

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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The Dohnavur Post

From the Scribbling Desk...

For private circulation only.

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Hello, Greetings to you again from the Newsletter Team. It has been a long three months since the last issue. We've just about made it as a quarterly newsletter. Thank you all for sending your feedback, it was motivating. I hope you enjoy reading this and don't forget to write back.

Credit must go to Theodore Sam Paul and Bramwell who put in efforts in the design of this issue. Daniel Balasingh, in his usual paternal ways, helped to bring out this issue in time.

Karen, the resident writer of the 'Down the memory lane'

column, is in her elements as she recollects the Sports Day in her unique style redolent with the smells of our childhood. Sports day was special - Success and defeat tasted just the same - like sticky, dust smeared candy in the sweaty palms of a 5-year-old.

Daniel Ponraj's Top5 is an intense piece of work. He told us he wrote it 'from his heart'. It was wonderful meeting Daniel Ponraj, his wife and three lovely kids in Vellore. Peter's incisive pen finally gets in the act. We'll tell you this much - he packs a punch. George - thanks for making us



laugh, man.

I wish you all happy reading. Please pass it on to as many people you can. Looking forward to hearing from you.

The Team.

In this Issue:

- Karen's Reminiscence on SV's sports Day in her regular column, "Down memory Lane"
- Solbrekken puts down on paper every SVian's thoughts on waking up in the morning!
- Steve's angry support for the flawed genius, Juan Roman Riquelme
- Daniel Ponraj's thoughts on music and its influence on his life.

A Call to Arms..

Ever wondered how you end up being who you are? Most people choose careers when they graduate from school. But more often than not, what we end up doing in life is based on little things that were denied us as kids. A coal miner's son envisions of a life that gives him everything that his dad could not provide. He hopes his children would have a better lifestyle.

A few months back I came across an email from Ponraj sir, passed on through the

great SV alumni grape vine. The mail was in true SV style, stating financial fact but too proud to ask for direct assistance. It was more of an informative letter about the school's financial position than a fund raiser. I read a few of the posts attached, replies of alumni who had taken interest and responded. The response was overwhelming, everyone wanted to chip in, everyone wanted to help but the first thing they wanted to do was to get together and discuss the issue further. They did get

together (anniversary) but unfortunately it ended up being an additional expenditure for the school. Bottom line, every SV alumni takes pride in being an 'SVian' as long as it does not pinch his purse. Stranded alone on a desolate planet, we could cook up the most extravagant party in the universe but to pay up for something we have nothing to gain from?, Impossible!!

We were and always will be a close knit commu-

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nity. But the goal of a community is not only to have a good time but to support each other in times of need. I remember having prayed for a generator during my early years at school. Surprisingly, we were fortunate to get one only at the completion of my tenure at SV. I have often wondered if the school management were a little too optimistic and old fashioned in their beliefs. They believed in laying foundations and letting Lord build the rest. Even in those days needs were aplenty and a prayer was said for each one of it. When I think of it now I believe there is someone out there who is an answer to every one of those prayers uttered from a child's

mouth.

A few years ago when I started my career as a lecturer, it seemed almost impossible to make both ends meet. When asked then if I could make a contribution to the school, I would have shied away. Today, I will hold back no more. Someone long ago was the answer to my prayer and God forbid that I should withhold such a pleasure to a kid out there praying. This is not having a dig at your purse. I believe those of you who have heard the financial state of the school cannot plead ignorance. The school is really hard up for cash; the ever growing strength of students requires more infrastructures. Students are not as fortunate as before, Compassion India is focusing on sponsoring students

in North India and our students who are usually from the South are losing out precious sponsorship support.

These are hard times and I am with those of you who are out of a job, beginning their careers or burning the midnight oil just to make both ends

meet. But those of us who are more fortunate are accountable. We could do more than just a prayer for the situation for we could be part of the solution. Ours is a proud and honorable institution, it's a cause worth fighting for. Help our Alma Mater in the way you think is right. Let us be worthy of our institution's motto "Saved to Serve".

"Let us be worthy of our institution's motto "Saved to Serve"."

Peter Solomon is a Food Engineer teaching Food Technology at Karunya Institute of Technology. Peter enjoys working with the latest Food processing Technologies and Techniques. He reads books when possible, his latest being the Screentape Letters by C. S. Lewis.



Down Memory Lane

Let the Games begin!

