



# the newsletter

The School KFI, Chennai

Issue #4

February, 2015

## From the Editor

The cover page of our newsletter usually tells you what the subsequent pages have in store for you. We believe that after the first three issues of The Newsletter, regular readers know what to expect. As we continue to strive to surprise you, we are sure you will turn the pages to find out what each issue brings you.

This year, we have introduced two new columns – the 'Campus Tree Log', which discusses a different tree on campus in every issue and 'News from the Staff Room' which focuses on events and initiatives for and by the teachers of the school. Starting this issue we would like to dedicate the cover page to The School – not the events, happenings, stories and snippets but moments from everyday life at school which make it the place of joy it is!

A picture speaks a thousand words. So do these moments – about the freedom, the happiness, the connection with the world around and the love that makes the school a complete home. Welcome to yet another year of exploration and discovery at The School!



*Slice of Life at School*

*A source of Joy! - The old gate found renewed life in the pup's gay abandon and its loving visitors!*



*Worth their weight in gold - Last heard, these mud laddoos were to be auctioned by their makers – the junior school students to raise money to build a castle on the new campus!!*



*More (wheels) the merrier – this time around the tricycle scores over the bicycle as the preferred mode of transport!*

*A fine balancing act – Did we miss this event at the Sports Meet?*

## Celebrating Cooperation - Middle and Senior School Sports Day

What matters is to awaken the spirit of cooperation, the feeling of joy in being and doing together, without any reward or punishment. Most young people have it spontaneously, freely . .

- J Krishnamurti in Think on These Things, Chapter 15, reprinted by KFI

Sports meets at The School are symbols of the spirit of cooperation – non competitive and devoid of rewards or accolades they comprise a series of team and individual events that help each student explore himself/herself in the context of a physical challenge. The middle and senior school event each year opens with a drill and dance choreographed by the class twelve and brings together every student of middle and senior school in the performance. It is followed by an oath written and read out by the class twelve.

Individual events:  
Long jump  
Triple jump  
Sprint  
Shortput

" We, the students of the school take an oath  
To participate in the sports events with enthusiasm and energy,  
To try our best and learn from our experience  
To encourage each other and come together in a spirit of fraternity.  
On this day, we celebrate our youth and leave our self-consciousness behind. "

Team events:  
Relay  
Team challenges - games with a specific set of rules and objectives for teams - played in same and mixed age groups  
Drill and dance  
Parents' events - relay and a team challenge

## From The Library – Book Review

Book review as a part of the curriculum starts in Junior School where the students are introduced to the concept of a review and the various facets of a book – the title, author, publisher, illustrator etc. By class 7, the students are not just writing reviews but making posters, book jackets and bookmarks.



In addition once a term, a book review assembly for middle and senior school takes place where a few students and teachers present reviews of books from the school library.

## The Basket Ball League

Spectator sports are often criticized for exploiting a need for vicarious achievement, and a desire within the spectator to project a public image through a declaration of team allegiance. J Krishnamurti has repeatedly referred to the 'entertainment of sport' as an escape from what one is. The paradox of the spectator is described by French philosopher Jacques Ranciere as **'to seek an opportunity to passively contemplate engaging in an activity and in doing so, forfeit that life moment one might have used to actually engage in the activity'**. So, what place does a spectator sport such as basket ball have in a student's life, especially at The School?

The line between sport and the spectator is usually the line between the active and passive. However, if the spectator also plays an 'active role' would sport then be not just an escape or entertainment but a channel for exploration of the self?

This year's basket ball league where the matches were witnessed by the students of middle and senior school threw up many a question in the mind of the students especially those in middle school who were new to the spectator sport and being spectators.

"I liked team A because they played for fun while team B played to win!"

I supported Team C because some of my friends (or friend's friends) were a part of the team"

Why do we feel the need to identify ourselves with one of the teams?

"It was an unfair game for Team C since they did not have as many good players as their opponent team"

In a game with rules why does a question of "fairness" arise?

"Members of team A did not play fairly"

Are we being hypocritical by calling it non-competitive but still keeping scores?

