Kali Kalisu
A Review Report

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1. The Broader Context of Arts Education

Education across the board continues to be focused on the ‘harder’ subjects (such as science and computers) as they are necessary for the insertion of the future generation into a techno-centric vision of development. This bias is not confined to urban and private schools that reflect the aspirations of a middle class ‘clientele’ but is also visible in rural government schools. On visits, school authorities proudly draw attention to the presence of computers/computer labs in their schools with a sense of achievement. Even in the private school system that caters to urban middle class children, only a small minority of institutions embrace arts education as part of their educational endeavor.

The arts have always had a place in the vision for a holistic education across eras. In the classical context, they were valued as ingredients of an ‘accomplished’ individual. In modern India of the 20th century, they were central to the educational paradigm of Tagore, Rukmini Devi and others. The arts were also institutionalized in the curriculum of ‘alternative’ schools that were inspired by J Krishnamurti’s vision of a wholesome educational experience. In more recent years, the importance of the arts has been recognized in the so called mainstream educational milieu with the emergence of the multiple intelligences discourse and the development of multiple competencies. They are increasingly being perceived as vehicles to deliver cognitive skills in multifarious modes which are suited to a range of learning styles of children.

The conversation on arts education seems to be spinning around two pivots. There are those who suggest that the arts need to be pursued for ‘their sake’ in order to establish cultural roots for the young and others who see the arts as a resource bed for methods and pedagogies that can feed the cognitive abilities and multiple intelligences of the child. These can be simplified as the ‘arts education’ approach and the ‘arts in education.’ Of the two, the latter seems to have gained more currency in the educational system and practices.

Despite the awareness about the need to bring in the arts into mainstream education, they remain in the periphery at best as co-curricular activities or 'material' for cultural shows and competitions. They serve as ‘value adds’ to education as they are seen as markers of talent or accomplishments. The recent position paper (2006) of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the apex advisory body for education in India, articulates the concern about the state of the arts in our
schools. It makes a compelling argument to integrate art education within the curriculum at all levels in schools as a way of ensuring against future ‘cultural illiteracy’ and loss of ‘cultural identity in all its diversity and richness’ (Executive Summary, p.iii, iv).

It is significant that this concern for the arts is not merely for its ‘functional’ value as a repository for pedagogic approaches, but rather as context which builds the child’s connection between herself and her world. Placing the need for arts education in the contemporary scenario, the authors posit that popular culture (which is often removed from the immediate cultural experience of many) often alienates the young from creative expressions that are specific and immediate to their environs. This vacuum, they argue, will not only decrease students’ awareness ‘of the rich and varied artistic traditions in the country’ but will also deprive them of experiencing ‘the vibrant and ever evolving nature of creative arts.’

*The Kali Kalisu Approach*

There is clearly a need for the arts to enter mainstream classrooms but a conspicuous absence of ‘grassroots’ initiatives to put the vision into practice. It is within this space that the Kali Kalisu initiative of the Goethe Institut Bangalore and IFA has chosen to work in. It is significant because it targets government school teachers in rural Karnataka with a view to enriching and empowering them as individuals and as teachers. Kali Kalisu uses an interdisciplinary approach in its workshop where teachers are exposed to two or more arts in two or three day modules. As the idea is not to create ‘experts’ in any one discipline but to provide a range of experiences in the arts in order to feed the creative impulses of teachers.

The workshop has been designed in collaboration with the five partner organizations. All of them (Aattakkalari, Ananya, BGVS, Gombe Mane and Ninasam) share the concern to bring arts into mainstream education. They have been involved with various constituencies (teachers, teacher trainees, students) in rural and urban settings. The intent and focus of Kali Kalisu was evolved through a process of interaction by the partners, with the design being dictated by the possibilities that each of their arts practices had to offer. The arts, in their view, are not about ‘talent’ or accomplishment, but a means for enhancing the lived experience of children by allowing them to make sense of and interpret their worlds. The modules are designed around core concepts of the particular art form and are translated into hands on sessions wherever possible. The facilitators have paid extra care to nurture collaborative teaching and learning processes.
2. Kali Kalisu in Retrospect

Introduction

The journey with Kali Kalisu began in May 2009 at Ninasam, a premier theatre institute and hub of literary and cultural discourse in Karnataka, and moved through government schools spread over the four coordinates of the state. The impression that surfaces as I look back over the various workshops is the sound of teachers at work: shrieks of delight, thunderous laughter, ominous animal sounds, much singing, clapping and floor-thumping. And the occasional polite reminder from the facilitator urging them to finish the task on time. In the first workshop which was 15 day long (and held for Ninsam graduates who had been appointed as drama teachers), the working day stretched over 12 hours for some modules and yet teachers seemed to want more!