Who didn't want to be an athlete? Heck we all did! We wanted to run like the wind and get fancy 'water bottle' trophies or some other shiny thing at the end of the day. We didn't mind not getting the certificate then, for what could you do with that when we were less than 4 feet tall?

Sports Day was such a hot hot day. The sky was always clear and sunny, and every one's energy just pumped up the audible excitement over the funnel shaped loud speaker. The gleaming smiles bounced off the sun and glared down on the school games ground, dazzling the whites of our thrice-washed shoes and sun-ironed pinafore dresses. The fresh blue ribbons in our tight-plaited hair flirted with the hot summer breeze, as the sound of the drummers and trumpeters tuning their instruments wafted over the ground towards our unquiet feet that pranced like unsettled horses in the stables, eager to get on with the march past.

The low murmur of the boys, intermingled with the giggles of the girls interrupted the warm afternoon here and there with a sudden hush, as a teacher passed by with a stern warning or two until the chief guest dawned on the eager and action-hungry crowd.

A sudden but obvious hush settles. The only sounds are of the vibrant coloured flags flapping in the strong wind and our blood rushing with adrenaline in our own ears, as the chief guest walks in led by the Guard of Honour party.

As the band gives its signal, the pupil president hollers instructions to the student houses. School! Forward march! And the ends of the earth resound with the march of an army of more than five hundred feet, let loose by that single command. The rest of the march is near perfection. The March Past is followed by lighting the Olympic Torch. The torch-bearer's breath is heard in the silence as he sprints around the ground and the fire is lit at the giant pot after which we murmur the pledge trying

to look all so nonchalant.

With the march past done with, we jog in unison with the jogging tune and then Kaboom! we are everywhere at once, scurrying to ready ourselves for other performances like the mass drill and folk dance and the likes. All we ever thought of during that time was "Am I doing it perfect? Did I go wrong?" Who knew, I'd wonder if I will ever do anything with that much enthusiasm in the future or if I will drag my feet for all the other 100 metres races for the rest of my life.

Knowing that parents and friends' parents and other visitors from the nearby Dohnavur Fellowship, were watching our every move with eagerness, we lived that moment only to execute our dances and performances with the uttermost perfection! Midway through the Sports Day, we'd stop caring if our uniforms got dirty or if our faces were a mess, we'd sit on the ground and focus on leading our teams to victory and screaming our lungs out. The students from Day-1 in school were separated into Brand, Walker or Ragland Houses to which our allegiance lay until Day-Last. Some enemies we made on these days, remain enemies even today, or at least when the subject of Houses is broached. Such was the fervour and commitment



continued...

to our houses, partly why we still stay loyal to our other commitments today. I'd bet some reading this would wonder why I wrote the names of the houses in the order I wrote them. Well, I am from the Brand House, and so naturally...

The flags of each house would fly at different heights representing the house's points tally. Simple traditions of the institution. And as they rose above each other along with the over-

'The flags of each house would fly at different heights representing the house's points tally.'

all points, we would smirk at those who talked too well of their houses in our presence.

Don't they say, 'Save the best for last'? Well, SV sure knew how to do that part best. The Fancy Dress Competition was the highlight of the long tiring day. In the looming shadows of the dusk, we craned our small necks over the broad shoulders of our House mates and tried to get a good glimpse of the actor.

When all the guessing and screaming and was over and done and the applause override the end of the programme, came the prize-giving time, which was extremely excruciating in every way. Those who won would wait with bated breath to receive their prizes, wondering if they should shake hands with the chief guest or lift their trophy like they conquered

the games, or like in the movies. The rest of the audience, meanwhile, would wait for the overall trophy in painful anxiety channeling their excitement through applauding the other winners. When the overall trophy is announced to the House, the leader runs up the stage to receive it and waves it around with pride amid thunderous roars of the Roman crowd.



The National Anthem is sung and the faint rays of the sun give room for sincere patriotism as we sing aloud the song while the torch is still glowing strong.

In the closing darkness, after the dismissal, each one feels a quiet victory and defeat despite the great day and a pang of sadness that bites like the evening chill. The day is over and done. We know we'll have to wait another year to roam the grounds with the same enthusiasm and fanfare with imaginary confetti blowing in the wind, but feel content that those memories will last a little longer, while on the daily visit to the ground during games time.



