

The Dohnavur Post is a newsletter run by the alumni of Santhosha Vidhyalaya, Dohnavur, India.

Santhosha Vidhyalaya, set in sylvan surroundings with the Western Ghats for backdrop, is a residential school providing quality Christian education.

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From the Scribbling Desk...

Good Morning! This is the Newsletter Team, sitting in a virtual office, grinning ear to ear and waving to y'all. The Newsletter idea popped up and we sat on it for sometime and then it took wings in this format.

This Newsletter's purpose is to create a virtual Coffee House for the alumni of the School. This would be a place for us to shout a 'Hello' or say 'Wow' or just keep in touch as we keep busy making this world a better place. For those of you who'd like to have a literary culture built around school – This is the place. For those of you who would like to know how the school and its protégés are doing – read the Gossips

here. For those of you who would like to re-live the good ol' jokes that were cracked after lights-off in the dormitory corridor – You are welcome to write here. For some of us who just want to read something on a Sunday afternoon – this is it.

Over the years, many of us have developed a way with words, some tell a good tale, some write brilliantly, some sing captivatingly and some just read. This magazine has been conceptualized to put our life music into words, to write about our experience at School (a usual icebreaker), our interests, work and love, and just Life in General. As someone once said, "If you keep reading and don't write,

you may get constipated".

This is a newsletter owned by all of us, for all of us. Please write and share this with all SVians, let the music flow..



Some future planned articles:

- Poet's Corner
- A story from P. G. Wodehouse's tales of School Life
- Juke Box (SV-ians top five songs)
- Comments and suggestions
- Spinning Yarn (Tall Tales from some of SV's Master storytellers)

Marching to the heavenly beat...

The year is 1990... A shrill whistle blows and the little children stare wide-eyed in wonder as a grey haired, elderly gent walks into the classroom. It is the first P.T (Physical Training) period of the academic year. 'Here! Here!' says the gentleman - (Probably a phrase used by the British Officers in India that meant 'Can I get your attention??') The kids hear it as 'Yeah Yeah!' and that is just

the beginning of wonderful days with the legendary P.T. Master - Mr. N.B Thomas :)

I was privileged to be one among this class that went for the P.T. that bright sunny morning with Mr. Thomas. I believe he must have been pushing sixty at that time, but my! what a brisk pace he maintained! We were led like a train in a straight line and stopped under the good old shady banyan tree of Santho-

sha Vidhyalaya. Then started the exercise routine with counts 1,2,3,4...5,6,7,8 and backwards 8,7,6,5...4,3,2,1 followed by running around and playing little games under the banyan tree.

It was many days later that we came to know that Mr. N.B Thomas had served in the nascent Indian Railways with its British traditions and legacies - which so often showed in his mannerisms.

He was also the warden of the junior boys' dormitory for a while. Can remember him waking up as early as 5 in the morning and jogging/exercising in the playground. He used to have his legendary brown, square-shaped stop-watch in his hands and time his laps around the ground. He was the true P.T master. He had the thing for spotting talents very young. And then nurtured them to win medals and trophies. He was like a gardener, patiently weeding out bad techniques, watering nutrition, instilling confidence and then would sit back and see the fruits with pride. Believe it or not, I was among the lucky few who were trained by him!

He was a spectacular trainer who was there beside you always. He used to walk with the children to the ground and even train with them for javelin throws, discus throws and long jump! Such was the

enthusiasm of the man. It was due to him that there were a slew of sports trophies and individual sporting achievements for Santhosha Vidhyalaya.

He also took part in many national level athletic events for senior citizens in the 60 and 70+ age category. I remember him winning events like the short sprint, hurdles, discus and shot-put on a national level competition. Imagine someone hurdling at that age! I still cannot jump over a single hurdle. Like a little boy, he proudly brought back and displayed the medals he had won. He also carried over the same passion while coaching the children of Santhosha Vidhyalaya. He displayed the same pride when one of us won a medal.

The sports day in S.V was an event looked forward to and Mr. Thomas was regularly in-charge of the march-past and drill. What fun we had

(Walker, Ragland and Brand) marching around the playground with Mr. Thomas parading with a bamboo cane, enjoying his funny little wisecracks at people who fell out of line. Those were the days...