As an ‘accepted’ observer, I watched as teachers discovered the thrill of movement, the language of puppetry or played with waste material to create art. Some of them made their acquaintance with classical music and others crafted short performance pieces at short notice.

The scope and spread of the workshops was wide, the participant mix diverse and the body of impressions and insights voluminous. The attempt has been to present responses in a summarized form that will give one an idea of how teachers experienced the workshop. On the basis of conversations, observations and reflection, some suggestions have been made that could potentially feed into the next phase of the programme. There are four stories presented in the report. These ‘cases’ are unique in and of themselves and gave me interesting insights into the life of teachers on their own turf.

A report that attempts to document a complex and dynamic process such as this workshop can neither claim to be a complete representation nor a 'precise' one. It does not claim to be findings of a research project. Rather, it is a narrative that is based on the reviewer's observations and enquiry within the bounds of her association of the Kali Kalisu programme. At best it puts forth the responses of the protagonists (teachers and facilitators) and the reviewer's perspective from the vantage point of the observer's corner. The entire review process, that made me somewhat familiar with so many teachers and their diverse settings, has shored up several issues that relate not only to arts education but to education in general, the specifics of everyday life in government schools, the relationships which teachers negotiate between the system, school authorities and their students, etc. While some of these strands might make their way into the report, for the most part the rest remain as the background
against which observations are recorded. The sketches of Kusuma, Ashok, Gaithri, Upadhya nd Uma will hopefully provide some texture to this narrative.

**Scope of the Review**

The report is based on observation of the inaugural workshop (15 days) at Ninasam (Shimoga district) and the shorter workshops in the districts of Gulbarga, Bidar, Udupi, and Coorg. Large group reviews at the end of every module in all workshops, discussions with individual participants, and facilitators have also fed it. These discussions were continued after the completion of the workshops. Five teachers were also visited in their schools in Gulbarga district (Sadem), Shettikere (Shimoga district), Udupi town, and two schools in Coorg district. The intent was to discuss with teachers their insights and experiences post workshop and also to become more familiar with the particular conditions and relationships that are part of the teacher’s working life. There were two broad levels of feedback-responses to specific modules/sessions and general feedback that relates to the workshop as a whole, its intent, etc. The former has been collated and recorded in earlier reports. This review document focuses on the latter aspect that has an implication for the workshop as a whole and for shaping its trajectory in the second phase.

**The Workshops**

The first Kali Kalisu workshop was held at Ninasam, Heggodu (Shimoga district) exclusively for high school drama teaches. All five modules of 3 days each (movement, theatre, music, visual art and puppetry) were presented over 15 days. This was different from those that followed as it was a residential programme that allowed more intense interaction. The rest of the workshops were two module combinations of two or three days each. These were run in the district towns of Dharwad, Gulbarga, Bidar, Mandya, Udupi and Kodagu districts. The Kodagu workshop was residential as the teachers found it difficult to commute to and from the venue given the hilly nature of the area and the slushy conditions of roads.

**The Modules**

*The Ninasam module* included a mix of theatre and literary exercises. A poetry collage session (creation of a poem through a group process) in which participants were invited to extricate lines that they found meaningful in order to construct a poem, emphasized that creative inputs are often generated in a collective and participatory environment. Texts in theatre, and theatre games were the
other elements of the module. On the final day of the 15 day workshop for drama teachers, Ninasam faculty led a problem solving session on the challenges specific to them.

