

We reached Halsinkaipura at around 11:30 a.m, and were then given a session by Ms Shakuntala, the person responsible for the microfinance of the village. She informed us about then noble work that CSA had initiated in the village. She said that the condition of the people before 2003 was poor – children weren't educated, women weren't encouraged to be independent and work for the family. But then, CSA began the mission of children education and women empowerment. Initially, the villagers were wary and hesitant to accept help from city-dwellers who had no idea of their conditions. But despite the lack of warmth and enthusiasm from the villagers in the beginning, the CSA volunteers attempted to help them by providing health and educational services. They began to supply nutritious provisions and were ready to take responsibility for any untoward incidents. Improvements were seen in 6 months and the villagers decided to trust CSA.

There were countless dropouts in the 5th-6th grades, due to lack of finance and support and encouragement from the parents. Thus CSA supplied them with school supplies like bags, books etc. They also set up Child Centres where students of University volunteered to help cultivate the talents of the students. Before CSA established itself in the village, the villagers thought that their health was a matter of religious faith, and prayers would cure their diseases, so they avoided medical institutions. Even pregnant women were discouraged from delivering their babies in hospitals, and consequently delivered their babies in their own homes, which was unhygienic. They believed that no harm would befall the infant or the mother as God would take care of them. This is why CSA volunteers conducted training sessions for them to spread awareness about health and hygiene. This is how CSA helped bring down infant and mortality rates.



The women of the village work in their households and on the farms, CSA encouraged the women to participate in woman affairs, but the men did not appreciate this. CSA promoted the establishment of self-help groups which collected about 96 lakhs. This initiative by the women changed the mindset of the men, and they now encourage their women. We explored each and every part of the village- the houses, the schools, the lanes. We observed that the houses were compact and organized, unlike the view in cities. Despite cows and other animals roaming about freely, they manage to keep their surrounding clean. When we entered the house, it felt like we were entering a doll house. The family's members were courteous and made us feel welcomed. The walls of the school building, unlike the concrete walls of the city, did not separate us from nature. We could view them from any perspective. They may have been faded and dilapidated, but they

made our minds colorful. Visiting their school reminded us of our carefree school days. Our gifts mesmerized them and brought the brightest of smiles on their faces. They were so involved in the games we made them play, that they became oblivious to their surroundings. Watching them play khokho, tug of war, passing the parcel and other games plastered huge smiles on our faces.

When we were at the school, we met Kanthama, the board director of the co-operative society. We also met Nagamma, Priyanka and Jayalakshmi, other members of the Sanga. The Sanga holds a meeting every Sunday at 8 where they discuss issues regarding micro finance of the village etc. If a member comes late to the meeting, she must pay a fine

of 5 rupees and if she does not attend, she must pay a fine of 20 rupees. They save some money every week and give loans to people. It is compulsory for every member to go to the bank. As the day progressed, our connection with the villagers became deeper and deeper. They went from being strangers to people we felt comfortable with. This trip defined the concept "VasudaivaKutumbakam", which means "the world is my family".

It was warm outside, but the smiles on our faces were warmer.

Devi Sastry
NayanaSubramanya
Neha Ashar
Manish Sharma

AN ARRAY OF EXPERIENCES OUR ESCAPADE

We try to do so many different things to feel happy, but we rarely succeed. And then we met the children of Hoskote village who found happiness in that tiny bite of dairy milk. I do not know if I am ever going to get another chance to go to that village, but I do hope that the smiles on the faces of those villagers don't fade away and that CSA continues its good work of improving their lives.

-Syed Afnan



EN ROUTE TO HAPPINESS



The village trip was a fresh breath of air from our everyday hectic and fast lives. Through this trip I learnt the value of microfinance as well as managing it. We visited many houses and looking at how humble the people are with their simple needs makes me wonder if the city dwellers are truly happy with their fast moving and hectic lives. Visiting the children at the school and playing with them made me feel blissful and I realized that there are so many things we take for granted.

- PrachiKapasi

GATEWAY TO A NEW WORLD

In our cushioned lives, we know little of life outside our luxuries. That is why our trip to a village in Hoskote was humbling and pleasant at the same time. We learnt something that cannot be expressed in words, or properly defined as one subject. We understood the stark difference between us and them, even though we live in a radius of only about 100 kilometers. Our “stay” in the village only lasted for a little less than 4 hours, but the more we retrospect, the more values we learn about life. For example, I realize now that if such a huge difference exists between communities of a single state, how different life must be in the other corners of our country.

The most ironic part of our visit was that the villagers thought that city life is chaotic, dangerous and fake, and that we live in a less civilized manner. This shows us just how different our perspectives on life can be, and how much geography and society affect our way of thinking.

-Aditi Kumar

DISCOVERY

Little kids who once lived in unimaginable situations were now able to lead a decent life. Being a part of this journey with them was definitely fulfilling. We all had the pleasure to meet the women of the village and play with the school kids. I had a new found feeling. Kids that I have never met in life were excited to meet me and I without even knowing them personally, was able to connect to them somehow.

We also heard some brave women talk about themselves. Women of the village who are specifically involved in household activities were now giving us strong life lessons about family and children. They had little groups among themselves to carry out activities. It was astounding to know that illiterate women who are rarely given opportunities are now important members of the society. They are able to safeguard money inflow and outflow. The trip was fun and it was a learning experience.

-Sanjana R.

COGNIZANCE

'When we acknowledge the value in every human life and witness such, we thrive and succeed and protect one another.' We city dwellers have forgotten how to live. We have forgotten how to support each other and be pillars of strength in times of need. We have forgotten how to live in simplicity and live each moment of life.

