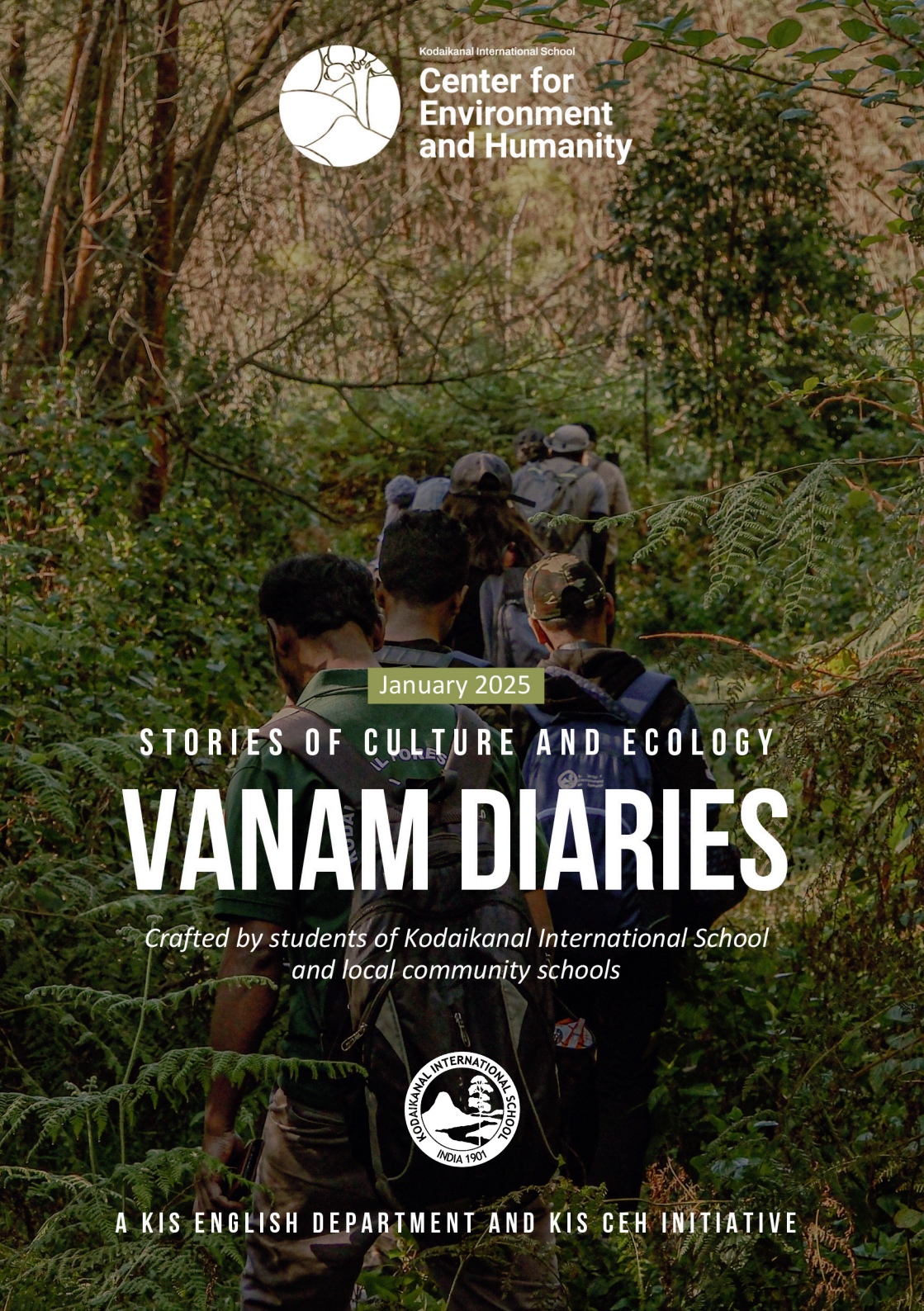


Kodaikanal International School

Center for Environment and Humanity

January 2025

STORIES OF CULTURE AND ECOLOGY

VANAM DIARIES

Crafted by students of Kodaikanal International School and local community schools

KODAIKANAL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL INDIA 1901

A KIS ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AND KIS CEH INITIATIVE

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Table of CONTENTS

1. **Susikumar vs. Climate Change**
   by Angad, Raya, and Adil — Page 7

2. **Kodaikanal's Junior Naturalists**
   by Kritika, Sameera, and Viktoriia — Page 13

3. **Discovering Vinayagar in the Classroom**
   by Danikaa and Htet — Page 19

4. **Bricks and Tricks**
   by Aarna, Thae and Fia — Page 23

5. **Dorm to Dump**
   by Andy, Amy, and Maahi — Page 29

6. **Celebrating Green Businesses of Kodaikanal**
   by Yaksheta, Kuldeep and Arwa — Page 33

7. **Dear Diary**
   by Hannah, Saw, and Devarakkshithaa — Page 47

8. **Ganeshan Anna the Farmer**
   by Sai Avaneesha and Tejeswini — Page 51

9. **The Struggle of Climate Change Migrants in Kodaikanal**
   by Preethi and Anusha — Page 55

10. **A Tree Walk on Highclerc Campus**
    by Preity — Page 63

11. **JNAN Student Poetry**
    by JNAN students — Page 71



SUSIKUMAR VS. CLIMATE CHANGE

By Angad, Raya and Adil
Grade 9 and 12

When I first met Mr. Susikumar on his farm, I wouldn't have known the challenges he faces in his day-to-day life. He represents a happy man. In our interaction, I sensed that he was brave, confident, positive, and healthy. But as he unpacked the complexities of making ends meet to provide for his family and build security, it became clear that climate change has affected him. Susikumar's day job is to manage the supply and transport of fresh produce from farms to wholesale dealers. However, he also owns a small plot of land where he pursues his passion for agriculture.

Having farmed for 15 years on this small plot of land and with his day job in the same industry, he has a lot of personal experiences to share on how climate change has impacted farmers. He has noticed the weather change year after year, forcing him to adjust. "The weather used to be much cooler, and by now, the monsoon season should've started," says Susikumar.

His story is not unique; like him, most farmers in Kodaikanal rely on conventional farming practices to make a profit and cope with the challenges of a changing climate. Farmers are businessmen.

How does a business run? Let's take a pen, for example. If I want to produce and sell pens to make a profit, I first have to purchase my materials and inputs by taking a business loan. I buy the plastic, the ink, the manufacturing building, and hire the labour. After production, I can market and sell the product and pay back the loans once I've made a profit.



Lucky for a pen manufacturer, the quality of the final product, the pens, are almost completely under their control; natural elements like rain, sun, soil, and pests don't impact them. These forces of nature are what make farmers the most vulnerable industry to climate change.

The only thing under their control is what they put in the soil, so they heavily rely on chemical fertilizers and pesticides because of its quick returns. They understand that it harms the land, but they have no choice. Small-scale farming today is like a goldfish stuck in a plastic bag.

In Susikumar's case, this has reflected on the crops he's growing. Kodaikanal has always been famous for its potato cultivation, and nowadays, because of intense rainfall in short periods, the soil composition has changed.

Susikumar says, "Because of too much moisture, my potatoes rot. The only way to deal with this is with large amounts of fungicide. My options are to either continue growing potatoes with a lot of chemicals and money spent, or find alternative crops. But changing the crops comes with huge risks. I have to learn new techniques and management practices for different crops like beans, cabbage, carrots, and beetroots."

It's a lot of pressure to make these decisions, especially when you have no control over the natural environment.

Just like Susikumar, we have learned that farmers all over Kodaikanal—and likely all over the world—are facing the same problems. In August of 2024, a group of students from NYU worked with the KIS Center for Environment and Humanity to gather data on the impact of climate change on farming practices in Kodaikanal.

They found that 85% of farmers have noticed an increase in diseases and pests over the past 25 years. To tackle this, just like Susikumar, they have to increase pesticide use or introduce new crops. Other challenges include

crop failure due to a weak monsoon, water shortages, and soil erosion. New crops like flat beans are more resistant to drought and have quickly become a favorite among farmers in Kodaikanal.

While these flat beans sound like a great alternative, this strategy of changing crops can lead to a snowball effect. In the case of flat beans, a new pest was introduced to Kodaikanal that is now affecting other crops. This pest is called whitefly. This situation is like farmers trying to patch a crumbling dam with band-aids. It might work for some time, but soon the pressure builds and risks affecting everyone.

Susikumar cannot work alone. As the climate changes, farmers find “fixes” for these challenges, but without an end-to-end holistic approach, short term solutions cause more damage. Susikumar has gone through a lot over the past 15 years. The one thing that farmers can do that is within their control is to form alliances and work together. For example, they can pool resources for organic inputs such as cow dung, share livestock, gather and share microclimate data, and work with farmer producer organizations to receive subsidies to transition to organic farming.

We, the people, can support farmers by buying local organic produce. Conscious consumerism is the idea that individuals can have a major impact on the world around them by choosing where their money goes. Choosing to support sustainable businesses and organic farmers creates a positive feedback loop that incentivizes sustainable practices. Second, we should use our voices to spread awareness and share stories like Susikumar’s so that people are no longer disconnected from climate change. Everyone must know about the tangible, on-ground challenges facing their own communities.





KODAIKANAL'S JUNIOR NATURALISTS

By Kritika, Sameera and Viktoriia
Grade 11

The children we have had the opportunity to interview have led difficult lives. However, their curiosity and thirst for knowledge still flourishes. This is only encouraged by their positions in the KIS Center for Environment and Humanity Junior Naturalist Action Network (JNAN). JNAN is a programme for the school children of the Palani Hills. It aims to educate students about biodiversity, eco-literacy, and the importance of the forests of Kodaikanal. We got to interview four students in the programme – Yazhini, Akhilan, Joshua, and Santosh.