*Attakkalari* designed its movement module with the twin purpose of presenting the range of possibilities available in contemporary dance that can be used in the classroom, and to offer an opportunity for teachers to work on self awareness and the body mind connection through movement. Skills (from simple to complex) were layered gradually, on the basis of ideas and themes elicited from participants. A basic tool kit (suggestions for doing movement with children in limited spaces with few resources) was also presented to the teachers.

*At the Ananya session* (an appreciation of South Indian classical music), one of the teachers from an urban school expressed his dilemma: he was unwilling to cater to children’s demand to mimic popular music in plays and performances, but he was unable to suggest alternatives. The idea of a music appreciation module addressed this common predicament. The first Ananya module was designed in the lecture-demonstration mode. The three days of the Ninasam workshop were woven around introducing the characteristic elements of the form (such as shruti, scale, ragas, tala, laya, etc.), and the various kinds of compositions. The sessions in later workshops were more application oriented with a focus on helping teachers to use rhythm and melody to fashion simple compositions. The intent behind this was to enable 'subject teachers' (non arts teachers) to apply this method in their classes.

*Gombe Mane* (Puppet House) has had considerable experience in working with the teachers in the state system. According to Prakash Garud (Gombe Mane), when faced with the task of exposing children to ‘culture’, teachers invariable fall back on a CD of a popular/filmi song or dance because they themselves neither have adequate exposure nor skills to do otherwise. He feels that if teachers are able to learn the art of puppetry, they can catalyze an interest in children and thereby help to revive it. In the 15 day workshop, three groups, aided by facilitators, worked on rod puppets, shadow puppets and glove puppets. In the later workshops teachers worked on rod puppets and paper mask making.

*BGVS* has worked intensively to bring visual art into the classroom at the primary school level. The focus of the module was to suggest techniques for using colour, waste and locally available material (like mud, charcoal, role, etc) to ‘illustrate’ lessons in science, environment studies, community, etc. Exercises in these areas were designed to enhance ‘local knowledge’ of environment- both physical and social, as well as of local materials. Aesthetics of classroom display and techniques for the same were also strung through the session. The stress was on developing group based activity and a participative
atmosphere in the classroom though the ‘doing of art.’

**The Teachers**

The first workshop which was exclusively for drama teachers had a group of thirty six young teachers (13 women and 23 men), the majority of who were freshly appointed rural high schools. Most of them were Ninasam graduates. The group included a handful of subject teachers. The subsequent workshops were run for a mixed group of teachers with a wide range of experience and expertise. There were teachers who taught subjects ranging from drawing, physical education to maths and history. There were Nali Kali teachers (primary) as well as high school teachers. Senior teachers who were primarily resource people (Block and Cluster) were also present. The unifying aspect, however, was a shared experience of place and local culture, as the workshops were held exclusively for schools within the districts of Bidar, Gulbarga, Dharwad, Udupi, Coorg and Mandya.

Teachers as a whole brought a willingness to explore new ideas and to work at acquiring new skills and perspective. Some were able to relate workshop experiences to the classroom as well as to personal contexts. In the introductory sessions it became clear that some of their school contexts were fraught with challenges in terms of infrastructure and attitudes of school authorities. In some schools class sizes were large. In others in the tribal and poorer areas of the state, classes were smaller as student absenteeism is high.

Some participants were aware of vibrant folk cultural forms that exist in the context of their schools (music, dance, ritual theatre etc) and were conscious that they needed to be supported and validated in the face of the dominant commercial forms. They also seemed sensitive to the challenges their students face in terms of consolidating a positive sense of self in the face of material deprivation and a socio-cultural scenario that values urban and ‘global’ markers of identity. The traditional art form in this context becomes, as one teacher put it, ‘is symbolic of backwardness.’

There was variation in the teachers' familiarity with art forms across the districts that I visited. It was interesting that the teachers of Udupi seemed to be well versed in the Yakshagana tradition and naturally drew on this form in the course of fashioning various performance pieces in the workshop. There knowledge of literature (Kannada) also seemed to be at a some what more advanced as compared to the other districts. Many teachers in the Gulbarga workshops were unaware of traditional schools of music and were not familiar with folk forms either. Or perhaps there were hesitant to acknowledge
their familiarity with folk music as a way of avoiding being marked by a caste or ethnic identity. Popular music and culture seemed to be the idiom that they often drew on. This was demonstrated in their group performances. The participant group in Gulbarga and Bidar (which had a mix of Kannada and Urdu medium teachers) showed cleavages between men and women, and between the Urdu teachers and Kannada teachers as well. The Attakkalari module became an uphill enterprise partly because of the nature of the dress code that the women teachers followed in Bidar. In Coorg, where group dancing is often enjoyed on festive occasions, the Attakkalari module was welcomed and enjoyed thoroughly by all participants regardless of gender or age.