When the entire HEPP N class visited the village of Hoskote, we witnessed something that one would not generally see in urban areas. We met women who had taken initiative and were running an administrative setup which helped in the smooth functioning of the village.



We realized that these women had grown out of their societal restrictions and boundaries to become role models to the rest of the people around them. They had overcome the norms of Indian tradition and had taken up responsibilities that were long overdue.

When we visited a few houses, we saw the humble conditions that these families lived in. Some of these women and children have been exposed to the beatings of alcoholic fathers. But nevertheless, they still live, strong willed, ready for the adversities of life.

Another realization that we had during this trip was that all of these villagers, no matter how far behind they might be in terms of development by our standards, were people who would never leave another behind in the race of life. They held on to each other for dear life. Not because they were asked to, but because they wanted to. They genuinely knew the value of a person in a community and if one was in trouble, they would all support him. They are the people who still preserve humanity. And that is something today's world needs to re-learn.

I think all of us require a reality check from time to time which should keep us grounded. Our reality check was this visit to the village of modest people whose experiences gave us a new perspective to learn from.

-Bavna Mathai

RURAL: 1; URBAN: 0.

We've all pretty much always known that life in the city is much more stressful. Researchers have proved that the parts of the brain handling stress and emotions are affected by living among huge crowds in large cities. These generous findings help us understand why those who are born and raised in urban areas are more likely to suffer from various diseases such as anxiety, depression than those brought up in rural areas. The monotonous concreteness of the city can be very depressing to a brain that is in need of some fresh air and greenery.

Life in rural areas is extremely simple and it shows in their personality sometimes as well. As per my observation rural life revolves around self sustenance and humility. Whether it is the kind of food they eat, the clothes they wear or their needs, it is all pretty simple compared to the needs of an urbanite. On the contrary, life in urban areas can tend to be very torturous. It all starts off with luxury and air conditioners but soon everybody understands that urban life is devilish. We, urbanites, give into machines and the internet almost as though we're chained. We have complicated schooling, intricately designed phones, and densely populated gyms. And considering the pollution the vehicles produce, living in urban areas is a definite threat.

In cities that we live in, there's so much hierarchy, people care more about social status and religion which starts taking a toll on the stress. There's so much more pressure to deal with. But in rural areas, it's more harmonious. Everyone mostly belong to the same religion and there isn't much pressure because people don't feel the need to be competitive. Yet the ones that live in rural areas are extremely hardworking and it pays off. Well, I've so very comfortably bragged about how life in rural areas is better than the urban areas but there are certain disadvantages when it comes to rural areas. One advantage that urban areas have over rural is the employment opportunities available. It provides incentives and a good pay with regard to jobs in general. Villagers migrate to urban areas in search of jobs. They find them and end up in a spiraling pool of monotony and lung diseases. When I visited the village for the class field trip, I understood all these points I just stated elaborately. It isn't that hard. Rural areas provide the perfect air for a happy mind, whereas urban areas tend to be depressing and pretty wretched. If people didn't move to urban areas from rural areas and job opportunities were washed in towards the rural areas, then it would be an ideal living place for a person that wants to live with a clear, carbon monoxide-free life.

-Soorya Praveen



EVERY MINUTE A MEMORY

A wise person once said, "Experience is the only way to truly learn anything." With this in mind, 2 HEPP N set off to Hoskote with the plan of gleaning as much knowledge as possible from the destination. Our class had contributed the highest amount to the CSA fund the previous year, and as a result, we gained the opportunity to glimpse a few of the lives we helped change. What we didn't know was just what the gain from this experience would end up being.

As we disembarked from the bus, we found a very different world around us than what we were used to. From the wind to the earth, every element of the experience enriched us. We learnt the value of fresh air and a natural environment from the serenity that the village offered us. After speaking to a representative from the village, we gained an insight into the conditions in the village. Our lives were put in perspective, and we began to consider the things we took for granted, and what we could gain from this particular lifestyle.

From this we learnt to find happiness in the simple things that life offers to us. We returned to the city wiser than when we had left.

-Devi Sastry



**NOTHING BETTER THAN POEMS TO
DESCRIBE A POETIC EXPERIENCE**

BEYOND SHADOWS

*The faces were intense
A glow, even with no smile
The eyes told us stories
Stories that felt like home*

*If purity had an aroma, we had smelt it
The sky was a tint lighter
The soil was stardust
And the grass, divine*

*They shone like a halo
A little twinkle in the eyes
“Less fortunate”, we had heard
Yet they gazed like they knew a secret*

*A secret that we knew too
Buried deep
In our concrete carbon minds
Held by roots that had now gathered rust*

*With mystifying smiles
Thanking Gratitude herself
Their hearts were bigger
than the brains of the world*

*Their contentment, a gentle arrow
Shattered the mirrors of illusion
The secret; our secret
We discovered again*

*Happiness lay
Not in time
Nor place
But within*

*And then, all the light in the world burned
brighter...*

- Neha Rajan

ELEEMOSYNARY

*Shy faces
Eyes made big,
Some stood still
Whilst hands outstretched.*

*Shoes and socks,
Shirt and tie,
Oily pigtails,
Mouth pulled wide.*

*With moments passing
Their bags were filled,
As though something
Came fine; divine.*

*They sang,
They rolled,
They played,
They danced,
All and one, happiness rang.*

*Home they went
Chattering away;
Thanking god
For his benevolent ways.*

- Karuna .K

Teacher Coordinator:

Mr Noel Borges

Teacher Editor:

Anu Mathai

Student Editors:

*Devi Sastry
NayanaSubramanya
Neha Ashar
Manish Sharma*