



# SALT Camp

## An enthralling experience

Akshay Jose, IX A

“From curses to praises”—that is what comes to the minds of those who were a part of the SALT camp conducted by the Jesuits at Wayanad. The camp lived up to its motto: “A fire that kindles other fires.”

The moment we got off the bus in the interior of Wayanad, we thought this was not going to do any good. The camp house was a summerhouse in what seemed the middle of a jungle. We reached there by 6 in the morning. Once we unpacked and got settled in our rooms, the first thing we searched for was the television because the T20 series was going on!

No, we were not content with the place. But as soon as the campers from other schools came, we were sure this was going to be fun.

Sure enough, as the camp activities began, we felt really lucky to be there and pitied our friends who were at home whiling away the vacation. The camp started with the lighting of the lamp and this fire in our hearts burned throughout. In order to encourage teamwork, we were divided into four groups. Maybe, it was to mix up the campers who were inseparable. With different games and competitions, the days that followed became more lively. Our creative skills got a boost when we got an opportunity to design and bringout a newspaper.

Most of the classes were conducted outdoors, and this brought us close to Nature. The classes, especially those on leadership, friendship, stress and emotions were very interesting and helpful in



moulding our personalities.

All of us were game for most of the activities. We weren't just concentrating on emotional or mental side alone. Our physical side was taken care of as well. We had exercises like *Suryanamaskar* and *Pranayama* in the mornings. And we discovered that the food was really good.

The greatest benefit of the camp was the strengthening of our friendship. No wonder, now it is hard to keep track of the e-mails and messages.

As part of the camp activities we went trekking at the Kurumbalakkota hills, and visited the Soochippara waterfalls and the Edakkal caves.

Towards the end of the camp we got our personality evaluated by others. The most enjoyable night of all was the Campfire Night. The campfire presented a moment of anxiety too because one who danced in a frenzy around the fire nearly got singed when his towel caught fire. But in no time we turned firemen and saved the situation!

Well, the days went by like minutes and we enjoyed every moment of it. It was then that we learned that happy moments pass with more velocity than sad ones. On the day of parting, it felt like it was only the previous day we had landed there. We all welcome another chance for such a camp because it lived up to its motto: “A fire that kindles other fires.” We are the living proof, aren't we?

*Towards the end of the camp we got our personality evaluated by others.*



The Government of India's Leave Travel Concession scheme came as a blessing in disguise to me as it was through this scheme that I was able to visit some of the most beautiful places in India – Darjeeling and Sikkim. It was a memorable journey which was a treat to the eyes and a pleasure to the soul.

Darjeeling, which unfolded before my eyes, was entirely different from the extravagant hill-station which I had imagined it to be. The narrow serpentine roads, houses which could better be called huts and people who had Nepali and not Hindi as their mother-tongue were a picture of contrast to me. But the beauty and serenity of the place was a trillion times better than I had ever imagined. If I had to give a tag line to this place, it would be, "Flowers, flowers – everywhere"!

Buddhism is the popular religion in these places. We visited a number of Buddhist monasteries like Kalimpo and Nygmapa.

## An enchanting scenic splendour



The monks, the intricate artwork, and the Buddhist rituals reminded me of the popular film *Yoddha*.

Another unforgettable journey was the one to the Tiger Hills to witness the sunrise. The flood of colours thrown out by the rising sun was a phenomenon in itself which no painter could reproduce. The rays from the rising sun that lit up the Kanchenjunga ranges brought back the nostalgic memories of my Geography classes.

We visited the museum and the Himalayan Institute of Mountaineering. Its collection includes the equipment and dresses used by the first conquerors of the Himalayas – Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. The model on display revealed to us the vastness and greatness of the Himalayas.

While we were in Darjeeling we witnessed a demonstration demanding for a separate state called Gorkhaland. They were worried about the Bengal Government's neglect of this remote hill station. The people are very poor, educationally backward and their main vocation is military service or driving. I have never seen people so skilled in driving. In general, the people are very energetic, enthusiastic and they always have a smiling face.

After three days of stay in Darjeeling, we left for Gangtok in Sikkim. Throughout this journey, we were accompanied by the meandering river – "Teesta". In contrast to Darjeeling, Gangtok presented the look of a comparatively affluent city with better roads, buildings, and gardens. In Sikkim, we visited a number of gardens, monasteries and museums. Our visit to the Nathula pass was very amazing and the most memorable one. We started our journey early in the morning. We saw a Chinese bazaar where traders from China are allowed to sell their products. We saw several beautiful lakes. One of them is

called India Lake because when seen from a particular point it resembles the map of India. Another is the Hathi Lake since it resembles an elephant.