In all these years, I have never come across a P.T master with Mr. Thomas' enthusiasm, eagerness and attitude and I bet a lot of the old students would agree with me.

He is also well remembered for the anecdotes (railway life) that he shared sometimes when in a jolly good mood. During the Football World-Cup, he used to watch the matches with the same enthusiasm and passion as us little school kids. I believe we all together rooted for Argentina!

I visited school again in the year 2000, and was overwhelmed when Mr. Thomas recognized me. 'Yer!' He said, for that is how he used to call me. He prayed for me and placed a sign of the cross on my forehead. He was a lot older but still having the same charm and enthusiasm.

I was saddened to hear of his passing away (last year) and berate myself for not trying to spend some time with him during my last visit but then he seemed so indestructible.

I truly believe he is marching along with the heavenly hosts, sprinting around and throwing javelins in a playground high above and maybe training the Angels. He doesn't need to use the stopwatch and the bamboo cane these days :) and trust me if you listen closely you can hear one of his wisecracks!

Three Cheers to "The Grand Old Man of Santhosha Vidhyalaya" - Sir N.B. Thomas and may his soul rest in peace, till the day we will meet him again!



Jeremy Daniel is an Engineer by education and is currently in the Promised Land of Software Engineers, The US of A. His Interests are reading and music. He plays the guitar and is an avid musician and aspiring Rocker. He can also be seen (when he is in India, that is) fiddling around with his first love, his bullet, "Black Knight".

"Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child"

- Mr. N. B. Thomas' favourite quote from the Bible before delivering six of the juiciest on Jeremy's sensitive posterior.

A favourite Pre-fix, "When I was in the railways..."

In God's Plan...

A handsome boy was born into a middleclass suburban setting. The neighbours came over at the birth. "What a beautiful baby" remarked the lady across the street. Someone presented the crib, there was a Johnson & Johnson grooming kit among the gifts. He endured the cuddles of the entire neighborhood. By the time he was a toddler the darling of the street was sent

to a totally different environment. He started learning languages, picked up useful skills, played instruments. Military-like setting. Growing up to be a man but far away from home. New language, new culture. Along with adulthood came the nagging question "where am I from?". This almost looked like home but it was not. He did not belong.

Lessons from the life of Moses...

Just as he settled down to sit and ponder and trace his roots he had to run. Now driven to another country. Different people, different culture, different food, different language... Everything different again. Even his current job was so different from what he learnt. Been everywhere but didn't belong anywhere. Nomadic. Rootless.

Well, does that sound like



In Gods Plan.. (continued)..



your story MK? All seemed fine till your parents moved to the mission field. Then things changed. A totally different setting where you woke up at whistles and bathed as a

crowd. Military-like setting? Spoke a different language and picked up guitar tricks. Busy growing up to be a man far away from home.

Even as you finished your studies you had to move over to some other place totally different. The difficulty in finding the right barber. Memorizing bus routes and rickshaw fares. Was that your story? Rootless. Been all over but belong nowhere? Still the nagging questions haunt you, don't they?

Lets look at that kid's story. The neighbors called him cutie pie. The kids at the soccer field called him Moe. His roomie called him Moss. And Bible calls him Moses. Yes, Moses can identify with you and me. He knows what it is to feel rootless. He must have shuddered at the simple question " where

are you from? " *just like you and me.* You tell him its difficult being an MK, he'd reply "been there, done that."

Moses was born into a middle-class family. He must have endured that agonizing trip to the palace clutching his big sister's hand *just like we did* the trip to the boarding school. He had the best of education. He felt unbelonged all through. *Just like us.* He had to move to another place just when things were get-



ting settled. Just when we thought we picked up the boarding school game, college came along. A totally different environment. Moses was driven to Midian. He even named his first son 'alien' (Gershom in Hebrew means alien). Rootless.

God had other ideas. Moses was being groomed for something bigger. God prepares His men thoroughly. Moses needed the skills of a prince to lead a nation. And that's why Moses won a scholarship at the palace. Moses needed the skills of a shepherd and that's why the Midianite shepherd girls were impressed with him.