While interviewing Yazhini, we discovered that she migrated to the rolling green hills of Kodaikanal from Madurai. The vast forests around her village made her curious. Her parents never let her explore the forests herself, on account of her being a girl; they were concerned for her safety. However, when she joined JNAN, she was given the golden opportunity to visit these forests which she had always been interested in. This would prove to be highly beneficial for not only herself but also for the community beyond, because of her campaigns, which were impactful in protecting the environment.

Asking about what first attracted Akhilan to Kodai's rich natural history, we got to know that it was actually his own backyard, which was filled with birds and animals. He talks about Kodai being a wildlife sanctuary, and is an eager student who wants to know all about it. However, his family couldn't provide him with any of this knowledge, as they had no background or information on the topic themselves. JNAN was a brilliant opportunity for him to learn about

the wildlife he could see in his backyard. He managed to learn a lot about Kodai's natural history and resources. The topic he was initially interested in was the wildlife of Kodai, but eventually JNAN taught him about the past of plants and different invasive species, as well as the history of the hill station itself.

As a tenth-grade student in Kodai, Joshua told us that he is incredibly busy throughout the week. As a result, he reserves Saturdays for JNAN work. He learnt that Kodai was a bird paradise. Seeing these birds everywhere and learning about them through JNAN made him interested in birdwatching. He was intrigued by the stream-dwelling Malabar Whistling Thrush (*Myophonus horsfieldii*), also called the Whistling Schoolboy. As such, he was delighted to discover two of them in his backyard, near a stream that flowed past his home. Every Saturday, he goes to keep the birds' habitat healthy, and cleans the stream. Initially, his mother was worried that he would fall into the fast-flowing stream, but after explaining what he was doing, she started helping him in his work as well. Both before and after joining JNAN, Joshua's dream career has been to become an IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officer. There is one thing Joshua is most interested in – water bodies and related ecosystems, largely due to his own experiences living by a stream, and learning about it over the past year.

Santosh told us that he has created citizen bird watching programmes – he conducts guided walks for other local students in the community. The local community considers Kodai as a tourist destination; they don't consider the implications of the crowds of tourists on the environment. However, Santosh would like to change that, with the help of an institution like KIS CEH and programs like JNAN. He would like to bring awareness of the topic to the community. The most interesting thing Santosh says he learnt at JNAN is all the information about birds and birding/birdwatching. Santosh also wants to teach what he learns at JNAN to the general community.



Yazhini was motivated to take part in JNAN when she learned about the importance of kodai as "an island in the sky". She was inspired by a researcher, Dr. Robin V Vijayan of IISER Tirupati, who performed DNA sequencing on a bird called the Palani Solaikili, and discovered that this bird in Kodai was a new subspecies. This brought about an interest in birding for Yazhini. She later became motivated in campaigning for the environment after an incident when a bison died because of ingesting plastic. Due to this, she decided to start door-to-door campaigning to save the animals from such plastic pollution. Thus, with some of her friends, she started a movement to go to each house and campaign for a Clean Kodai.

At first, her friends were a bit discouraging. They got tired of hearing her talk about nature all the time. However, her family, especially her mother, have been nothing but encouraging. Calling her a bold girl, her parents motivate her to continue her mission daily. Her main goal is to achieve a Clean Kodaikanal. First, she says, the change should happen in the home.

She herself motivated her mother and brother to start segregating waste between compost, trash, and recyclable waste. Now, once every three days, she goes to a friend or relative's house to help them segregate their waste appropriately. The most interesting thing she's learnt at JNAN, she says, is about the landscapes of Kodai.

Akhilan is a second-year student at JNAN, and started a project he likes to call the Plantation Club. On the premise that Kodai has a lot of non-native or alien trees, and doesn't attract any biodiversity, he formed this club. Native trees are homes to many organisms. Thus he goes to different houses and explains the value of native trees and how to plant and take care of them. He provides these homes with saplings from CEH. He also made 'tree cards,' like ID cards, that provide details about when and where it was planted. He also gets monthly photos and updates from all these houses through WhatsApp, which prove that these trees are indeed getting taken care of. His goal is to plant a minimum of fifty trees and house them with responsible citizens. Through JNAN, he learnt many details about nature, but what he considers most interesting is the knowledge he gained about grasslands.

Before joining JNAN, these students had very different outlooks and dream jobs. Yazhini wanted to be a pediatrician. Akhilan wanted to be a doctor. After the initial experience at JNAN, though, Yazhini wants to get into the fields related to agriculture or farming, and wants to promote integrated farming systems, dissuading people from using pesticides that can harm the human health and the environment. Through the knowledge she gained at JNAN, Yazhini wants to help get other people basic information about the environment. She thinks people should incorporate activism into their lives and help spread the word to everyone. Akhilan now wants to be a wildlife photographer, and live harmoniously with nature. Through JNAN, he learned how to observe and find beauty in his surroundings. He is grateful to KIS CEH for the opportunity it provided for him to be able to learn a lot about wildlife by being able to visit forests with other members of the JNAN program.

Joshua considers the traveling experience and information he obtained his most valuable takeaway from the programme – before JNAN, he used to think the Malabar Whistling Thrush was a kind of crow. After joining, he started to see every bird in a new light and a different view. Santosh is most grateful to JNAN because it taught him to identify and appreciate the connections between everything. The marshlands connect to the stream, and the stream then to people; non-living intrinsically connected to living. He also learnt to respect everyone and everything.

Hearing them talk passionately about their dreams shows how much of an impact JNAN has had on them; looking at their drive and determination, one can also see that they'll all be able to do anything they want to. The four dream big and want more — for themselves, for the environment, for Kodai, and for the world.





DISCOVERING VINAYAGAR IN THE CLASSROOM

By Danikaa and Htet
Grade 9 and 10

Sitting in my classroom, I found my eyes fixed on the board as I scribbled notes in my notebook. Suddenly, a thunderous drumbeat echoed through the window, making my legs instinctively move to the rhythm and bringing to mind the interview I had that afternoon. My sketchy knowledge of Vinagayar Chaturthi would soon expand and I would come to gain a nuanced understanding of this ancient practice.

Vinagayar Chaturthi, a celebration of the elephant god Vinagayar, holds significant cultural importance, particularly amongst the ancient tribes living in the southern parts of India. It's a Hindu festival that does not follow the Gregorian calendar. It follows the Tamil Chithirai calendar created by Buddhists and Sikhs which starts on the Tamil New Year on the 14th of April.

The observance of Vinagayar Chaturthi has a great deal to do with the importance attached to elephants in India. Elephants are the center-piece of the forest, helping to sustain rich vegetation. They also form passageways for other animals by burrowing into the forest enabling denser growth that in turn facilitates growth and movement of other plants and animals. Clearly, there is an immense need to conserve these wonderful giants. Apart from being ecologically important, they are also worshiped and treated as gods in India. Nowhere is this more evident, than during the Vinayagar Chaturthi celebration in which Vinagayagar's idols are made and prayed to.

Interestingly, I learned of two local connections to this festival, namely Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon pers*) and the Butterfly Pea. With its

beautiful stems and quick spread, Bermuda grass is hardy, and is a great success in the valleys and farms around Kodaikanal. However, I didn't understand its true significance until I learned about Vinayagar Chaturthi and how it is used as an offering to Lord Ganesha. Bermuda grass is revered in many parts of Tamil Nadu, notably Kodaikanal, and is offered to Ganesha as a representation of perseverance, purity, and simplicity. The Butterfly Pea, or *Clitoria ternate*, is particularly symbolic and significant too. The vibrant blue and violet blossoms are given as offerings to Lord Vainayagar. The flower blooms on stalks and sprouts into petals. Its reputation for its hardiness reflects Ganesha's role as a barrier remover. Aside from its aesthetic and spiritual significance, the medical and therapeutic properties make it useful to the local tribesmen. From Ayurvedic medicines to heal digestive and ophthalmic issues to antidotes for snake bites, the plant represents the healing and protective qualities associated with Ganesha's blessings throughout this holy month.

Vinayagar Chaturthi is celebrated in various ways across different regions. The classification of areas into five types Kurunji (mountain), Mullai (forest), Marutham (cultivated land), Neithal (coastal land), and Palai (desert) affects how the festival is observed. Each region has unique traditions and customs that are followed during this time. A key concept associated with this festival is that of omnipresence, as Vinayagar is believed to be present everywhere.

Now, on any ordinary day, the distant sounds of thunder remind me of the drums of Vinayagar Chaturthi, a festival of gratitude for the beauty and richness of nature that surrounds us. Learning about this festival has opened my eyes to the interconnectedness of all things - animals, plants, people, and planet earth.





BRICKS AND TRICKS

By Aarna, Thae and Fia
Grade 11

There has been a growing trend toward natural materials in construction as a sustainable alternative. Shifting towards natural materials is vital as it improves our community's health and cuts down on carbon dioxide emissions. Yet, the benefits of these eco-friendly approaches are often overshadowed by the ever-developing modern construction methods even though the solutions to our environmental challenges are right in front of us, waiting to be noticed.

Recently, we, as the students of KIS, had the opportunity to take part in a research project conducted by a group of graduate students from the Centre for Alternative Technology. They came all the way from Wales to Kodaikanal to explore the use of lantana and straw as local materials for creating bricks. They collaborated with the KIS Center for Environment and Humanity to organise natural brick-making workshops to offer KIS students and local kids hands-on experience on innovative approaches to sustainable constructions.