As we went higher and higher, the woollen clothes seemed to be insufficient and we felt chilled to the bone. Now we came to the Harbhajan Singh Mandir which gave us the most amazing experience of our tour. This Mandir, more than



13,000 feet above sea level, is sure to instil patriotic fervour in every Indian. The whole area overlooks China and it is under military control for security reasons.

Harbhajan Singh was a soldier who died during the Indo-China war of 1969. He died in a helicopter crash and his body could not be found. The Malayali Javans were eager to share the story of this great man with us. According to the story, he appeared in the dreams of his fellow soldiers and told them correctly from where his body could be recovered. The temple was built on what was actually his bunker. Even now, the soldiers believe that he protects them. All the rituals in this temple are performed by the soldiers themselves. We could see his diary, pen and bed. The bed sheet is changed every day. Some days they see creases on the bedspread and they believe that his soul is still with them, protecting them from danger.

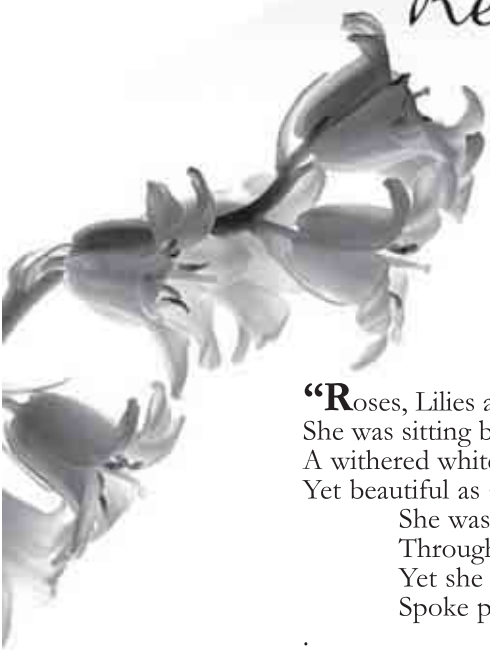
Thus our seven-day-journey was an experience for a lifetime. It gave me an insight into the rich and varied culture that India has. It taught me many things. I enjoyed myself and at the same time learned "*Mera Bharat Mahan*".

Mrs. Nandini V.G.





## Red roses and white lilies



Arjun Shajan, XI A

**"Roses, Lilies and Jasmines"**, cried she.  
She was sitting by the temple,  
A withered white lily;  
Yet beautiful as a red- red rose.  
She was selling flowers; and,  
Through tear-filled eyes, peering out;  
Yet she was calm; and her face  
Spoke peace as much as a white lily

The tears wanted to rush out,  
But she would not cry  
No, definitely not,  
She was too proud.  
Look at her eyes – and no heart,  
Not even a stony heart  
Could bear it  
The pain in those eyes.

I looked at her  
And felt emotions which I knew not.  
I wanted to do something –  
I was helpless.

I went towards her;  
She cried "Please, sir –  
This beautiful red rose –  
Just one rupee."

I fished out a coin;  
She gave me the flower –  
A red-red Rose –  
Beautiful as she.

I turned and walked:  
Never pausing, never hesitating,  
To look at that withered white lily  
Who gave me the red rose.

Tijo L. Peter, XII D

## Thank Goodness for Ignatius!

**I** walked in here for something  
I always hoped to find it there  
And here I'm gratified with the  
Supreme discovery of self  
I shall remember the walks through,  
The not-often empty corridor  
The LA fests, the youth festivals,  
The assemblies and the excursions...  
Oh! I hate to remember the fact,  
That these are not going to last long  
For I will soon disappear into the  
Long-winding corridor of life  
I do kneel before him,  
The great saint, Ignatius of Loyola  
Without whom, none of this would have been.



Anantha Padmanabhan V.V., XII B



## A different Christmas celebration



Christmas for most of us would mean Santa Claus, shopping, gifts, feasts. But it can be so different for the sick, the aged, the poor, the disabled, and the neglected sections of the society. For them Christmas holds no special delight.

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2009 as part of the Christmas celebrations students of class XII B & D at the behest of our Principal, decided to spend some time with the convalescing patient-inmates of *Sadbana*, Monvila. After enquiries with the Father in

charge, we learned about the immediate requirements of this charity centre. A few of us accompanied Fr. Toby and bought an electric food processor, a few bags of rice, and an assortment of articles like bathing soap, detergents, biscuits and soft-drinks. We went there by the school bus and spent some time talking to them, and also sharing the biscuits and soft-drinks with them. Some of us sang songs and they too came forward with extremely coherent speeches and quite melodious songs, showing no sign of nervousness. The educative experience we had there is great. We had thought that Christmas was all about getting gifts, but we realized that no joy can equal that of giving and sharing.



