

## Hope for Change

On the 23rd of February, the USIBC, an organisation that aims at coordinating and regulating business relationships between the U.S and India, visited Shanti Bhavan. This visit was brought about due to their interest in encouraging education on a global scale.

Among the guests were senior executives like the CEO of Goldman Sachs(Asia) and the principal of Ryan International, Delhi, the CEO of the Clinton Foundation and the head of AT&T Asia.

The eight guests were at Shanti Bhavan for about four hours. They attended the school assembly in which the news of the day was presented by the students.

One of the guests humorously

commented, “The news being given by the children is far better than in the Indian newspapers,” as he had not been able to read the paper that morning in his hurry to arrive at the school on time.

After the presentation of the news, the guests were entertained to a traditional folk dance of the state of Tamil Nadu, performed by the girls of grades six, seven and eight. The school choir followed next with two songs i.e., one in Tamil and the other in English.

After the children’s performances, the guests were given the opportunity to interact with the entire school. Starting from introducing themselves, they spoke about the various careers that they are in and what made them interested to get into those fields.

After a hearty lunch, students Vijay, Praveen and Shilpa escorted the visitors on a tour around the campus.

Shortly after they met with volunteers and the senior most students of the school who will be graduating in June.

“They asked us about our aspira-

Dear Friends,

We, the ninth graders, have worked as a team to successfully complete this newsletter.

In this issue we have written about the various events that have taken place during this semester; the most important being the 10th and 12th graders doing their Board Exams. The 12th graders will be graduating in June. We wish them the very best for their future endeavors.

We were grieved to hear about the demise of our volunteer friend, Neil Chamberlain. We send our condolences to his family and friends as we keep him in our prayers and memories.

**- The Editors**



The guests meet the whole school at assembly

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tion and aims in life. It was useful getting their feedback on the various careers we want to venture into,” says Vinay of grade twelve.

This visit provided the guests an opportunity to learn about the school’s mission to give children from socially and economically deprived backgrounds

the opportunity to be well educated. This would help them break through the barriers of social oppression and emerge as the future leaders of tomorrow.

**-Gowtham, 11th Grade**

## 1st Batch to Graduate in June : The Big Step Ahead !

With only a few days left for graduation, the 12th graders who joined Shanti Bhavan at the age of four are caught in an inescapable emotional web as the days draw nearer to leave the place which has been not just merely a center of education but also a home for them.

“I grew up in this place which I have always considered as a home away from home. The thought of leaving Shanti Bhavan and the people I know so well like the back of my hand is unbearable,” says Bina, when asked how she feels about leaving.

Her classmate, Stella, remarks, “I don’t have any siblings nor did I have caring parents. But when I joined Shanti Bhavan I had a huge supportive family. While growing up here, I have built strong relationships with people. These are the bonds that I will always value throughout my life.”

On the 11th of April, four students who have taken the science stream for their eleventh and twelfth

grades attended the nation wide IIT JEE test.

When asked how he fared in the exam, Thomas answers with creativity, “It was like a smooth tar road. At points there were bumps on the road, and at times huge boulders blocked my way. In the middle an accident took place. But I successfully managed to complete the journey on the road.”

A week later, these same students sat for the entrance tests seeking admis-

sion to the Vellore Institute of Technology.

While these few students have been rapt in preparing for these exams, their classmates, Viji, Rajini and Maha have been nose-deep in attending tuition for the CLAET (the law entrance exam) in Bangalore. They are preparing for examinations which will happen on the 9th of May.

The whole examination process was captured on reel by film maker Madeleine, who is a director and her hired cameramen, Mike and Nathan and editor, Greg.

Nathan Drillot is a film director and cinematographer who owns a producing company in Vancouver, Canada. Speaking about his time at Shanti Bhavan, he says, “I just try to be there



**Nathan**

Mrs. Ruth who has been working at the school from the very beginning is still struggling to come to terms with the reality that the children she brought up from the age of four are today’s young, talented teenagers, who are all ready to go into the world and bid their fortunes.