Karen finished her schooling in 2001 and now works as a sub-editor with the Times of India, Bangalore. She is contemplating taking up painting lessons, since like most people on the planet she is finding her job quite boring. Right now she is rummaging through her music collection to fish out old Michael Jackson tapes to listen to.

Musings on a Monday....

GeddaGedda.....

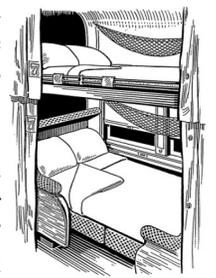
"Gedda...Gedda...Gedda.", the giant roared in my fantasy dream. Shaken up by the sound I opened my eyes to find myself shifted from fantasy to reality. It was the usual wake-up call. As the tube lights came back to life, the usual *grrrr* sound continued to reverberate through the corridors of our little bunk city till the last lazy soul was out of bed. I looked up straining my eyes to catch a glimpse of the white clock on the tall stone pillar. It was 5:00 am. Oh how I wished the day would never dawn. Sleep was the best thing in the world, my own little haven where I had the power to travel to the farthest corners of the earth and bring alive all the comic characters that I was so fond of. This was my way of connecting to my parents, enjoy-

ing the precious moments that we had spent during the small summer vacation. Two months with them every year was barely enough to even know them. It was an involuntary sacrifice, and I had to face it.

I pulled the sheets over my ears to get two minutes of extra sleep. But then the sound of a loud whack on the metal bunk, loud enough to shatter the dream of any sleeping beauty, drove every bit of laziness away. It was time to get up, the most dreaded time of the day. While the wakeup call on the other days of the week could vaguely be tolerated, Mondays was the most difficult. I sluggishly got off the bed, spread the sheets and staggered half asleep to continue my dream. Only this time the pillow was replaced by my large blue 'trunk petti' (Box) in

the box room.

Sleep lovers always found ways to evade the watchful eyes of the invigilators. While some secretly crawled to the dark corners underneath the bunks, few others rushed to the toilet to continue their sleep in the dark confines of the not-so-friendly space. Nothing seemed to deter the desire to sleep, not even the smell emanating from the surroundings. Sleep was indeed sweet! I faintly remember a time when some students climbed the rooftop of the box room and found a place facing the open sky— the most secure place to sleep and avoid being caught. But there was no place in our little world that was secure enough to evade the eyes of our watchful warden.



There were days of scary surprises when some were caught red-handed as our clever warden tiptoed bare footed, with his 'lungi' tied up revealing the strong calf muscles and wielding a powerful red flashlight that seemed more like a light-house as it beamed its light into areas hidden by the tube lights.

Reasoning and judgment were dominated by fear. It was the fear of being punished that prevented me from doing the things that I shouldn't. How I wished I had the liberty to do the things I liked, walk the way I wanted and dress the way I wished.

continued...

"Twas bitter, but I can say with confidence that every single correction I despised then, I strive to develop now.

Power of Pandam:

As the pump partners took their turns to guzzle out gallons of water there were the bullies who appeared on the

"The tears and the pain
Is surely not in vain"

scene unmindful of the others. A scuffle would erupt and the mighty always won – survival of the fittest. For those who weren't powerful enough there was a way to avoid the queue and have the first place.

That was the power of Pandam (tuck, eatables).

The most ludicrous way to woo the strong was to preserve the 'Second Saturday' delicacies and offer them as bait to secure their favour. Being in close friendship with a guy from the North-East was always an advantage. Pandam could do a lot more than just a quick bath, it can help wash clothes, press uniforms, get you comic books and even write your chemistry notes from the little paper circulated among the students. With parents so far away and no relations close by, I remember the times I sulked in gloom wishing I could get a bite of the Cadburys chocolate or the sugar studded cream biscuits. Deep in my heart, I blamed my missionary parents for not having enough money to get me what I wanted. Is this all my missionary parents had to offer me? Why should my parents sacrifice me against my will?

Today as I sit back in my lawn, reaping the fruits of their labour and reflecting those days, everything that I considered bitter has turned out to be sweet.

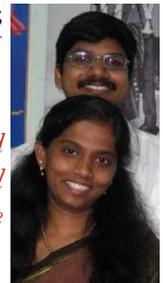
*"The tears and the pain
Is surely not in vain"*



Studies apart, there is so much that SV has taught me, and the most striking of all is the self-discipline. Though I learnt it the hard way, I am thankful to my teachers who instilled this in the early years of my life.