The trainees of the first workshop in general demonstrated a high degree of awareness of macro processes (cultural, economic and political) which form the context of their work and lives. They were able to sustain their involvement in the workshop across the 15 day stretch. Some of them continue to maintain a conversation with updates and ideas that they have been able to implement in ‘the field.’ However, there were other groups who seemed to accept hierarchy and power structures (both between the adults and between adults and children) and sometimes replicated it within the context of the workshop. For instance, the Block and Cluster Resource Persons were always given ‘respect’ and obedience. Organizers of the workshop were treated with great deference, while fellow participants (especially women and ‘others’) were often cut short or not listened to.
3. Summary of Participant Responses

Within the context of an intervention that is not designed to deliver a predetermined set of skills and tools to cater to specific needs, it is difficult to measure its 'utility' value. The effect and relevance in the life of the participants may have a wide and amorphous spread. Although on the one hand there were some teachers who were precise in listing skills and approaches that they thought were 'useful' in the classroom, there were others who felt that the entire process itself was immensely 'helpful' in a broad sense by suggesting possibilities, and exposing them to new experiences with the arts. Some felt it would form the inner resource cache which they could draw on at appropriate moments. A summary of some of the 'useful' elements that teachers identified has been provided. 'Useful' in this context primarily refers to the potential of using tools/approaches in the classroom. These have to be read as companions to the more intangible range of possibilities (all of which cannot be named or predicted) that the workshop has opened for the participants.

The Specifics

Art

In general, the sessions were appreciated for their direct link to the classroom. In particular, teachers felt that the BGVS sessions gave them a list of applicable tools. Some of these were methods for bringing in the visual medium (such as collages, finger painting, etc.) that could make subject teaching more 'fun' and creative. They also appreciated the emphasis given to designing activities relevant to the immediate environs of children. Teachers were excited to learn the art of collating and displaying children's work in simple but attractive ways. The other highly appreciated and 'usable' aspect of the BGVS module was their stress on using locally available material (mud, leaves, etc) as well as waste material in visual presentation. The art of using local material was especially appreciated as most teachers work within a context of strained resources and infrastructure. Kusuma, who teaches drama for high school at Shettikere, Shimoga district, has made a list of activities that she plans to do with her children. The day we visited her, her students were experimenting with different kinds of mud as art material, while some used leaves and natural material to fashion animal forms. Many teachers were very proud of all the charts that they had displayed and spent much of their spare time taking pictures. Many of the displays were distributed and carried back to homes and schools.
Theatre

Many teachers who had no prior exposure to Theatre in Education workshops, felt that the application of theatre games were useful to energize children. Theatrical elements, they felt, could be used in the study of texts (prose and poetry). Having experienced the growth of their own level of confidence in the workshop situation, teachers were positive that theatre could build the self confidence of the children, wear down awkwardness (especially in adolescent boys and girls) and enable them to be more expressive and articulate.

Exercises such as the poetry 'collage' (which involved building a poem by using different pieces of text generated by participants) was highly appreciated not only for its potential for future use in the classroom but also for its ability to generate a creative impulse among the ‘non poets’ in the group.

Puppetry

Gombe Mane was perceived as the most ‘utilitarian’ with the biggest basket of skills and techniques to offer. The module, they felt, suggested multiple ways in which puppetry can be used for instruction and lesson development. It appealed to most teachers as it was clearly linked to children. 'Since it is activity based, it most suitable for children' was a commonly shared perception.

Some teachers had had exposure to mask and puppet making as part of their theatre course. But they too felt that they had refined their knowledge and also acquired exposure to shadow puppetry, which is perhaps one of the oldest performance art forms in Karnataka.