“I still remember the first day they came to Shanti Bhavan. They didn’t even know how to hold a spoon or read a book. Today, they are smart and capable boys and girls who have the power to make a difference in this world. This makes me proud,” Mrs. Ruth says tearfully.

The graduation ceremony is to take place on the 6th of June. Ex-volunteers, well-wishers, friends and family members of Dr. Abraham George, the 12th grader’s family members, the students of fifth and above, and the staff are going to attend this ceremony which will be hosted in honor of the graduating batch.

We wish the twelfth graders the very best in all that they do in their lives. Everybody is cheering for them from the sidelines.

- Arun, 11th Grade

**Mrs. Law taking English class for the 12th graders who were then in the sixth grade in this snapshot**



on the right time when the students are doing something important.”

The purpose of this film is to shine light on the exam process and show how children’s futures are to be shaped according to their performance in these exams.

As time is fleeing for the 12th graders who are to leave Shanti Bhavan to go to college, they are not the only ones who are going through an emotional phase.

## The Unexpected Departure

On the 7th of April, after a dinner of nan and chicken curry, the students, staff, volunteers, members of the facility department and the cleaning staff gathered at the assembly hall to bid farewell to school principal Mrs. Lalita Law.

Mrs. Law has been the principal of this institution for the past thirteen years. From the founding of the school to its present state she had been there to support its vision and carry out its various endeavors.

As CEO of the George Foundation, Mr, Jude Devdas says,

“Mrs. Law has been like a mother who nourished the school from its inception with love, dedication and commitment,” Mrs. Law has always given her time, energy and heart to building the institution’s mission and disciplining the students to follow the right path.

Having been away from her family in order to tend to the demanding needs of the school, Mrs. Law felt it was time to return to her family which she had placed in second preference to Shanti Bhavan. Feeling the weight of family commitments and obligations heavy upon her shoulders, she felt it was time to bid farewell to the institution she had painstakingly raised from its foundation.

On a final note while speaking to the children, she emphasized on the importance of honesty in one’s life and growing up to be virtuous human beings. She said, “As your principal teacher, I would like to share one last

lesson with you. The lesson is about truth and integrity. Truth is practicing honesty. It is better to speak up and be open than hide things.”

While referring to the graduating batch which was her first set of students she taught when Shanti Bhavan was started, she said, “My hope is that you will graduate with honor. Let no

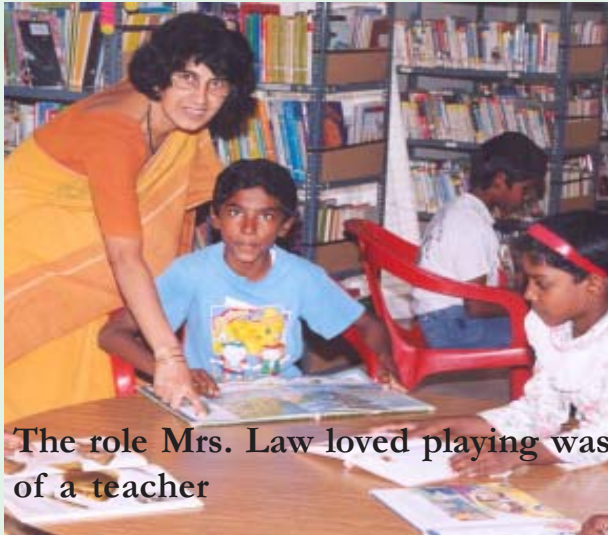
one buy your souls.”

“Mrs. Law was more than just a teacher for all of us. She was like our mother. I always looked forward to her classes as she took them with so much of involvement. It’s painful to

lose a beautiful person like her. But where ever we will go, we’ll carry the values and teachings that she has imparted to us,” says 12th grader Sindhu.