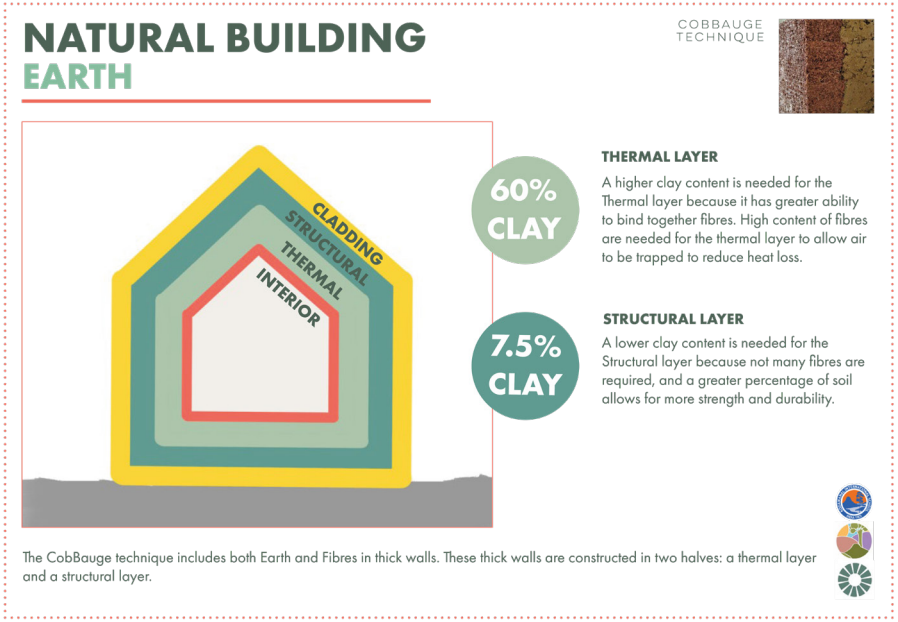
The project began with identifying suitable local materials for construction - clay, lantana and straw. Lantana is a well-known invasive species brought to India during colonial times. One of the things we learnt about Lantana was that it quickly outgrew its ornamental intention - it began dominating local ecosystems all across India, and poses a serious threat to local biomes. However, using lantana as natural building material has the potential to address all multiple approaches to sustainability. If these natural materials (which are considered waste) come into use, job opportunities will be created, thereby, boosting the local economy of Kodai. The widely accessible

natural building material is available and accessible at an affordable price for everyone in the community.

Some of us had the opportunity to participate in the research weeks before the CAT student group arrived. Our task was to identify a location in Kodaikanal with the right type of soil for brick production. This was a unique experience for us; we had never seen a construction site or the various layers of soil three metres deep. Using shovels, we dug into the ground, to scoop out the layers of soil like a rich chocolate cake. As compelling as it was, we were astonished to learn how these layers of soil embedded in the earth beneath our feet can be applied as an essential foundation for buildings.

As part of our study, we conducted a sedimentation analysis to explore the amount of sand, silt, clay, and rock in different local soils to understand how changes in the percentages of each component would affect the features of the bricks. Through this experiment, we found that sandy soils provided stability while soils with clay content enhanced plasticity and cohesion. Silt was also an important factor as it improved soil compaction and tightness. Overall, we were fascinated by the analysis showing how a balanced combination of different materials - clay, soil and fiber, have to come together to make bricks that serve different purposes.

In the workshop, we learned about properties of construction like strength and porosity, the different layers that make up a wall, and the types of materials that fulfil special requirements. We made two different types of bricks for two different purposes: thermal insulation and structural support. Light bricks, primarily used for thermal layers, consist of a higher proportion of lantana due to its ability to insulate. In such ways, using light bricks made out of plants' fibres, will help our homes warm during winter, especially in the chilly mornings of Kodaikanal. Heavy bricks, on the other hand, are used for structural purposes. In such bricks, the addition of fibre is reduced by 1.5-.05 times while the use of local soil was doubled.



This workshop was an amazing opportunity for us to connect with and understand how people can make a difference in the world around them through creativity and innovation. The most impressive part was that we got to see people just a few years ahead of us actually studying and pursuing fields that work on the basis of environmental action and awareness. Getting to see and experience the ideas of the CAT students first-hand has given us inspiration to think outside the box and take steps to be part of the solution. We've been shown that the easiest way to start is to act locally, learn, and participate wherever we can.


ICON STAR
No additives or preservatives



DORM TO DUMP

By Andy, Amy and Maahi
Grade 11

KIS is a school that prides itself on its natural beauty and its campus is designed to be environmentally conscious. Our school has worked hard to ensure that the students are aware of sustainable lifestyle practices and we are also taught to appreciate the beauty of it. However, one area where we observed room for growth is in waste management across the residential dormitories.

Our team visited the dorms to understand the waste cycle more clearly and listened to the students and staff who experienced it firsthand. Through these interactions, we learned that the system, while in place, needs to be taken seriously and requires stronger infrastructure and commitment from students and staff to ensure our waste patterns align with our values as a school.

We first went to the Bartlett campus where we interacted with students and staff in Bartlett East. We observed that the Ayah who comes to clean every day is practicing the segregation policy as instructed. However, it's evident that students are negligent, and after talking to residents of this dorm we learned that most students "aren't bothered" and that the session they received about segregation at the start of the year was "short and unfocused". Many were not bothered and didn't understand the importance of waste segregation.

On a positive note though, what we understood was that some students are more passionate and want to try. They believe that by being provided with more engaging information, change can happen. One student said, "If

we had some kind of point system or rewards for cleaning and segregating properly, I think more of us would actually follow the rules." A staff member added, "There's definitely been improvement over the years, especially in the younger dorms where the policies are stricter. But there's still a long way to go in terms of awareness."

Overall, from the interactions we had at the Bartlett campus we understood that while there is a proper waste management infrastructure, the lack of knowledge and awareness among students (especially those in the older grades) makes the system unused. Only if this is rectified, can we expect students' attitudes towards waste management to change for the better.

When we visited Wissy, we spoke to the dorm parent, who shared her thoughts on waste management. As we stood by the bins, she explained, "We have a good system here, and most students do their part, but it's not always easy. I remind them often about separating recyclables, organic waste, and non-recyclables, but some still get confused." She shared that although awareness and instructions are important, they're not always enough to create discipline. "I believe that adding consequences for students who ignore the need to separate their garbage could really make a difference. If there were actual consequences, it would remind them just how important waste management is."

She also believes that this is necessary for developing a genuinely waste-conscious dorm lifestyle. However, she does also recognize that many students are trying their best to stick by the guidelines. She wants to create a greater awareness of how students' behaviors impact the environment by holding them responsible through consequences. According to her, this strategy would guarantee that every resident of the dorm makes a beneficial contribution to the overall sustainability initiatives and improve the efficiency of the current waste separation system.



In conclusion, looking at all the dorms at KIS, the implementation of consequences and raising more overall awareness for the staff and the residents is a good step to take. After talking to dorm parents and the residents it comes to our knowledge that most of the students do not care enough about waste segregation or are not told to segregate their waste. Therefore a consequence implementation and a small session on why it's vital to segregate their waste is the step to take.



CELEBRATING GREEN BUSINESSES OF KODAIKANAL

By Yaksheta, Kuldeep and Arwa
Grade 11

A growing number of businesses are embracing sustainability, understanding that they can still succeed while making a real difference. Right here in Kodaikanal, we're proud to highlight three businesses that have woven eco-friendly practices into their daily operations, all while providing unforgettable experiences for locals and visitors alike. *Pastry Corner,* a cherished bakery, has been a part of the community for years. They're not just known for their mouthwatering treats but also for their dedication to using fresh, locally sourced ingredients. To tow the line, *Holiday Homes Resort*, a peaceful resort tucked away in nature, has taken sustainability earnestly, using eco-friendly energy solutions and practicing water conservation to ensure that every guest's stay is both relaxing and environmentally responsible. Finally, *Hotel Kodai International* has truly set the standard for eco-conscious hospitality in the region. From their energy-efficient infrastructure to their deep respect for local culture and traditions, they're proving that luxury and sustainability can go hand in hand.

Pastry Corner

Yaksheta, Grade 11

Kodaikanal has a tight-knit community, and Mr. Prasanna, the owner of Pastry Corner, is a cornerstone of this community. A former student of KIS, class of 1984, he decided to start his bakery soon after finishing school.Baking was a new passion for him—he began by baking bread and running a small home-delivery business. Though he never studied cooking formally or attended college, Mr. Prasanna taught himself through avid reading, gaining practical knowledge from books on business and culinary skills. With the support of his sister, he started baking and initially sold only one product: open-top bread. His small enterprise relied on local deliveries, including to nearby schools Presentation Convent, Bhavans, and Zion.

As Kodaikanal grew and attracted more tourists, Mr. Prasanna's bread was soon sold by multiple small shops around town. In 1991, his friend Harry Mathias, who ran the now-famous restaurant Tava, encouraged him to rent a shop in the bustling Seven Roads area. Though hesitant, Mr. Prasanna's friend insisted, even paying the landlord directly on his behalf. This shop ran from 1991 to 1993, until the landlord unexpectedly reclaimed it. Mr. Prasanna then secured a new space near Meenakshi, a popular grocery store, where Pastry Corner still operates today.

In 2000 the Spencer's grocery store opened opposite the municipal office, and Pastry Corner set up a small second branch there. This branch operated until Spencer's closure in August 2024. Over the years, Pastry Corner has expanded its menu from an initial 10 items to now offering 30, becoming a beloved spot for tourists and locals alike. Keeping prices low, Mr. Prasanna aims to ensure everyone can enjoy a small treat, like ice cream or an evening snack. Their most popular items include pan pizza, cream buns, and fruit ice creams. His former house now serves as the bakery's main production space.



