puducherry in July 2008 and conducted a 4-day workshop for the SSA, Puducherry. This was a first initiative of its kind wherein the Multi-grade Methodology was going to be used at the primary level for English Medium Schools affiliated to CBSE board

The KHEMKA FOUNDATION awarded Padmanabha Rao and Rama Rao, joint Heads of Rishi Valley Institute of Educational Research (RIVER) fellowships for innovation in primary education and in scaling-up their methodologies in February 2007. The Khemka Foundations Schwab Foundation also felicitated them on the occasion for their Outstanding Social Entrepreneurship.

Ms Mei Lan Frame, a Fulbright scholar spent nine-month at REC. Her research project was titled "RIVER: Community and Culture in Education".

Ever since RIVER won the Global Development Award a fairly ambitious building programme is underway.

A new Dining Hall and a Multi Purpose Hall were inaugurated by in August 2007.

An International Guest House jointly funded by the Professor Ralf Girg's group from Germany and the RVEC has been completed. Professor Girg and his students will be the first to avail of the facilities in August 2008.

Plans to refurbish the existing classrooms, build a new library and a few dormitories are proceeding. Sishukunj International an educational foundation from the United Kingdom has very kindly come forward to sponsor some of these structures.

A new documentary 'A Freedom to Learn' was released. The film was made at the Rural Education Centre, with camerawork by Cecilia and Miguel and script by Raju Ashirvadam.

A new computer laboratory which host 14 machines, donated by Mr Harish Raghavan and Mrs Rama Raghavan (ISC 81) of New York was inaugurated in August. The realization that the new laboratory would open up new vistas for their children has generated a great deal of excitement among the local people.

The Annual Sports Day was conducted on 27 & 28 Jan 2008. Children participated with a lot of enthusiasm.

News from the Rural Health Care Centre (RHC)

Over 16,000 patients accessed the health centre for health care services. With this the total number of patients who have accessed the health centre since its inception has crossed 63,000. Patients come in from as far as 100 km, for the quality and cost of the health care provided.

Health Programmes

- a) Eye Care: Dr TN Krishna Reddy and SILOAM eye hospital, at Madanapalle, operate on our patients for Cataract surgeries at a minimal cost of Rs 1100/- per cataract. 73 cataract surgeries were done bringing the cumulative figure to 821 surgeries since the programme started in 2001.
 - b) Tuberculosis: The RNTCP, regional coordinator and the District TB Officer visited the RHC in Feb 2008. They were impressed with the quality of diagnostics, record keeping and follow up of patients. Subsequently they have instructed all Primary Health Centres in the area to refer patients to the RHC for sputum examination. The RNTCP provides the laboratory materials for the Sputum Tests. The TB programme diagnosed 69 new patients in 2007 – 08. 40 of these patients have been referred to the RNTCP for continuation of treatment. The total number of patients diagnosed at the RHC since the programme inception in 2002 is 283, with a cure rate of > 90%. (WHO requirement is 85%.)
 - c) Antenatal Programme: 44 new patients were registered in the year 2007 – 08. Most of them opted for hospital deliveries thanks to incentives introduced by the State Government (108 Ambulance and a Monetary incentive). The average birth weight continues to rise and it is now about 2.7 kg (up from 2.5 kg).
2. Diagnostic Centre: The laboratory continues to be very busy with an average daily workload of about 40 patients. More than 10000 investigations of different kinds including X Ray, Microbiology as well as Pulmonary Function Testing was done in 2007 – 08.

News from the Rishi Valley Estate:

The Estate has been experimenting systematically with organic farming techniques. A new technique for growing sugar cane with inter-cropping has been tried out successfully. Our agricultural fields have been certified as organic farms by recognised agencies.

With poor rainfall year after year we have been unable to experiment more extensively. The yield from orchards has been significantly less than the average due to unseasonal rain in the month of March.

New from the Rishi Valley Institute of Bird Studies and Natural History

Among the distinguished naturalists to visit the school and speak to students were:

Dr P. Jeganathan of the Bombay Natural History Society, who talked to students about the endangered and endemic species Jerdon's Courser, which was thought to be extinct, until its rediscovery in 1984. Its habitat is confined to just one known site in Kadapa district of AP.

Dr Kartik Shanker of Centre for Ecological Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore spoke on Sea Turtles: their biology and conservation.

Dr Raman Sukumar, Chairman, Centre for Ecological Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore was the

chief guest on the occasion of the Rishi Valley Bird Preserve Anniversary on 27th July. He presented a slide show on Asian Elephants, their role in Indian culture and ongoing efforts to conserve their habitat.

Under the direction of Dr. Suhel Qader, the National Centre for Biological Studies in Bangalore has established a 'field station' for environmental monitoring at Rishi Valley. R. Somnath, a resident of the Valley has been collecting data on the fruiting and flowering times of trees and shrubs with a view to evaluating effects of climate change. He is in addition compiling records of livestock villages and on the use of natural resources by residents, which will help create a more complete tool for monitoring environmental change in the Valley.

The Home Study Course on Ornithology has an enrollment of over 1070 students from all over the country as of 31 July 2008.

Mr Murali Reddy a research scientist working in america is maintaining a website that highlights Rishi Valley Education Centre's work in the areas on conservation, rural education and rural health. The website url is: www.forv.org (Friends of Rishi Valley)

Somnath has been collecting some very interesting information about the ecology of the valley and about the use of natural resources by its inhabitants. Somnath has been collecting data on fruiting and flowering times of various trees and shrubs (important for evaluating effects of climatic changes); on grass extraction from the hills above the school, and on livestock ownership in the villages within the watershed of the valley. Also, with the experience gained from this "environmental monitoring" at Rishi Valley, "field station".