In appreciation of Mrs. Law’s tremendous contribution and commitment to the founding and creation of Shanti Bhavan during the first thirteen years of the institution, Dr. George announced that the assembly hall which is the focal point of the school is to be dedicated in her name as - Lalita Law Assembly Hall.

**-Nivya,10th grade**



**The role Mrs. Law loved playing was of a teacher**

## Learning to ‘Scratch’

Scratch was introduced to me by Dr. Barny, a professor from Australia. Scratch is software that allows the users to program and animate using basic programming techniques to create projects of the user’s choice. Though I was not so good at working on the computer, Scratch was surprisingly easy and fun to work with.

I got better at Scratch as I worked with my classmate on animating a children’s story for the students of first and second grade.



**Preetha drew a picture of Dr. Barny teaching her Scratch**

Unfortunately, we had frequent power cuts which interfered with our work. Dr. Barny had announced that he would be selecting some of the best Scratch projects to present to the whole school at assembly. This got us really serious and focused on giving our best shot at the project. But we had a big problem.

On the eve before the day of the presentation, we lost our project due to the power cuts. We were very disappointed. But Dr. Barny who did not give up on us, helped us finish the first page of the book.

On Friday during assembly we presented whatever we managed to complete despite the shortcomings. This whole experience taught me a valuable lesson that I should never give up on something that I set my mind upon achieving and to press the save button frequently.

**-Preetha, 7th Grade**

## Shanti Bhavan Inspires British Author

Ms. Caroline Seebolm, a freelance writer and author of fiction and non-fiction, spent a month at Shanti Bhavan taking writing workshops and English classes for the higher grades. She has written and published around eleven books of fiction and non-fiction. Here she talks about her unforgettable experience at Shanti Bhavan.

**1. Why did you want to volunteer at Shanti Bhavan?**

Ans. I have for a long time wanted to do something like this with children. Writing is a very isolated profession and I wanted to go into the world while I still can. I had twice visited India and fallen in love with the country. So Shanti Bhavan seemed an ideal opportunity for me.

**2. How did you find your experience at Shanti Bhavan?**

Ans. The children were utterly beguiling. The school is the product of an extraordinary vision. Teaching here was an unforgettable experience. I have taught in Trenton, New Jersey. But this was entirely different.

**3. What was the best part of your experience at Shanti Bhavan?**

Ans. Relating to and gaining the trust of the students and feeling their curiosity and enthusiasm for writing. I loved the teachers who were very welcoming. They work incredibly hard and form the backbone of the school. And outside classes I have loved walking in the beautiful gardens.

**4. After having been here and seen the work being done, do you believe that the students have the potential to go places?**

Ans. Absolutely. The training here is very rigorous. Their English is superb. Their commitment to education will take them anywhere they want to go.

**5. Has Shanti Bhavan inspired you in any way?**

Ans. Yes. To see children taken from terrible backgrounds and flourish in this environment is enough to make anyone feel that there is goodness in this world.

**6. Do you wish to return some day?**

Ans. I would love to come back. I don't know when, but I would even come on a visit to just say hello to the children.



## Third in Line

Being the third batch of students to attend the Board exams, the 10th graders had a lot on their plate. With two batches of seniors who had already done the exams, there was a great deal of competition to make a record of their own.

“I was really nervous in the beginning but after attending the exams I found it was not so bad as we all had feared. I think I have done well,” says Praveen confidently.



The 10th graders are all smiles after walking out of the examination hall

Their exams got over on the 2nd of April. Now that the exams are over, the 10th graders are indulging themselves in taking part in community services.

Priscilla says with a smile “It was a stressful experience and I'm glad it's

finally over.” They are nervously anticipating their results which will be released in the month of May. “We hope they do exceedingly well, better than their seniors,” says Vice-principal, Miss. Beena Nair.