Pastry Corner sources most of its dairy from Kodi Cheese and makes fruit preserves seasonally for use in their ice creams and pastries. With a team of around 27 employees working seven days a week, they wrap their goods in butter paper and use a dryer machine to keep biscuits crispy. During pear season, they make a preserve using sugar and lemon juice, producing about 3,000 kilograms in a 45-day handmade process. The goods are prepared each morning from 8 to 10, delivered to the store, and the shop opens at 10:30 am, closing around 5 pm.

Mr. Prasanna feels nostalgic about his once best-selling item, open-top bread, which now sells only about 15 loaves daily. Focused on the present, he hasn't planned much for the bakery's future. When they have unsold items at the end of the day, they often give them as complimentary additions to customer purchases. During the pandemic, he feared the bakery might close, but fortunately, it survived, much to his and his employees' relief. All of Pastry

Corner's employees were trained from scratch, with Mr. Prasanna especially dedicated to helping underprivileged individuals learn the trade.

Mr. Prasanna is a generous person who genuinely cares about the well-being of his employees, the Kodi community, and his business. He's made efforts to switch from plastic to baking paper and aluminium foil, and runs a nearly zero waste enterprise. He hopes KIS students will visit the bakery to enjoy items like pan pizza, sandwiches, and pastries, which he is particularly proud to offer.



Holiday Homes Resort

Kuldeep, Grade 11

Balancing sustainability with profitability may be one of the biggest ironies of our time. There is, however, someone in Kodaikanal who embodies this irony—an ace businessman with a deep passion for hospitality who also shares a commitment to conserving our ecosystems.

Priyank Pradeep is a fourth generation hotelier in Kodaikanal, and has been looking after Holiday Home Resort for 8-10 years now. He stands for a compelling case of why business must go the sustainable way. His hotel, deeply rooted in the community, has significantly reduced waste and other environmental impact – a responsibility he feels every business must assume. The entrepreneur believes in taking steps in the right direction, whether large or small, in whatever way possible, to take action for better waste management. He motivates himself to become sustainable by looking at the impacts of sheer exploitation of natural resources and litter all around us. The triggering point for him was when he visited the Kodaikanal dump yard.

The Kodaikanal landfill, also known as the Prakasapuram Dump, is located near Prakasapuram, 10 kilometres away from the town. The landfill is a whopping 3.77 acres and is easy to spot on Google Maps satellite view – where you can see a large grey mass of trash and smoke, surrounded by green forest. The landfill is a carcinogen to the town. The growing garbage heap is located on the edge of the Tiger Shola forest, and is an open dump, not a sanitary landfill. The waste is just burned, buried, or dumped, and it continues to grow and spread and causes toxins to spread in the air and water. It not only affects the wildlife and the forest but the people living downstream, due to soil and water contamination.

Priyank confides as he says "Visiting the dump was a major turning point for me to, you know, wake up". Over the past five years, Holiday Home Resort has made great strides in solid waste management.

Mr. Priyank realised that the biggest challenge to his vision of an eco-friendly business is in managing both degradable and non-degradable waste. While degradable waste could be composted or repurposed, non-degradable waste like plastics poses a significant environmental threat.

The town of Kodaikanal generates between 17 to 24 tonnes of garbage every single day (varies according to the flow of tourism), of which nearly 40% is wet waste. To treat all the biodegradable waste from his hotel, Mr. Priyank uses a pulverizer, which connects to the rest of the grey waste generated by the hotel. “Grey waste” is non-sewage wastewater that comes from sinks, showers, bathtubs, dishwashers, and washing machines. This helps Priyank reduce the pressure of having to segregate wet and dry waste at his sorting facility.

For the non-degradable waste, the hotel staff collect the waste from the hotel rooms and other common areas, and is brought to the dry-waste secondary sorting facility. Here, recoverables materials like paper, hard plastic, metal, glass, and cardboard are kept aside to be sent to the recycling industry. Only the remaining waste which is critically mixed or non-recyclable and non-degradable, is sent to the municipal dump.

Embracing sustainability is essential for the business, as it brings lasting environmental and economic advantages. For Priyank Pradeep, “… adopting sustainable practices like waste segregation and composting has helped reduce landfill contributions, lowered operational costs, and improved waste management efficiency.”

More and more tourists are seeking eco-friendly destinations, giving hotels that emphasize sustainability a strong foothold in the growing market of green-conscious travelers. This was true for Mr. Priyank’s hotel, which had already taken significant steps in preparation for the plastic bans implemented in Kodaikanal well in advance. By switching to reusable glass



bottles, the hotel not only drastically reduced bulky waste but also cut costs associated with frequent purchases of disposable bottles. Over time, the systems put in place allowed the staff to adapt and learn from these changes—what once felt like a challenge has now become a point of pride.

There's a lesson here: with proper planning, sustainability can integrate smoothly into daily operations. Priyank Pradeep introduced glass bottle stands to prevent breakage and avoid losses, though some sustainable practices are more challenging to replace. He acknowledges that transitioning to renewable energy sources, like solar, is a substantial undertaking.

Establishing power infrastructure in Kodaikanal is challenging, as eco-friendly energy options often come with high initial costs and uncertain returns. However, he remains undeterred, exploring alternatives like the Root Zone System for greywater reuse. This natural, low-energy wastewater treatment could soon support irrigation, helping the hotel genuinely reduce its carbon footprint without sacrificing efficiency.

The idea of multiple hotels jointly investing in a shared biogas plant is both promising and practical. If 5-6 hotels pooled their resources, they could offset high installation costs, making the system more accessible. In Kodaikanal's cold climate, where methane extraction is difficult, this joint investment could also fund technologies like heating elements to improve biogas efficiency. This approach would address the region's food waste by converting organic waste into energy, reducing environmental impact, and lowering waste disposal costs. It shows that, indeed, a single idea combined with passionate and collective action can drive meaningful change!

This plan can become effective only if there is strong communication and shared commitment among the hotels. Moreover, local government support in terms of subsidies or technical assistance would ease the initial hurdles. Generally speaking, it's a very feasible solution to sustainability, but it calls for unity and long-term planning by hotel owners to effectively come to life. As exemplified in Priyank's story, sustainability is not a fad; rather, it is a sensible and profitable way to approach business in an ever-changing world.



Hotel Kodai International

Arwa, Grade 11

Hotel Kodai International, located in the beautiful hill station of Kodaikanal, offers a mix of luxury and eco-friendly practices, providing comfort to many tourists.

What sets this hotel apart is not only its scenic location but also its strong commitment to safeguarding Kodaikanal's delicate ecosystem, renowned for its rich biodiversity. Under the leadership of Mr. Veeramanak, the revenue manager and head of sales and marketing, the hotel demonstrates how local hospitality can effectively combine sustainability with an exceptional guest experience.

Hotel Kodai International has made a name for itself not only as a family-friendly resort with numerous activities but also as a pioneer in eco-friendly practices. The resort is home to an abundance of birdlife, with guests waking up to the Nilgiri Flycatcher mingling with the soft trill of the Palani Laughingthrush, their melodies weaving through the mist like whispered secrets of the forest. The hotel has indoor and outdoor activities that encourage guests to appreciate the beauty of nature. However, it is the hotel's sustainable operations that truly set it apart.

One of the most notable initiatives at Hotel Kodai International is its rejection of single-use plastics. The hotel does not provide plastic water bottles for guests, encouraging them instead to bring their reusable bottles. Additionally, they use banana leaf packaging instead of plastic for their trending banana cake, which went viral on Instagram. They say that the banana packaging adds flavor and minimizes waste.

The hotel's sustainability efforts extend beyond waste reduction. Hotel Kodai International has two biogas stations on-site, with a third in progress,



allowing them to process organic waste efficiently. Used cooking oil is also sold to organizations for further processing into chemicals, minimizing wastage. The hotel's water supply is managed through its own wells, which are treated using UV and IV filtration systems, ensuring clean water without over-relying on municipal resources.

The hotel ensures that guests are aware of its environmental initiatives. Pamphlets placed in rooms and subtle adjustments, like reduced water pressure in wash basins, encourage guests to be mindful of their resource consumption. Energy-saving practices are emphasized, including the concept of "zoned lighting"—a Japanese practice of using lights only where necessary, illuminating specific areas rather than the entire room to save energy and avoid wastage.

In recent times, the hotel's focus on sustainability has even positively impacted its occupancy rates. With the installation of Kodaikanal's first electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, Hotel Kodai International has attracted eco-conscious travelers who appreciate the hotel's dedication to green practices.

Kodaikanal is a sanctuary for diverse wildlife and plant species, making it a hotspot for ecotourism. The hotel is aware of the impact that unchecked tourism can have on this fragile ecosystem and actively educates guests about the importance of preserving it. Rather than promoting overcrowded tourist spots, the hotel advises against visiting places where the environment may be harmed. They believe that the future of tourism in Kodaikanal hinges on sustainable practices that protect the region's natural resources.
Looking ahead, Veeramanak envisions a future where the local tourism industry prioritizes sustainability over mere revenue generation. He advocates for collaboration among business owners in the region, urging them to take responsibility for their waste and environmental impact. One of his more progressive ideas is the potential banning of homestays that do not follow sustainable practices, allowing established businesses that operate on revenue land to continue while ensuring that environmental policies are upheld.

Prasanna Ghosh, Priyank Pradeep, and Mr. Veeramanak are the torchbearers of a new age, where the meaning of entrepreneurship goes beyond profitability. It's about innovation, a sense of responsibility to place, and care for the natural world. The key to addressing the environmental challenges our planet faces lies in thinking globally and acting locally.