For many teachers the performative aspect was a novel experience. There was much discussion during the preparation of the puppets and during the rehearsals. Many of the older women teachers (who are in high school and middle school) were experiencing the ‘fun’ aspect perhaps for the first time in a training session. They felt that the performance aspect of it had given them confidence, especially since there was a curtain that gave them a sense of safety. Some were eager to use the medium as a way of building confidence and exploring creativity of children rather than using it in a limiting way as a vehicle for information.
Movement

The basics of the body’s relation to space, and the aesthetics of movement are some of the significant aspects absorbed from the Attakkalari session. At Ninasam teachers learnt the basics of choreography by layering movement onto text. This allowed them to see the creative process that transforms a thought or experience into an expression- either through words or through the medium of the body, and the dynamic relationship between the two.

The later movement modules incorporated more tools and applicable inputs. Participants felt that a tool such as site specific movement work, where movement was developed around available spaces (what Attakalari calls the 'limited palette') could be potentially useful in their work with children.

Music

The Ananya module was appreciated for its role in introducing ‘lay persons’ to the structure and form of Carnatic music. The aim of the module in the first workshop was to generate an appreciation rather than impart specific skills. In the later workshops, the module was designed to include more ‘application’ content. For instance, the session on composition (in which participants set a poem from the text book to music) was rated as a highly 'useful' aspect of the module especially by language teachers. Uma, a primary school teacher from Coorg district has begun to use more rhythm and movement to teach children to memorize the names of months and arithmetic tables. As a whole, teachers enjoyed singing, making rhythm and performing in front of their peers.

Broad Canvas

Looking at the workshop in its entirety, there were some aspects related to arts pedagogy that seem to have had a significant impact on the group. For instance, the process of eliciting and using inputs from participants was recognized as a potentially empowering method in the classroom, as was the building of relevant skills at various stages of the process. Teachers felt that these modules had taught them to value personal experience in the classroom.

Democratic processes in the classroom that included participants were highly appreciated and acknowledged as the 'ideal' to be employed, regardless of what is taught. The 'creative moment' was described as the experience of a being able to express a thought or an idea with the help of appropriate tools/skills, the catalyst for this being an environment of openness and mutual respect between the
facilitator and ‘student.’ These observations may be summarized in the following comment: 'it helped us to develop a sense of ‘what would work’ (and what doesn’t work) in the classroom.'

At a broader level, many participants felt that the workshop had given them the opportunity to appreciate the various art forms – especially movement and classical music as they are often not accessible to all. Some felt convinced that Kali Kalisu had also provided the opportunity to recognize the potential of the arts as catalysts and enhancers in the classroom learning process. For others, especially for participants who teach the arts (craft, drawing, drama), the workshop was space for a conversation to be initiated between themselves and ‘subject teachers’ within the context of arts education.

All teachers seem to harbour some anxiety about the annual 'talent' competitions for children- (pratibha karanji) which is the showcase for drama, music, dance and other arts. This has generated much debate on the 'quality' of the presentations which tends to learn sharply towards popular/film versions of these art forms. Some teachers (who have not had much exposure to art forms such as contemporary theatre and classical music) felt that the Kali Kalisu sessions had provided a novel point of reference for aesthetics in the performance arts. They felt that this fresh perspective could impact their conception of these pratibha karanji presentations. As one teacher put it, 'earlier we forced children to do as we say. I think now I will try to use the children’s' own ideas, experience and talents.' Another was looking forward to moving away from 'habits' such as preset notions of what constitutes dance, etc. and bringing in a new aesthetic to these productions.