I m a g i n e Moses, a poor Jew, who is supposed to be dead by the King's decree learning to ride the same

Moses needed the knowledge of the wilderness and that's why he had to tend sheep after a Master's degree from Egypt's Ivy League Management School. **When God prepares His man you better watch out.** Moses never felt belonged in Egypt. Why? He had to lead the folks to the Promised Land. He had to un-belong. It was in the script. It was in God's plan. Egypt was not the Promised Land.

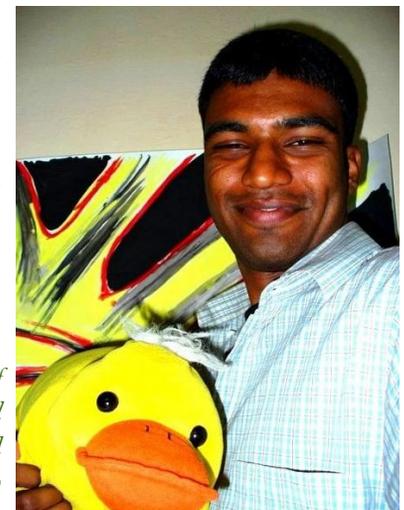
God plays His game well. Its amazing to be in God's plan.

King's horses in the same king's rodeo. Imagine the coffee break scene after the history class in the palace school. Moses sips coffee and casually discusses the historical decree that killed his compatriots (the same one that should have killed him too). I can imagine Moses religiously learning the princely duties of Egypt little knowing that one day he would challenge the same system. Imagine Moses with his foreign looks and aristocratic language defending

some Midianite shepherd girls. No wonder they were impressed. Look at God's sense of humor.

Yes, that's the message for you and me. Do you feel how Moses felt? Rootless. Are you bothered about moving to yet another place? Torn between cultures or is there a question of culture? An NCK (No Culture Kid)? God could be preparing you for something big. A career that transcends cultures. Are you tending sheep in the wilderness? Look out for the burning bush. Is that 'alien' feeling haunting you? Remember we are not Home yet. We are just passing by. Watch out, you are about to be pulled into something bigger than you ever imagined. Look at Moses. Same story.

"Moses never felt belonged in Egypt. Why? "
"Moses was being groomed for something bigger."
"When God prepares His man you better watch out."



Steve (Stephen Jothiraj) works for TCS as an Analyst studying markets for a wide range of clients. Steve lives and works in Bangalore. He is passionate about Entrepreneurship and Football (He thinks Arsenal is the best club in the world). He also writes on subjects close to his heart and feels Moses has some interesting lessons for people questioning about the 'reasons things happen to us'.

Watching From the Sidelines – Rambling Thoughts on the Philosophy of Football



Warning – This column is for the serious Football enthusiast, a corner for intricate and technical Football Topics. Future columns are, the role of the fullbacks, the Sweeper, the holding Midfielder etc., for which we need more contributors. The intention is to create a regular sports column discussing the intricacies of the game we love, and maybe, all sports in general. Again, contributions and comments needed.

A regular pastime while in Bangalore was for a few of us SV guys to gather together to watch Football matches on the weekends. We also used to get together for highlights of the football calendar such as the World Cup and the Champions League. The Champions League used to take some effort, what with having to stay awake till 0300 am to watch the games. As a corollary, a lot of time and energy was spent in discussing, arguing about and dissecting various aspects of the

“Football has become a world language with unique regional flavours.”

game. Tempers used to fray, what with the differing viewpoints and we often used to wonder about why football evokes such passions in SV. Out of this arguments was born the idea of an infrequent column where folks can write about the intricacies of one of the world’s simplest games, Football.

Of course, now age has dimmed our passions (Old men!!) but Football has always been an integral part of SV-ian life. In fact at some periods of schools life, it dominated all else. Getting into the School Team was the pinnacle of achievement and gave one ‘Status’.



Generations of SV kids have floated through evening studies, gazing into text books studiously but dreaming of derring-do on the football field or philosophizing on getting past the gigantic (as it then appeared) centre back of the senior team.