DEAR DIARY

By Hannah, Saw and Devarakkshithaa
Grade 10

Saturday, 19th September, 2024

Dear Diary,

My Saturday started with the sound of my alarm mocking me with its ticks and my friend's text blaring through my phone. I had planned to borrow a camera and binoculars from the KIS Center for Environment and Humanity for my bird walk. The excitement of my morning plan had me rushing out of the dorm when I saw my friends, Hannah and Saw, sitting under a tree near the KMU (which, by the way, I just learned stands for Kodai Missionary Union). They had been waiting for me – I felt bad for being late. A strong wave of joy washed over me when we saw Dr. Rajamanikam, who was waiting for us with 10 other local school kids. He then provided us with binoculars and the book Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.

I remember feeling a rush of dopamine as we left the school gate to start our little adventure - sightseeing birds. We saw our first backyard bird, the Palani Laughingthrush, near Bendy. This bird has an intricate design of orange and gray and a white eyebrow-like feature. I had seen this bird before, as they are common.

The morning air of Kodai was cold, but the walk made me feel warm. Near Bendy, we were also able to spot House Sparrows, Jungle Myna, and Crows - all un-shy birds, also known as human-associates, as they are able to live in densely human-populated areas. We left Bendy and walked towards the lake after greeting the security guard. The strong smell of breakfast being

prepared around the lake made my stomach grumble, and my friends laughed at me. Here, we saw macrophytes moving, which caught our attention since macrophytes are a type of algae plant. We grabbed our binoculars and looked for the plant, only to see a water hen hiding. These unique hens had beaks like ducks and legs like hens. They amazed me (Hannah had her mouth open because of her shock). Wetland birds are harder to spot than human-associated birds. Hannah had trouble taking a picture of the bird because the bird vanished underwater, seeking shelter from the macrophyte.

Failing to take a picture, we took an exhausting walk up the Consumption Ghat to Bombay Shola. The tiring uphill made it necessary to take a water break. Here we saw Miss Bhavana walking with her friends. We greeted her goodbye and left for the shola, where I used a professional camera to take a picture of a moth flaunting its beauty. The golden wings wrapped around her body like a skirt. This surprised me as the picture was clear, and I could see the confidence of the moth through the camera. In the shola, we spotted the Yellow Lored Tit, which had a spiky hair-like structure, mimicking the style of an angry bird. Next, we spotted the Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher. This bird was similar to the bird I had painted for my art assignment - the color contrast of gray and yellow made the bird pop out. Afterward, the Black Bulbul was an interesting little singing angel; its orange beak popping out of its darker body gave her a unique powerful expression. We were surprised by the abundance of birds spotted in the area. Later, the White-cheeked Barbet, Orange Minivet, and Oriental White-eye caught our eye. These were hard to spot as they are very small birds (I could only see them through my binoculars), but the local kids could spot them with their bare eyes. This impressed my friends and me.

Then, the Velvet-fronted Nuthatch grabbed our attention. This bird looked elegant, its majestic blue color complementing the yellow eyes, hopping sideways and upside down all along a tree trunk. This was the peak of our journey, the last bird we saw.

We ended the adventure with a car ride to school. I felt grateful to witness nature and notice the details that surround us…





GANESHAN ANNA THE FARMER

By Sai Avaneesha and Tejeswini
Grade 9

Farming sustains the people of Kodaikanal, including you and me. It provides the basic ingredients for a variety of cuisines and our favorite dishes, but the main reason is that our lives depend on farmers who tend to the land from which all our food comes. Farming requires both human effort and nature's role. Farmers cultivate various fruits and vegetables, and each landscape offers a unique environment suited to different crops. Agriculture has been part of our culture for generations. Over time, farming methods have become more advanced and expensive. One of these modern methods includes the use of pesticides and herbicides. Organic pesticides do not harm the land much, but chemical pesticides damage both the land and, eventually, us. This causes many farmers to spend more than they earn. To better understand these challenges, we met Ganeshan Anna, a local farmer in the Kodai hills.

Ganeshan is a 55-year-old hard-working farmer with multiple farms in Kodaikanal. He is the father of two sons and a daughter. His second son lives with him and helps on the farm. Since childhood, Ganeshan has been passionate about farming and took over the business after his father. Having been dedicated to farming his entire life, he works hard to ensure the family business thrives. When he was young, he was inspired by his father, and over time, he took over the farm, now running it with the help of family and a few workers. He welcomed us into his small blue house with a glint in his eye and a sunny smile. The house had a common room, kitchen, and bathroom. He doesn't have much, but he has enough to support his family – although, in tough seasons, he struggles to make ends meet. We arrived at the farm, and Anna Ganeshan, as we love to call him, welcomed us warmly. He said "People

who have never experienced farming life will never know the struggles of a farmer's daily life." He explained that many people underestimate his work, assuming it's as simple as putting a plant in soil, adding water and sunlight, and waiting for it to grow, but it's far from that. It was clear that he was excited to share a day of his life with us.

Many unfavorable conditions make farming challenging, especially the unpredictable weather of the Palani hills. Heavy rainfall often over-waters the crops, preventing them from growing at a normal rate as they lack sunlight. Sometimes, the opposite occurs, and crops receive too much sunlight with limited water. These extremes cause delays in the harvest season as crops struggle to grow on time. Rain also washes away pesticides, forcing farmers to respray, which adds to their expenses. Such unforeseen challenges shrink the profitability of farming.

"These problems can only be solved by God and nature's will," says Ganeshan. He is quick to add further "...there are times when my farm has seen good results, but only when the weather is steady and normal." Unfortunately, Kodai's current weather has not been favorable for Ganeshan's farm, as his crops are taking longer than expected to grow. He showed us the state of his crops by making a small hole in the soil, revealing how small and unready they were for harvest. In a disappointed tone, he added, "My crops are late for harvest, and when they're late for harvest, they're late for market." Despite these challenges, he remains hopeful that God will help him through these tough times. He finds some comfort in the few crops that are helping him to support his family, his farm that was passed down to him from his father, and the farms that he has rented out.

As we walked back along the long trail, the sun set on the horizon, and the sky wore a crimson scarf.





THE STRUGGLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE MIGRANTS IN KODAIKANAL

By Preethi and Anusha
Grade 11

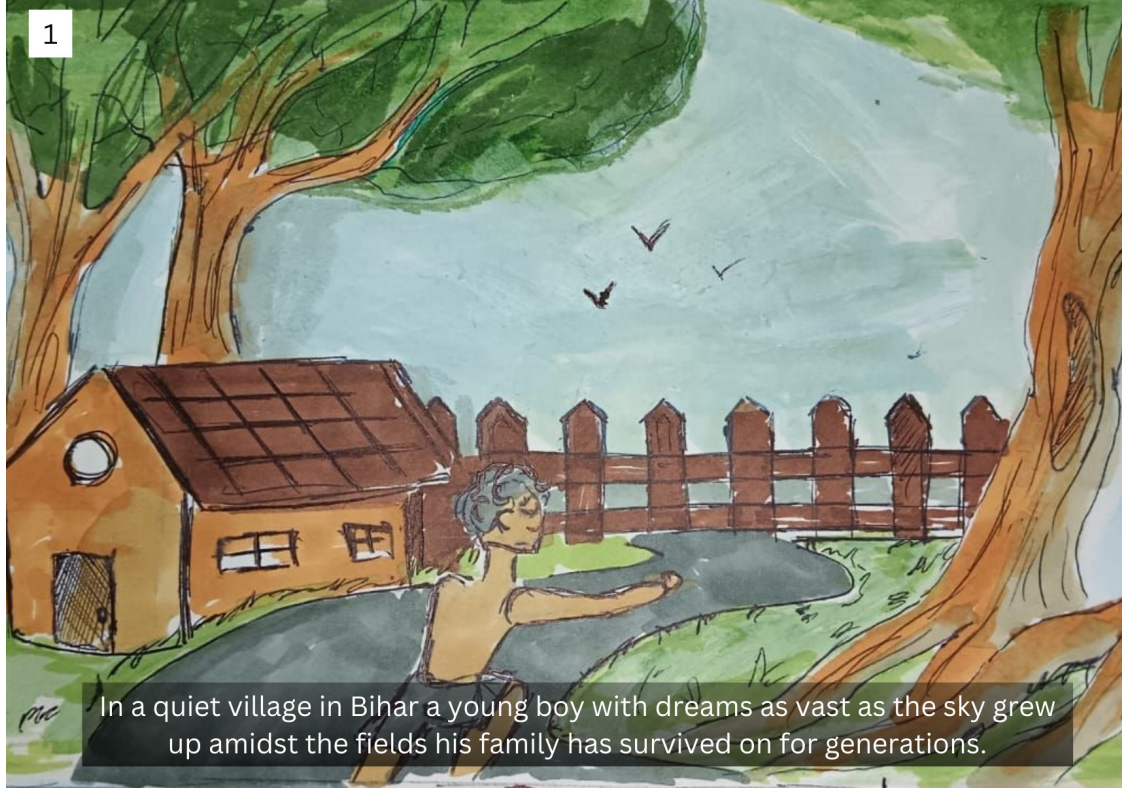
A concealed struggle lies behind the mist-kissed peaks of Kodaikanal. Migrant laborers, mainly from Bihar, have come to our town for a better life. But the lives they lead here are far from the idyllic existence of a hill-station dweller. These migrants, seeking to support their families back home, become trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. They have to abandon their traditional way of life—cultivating their forefathers' land—because of the impact of climate change. Farming is no longer a viable option for them, as water scarcity, pests, and a changing climate are some of the problems they face. Without any way to make a living off their land, they are forced to find other means of survival.