Life throws up so many distractions and sometimes it's so hard to concentrate on the things that matter. At SV the journey was a no-frills flight. Just the essentials. Less baggage. This training from my early years has put me in good stead as I navigate perilous waters today.

As the years roll by, every time I see the clock hit 5:00 am, I shall be reminded of the words Gedda.....gedda....They will continue to remind me of Proverbs 24:33,34 "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man". Thank you SV for this invaluable lesson!



Sol is a Physiotherapist (Neurology) in Florida, USA, where he lives with his wife, Evangeline. Sol's new found zeal for administration has driven him to pursue an MBA there. His dream is to establish a chain of model Rehabilitation Centers that is totally self sufficient, catering to the upliftment of the Physically Challenged across the globe. His all time favorite book is 'Why Revival Tarries' by Leonard Ravenhill.



Centre-fold....

Go Tell it on the Mountain...

Daniel Balasingh

[A view of the Western Ghats as seen from school.]

[Picture by Capt. Vinod Paul]

A great many years of our lives have been painted against the backdrop of this magnificent vista. Countless evenings have been spent, especially Sunday evenings, in looking up at the mountains, imagining the dark forbidding forests, or in watching the periodic forest fires or in singing the song, "Go tell it on the mountains.." during the Christmas Season "Sunday Sing Songs".

One-day picnics (especially those on Jan 15th or 26th) usually meant a meandering trek through the Tiger Reserve, with a bit of bathing in the streams or a spot of impatient fishing. The fishing began properly with hooks but ended up with the age-old towel method. And who can forget the periodic marathon runs, run right along the base of the mountains, stopping now and then to chew on some wild gooseberries. Or the Wild Sunday afternoon (till late night) cycle rides to Waithuparai. Kids staying behind for Christmas were taken to stay at Naraikadu, an unforgettable experience of trekking through tiger grass or wading through mountain streams. The crystal clear waters of Thirukurungudi still runs clear and clean through our minds.

Many of us have left school with a lingering love for the mountains and many periodically return to the mountains, where ever they are, for rejuvenation. Even now, when I close my eyes, I remember the towering grey mountains with the banana fronds waving gracefully in the foreground. As the bible says, "I look up to the hills, from whence does my help come" (Psalm 121.1).

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



Juan Roman Riquelme

That fateful day Oct 25th 1997, Maradona, the Boca Juniors Idol and the Football God of Argentina gets ready for the derby against River Plate (Boca's arch rivals). After a poor start Boca are 1 goal down at half-time. Maradona, far from his energetic and lively self is clearly not having a good game. At half time Maradona gets substituted. Little did he know that this would be his last professional match of his career. Maradona leaves the field as an 18 year-old on his senior debut for Boca Juniors takes the field.

This youngster goes on to run the show in the second half. Boca comes back and wins the game 2 - 1 as the debutant dictates terms. Little did the world know that this substitution was history in the making. The event passed on in obscurity, but this was the moment of the gods. As one god of football leaves the stage the other enters. That debutant was one Juan Roman Riquelme. The Bombonera (home ground to the Boca Juniors) danced to Riquelme's tunes for the next 5 years.

Somebody said "Riquelme's geometry is the reason I love football". And what a character the best football of this generation has to come packaged in. I like the character of the man as much as I like his game. He is one of them players who neatly divide opinions. There are some who think he is luxury. There are some who think he is outdated. I think his indifference to keep up with today's footballing fads makes him divisive. The offense of his game is that he plays it on his own terms. In today's world where success is glorified and winning is everything, he comes as a breath of fresh air. He plays football for football's sake. He is, I believe, the last of the art-for-art's-sake players. In today's world where pundits try to spot patterns and get their highs giving them



names, he is an outlier.

Usually phrases like 'slide rule pass' and 'tight angle goal' follow good football. But there is one brand of football (which Riquelme plays) that cannot be explained in measures of time and space. Riquelme defies time and space. Riquelme refuses to be constrained to the fad of the day. When we talk of bursts and runs - he plays with pauses. You talk of taking on the defenders - his passes leave them -awestruck. You say you have to beat the defender to the goal-mouth - he scores from dead-balls. We talk of injecting pace - he

slows the game with his touch. Sometimes the modern football vocabulary is so stunted to talk of the man and his game.