While at School, we were lucky to be a part of the growing tactical revolution in football, which was belatedly making an arrival in India. We first began with the 4-2-4, moved on to the 4-4-2, then the 4-3-3. The 4-5-1 atleast in our times (makes me feel old) was despised as too defensive. The 4-2-4 on the other hand was too offensive, leaving gaping holes for opponents to utilize. Too defensive or too offensive? This brings us to the basic philosophy of Football. Football offers literally unlimited tactical variations making a good team make 4-5-1 interesting to watch or a bad team making 4-3-3 unbearable.

Some played to win, there are still dark tales of the ends to which some of our local rivals were supposed to have gone to. Some played to play good football, of which SV was supposedly the guardians. Remember the tales of the Juniors having to kneel in the sand after scoring fifteen goals in a game?, for breaking their tactical shape and playing

like a herd of buffaloes (sic).

Since football is a team played by 11 players against 11 players, it is often assumed to be about the men (or boys) on the pitch. This lead to the ball being hoofed to the big Centre Forwards who tried to muscle their way through even bigger opponents. Consider this against the mindset that Football is about the “Spaces”. There is only a certain amount of yards that can be occupied by the players, the rest is all space to be exploited when you are on the attack. There are now numerous empty channels to run into, empty spaces to play the ball in and glorious runs to be made. Remember the attacking football of Arsenal, Barcelona or Spain? A simple change of thinking suddenly makes the game beautiful. [An analogy for life, for after all life isn’t about the inconsequential obstacles we face,

but the opportunities and empty spaces for us to fill. In fact, the only ‘Obstacle’ that matters is the goalkeeper whom we must surmount to win.]

While defending, the aim has to be to ‘block’ these spaces and channels. Great defensive players like Paolo Maldini almost never had to make last ditch tackles because they usually cut the balls along these channels.

Suddenly strength and size is not very important. This leads us to the 4 Ps of Football (similar to the 4 Ps in marketing), Pace, Power, Position and Precision. Of these, arguably the most important is Position. The others can be taught or practiced except position. This is the intangible something that gives rise to the ‘Right place at the right time’. How many times have we wondered about the

striker who just happens to wander in in the nick of time to score. The ‘Fox in the Box’ who seem disinterested outside the box suddenly appearing lethal inside the box. Second in the scale of things is Precision, The ability to play the ball exactly where you want to, both during the build-up and the culmination in the goal. Pace and Power are again inconsequential and not necessary to make a great player but Positional sense is absolutely essential to make a great player.

While the more physical and pacy English game (read English Premier League) demands athleticism and power, the Continental version, which is the more beautiful of the two is slower and easy on the eye. South America serves its unique brand of football along with the intense atmosphere while Asia offers a lightweight but hard running version of the game. Football has become a world language with unique regional flavours. As we go on, you’ll be served a good football piece every issue in this space. Happy football!



Daniel Balasingh is the makeshift writer of this column. He earns his daily bread working for Nissan Motors in Chennai. His interests are football and books. He played left-back for SV and roots for Arsenal every weekend. [Lately he has been keeping a very low profile, with Arsenal stuttering and stumbling every weekend.]

Musings on a Monday....

Picture this - a bunk bed and a wide open shelf- not very close to each other, but certainly in some close proximity, the geometry of which I cannot still decipher. That was our only personal space. Something we could call our own in that large campus with red buildings under bang blue skies.

The bunk was very personal to us. The bunk was almost a home. It was one thing that was private in that vast expanse of generality. You could find anything in the bed. Some of the random things that come to mind are perfumes, tons of make-up stuff, a rack for letters from Mom and Dad and perhaps a dolly with special history attached to it. The mattress was a good storehouse. Anything and Everything could be stored under the mattress. From jilebis and chapattis to elastic bands and fancy looking candy wrappers. Sometimes there were these things left there for a long that it was re-discovered, much to our embarrassment, only on the last day of the academic year. Some of the things that made it into that list were greeting cards, letters, unreturned comic books, posters stolen from magazines and polyethene bags etc... We saved them all, right under us. One

of the girls found a raw banana, which had certainly ripened after all those months. On the last day they all had the same fate – they went in to the bin. It somehow seemed so worthless at that point that our small minds wondered why we ever put them there in the first place!