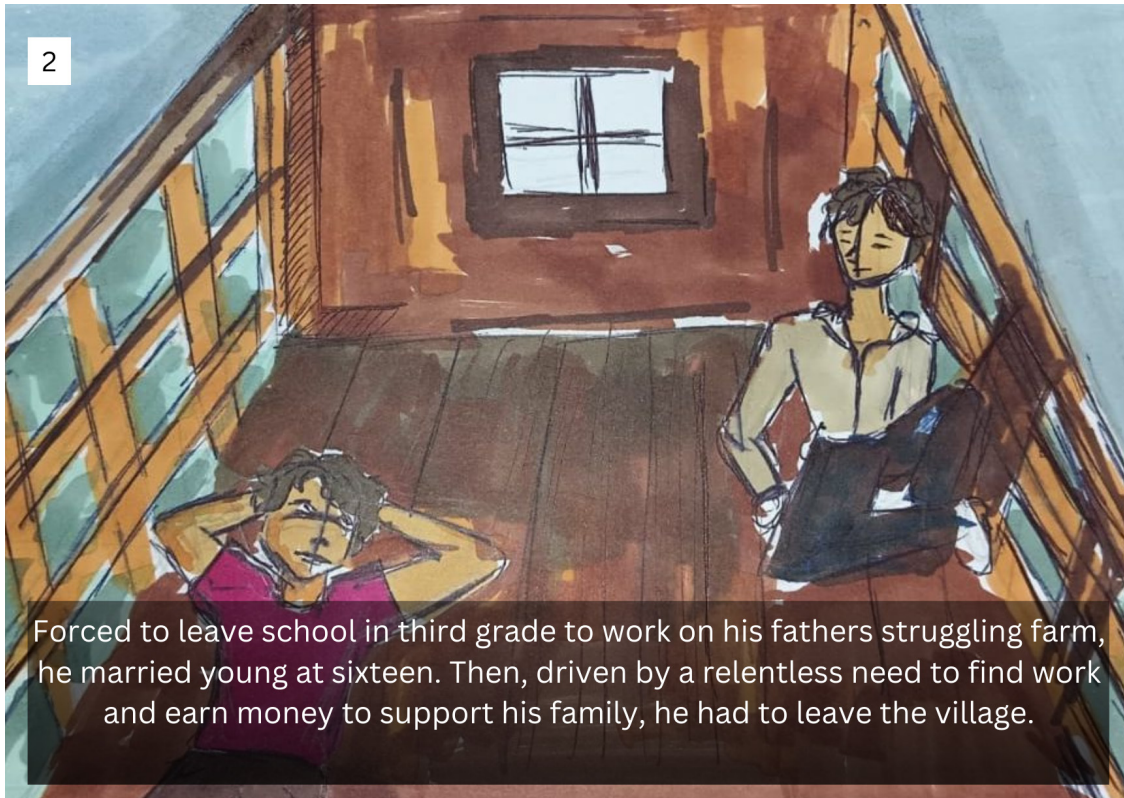
Kodaikanal offered them higher wages; however, the reality of their life here is disheartening. They work as scrappers, picking through heaps of dry waste—metal, plastic, glass, paper, and cardboard—from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day. Their hands are calloused, and their bodies ache. And yet, for all their hard work, they are faced with discrimination and abuse. Their superiors, treating them as aliens from the North, don't care about their pain. They receive abysmal housing and no protective equipment for their working conditions. Their small living spaces, sheltering 12 or more persons, are infested with rats, and essential clean water and sanitation amenities are not available there. The grim reality of discrimination weighs heavily on their lives.

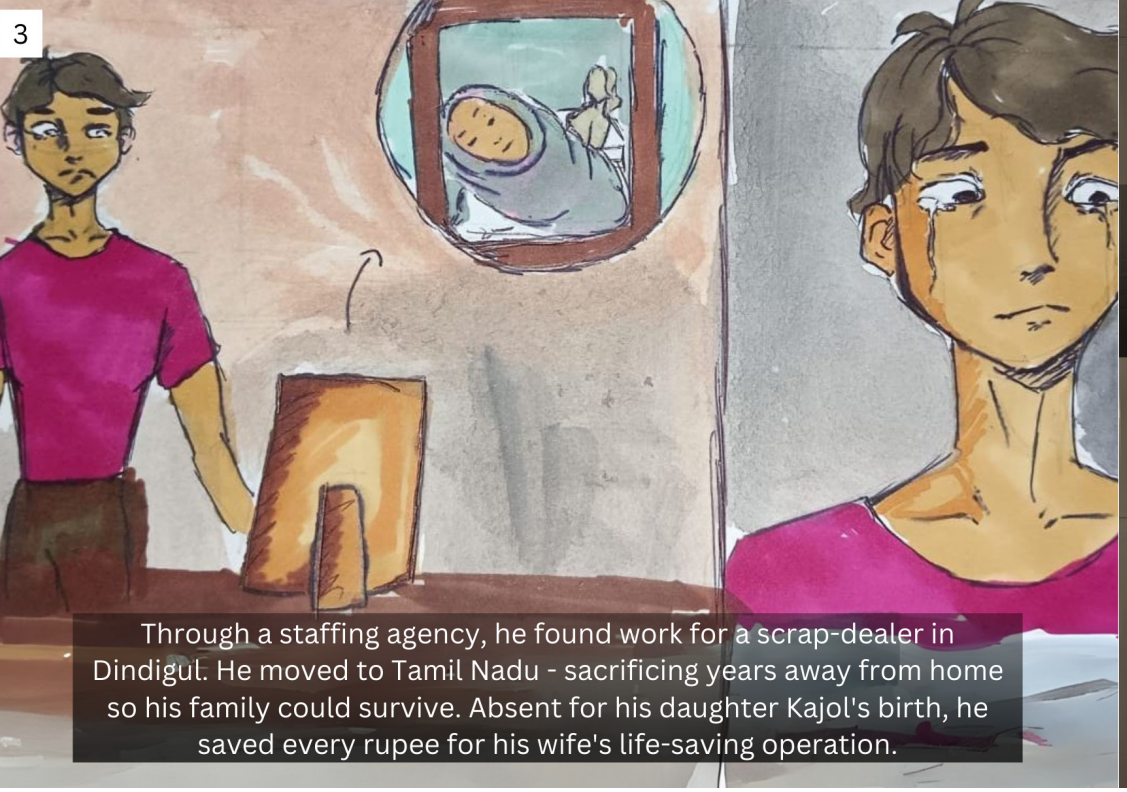
Whether it's a man suffering from respiratory ailments due to excessive dust exposure or another with burn marks from dangerous working conditions, the results of their harassment are palpable. The emotional impact of such harassment is significant. Most migrants are frightened of losing their work or too ashamed of their circumstances to speak out. They hide their problems; their pain overshadows their hopes for a good life. Still, amid all that hopelessness, there remains a glimmer of hope. These migrant workers have endured their share of hard times, but at least they can keep in contact with family and relatives. They write letters and make calls to keep them informed of what they are doing, hoping to assuage and sustain those left behind.

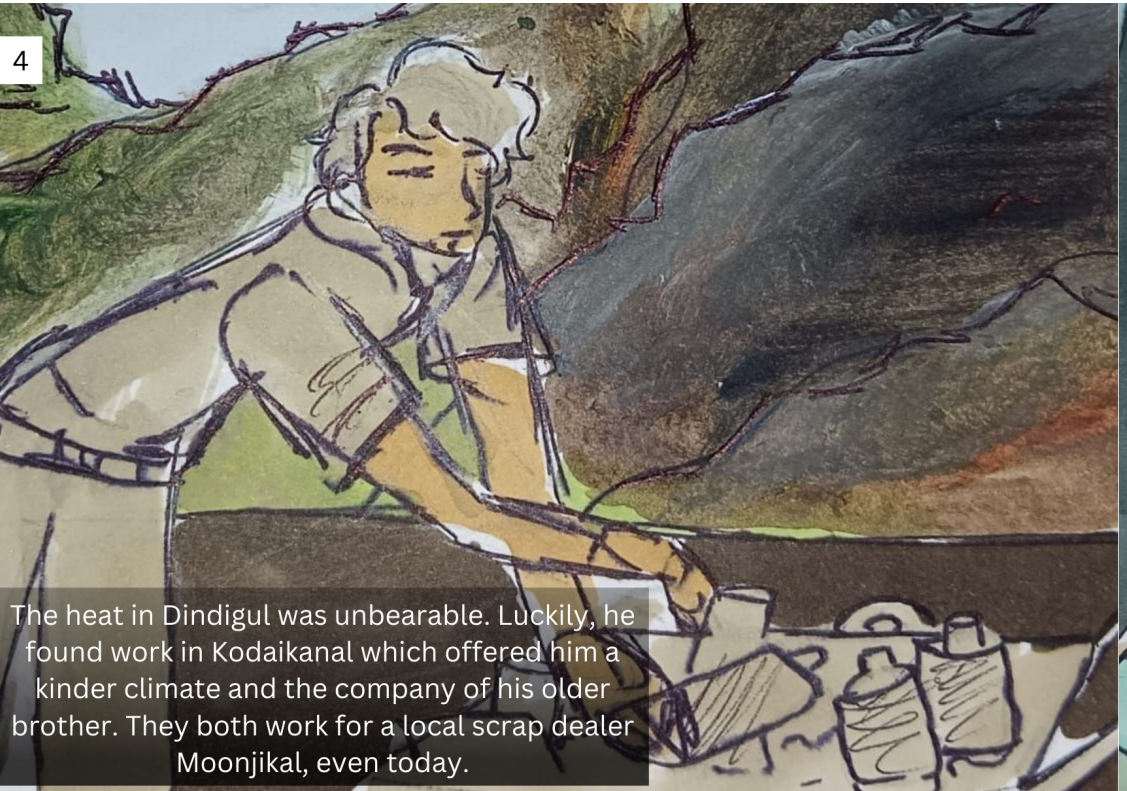
Theirs is a story of the human spirit, a reminder that even in the face of adversity, people can find strength and resilience. Their story calls for more awareness, sensitivity, and justice for these people who journeyed to Kodaikanal in search of a better life and found work in the recycling and scrap-dealing industry.