The 'Intangibles'

In the course of several review sessions as well as in conversations with teachers, it became obvious that they confront multiple blocks in their schools either due to lack of infrastructure or supportive environments, or both. However, the value of this workshop does not lie primarily in its 'applicability' in some direct sense. Discussions with participants suggest that the workshop has triggered off processes and trajectories of thought which may have intangible effects, some of which were part of the overall objectives of Kali Kalisu. Shifts in perception about the arts, a catalytic effect on latent artistic impulses of teachers, a fresh approach to the teacher's role in education, etc. may begin to unfold. Specifically, they seem to be in the following realms:
Classroom democracy

The overwhelming positive response to some of the pedagogic aspects in the area of classroom democracy suggest that the arts, in the hands of committed trainers, offers a liberating and creative energy that can be tapped into by all teachers regardless of what they teach. A relationship that is grounded on mutual respect that acknowledges the value of the participants’ experiences and realities, and allows room for this to enter the 'lesson' has been appreciated and commented on across all workshops. While these may be identified as 'best practices' in teaching manuals, it is unrealistic to expect teachers to translate these principles into classroom behaviour unless they have experienced the potential of a democratic approach.

The arts and arts pedagogies in the hands of practitioners like the partners of Kali Kalisu, has been able to offer this experience. Hopefully it will be able to support a democratic and creative approach to education and ultimately result in a nurturing environment for children, and open a path of self discovery and fulfillment for teachers. This has an implication for training of non arts teachers. If they see learning of/about the arts as a positive and transformative experience, they can become advocates for them in schools without being directly involved in them.

Appreciating the arts

Teachers have been able to appreciate the arts as ‘disciplines’ that are rooted in language and methodologies. One of the reasons for devaluing the arts is because it is seen as an activity that is lacking in method and ‘discipline.’ For instance, many perceive contemporary dance as set of random and ‘free’ movements. After one becomes aware of the underlying science and experiences the effort involved in learning a so called ‘simple’ movement, one begins to appreciate it more. The joy of creativity, for many, has been experienced in the tension between rigour of the discipline and the freedom to explore. This has come through in our conversations, especially in the context of some of the modules. Therefore, a teacher who is able to appreciate the arts first hand is apt to be more proactive in recognizing the value of the arts in a school setting.

Arts Pedagogy

The arts cannot be 'taught' as a set of skills: they offer a window for exploring one's inner realm and its connection with the outer. The expression of these processes is made possible through the language and skills that are unique to every form. The externalization flowers in a space where there is tension
between freedom and rigour of a discipline and are enabled by arts pedagogies. The act of creation of an art 'product' is a process of making sense of the relationship with oneself and the world. Exploration, reflection, expression and a sense of 'play' that involves the whole being and all the senses makes the relationship with the arts a 'creative' one. Ideally, all of education ought to internalize some of these elements regardless of what is being taught. An initiation into arts pedagogies may suggest possibilities to all teachers (arts and non arts) and inspire them to bring a sense of discovery and joy into other subjects that they teach.

*The Personal*

One of the visions of this workshop was to ‘invest’ in the teacher and nurture her/his creative impulses. In the review session, many participants commented that this workshop was individual centered rather than information centered. Overall, many teachers viewed the workshop as a window for self expression. Some of the exercises also helped them to reflect, explore their creative sides, tap into personal contexts and share experiences. This aspect, they felt, ought to be brought into classrooms in order to help children develop a sense of self.
4. Kali Kalisu in the Context of other Workshops

Teachers are routinely deputed to attend training programmes as part of their professional development. Some of the senior teachers (like the Block Resource Persons and Cluster Resource Persons) are 'regulars' at programmes as they are expected to train others. At the other end of the spectrum was a young maths teacher in Udupi whose sole exposure to training was a maths workshop.

“When my CRP asked me to attend this workshop, I was afraid.” says a young English teacher from Bidar district. However, she confessed, on hindsight she was glad to have consented to come and be a part of it. When we explored this further, she, like many others, clarified that it was a relief to attend a workshop that stepped outside the area circumscribed by the syllabus that binds the teacher. Unlike other professional development programmes (which are no doubt essential and valuable) which focus on equipping teachers with specific tools that help lesson delivery, Kali Kalisu, teachers felt, had a wider goal. Creative drives, talents, exploration and discussions were all a part of a larger canvas that encompassed the wider world of the teacher.

The expansiveness seemed to flow from two significant attributes: the nature of the workshop’s goals, and the quality of interaction in the workshop. Many of the primary school teachers who had already attended training for Nali Kali (an open classroom system which uses flash cards, games, songs, etc) felt that while the Nali Kali too focused on training teachers to impart ‘joyful learning’, it was still focused on specific skill development as demanded by the syllabus of Nali Kali. The Kali Kalisu workshops they felt was fluid in its focus and offered a wider range of experiences that could ultimately build a teacher's teaching repertoire.