Most of us who started boarding school from the 1st standard, did not get to watch TV as kids. But we had the blessing of watching a good movie as a crowd every weekend. I watched it along with the dormitory of 200 girls. The 'video-show' scenes are fresh in my mind. The TV was kept on two tables placed over each other. After the show there was this intense energy hovering about the place just like the wet-earth smell after the summer rain.

After the movie, almost everyone talked about it differently.

Some loudly, some imitating characters in the movie, others arguing about what actually happened, and I, thoughtfully went to bed after such conversations, wishing I could do something as great as those movie heroes. But by next morning, it was only a memory. Sometimes the movies made me miss home.

Books were my favorite part of school. When I was a little kid, I read and re-read my favorites like Enid Blyton's *The Wishing Chair* and others with a magical twist in them. I liked the library. I enjoyed the smell of the old books, I cherished the silence of the high-roofed room with tall open windows and the watchful bespectacled librarian. I sometimes read big



Wish our bunks were this comfortable..

books with large pictures on them that were worn out due to frequent use. But I always kept a tab on the ones I loved and in the next class I would rush to take it first.

There were always fights over books, because some got what was thought to be boring books full of only small texts and there was a line of 'after you' for the best books. When I could begin borrowing books from the library, I did so every week religiously and read them all the time - during class, while I ate and during study time also. Many girls were caught reading novels in study time and I was also one of them. But these reading sprees were wonderful and helped us forget home for a while. When we were kids we lost ourselves in the world of fairy tales. As we grew up we upgraded to mystery novels. We used to read these novels with so much of involvement that we would often end up pretending to be a sleuth. I

don't know about the majority but I often, after reading a mystery novel, used to pretend to be a sleuth in a plot. I used to place my things a certain way and if it was misplaced after a while, I would try to find out who had been there and what they had done. For a whole week after the completion of a mystery novel I would act as a sleuth on a mission.

The Encyclopedia Britannica were a craze then. Someone would read some totally useless information and speak of it in the dormitory. The next day, everyone would reach for the same encyclopedia and satiate their curiosity. A command over useless trivia was thought to be intelligence.

We also 'famously' read comics like *Tinkle, Pinky, Billoo, Chacha Chowdhry, Mandrake, Phantom* etc... The only problem was, once you lent your comic book to someone, you had to kill the hope of seeing it again, because the book will be circulated to the whole dormitory by evening time and at night it would be on the pillow of the last person who fell asleep reading it. Every Sunday afternoon was compulsory nap time that everyone detested. So just before our clock tower struck 1 O'clock, we would have stealthily looked under everyone's pillow for books to read while on the bed for two boring hours.

Life here in the city with a demanding job makes me long for the good ol' Dohnavur days. Life was simpler then when Sunday's worry was finding a book during the afternoon nap, Saturday's worry was finding space on the clothesline and the power cut was an event in itself on a weekday. It had simpler toys and more joys. Long live the school and its memories.

Karen passed out of school in 2002, graduated in Journalism and now works for 'The Times of India' in Bangalore. Karen's newest - "Also, I am playing with a few ideas in my head about writing a book. Till then, I am letting music inspire me."



"I enjoyed the smell of the old books, I cherished the silence of the high-roofed room with tall open windows..."



The Dohnavur Post

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Quotes from Great Writers,

“Boyhood, like measles, is one of those complaints which a man should catch young and have done with, for when it comes in middle life it is apt to be serious.”