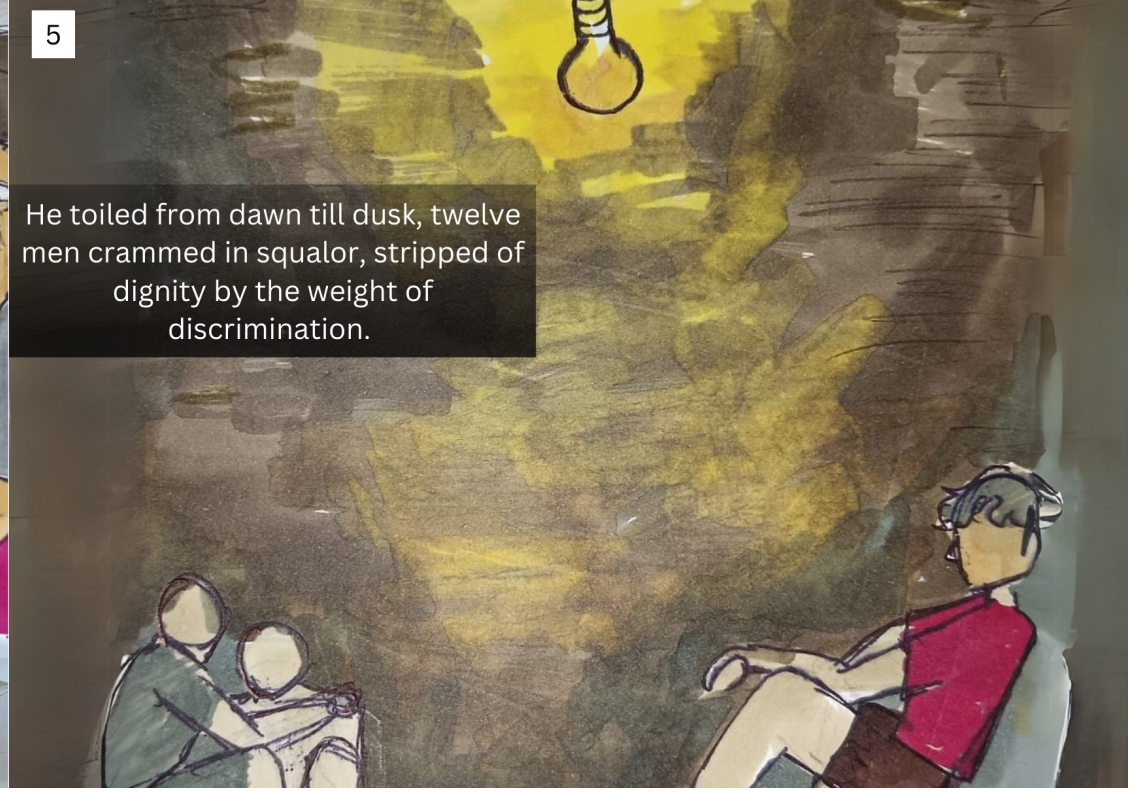
This short comic strip is based on the heart-rending story of one of the scrappers living in Kodaikanal.






3
Through a staffing agency, he found work for a scrap-dealer in Dindigul. He moved to Tamil Nadu - sacrificing years away from home so his family could survive. Absent for his daughter Kajol's birth, he saved every rupee for his wife's life-saving operation.


4
The heat in Dindigul was unbearable. Luckily, he found work in Kodaikanal which offered him a kinder climate and the company of his older brother. They both work for a local scrap dealer Moonjikal, even today.

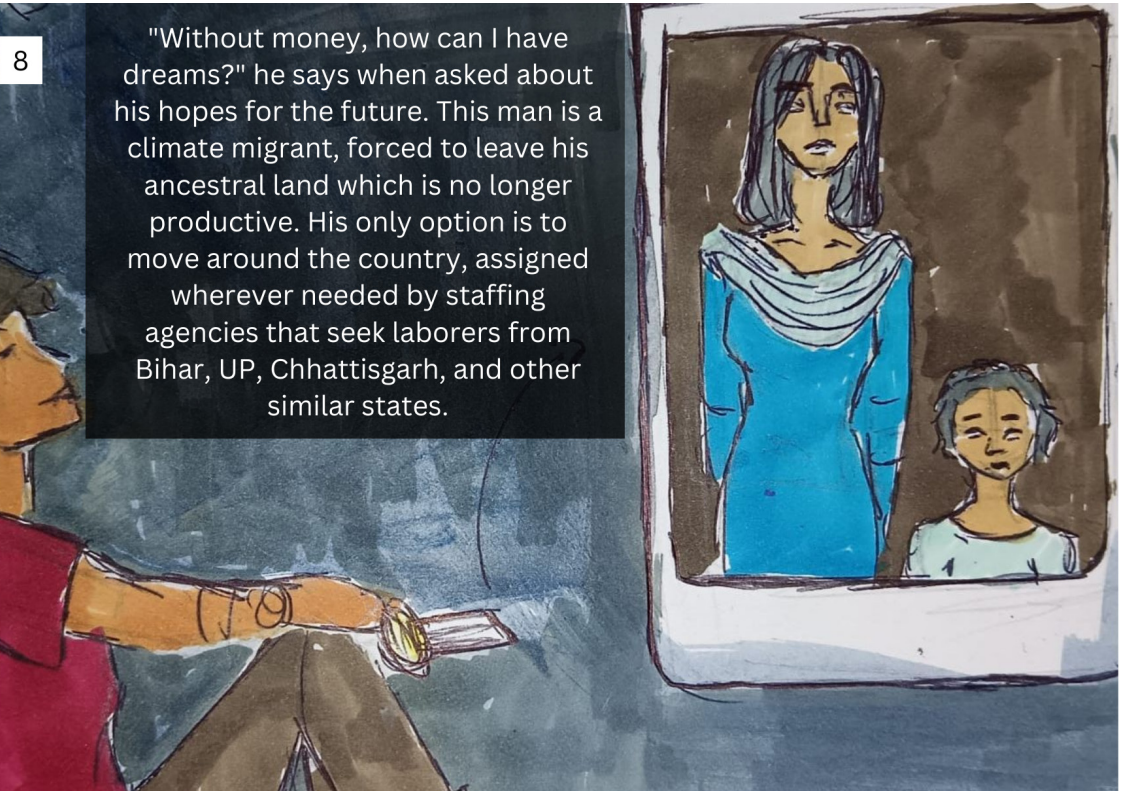

5
He toiled from dawn till dusk, twelve men crammed in squalor, stripped of dignity by the weight of discrimination.


6
WIFE
He clung to his family through the crackling calls and fading ink of distant letters.

7


He counts down the days to each reunion, his heart racing with anticipation as he longs to be home again.

8


"Without money, how can I have dreams?" he says when asked about his hopes for the future. This man is a climate migrant, forced to leave his ancestral land which is no longer productive. His only option is to move around the country, assigned wherever needed by staffing agencies that seek laborers from Bihar, UP, Chhattisgarh, and other similar states.



Nilgiri Daphniphyllum

A TREE WALK ON HIGHCLERC CAMPUS

By Preity
Grade 10

The term “Shola” refers to a dense forest that even sunlight struggles to penetrate. Living in a wildlife sanctuary, it’s essential for us to understand the ecology and biodiversity of these forests. In 1970, 80% of the Palani Hills was covered in grasslands, but today, only 30% remains. This decline is due to the introduction of invasive species such as eucalyptus, wattle, and pine, as well as the conversion of grasslands into farmland. As a result, biodiversity has been severely impacted, with the Nilgiri Tahr population decreasing and the grasslands associated with the Nilgiri Pipit nearing extinction.

But there is still hope, and this comes with awareness and a love of nature. In Kodaikanal, one of the best ways to begin is with a tree walk around the KIS campus.

When a person enters the KIS campus from the main gate to the Chapel, they come across a medium-sized tree with some of the brightest leaves in a Shola, the Nilgiri Daphniphyllum. There are many Daphniphyllums scattered throughout our campus, including right in front of the covered court, in front of the Arts block, and above the squash courts. The Daphniphyllum is a pioneer species, meaning it is essential for restoration efforts. These trees are among the first species to establish themselves in a degraded area and allow for the expansion of Shola forests because they create favorable conditions for other species to grow. They are resilient, have a relatively faster growth rate compared to other Shola trees, and are resistant to bison grazing.

The Nilgiri Mock Olive, locally known as Kottampalam

Other special trees in front of the Covered Court are the Nilgiri Mock Olive and Warty Marble Tree. The Nilgiri Mock Olive, locally known as Kottampalam, is also found in front of the staff lounge, right outside the counselor's office, and in front of the Alumni Office. Its scientific name is *Elaeocarpus variabilis*, and its olive-like fruit is a favorite among squirrels, birds, and people. Animals that eat its fruit help in the tree's seed dispersal, which is why we see many Kottampalam trees in Sholas all over Kodaikanal, like Bombay Shola, Tiger Shola, Vattakanal Shola, and Mathikettan Shola.



Warty Marble

The Warty Marble Tree is easy to distinguish. It can grow very tall and has large, wide, leathery leaves. The tree produces white, cup-shaped flowers with frilly petals and bears elliptic-oblong fruit with a single warty seed. Its scientific name is *Elaeocarpus tuberculatus*. It also produces a fruit similar to Kottampalam, with seeds that look very similar, but they are poisonous—do not eat them! Unfortunately, the saplings in the forest are vulnerable to bison, so if planted as part of a restoration project, close attention to their protection and growth is needed.