“This is the first time I have not taken constant notes or kept my pen and pad handy” commented Uma Devi from Coorg district. She, like many others, felt that there was a lot more interaction between participants and facilitators, while in most other programmes, information is passed on to participants who usually are passive listeners. The sessions were dynamic and therefore teachers felt more alive and attentive. A sense of fun and play brought back snatches of childhood for many of them.
5. Kali Kalisu and Children: possible scenarios

In conversations with teachers, both immediately after a workshop and also in retrospect, it became clear that there were differences in the way that they had experienced the workshop and understood its intent. Some felt that the emphasis was on experiencing and participating, although there was a possibility of applying new skills and approaches in the classroom, some of these were obviously in the areas of techniques (such as in the BGVS module that focused more on tools to use art in the classroom), the use of theatre games, etc. “If we learn something and enjoy it and we can’t pass it on to the children, then it is a waste” says an experienced teacher (Bidar district) while presenting highlights from a session to the rest of the participants. She is not the sole voice to express this view. It echoed through the workshops in numerous review sessions and private conversations. Many teachers were convinced, since the title of the workshop read 'learn and teach', that they were expected to imbibe skills and tools that they could use in the classroom. Therefore all sessions and inputs were measured against this lens of utility.

There were other areas such as the use of a particular method or approach (that had been used by the facilitators) that appeared potentially valuable for use in the classroom. Sometimes, this also applied to an ‘attitude’ displayed by the facilitators. “It was not only what they taught us but the way in which they taught us by involving us and our experience. It is something that I would like to bring to my students” commented a young theatre teacher at the end of the workshop. Some teachers saw the workshop as a window to view possibilities for self development (both as an individual and as a teacher). They felt that they needed to take the initiative to build on what they had learned and experienced. In this context the ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ (from ‘Kali’ and ‘Kalisu’) were not bound in an immediate relationship but punctuated with a space for exploration and internalization.

The motivation to 'learn and teach' in its most literal sense may not always translate into creative or exciting classroom interactions. They may not have a significant impact on the learning of a child. For instance, the exercise of using movement (in the form of a drill) to illustrate a geometry lesson, may neither result in a deeper understanding of arcs and lines nor an appreciation of movement. In some instances there may be an effort made by the teacher to force an application, an 'art in education' approach that attempts to use music, theatre or the visual medium to convey an idea, a concept or knowledge. In some instances these may be effective, such as the use of rhyme for memorization in the younger age groups. But if the teacher has herself not internalized the potential of these various mediums, it may not play a creative role. For instance, the use of an impromptu tableau in a history class to depict the architectural features of a Moghul monument may seem like a distraction for
children but it is not clear whether they learn about a dome by simply pretending to be one. Images from a well illustrated book may be a better resource in such an instance.
6. Teachers as Trainees: some observations

- Despite the fact that some teachers were appreciative of the seemingly open approach of the workshop, majority of the teachers were anxious about the ‘take home’ package. Their anxiety was centered on ‘what new thing can we do in the classroom.’ There seems to be a deeply ingrained expectation- that all training/workshops are about developing a skills package to be applied. It glaringly points to the fact that most teachers see all forms of training as repository of skills to be applied in the classroom. The suggestion that a workshop could be an investment in the individual is met with an uncomfortable pause and wariness.

- There are some obvious conclusions about the relationship of teachers to capacity building workshops that can be drawn from this observation. Primarily, teachers see themselves as skills horses who are mandated to absorb tools and skills in the programme that they are deputed to attend. Therefore, this is the expectation that they bring to the workshop. Secondly, the past experience of training workshops reinforces this expectation, as most sessions are based either on syllabi, teaching methods etc. which involve the grasping of knowledge and skills that can be transferred to the classroom. In the context of arts education, the tendency is to view the experience of the arts as vehicles in education- an arts in education approach which perhaps moves away from the intent of Kali Kalisu. This approach can also end up placing on facilitators a demand for more 'application' oriented modules.