Time and again people have criticized his disappearance from big games. So great was his impact that an off day is the talk of the town. Defeats have been blamed on the man, sometimes undeservedly. We've almost come to imagine that when Riquelme plays, there's just one man against the opponent. Riquelme, a very sensitive character, is easily put off and can be man marked out of the game. This only reinforces the

"Riquelme's geometry is the reason I love football"

legend that geniuses are difficult people. People complain that when Riquelme is off color, it is difficult to form a new team with fresh strategies. This makes him a man who defies categorization. He cannot be filled in by anybody else. Very rarely have we come across such talent. Imagine the trouble the current World Cup squad is in evidenced by their recent poor run in the WC qualifiers.

Another reason that sets him apart from the others is his unconventional relationship with the media. He's not your smile-for-the-camera star. His expression through most games are melancholy. He does not wear the latest hair style, rather he wears his hair in a boring pudding-bowl style crop. He's not the 'beachside bungalow' types. In Villarreal, while most of the players stayed in beachside villas with gardens and pools,

Riquelme stayed in an inner city apartment. What a contrast from the character (Maradona) that he had to replace in Argentine football.

Well, the game has moved on, and the true No.10 is almost extinct. I was hoping that Roman Riquelme would go on to dazzle the world with his game in the 2010 world cup. I can

Steve (Stephen Jothiraj) passed out of school in 2000 (The Millennium Batch). He works as a market researcher in Bangalore. He supports Arsenal Football Club and is a believer in old-school football. He reads non-fiction and likes to write on topics that are close to his heart.



My Top 5 Songs ever..

Daniel Ponraj

Jukebox



This is my most loved topic and I should not have any trouble writing on this. But I would not take this as lightly as it would seem, because the picture in my memory is just a little smudged. And will take some digging into the dirt, because I have hid the memories of SV, not wanting to take the hurt with the fun. Nevertheless I will do it because I am beginning to deal with the past. I have decided that I will rate the best ever of the 5 eras of my life, and by doing that I would actually be looking at the 5 most loved songs. Let me begin,

#1 – I'll Fly Away

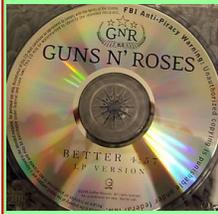
I can still hear the song play in my head, "Some bright morning, when this life is over", on the grand old record player. I was just 5 years old and I was getting to terms with the sudden change in my life. I was uprooted from the safe haven of my parents' and planted in a dormitory. And this song played every morning. I woke up to the music and for some strange reason this was sweet to me, I loved it. There is no other music apart from the songs in the gramophone record player that I remember in the first 3 years of my life at school. The lyrics meant little to me, neither does it now, but the music rings in my soul.

#2 – Joyful Joyful –

And then I moved on to the school choir. This was another lease of life and a temporary release from the captivity of being in boarding school. As we were preparing for Christmas and the choir was choosing its list, Edison sir came up with this song "Joyful Joyful" saying that it was a very tough song and much practice was needed. The very first time I heard it I loved it. We sang in 2 parts at the Christmas function, as the second presentation. I loved the music and the rhythm. Other memories that come with this song is the sheer pleasure of singing next to the girls. At the Christmas function they were dressed in their very best. The Christmas celebration lifted my mood and I felt so romantic. Of the more ecstatic moments of my school life, the singing of the song and the Christmas season feeling is the best.

#3 – "Welcome to the Jungle" – Guns and Roses

This was the period of my life when I was opening up to the world of music. I was in class VII and moving into the senior boys dormitory was like being set free in the music world. Suddenly we were listening to music by Guns and Roses, Bon Jovi and Scorpion. There were quite a few favorites at that time, "Bed of roses" and "heaven isn't too far away" being special. But nothing could beat "Welcome to the jungle". We used to miss our breakfast to be there to listen to the song. Memories associated with this song is that we had two gangs in our batch. One gang was seen as "Bon Jovi" fans and the other "Gun n Roses" fans. But it was more than just that, we had enmity in our hearts. We were probably influenced by the Nicky Cruz movie, I don't know. If there is something I regret about the last four years of my time in SV, it is clearly the lost love. What a waste of time, I wish we could go back and live the days again, do away the gangs and make friends again.