Kottampalam Seed



Tuberculatus Seed



Indian Holly

On the lawn above the squash courts, you can see the Indian Holly tree. The scientific name for the Indian Holly is *Ilex wightiana.* The tree fruits from March to August, and its dark red berry-like fruit is where it gets the name “holly,” as it belongs to the Holly family of trees.

Walking up past the cafeteria into the Quad, one will see lots of tree ferns. Tree ferns are ancient plants; their trunks are made of thick fibrous roots rather than wood like typical trees. They thrive in areas such as tropical, subtropical, and rainforests. Tree ferns contribute significantly to Shola forests, often growing near streams where they protect stream headwaters and retain soil moisture. These are among the most beautiful flora found in Kodaikanal.

Tree ferns



Alstonia Veneta

Walking past the lockers in the quad near the science block, one can see *Alstonia veneta* growing on the KIS campus. *Alstonia veneta* is a small, bright green plant with pointed tips. Its flowers are white and five-petalled, star-shaped. The plant's roots and fruits are known to be used for medicinal purposes by indigenous communities. This plant is resistant to bison and would be a great addition to any backyard or flower garden, as it is a Shola species and supports backyard biodiversity.

Another significant Shola species found near the grass area in front of the Arts Block building is *Viburnum cylindricum*. This is a short, evergreen leafy tree. The leaves are shiny, bright green with pointy tips, and the flowers are creamy in color. It is widely distributed in Peninsular India, the Himalayas, Sri



Viburnum Cylindricum

Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal, and West China. It is a Shola species found mostly in Pambar Shola and Poombarai Road. Because of its beautiful flowers, this is also a great addition to any flower garden or backyard, as it is easy to grow and resistant to bison.

A small disturbance in one part of the ecosystem can affect the entire chain. To help restore balance, we should plant more native Shola species on our campus, enhancing backyard biodiversity. Every species has a unique role that contributes to the overall health of the Shola ecosystem. Instead of just taking from nature, we must give back, creating a cleaner, healthier environment for future generations. Clean air and a healthy atmosphere should be a priority for everyone.



J. Blessy
7th Grade, Zion International School



JBS. Varunasree
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Amresh Madhan M
6th Grade, CSI Middle School, Pakiyapuram

JNAN STUDENT POEMS FOR VANAM DIARIES

Translation from Tamil to English
by Rev. Raja Krishnamoorthy

கானலும் காலமும்

இயற்கை எழில் கொஞ்சும் சோலைகள்!
சலசலத்து வளைந்தோடும் நீரோடைகள்.
மஞ்சு தவழும் மலை முகடுகள்!
மான்கள் துள்ளி விளையாடும் கானகங்கள்.
கோடை கனலை போக்கும் கானல் தான்
இந்த கோடைக்கானல் எனும் மலையரசி!
நூறு வருடம் முன்பு இதுதான்
எல்லையில்லா சொர்க்க பூமி!
பூச்சி முதல் யானை வரை
சேர்ந்து வாழ ஏற்ற பூமி!
சொட்டு சொட்டாய் வீழும் துளியை
சேர்த்து வைத்த பசுமை வெளிகள்!
சோலை காட்டின் பக்கமெல்லாம்
கீதம் பாடும் பறவையினங்கள்!
துள்ளி ஓடும் மகிழ்ச்சியோடு
வகை வகையாய் விலங்கினங்கள்!
காட்டிற்க்குள்ளும் மனிதன் வாழ்ந்தான்
ஆதி மனிதன் கானலை காத்தான்!
நவீன மனிதன் காட்டிற்குள் நுழைந்தான்
நாசக்கார வேலைகள் செய்தான்!
மரங்களை வெட்டி பணத்தை பார்த்தான்
கட்டிடம் கட்டி வானை அளந்தான்!
மேகங்கள் சூழ்ந்த மேடுகள் எல்லாம்
நெகிழி மலைகளாய் நிமிர்ந்தன இன்று!
நச்சுக்காற்றின் நாசக தன்மை
சுற்றும் சுவாசத்தை முற்றுமாய் அழித்து
இரசாயனத்தையும் உணவினில் சேர்த்து
இயற்கையின் கருவை வகையாய் அறுத்தான்!
காடும் மலையும் தராத நன்மை
நவீன செயற்கைகள் மீட்டுதான் தருமோ
நீயும் நானும் மாறாது போனால்
அழியும் இனங்களில் நாம்தான் முதலிடம்!

The charming forest and changing times

The Shola forest, the abode of nature's beauty
With meandering soft and gentle streams
The mist curling on the mountain cliffs
Forest alive with frolicking deer!

Kodaikanal, princess of hills,
Blunting summer's scorching heat
A hundred years ago, she stood
A paradise with boundless beauty replete.

This land is suitable and wild
From bugs to the big elephants grand
Everywhere the green grasslands
That saves each drop of water that fell.

Around the Sholas shelter
Birds sang merrily
All sorts of creatures
Jump around with great cheer.

Humans too lived here
Native people preserved this treasure.
But then came the modern man
Bringing destruction that cost us dear.

He felled trees for money
Built tall buildings that scaled the sky
Now the mountains of plastic rise high,
Where once stood mist and clouds covered heights.

The air we breathe, now
Is filled with destructive toxins
Adding chemicals to our food
He cut the very nature's womb.

Will the synthetics reclaim the goodness
Which once the forests and hills gave?
Listen, unless you and I change
We will be the first to go extinct.

By J. Blessy

7th Grade, Zion International School *JNAN 2024-25*

அழகிய கிளி

உயர்ந்ததொரு மரம் நெடியதொரு கிளை...
பசுமை பூசிய பச்சை இலைகள்...
கொத்துக்கொத்தாய் குலுங்கும் கனிகள்...
காற்றில் பறக்கும் உதிரி பூக்கள்...
சட்டென்று கேட்டேன் ஒரு கீதம்...
நடைபோட்டு தேடியது எந்தன் பாதம்...
கண்டேன் மனதை இழக்கும் காந்தம்...
வியந்தேன் இதுவே இயற்கையின் அற்புதம்...
குயிலின் கீதம் கேட்டு ரசித்தவள்...
கிளியின் கீச்சு சத்தம் கேட்டு ரசிக்கிறேன்...
மயிலின் அழகை கண்டு ரசித்தவள்...
கிளியின் அலகை கண்டு ரசிக்கிறேன்...
தேனாய் இனிக்கும் உந்தன் குரலில்...
தானாய் கரையும் எந்தன் மனமும்...
உன் உடலில் பல வண்ணம்...
என் உள்ளத்தில் பல எண்ணம்...
பேசும் கிளியென கூண்டில் அடைத்தேன்...
தினம் ஒரு வார்த்தை பேசி திரிந்தேன்...
அமைதியாய் அனைத்தையும் கேட்டு இருந்தாய்...
பதிலுக்கு ஏதும் பேச மறுத்தாய்...
சிறகை விரித்து பறக்கும் உன்னை...
சிறையில் அடைத்து ரசித்தேன் உன்னை...
தூண்டில் புழுவாய் துடிக்க உன்னை...
துள்ளுவதாக எண்ணி ரசித்தேன் உன்னை...
பேசாத பறவை என்றெண்ணி இருந்தேன்...
உயர பறந்து உரக்கச் சொன்னாய்...
உள்ளம் உலுக்க இதை ஏன் சொன்னாய்...
"விடுதலைக்கு நன்றி"
பேசாத பறவை பேசி சென்றது...
பேசித் திரிந்த நான் பேசாமல் நின்றேன்...

A Beautiful Parrot

A tall tree with branches long
Lush green leaves
Ripened fruits in bunches, hang
Flowers carried away in the gentle breeze.
Suddenly, I heard a sweet refrain
My feet moved around and searching
There I saw an amazing sight
Mind numbing miracle of nature
Having reveled the cuckoo's song
Now, enjoying the chirping parrot
Then I admired peacock's beauty
Now beholding the beauty of parrot's beak.
In your honeyed sweet voice
My mind would drown and lose itself
Many hues of colors on you
My many thoughts too swirl ...

Expecting you to speak I caged you,
Spoke a word each day, for you to repeat,
But you listened in silence,
Refused to respond anything in reply
You, who once flew with wings spread wide
Found joy in putting you in a cage so small
Thought you thrived jumping with glee
But I didn't see you struggle like a worm.

Oh, you are a mute bird, I thought,
But one day you flew so high
Shook my heart with words so free
"Thanks for the Freedom" you said
The 'mute bird' spoke flying free
I, a talkative girl stood still

By JBS. Varunasree

8th Grade, Brindavan School | *JNAN 2024-25*

ரசிக்கத் தொடங்கி விட்டேன் இயற்கையை

வெண்ணிலாவின் ஒளி வியக்கத்தக்கது
மண்ணின் வாசம் மயக்கத்தக்கது
மேகத்தின் மழைத்துளி வினோதமானது
பூக்களின் நறுமணம் புதுமையானது
பறவைகளின் பாட்டு இனிமையானது
மலையின் மௌனம் அர்த்தமானது
மரத்தின் தென்றல் மென்மையானது
ஆழ்கடல் அமைதி அதிசயமானது
அருவியின் அழகு ஆச்சரியமானது
இருளின் பயம் விசித்திரமானது
விண்ணின் தூரம் விசாலமானது
இயற்கையின் உறவு அழகானது.

I’ve started enjoying nature

Amazing is the moonlight,
Intoxicating is the earth’s scent,
Complex is the raindrop falling from the clouds,
Fresh is the fragrance from the flowers,
Melodious is the song of birds,
Meaningful is the silence of the mountains’
Gentle is the tree breeze,
Deft is the deep and calming sea,
Dance of the waterfall makes one wonder,
Strange is the mystery of the dark,
Deep is the space or sky
Nature’s kinship is grand.

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