## A JOURNEY THROUGH SOLITUDE

The statue of St. Francis of Assisi showering his blessings caught our eyes as we, the students of IX A, alighted from the bus before the beautiful old age home, christened, *Assisi Niketan*. And yes, *Assisi Niketan* is a great blessing for the old and destitute inmates there. However, in contrast to the fashionable buildings around, it radiates a charm with its simplicity. . . .

It all began when our class teacher Ms Sindhu Sharma decided to raise some money for charity. The students generously contributed to this noble cause and we could collect a sizeable amount of money. We decided to make use of the collection to help the hapless ones at the *Assisi Niketan*. Sr. Shaly welcomed us and gratefully accepted our modest gift of money. She introduced us to the inmates. The next one

hour was an emotional journey through the lonely lives of the inmates.

The inmates shared with us their memories and experiences in their voyage through life. Some talked about their family; some about

their present life there; some enquired about us; and some declined to speak. A few of them just broke down as they relived their past. The emotional scenes brought tears to our eyes.

Most of them had their own bitter experiences to share with us. We were particularly touched by Lorenzia's story. She had objected to the ways of her indifferent daughter-in-law, but her own son supported his wife and welcomed the idea of his mother leaving for the old age home. Later, we sang songs and presented mimicry to the inmates, and our efforts brought smiles on their faces. At the end of it, we said goodbye to them. One hour of interaction with the inmates enlightened us on the harsh realities of life and every human being's craving for love.

As we bid farewell to them, we caught a last glimpse of their faces that reminded us of Shakespeare's lines:

*Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and more oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*

We seal this chapter with the hope that humans shall turn more humane.





Aditya Nair S.B., XI C

riverside quays. Next on the list was the famous Orchard road. This road has all the major shopping malls like the Takashimaya Mall which sells all major brands in clothing and accessories. Although things were expensive, we could at least do some window shopping and admire the beauty of this mall.

Singapore has a rich ethnic diversity of Malay, Chinese and Tamils who constitute the major portion of the population. One fascinating thing was that most of the chauffeurs were Tamils and so they were helpful to the Indians. The cuisine of Singapore reflects the ethnic diversity of the place. Most of the food preferred by

tourists is from roadside hawkers rather than from restaurants. Another fascinating thing I noticed was that the hawkers knew how to prepare all sorts of dishes. The night life of Singapore is one which has to be experienced. By the end of our visit to Singapore, we prayed to God because our trip was so smooth without any weather interruptions and it was like a dream.

There is a saying: "If you haven't seen the U.S.A, you haven't seen the world." But I would say, "If you haven't seen Singapore, you haven't seen the world." Not that I've seen the U.S. Yet I will stick with this saying.

After a busy month of preparation and another month of taking the 10<sup>th</sup> Board exams, my father gave me the surprise of my lifetime. He had planned a five-day holiday to Singapore and I waited eagerly for the day to come. The day, 20 May 2009 finally arrived and we boarded the Silk Air flight from Trivandrum International Airport to Singapore. The flight duration was around 4 hours and the plane touched down at the Changi Airport which is regarded as one of the best airports in the world. Upon arrival, our travel agent took us to our hotel, Holiday Inn Atrium. It is one of the most magnificent buildings I have ever seen. The whole building was made of glass and it has 25 floors of which our room was on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. The view from my room was breathtaking.

That morning we were free and in the evening we went for the night Safari. Singapore has embraced the concept of keeping wild animals in enclosures separating them from the visitors by moats rather than caging them. The Singapore zoo is famous because it has animals of different species from all over the world. We went in a tram in which I listened to a live commentary on animals seen on the sides. The one peculiarity of this safari was that all the animals were seen in their natural habitat. Next day we went to Sentosa Island, which is a small island located to the south of Singapore. It attracts more than five million tourists every year. Cable cars are the most preferred means of travel from Singapore to Sentosa Island. The cable cars travel at an astounding height. The laser show, the dolphin park and the Jurong bird park are among the best in the world. Jurong bird park has a flock of 1000 flamingos. The other major attraction of this park is the penguin world and the owls. After sunset we returned to our hotel after a day of real good enjoyment. We woke up early next day because it was the day set aside for our city tour. We went to 'Merlion' which is considered as a symbolic monument of Singapore. Merlion is a statue half lion and half mermaid which has water coming from its mouth. Next we went to the Clarke Quay and Boat Quay. Both of them are historical

## Unique Singapore

## Lost Thought

Akhil P., XI C

The Earth is round  
When you travel around  
We're going to meet somewhere  
That sounds fair

Lots of fun we had  
It wasn't so bad  
Never going to forget  
That's a sure bet

As the time goes by  
And the birds do fly  
There is nothing much to do  
For me and for you.

With my friends long gone  
There's just this song  
And there's the memories  
That bring a chilly breeze.



