

the day when i opened my eyes towards the elephants!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

sushma doddamane [mailto:sush.0997@gmail.com]

{A report}

On 20th April (2012), around 6:00 am, 31 students of Sri Vain school < of both branches Rajajinagar and Basaveshwaranagar > accompanied by Sir Bhaskar- an explorer, departed Bangalore and started the journey towards Ranganatittu bird sanctuary. And on reaching there, we could make out that it was soggy and stuffed, tucked with dainty and boisterous birds like Indian swan bill, baffles, bats, eagles etc all over, few blaring, serenading and also sloshing in the water. This mesmerized everyone of us. The sturdy crocodiles were not less, they too pit against the birds and created a imbue of fear in few of us. The blend of boating and bird watching was extremely a heart-soothing experience. Nevertheless, this piece of salient feature got glued up in every single brain. But still hoping to have the next part of the journey more amazing and enthusiastic we left the place and rest part of the journey was spick and span.

On reaching 'COPS'- Coorg Public School, Gonikoppa(Coorg), we were heartily welcomed by those people who further provided us food and lodging facilities. After freshening up, we were drawn to 'Aane Chaukur'- place where few trained elephants lived with their trainers called Mahout- to study the life of elephants, mahout, about their bond etc. On the way we could clearly figure out an elephant with long muddy tusks eating straws on the road side. Each eye in the bus shot this scene, cameras were out, flashes were on. And soon this picture became the centre of attraction. Later, we all broke into groups each having 4 members. Then started out to explore about the mahout and their environs. At first it was as difficult as squeezing a dry lemon for juice to extract information from the family members of the mahout. They were too shy, feared to reveal few things but we could tackle this stuff. Child marriage, illiteracy was in sight, the biggest social evils in India. It was heart-aching scene to watch a 16 year old girl being lost in the medley of children and their caring and maintenance. Only one or two children are send to school. J.K.Appu(a mahout), said that many children are not interested in studies and also few bunk classes. Also stressed that only one man out the family called Manju has completed Degree and is aiming more in life.

Coming to elephants- their legs are tied up with long chain so that even if they are lost they can be ransacked by following the depiction of the chain left free. Rajendra, Balarama and Bheema was in sight eating coconut and ragi ball. The bond between the mahout and the elephant is so strong that it can be perceived by us. Mahout use different language to communicate with elephants. Appu asserted "Elephants are our life and will remain to our life....". N. Ravindranath, the forest ranger helped us more to know about the elephants dung. And everyone were astound to hear that this dung can be used to make paper. And few of us collected it to do so.

When we reached back on time to COPS, a PPT regarding birds in coorg was encapsulated by sir narasimha. And we all could imbibe, beautiful things out of it. And the day was over.

THE NEXT DAY, 21st, everything was all set and planned. After breakfast, we were zoomed to - Nisargadhama, where we went on a ride above the sturdy, hefty elephants which was mind-blowing. The body of it was very cool but at same time very spiny. The River Kaveri was flowing peacefully, cute deers around the place enchanted us. Then back in COPS, Sharda Prasad sir and Vani ma'am joined us. The Professor, Indian Institute of Agriculture gave us a brief idea about forests in coorg, conservation of water in coorg, coffee estate etc.

Then the scene shifted, we were exposed to the TATA coffee estate. The aroma seemed to have influenced our mind set- exhaust mind to an active mind. The guide explained from how to grow coffee to how to roast them and make powder. And we all pitched in. Finally we were nearing to the end of the excursion.

Back at Coorg ,the screen was set at 8:30pm, we were connected with Skype, 3 researchers called Kim Norvick, Angelina and Carlos de la Rosa were online from 3 different parts of the world .Nervousness and excitement too was clearly depicted on our faces. But once the interaction started it vanished. Bhaskar sir started with a brief introduction of us and then went on with elephants. Soon we were in vision in the new Museum of Natural Science, North Carolina, USA. Around 50,000 people were seeing this live interaction. India was represented by us. 2 students exchanged their views about the bond between elephants and mahouts. And once set off, Bhaskar sir thanked everyone for co-operating with him. Asked us to utilize net in a best and positive way, saying "usage of net is in your hand."Management of COPS was thanked for their hospitality.

Hence, the day was off, departing around 9:30 pm we reached Bangalore around 2:45am.

PERSONAL REVIEW

Time to time the world has changed. The change in one has changed the world sometimes. Yes, the same with the elephants. Change in elephants hav changed forests and change in forests have changed the elephants .Economy of India is influenced by elephants also .I think its time for Indians to try out something new with elephants dung. And coming to Mathout- are people who are away from the medium of communication, no idea about banking but just struggling in the midst of elephants and their maintainance. At this rate of growth of technology and population it is difficult to adopt agriculture in India, but once adopted people are going to shine , which I was trying to comprehend from past 6 months and understood in 1 day. I got my doubts cleared. Interaction on that day has helped me move ahead in my life, with positive thoughts. I thank from the core of my heart for proving us an opportunity to socialize with different people , animals and lifestyles. In 2 days the vision and mission of coorg was in our hand which made me learn things that are beneficial and out of syllabus.

-Disha Dharesh