- Tara, 11th grade

## The Big Day on the Field

*The Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGCC) with Mr. Hubert as its head organised a soccer tournament between the various companies of IGCC. This tournament took place on the 24th of January at Shanti Bhavan. Recalling the event, students talk about their experience of taking part in the soccer match, cheerleading and entertaining the guests to a small play for which they had practiced hard.*



“It was damn tough. After playing soccer on an international sized field all these years, I thought it was uneconomical to play small scale.

On the small pitch which was seventy feet long and thirty feet broad, all the shots had to be controlled. Accuracy of the shots had to improve a million times to keep the ball in play and not out of bound.

All the passes were short, fast and tight. The scope of dribbling was very limited. The endurance of the body also had to be high. We had to be on the run to make and receive passes. We did not have the luxury of eleven players.

We had only five, with one as the goal keeper, two defenders and two forwards, all working to score and save goals. We needed sudden bursts of energy because five on five matches tired us.

But this experience made me realize the importance of team work and cooperation. I also realized that I needed

to pay attention to improve my skills in order to display better performance. This type of playing soccer was certainly not in our comfort zones”, says Manikantan of the 11th grade who was on the school’s winning team.

His classmate, Lilly Mary, who has built her reputation as a gifted sportswoman, adds, “I was the first pick on the school team. Being a girl did not arrest my confidence. The short pitch restricted our passes. But short and quick passes proved their

worth.”

She was one of the players of the yellow team, which won the semi-finals but didn’t make it in the finals.

As the players were caught in their games, the cheerleaders were engrossed in boosting the team’s spirit towards winning. Their chants of, “Go team, go” and “we like to dribble, dribble...”, was enough to make the players feel that they had to win.

An 8th grader, Aishwarya who participated in cheerleading, certainly had a good time. She says, “I enjoyed being one of the cheerleaders. It was our first time at cheerleading and it was great fun. Maura was very encouraging as we tried new steps and overcame our shyness. At the end of the day, I realized that even cheerleading needs practice.”

While their seniors were battling for victory on the field, the students of grades five and below were entertaining

the young children who had come along with parents to spend their day at Shanti Bhavan, with a cultural programme.

Dressed in their animal costumes of tigers, lions and others as Peter Pan and Wendy, the children captured the attention of the audience who comprised of young boys and girls who had accompanied their parents who were either participating in the soccer tournament or just visiting the school.

When asked how the companies had felt about the event, Mr. Hubert replied, “Their reaction was very positive. The whole day was a great success. They were highly impressed by your involvement and dedication of the school. Next time we expect to have better competition between the companies.”

As the day came to an end, everyone was left feeling that something worth while had been accomplished.



-Pavithra, 12th Grade

## This Semester's Volunteers

With the start of a new semester, we have had another row of volunteers amidst us at Shanti Bhavan. As usual the volunteers bring with them priceless talents and skills in various educational and recreational fields.

For instance, volunteer-coordinator, Maura Marquez, a drama therapist and

### Our current set of volunteers



certified yoga instructor was taking yoga classes for grades five and above.

“Through yoga I help the children to become comfortable with not just their bodies but with their mind and heart,” she says.

From teaching subjects like Math, English, and Computers to taking music and theatre classes, the volunteers spread their time, talents and energy around the school and in different aspects.

They not only bring with them their varied skills but also impart priceless knowledge from the history of their countries to information about the human body.

“Another part of Shanti Bhavan which we will miss is getting to meet people from different parts of the world and being inspired by them. They are great role models for us,” says Mani of grade twelve who will be shortly graduating in the month of June.

We really appreciate all that the volunteers do to contribute in their own special ways to enriching the quality of education for us.

**-Gayathri, 8th Grade**

## When I grow up, I want to become a .....

When I grow up I want to become a doctor. I need to be a doctor to help many people. I want to destroy germs so people will not get sick. I have to learn the parts of human body, plants and animals. We learn a little in second grade but we have to be more serious when we grow up.



**- Adhavan, 2nd Grade**

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**The talented class- the 9th graders**