- P. G. Wodehouse

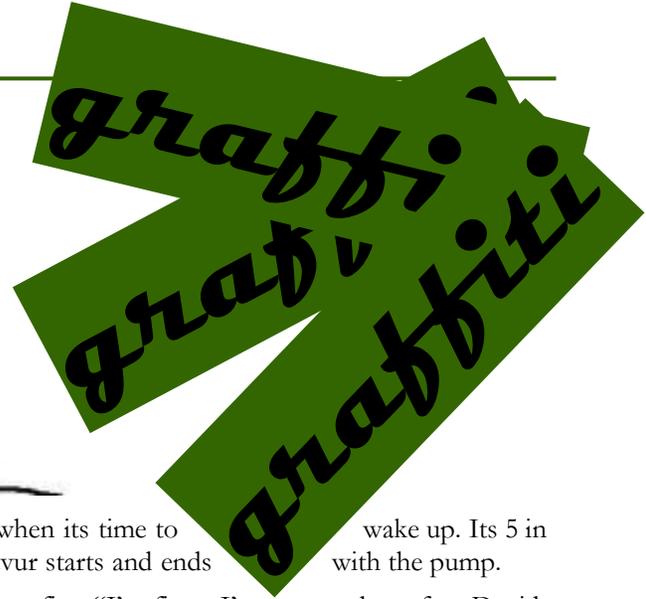
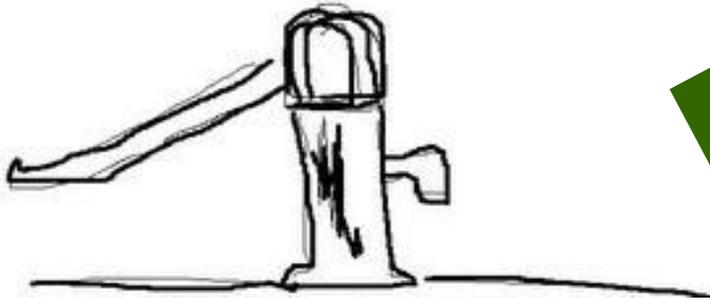
It is about twenty-seven years now since a group of folks gathered together to form Santhosha Vidhyalaya and hundred of students have passed under the “Arch” since that day. Some have liked the journey called School and some have hated it, but none can deny the impact it has had on our lives, mostly for good.

We have gone on our ways wondering about the vagaries of fate that brought a motley group of kids to this remote part of Tamil Nadu, separated now, but for some mystical bond that holds us all together.

We hope this Newsletter will provide yet another avenue to stay in touch. We hope to bring this out periodically, depending on the feedback and the articles we receive.

Please contribute and stay involved. We have chosen to make this a PDF document so that we can forward this easily, so please pass this on to all SV folks you know.

the pump factor



Taka tak taka tak... you would hear the pump invariably every morning when its time to wake up. Its 5 in the morning and someone is already at the pump. A typical day at Dohnavur starts and ends with the pump.

As some lazily walked to the pump, some others ran and touched the pump first “I’m first , I’m second... after David, after Michael, after Sodalikannan, ...” that’s how the pump got booked and then we would stand around the pump eagerly awaiting our turn, watching others pump, admiring their biceps or inquisitively looking at the physics involved in the hand pump. There were pump partners and we would take turns to pump for each other. Some expert pumpers didn’t need partners. They would sit under the pump and pump for themselves (Samuel Charles).

It still baffles me that about 100 people had baths in an hour with just two pumps. But we managed. That’s the Dohnavur magic. Some had head bath (the proper bath), some had crow bath (you just get wet) and still some just saw the water and were clean.

Not to forget we had to fight for our turns with Velu and Mariyappan (the official gardeners). That’s how our mornings were at Dohnavur.

There were different kinds of pumps in Dohnavur broadly classified by design and condition. In terms of design we had the stylishly curved handled Victorian model pumps and the more modern straight handled pumps. In terms of condition we had the green ones which were full of algae and the dokku pumps which were rusted and gave no water. In terms of the quality of water there were two – Salty and Saltier pumps (was there ever a pump which gave sweet water in Dohnavur?)

Anyway, the pumps were used for many things (just like most things are in Dohnavur). We used it to have our baths, fill water for plants, wash clothes, hang out place etc... Sadly the pump has given way to the impersonal and characterless motor.

And here are some funny pump terminology – pump partners, 1st half, 2nd half, underwear washing, crow bath... remember anymore?

George Raj is an SAP Consultant in Hyderabad. George's passions include Environmental studies and Enterprise. George's creativity has always found an outlet in his humour and wit, making life lighter for all of us who know him.