How can a competitive sport be played with a non competing spirit?

The event left the students, especially the younger audience dealing with questions and even a surge of emotions that they did not quite expect. Over the years as they witness and play more of the sport and inquire into their thoughts and feelings, they will progress towards becoming more sensitive players and spectators. There is no 'escaping' this at The School!

*In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous. - Aristotle*

## Campus Tree Log – Magizham



### Fact File

Binomial name: *Mimusops Elengi*  
 Native to: **South Asia, South east Asia, northern Australia**  
 Common Names: **Spanish Cherry, bullet wood (Vakul in Sanskrit)**  
 Prized for: **Thick Shade, fragrant flowers, medicinal uses**  
 Identification: **smell of the flower reaches 500m, edible orange berry fruit, supports a lot of caterpillar life**  
 Flowering Seasons: **Post the showers in August and January**



### Magizham in School Life

There are 4 Magizham trees in school  
 The Magizham D behind the office next to junior school section is the seat of most activity

- Junior School's quiet hideaway from the quadrangle
- Silent assemblies
- Individual study for classes of middle and senior school
- Venue for street plays during Drama Fest
- Junior School students call the seed the lucky bean seed and collect it
- They also string the flowers together to make jewelry

The Magizham flowers keep silver fish at bay in the school library and class cupboards

### Magizham in Ancient Art and literature

Vakulabharanam is a raga in Carnatic music named after the tree  
 In Hindu mythology, the milkmaids of Vrindavan were allured by Krishna playing the flute beneath a Vakul tree on the banks of Yamuna  
 Vakul is also mentioned in Kishkinda Kanda of Ramayana. It is the Sthala Vriksham at the Parthasarathy Temple, Chennai

## Interview

The one word that cropped up often in our conversation was 'amaidi' (meaning 'peace' in Tamil). Coincidentally it is also the word one would use to describe **Nalla Thambi Anna**. So, I was taken aback when he said, "An environment like our school is very difficult", but before I could ask him to elaborate he added, "very difficult to find elsewhere, very difficult for those not in it to understand it and very difficult to leave". He made his 25 years in school sound very easily understandable.

Nallathambi Anna joined The School in 1989 at the age of 22. He was recruited as a kitchen staff, based on his prior experience of 5 years at a juice stall but due to unexpected turn of events he started in the science labs. After a few years of watching, helping with and learning dissection and experiments (he still recalls the dissection of fruits and flowers and the test on potato for starch fondly and vividly) he moved to help in the office, where he continues to work till date. He has seen technology change from cyclostyling to the photocopying in school while witnessing technological change and the changes in enterprises it brought with it especially in the banks and government offices that he visits regularly as part of his work. He has helped during the years of manpower shortage in school assisting in everything from maintenance to art installations.

He says that he would rather not call what he does 'school work'. Instead he says it has always felt like his 'own work' because his time at school has been about three things:

- a. Job Satisfaction
- b. Working with people he likes immensely, especially the teachers
- c. Working independently without supervision and with utmost responsibility

As he reminisces, the student in him is striking. He recounts every bit of his past experiences as learning; be it how to weigh and make paper packets of groceries in his first job or knowing how to plan the exact no of slices of a fruit for a glass of juice or how to manage and engage junior school children on field trips. He thinks of it as destiny that for a boy who had to drop out of school in class eight due to very unfortunate changes in the education system he had to spend his entire adult life 'learning' in a school.

If today his personal life is marked by his friendship with his son and daughter, the ten children who come to play with him at home every Sunday from the neighborhood, and voracious reading (which explained his articulacy in Tamil despite Telugu being his mother tongue) he says it is the result of his time at The School.

So each morning as he leaves his home at Arakonam at 4 am, changes two trains to reach Thiruvanniyur and cycles to school from the station, he looks forward to yet another 'happy' day in school spent in the company of children, who he considers his friends and teachers, his mentors.

At the end of a very enjoyable conversation, when I ask him for a concluding statement, he records a message to the youngsters . . .

**"Education is the key to a good life."**

**A Pick from Wednesday Assemblies**