# The Solitary Martian Lass

Manu Mohan P., X C

Behold her, single on the mount,  
Yon solitary Martian Lass!  
Standing stretching an arm,  
Who knows? Let it pass?  
What she does over there,  
Why or how she's there?  
Oh look! For all mankind,  
Is overflowing with your news!  
How amazing you are!  
Or are you even there?  
Like that face, should you be false?  
How do you do without water-blue?  
O<sub>2</sub>-Is it needed by you?  
Could we be wrong-boohoo!  
'Bout the necessities of life  
Or the list longer than thought?

Will no one tell me what you are?  
Perhaps the extraterrestrial eve be-  
A proof of Martian life,  
Statue by Martian colony,  
Memorial by some aliens,  
Another life form from another planet,  
Or just a plain rock?  
That has been and maybe again.  
Whatever it is, that maiden-be,  
Was in the minds of many.  
Gave some spooks,  
Who knows why it offers  
Sleepless nights for people,  
By scares or study means.  
The news has died down,  
But it remains in hearts.

On 24 January 2008, there was a piece of sensational news about a woman-like figure on Mars. People everywhere went on discussing it till NASA recognised it as a huge rock. But NASA's scientific explanation could not stifle Manu Mohan's poetic sensibility, probably because Wordsworth's *Solitary Reaper* provided him with a perfect framework to fit in his fancy!



## Life on Earth

Aakash Vijayan, XI D

There was a time when  
Life was beautiful and blissful  
When the earth was inhabited  
By a modest few millions  
Now people wish they hadn't been born.  
Melting ice caps and scorching heat  
Vanishing rivers and rising seas  
Have made our life a bed of thorns.  
Man sees or knows nothing  
But he claims to know everything  
And brings doom upon himself.  
The epitome of cruelty and folly,  
He runs for fame and personal gain.  
When will he realize his mistakes  
And pay for his follies?

Sachin Sahuji, X B

Her mind is full of light,  
And her face is very bright,  
She is clad in pure white,  
And she is a beautiful sight.  
This little white pigeon,  
Helps everyone in the region,  
To get back to health,  
Without any greed for wealth.  
She leads a dedicated life,  
To keep the sick alive,  
And to keep them full of light,  
She does everything for them right.  
All throughout the day,  
From home she's far away,  
Helping the sick at hand,  
And she's known throughout the land.  
So, even if she passes away today,  
Her deeds won't ever pass away,  
But to us they'll do good,  
And will make us do good that we should.





Sam John Abraham, X C

# Global financial crisis: A lesson for India

Today, the world is trying desperately to climb out of a deep dark canyon, one that was made due to the inefficiency and carelessness of a few people, but that dragged into itself, the lifetime savings of millions of people all around the world. Though the current recession did not turn into a depression as it did in 1929, according to many experts, it was a very close shave. As Paul Krugman put it, “We have just stopped short of the abyss.” In this context, the million dollar question is, ‘What can be done to prevent it?’ But before we try to answer that, we must look at the genesis of this problem.



*To save the ailing banks, the Bush administration authorized a \$700 billion bailout plan. This was followed by a \$900 billion bailout by the Obama administration. Although all these measures were helpful in slowing the downward spiral, it didn't do much in the way of recovery.*

The history of market in the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows that it has always been a struggle between regulation and deregulation. But in 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union, it was considered that deregulation was best for the market and that too much regulation would stagnate growth. Subscribing to this view, India too followed suit and formulated the New Economic Policy which called for greater deregulation of the market. But in their quest to deregulate the market, the nations of the world forgot Nature's rule that “too much of a good thing is a bad thing”. In the end MDs and CEOs were left to play with their investors' money without any governmental restriction – 21<sup>st</sup> century version of Nero fiddling while Rome burnt.

Though they didn't know it yet, major banks like Barclays and Citibank had sown the seeds of the current recession when they started ‘Financial Supermarkets’ towards the late 1990s. In this setup, the conditions for giving loans were greatly relaxed and as a result loans were given left and right, even to those who didn't deserve it. Majority of the loans were mortgage loans and thus their value was pegged to the value of their borrower's home. Thus, when the housing bubble in the U.S. burst in August 2008, it created a dominant effect, leading to the fall (or the near-death) of major and minor banks throughout the world. Banking mammoths like Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch failed, driving the Wall Street stock exchange to a new low. This led to the failure of other companies that depended on these banks. Even the world's largest insurer, AIG failed. This led to the complete rout of the American financial system and led to serious rethinking among the governments and administrators.

To save the ailing banks, the Bush administration authorized a \$700 billion bailout plan. This was followed by a \$900 billion bailout by the Obama administration. Although all these measures were helpful in slowing the downward spiral, it didn't do much in the way of recovery. The recovery from the current crisis appears to be long and hard. Consumer