#4 – "Where Did you Sleep Last Night" – Nirvana

And then I moved on to 11th and 12th and then college. Those were the days where I lost my innocence. All through those 5 years, I loved Nirvana. That band is probably the most listened to in my entire life. I idolized Kurt Cobain. My only ambition then was to go and visit his grave. He was the world's greatest genius. I listened to an endless world of music, from Michael Learns to Rock to trash metal, from alternative music to country, from instrumental music like the sitar of Pandit Ravi Shankar to Led Zeppelin. You name it and I was listening to it. But by no far stretch of imagine, I loved Nirvana the best. I had every single collection of theirs. I got unreleased albums from the west. I had very expensive posters of Nirvana and the band. I had it hung in every part of my room and closet. I was gone mad. I imitated his hair style and his guitar, his clothes, his music, his attitude. Name it. I would die for him, not even my girlfriend. But in all of that madness I could not imagine why he had to die? Why did he do drugs? I could not connect with him in the level of his erratic life. Well I had spent all my pocket money in buying the custom made guitar. Of all my favorites with Nirvana, I have been possibly most drawn to Kurt Cobain by the song "Where did you sleep last night", one of my all time top 5 favorite songs.

"I can still hear the song play in my head, "Some bright morning, when this life is over"..

#5 – "King of Glory" – Third Day

This period of my life is from 1999 to 2009. I had just graduated from Madras Christian College and I was not at peace with my life. The Lord healed me or I would have committed suicide. In 1999, the Lord healed my spirit and that year I was called to his ministry. And dramatically I took a different route to life and music. Let me explain this very clearly, that I did not take a different route because Nirvana was bad music, my taste for music just changed. I continued to listen to Nirvana, alternative music and I still do, but because of the nature of my work and life, I consciously changed tracks. I was looking for wild music that was Christian. I came into contact with DC talk, and then Darlene Z., then Rebecca St James, Michael W. Smith and Chris Tomlin. Looking for something more alternative, I got into Casting Crowns, Planetshakers, Jeremy Camp, Delirious, Jars of Clay and of course Third Day. And I was stuck to Third day. Today, I find satisfaction and calm in today's Christian alternative music. I prefer them over the crazy life of my youth. I might be in some way be shielding myself from the pain of my youth by keeping away the memories that the "Nirvana kind of music" brings. By unanimous choice "King of Glory" by Third day is amongst the Top5 all time favorites.



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For comments and feedback write to
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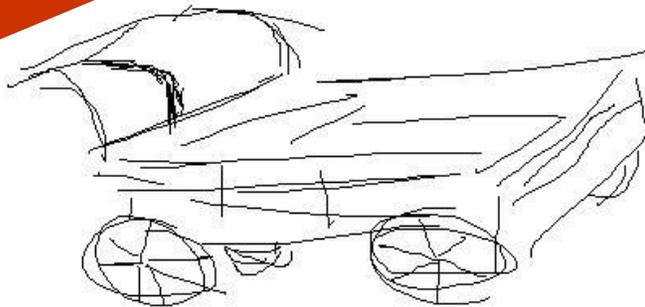
Today, of all the music that I actually listen to, Santali Folk songs, the kind that is sung in church, is most often. I sing it and enjoy it. The top 5 songs I have listed are treasures in my heart that conceal fond memories. I want to conclude by quoting the famous quote "Why should the devil have all the good music?" All music is good and God given. But Christians have given the best music to the devil and his friends. We have to use it to fulfill two purposes, for pleasure and praise of God. Music is medicine to the soul and it can bring glory to God, think about it?

Quotes from Great Writers,
"I had to interrupt my Education to go to School."

- George Bernard Shaw

Daniel Ponraj passed out from SV in 1993 after completing his Std. 10. Daniel had been interested in music from his childhood. After singing in the SV Choir, he went on to dazzle the MCC crowd with his distinct grunge style of singing with his band Simpleton. For the last ten years he has been working as a missionary among the Santal tribe. He makes his home with his wife Asangla and 3 kids (Jeremiah, Deborah, Elizabeth) in Maadbupur, Jharkhand.

Grffiti



**Through rain and Sun, giggles and fun
Upon stone and weed, in blistering speed
With sound blaring from the open lids
Carrying the hopes of a bunch of kids
Taking chances with amateur driving
Never complaining about a bad turning
From Sugarcanes to Rice
And a million other compromise
Withstood the test, of time and rust
The Oscar goes to an obscure Hero**

- THE KITCHEN BANDI -

A tribute to the one of the oldest serving members of the SV transport system.

George Raj passed out of SV in the year 2000. He is the resident humour editor and is on the verge of joining the country's premium energy institute - TERI, Delhi. He is passionate about Environmental Studies and Enterprise.