Perhaps the intent of Kali Kalisu needs to be touched upon by the first set of facilitators of each workshop (ideally not by the organizers) so that the tone is set for the entire programme. It might lighten the teacher’s burden of being a skills-horse to some extent and allow him/her to experience the sessions with a little more freedom.

- Through observations and conversations with teachers it became obvious that training is a sort of expected ‘perk’ that is given to all teachers. Individuals such as the Block and Area officials perhaps have already developed a ‘workshop persona’ because of their regular exposure. The challenge is to create a learning atmosphere in the workshop that is a departure from the regular ‘government training.’ Perhaps one way of doing so is to bring the focus onto the intent of the workshop and to attempt to build a collaborative relationship between the facilitators and participants. Rules can be evolved within the groups and norms enforced by the group. Why is this a concern when the workshop is about art in education? An experience of a group dynamic
that is cooperative, dynamic and self regulated (even if this is their only experience) is sure to help teachers recognize its benefit in their own classroom. Even if it cannot be replicated, perhaps it will remain as a possibility that can manifest sometime. On the other hand, an ‘authoritative’ atmosphere in the workshop can end up reinforcing modes of relating that are grounded in relations of power and hierarchy. If the ultimate beneficiary is expected to be the child in the classroom, these workshop processes need to be kept in view. Processes do determine the efficacy of classroom interaction. To quote a cliché, ‘joyful learning’ cannot be enforced but needs to unfold in an atmosphere that supports it. While it is important to remind all participants of the ground rules for discipline and the need to be attentive through the workshop, it might be more effective if this role is taken on by facilitators rather than the organizers.

• The intent and scope of each module needs to be reviewed in the context of the larger canvas of Kali Kalisu. Like most other short term workshops, these modules are intended to provide an experience of a certain art form and its pedagogies, all within a duration of two or three days. Therefore the workshop does not claim to make ‘experts’ out of teachers in any particular area of the arts. However, some of these modules seem to be moving towards a content that is skill based and application oriented.

Given that two or three days are insufficient for creating competencies that can be used with confidence by teachers, the latter tendency needs to be examined in the light of the broader objectives of Kali Kalisu. The very real danger would be to have modules which neither provide a feel and experience of the art form, nor develop skills that can be applied with confidence. The later Ananya sessions were heavily tipped towards attempting to build applicable skills: rhythm in poetry, for instance. The attempt to introduce composition may not have moved teachers to a level from which they could compose music, as the group in Gulbarga had little exposure to music other than its popular form. The ability to convey a framework for appreciating Carnatic music is the unique approach that the Ananya facilitators bring to the workshop which could be brought more into focus.

In the later Attakalari session (Coorg) the sessions incorporated theatre inputs in a simplified form (the exercise on giving expression to emotions for instance). The intent of working on abstraction was perhaps not achieved as there was no space in the module to refine these expressions or movements. The strength of earlier movement modules, that lay in their ability to bring a degree of reflection and
self awareness, was minimized somewhat in the later modules.

There were moments in the workshops flowed smoothly along the fine line of confluence between skill building and experience, giving participants a feel for the possibilities of the art form while also building a set of approaches and tools. The BGVS activity that introduced teachers to local soils as potential painting media, and the site specific group performance that culminated the Atakalari module (in Coorg), the poem building exercise of Ninasam were some instances among others that demonstrated this possibility.
7. What Next?

The first phase of the programme has been received with much enthusiasm that signals that there is deep need and thirst for an exposure to the arts. However, the response has also indicated that there are areas (both within the context of the workshop modules as well as the larger context) that need attention in order to enhance its appeal and potential. The following are suggested interventions or changes in the areas of workshop/module design and facilitation. Suggestions for evolving a supportive environment for teachers have also been suggested.

Some of these recommendations have been made with the assumption that the Kali Kalisu programme will broadly adhere to the design of the first phase. Should the structure of the programme be revamped, these may not have much value.

Clarity of Intent

The overall approach and broad intent of Kali Kalisu needs to be discussed and debated in the context of the broader canvas of Kali Kalisu. This is not to suggest that there needs to be a top down formulation of a rigid 'objective.' Each arts practice and its pedagogy have different learning experiences to offer in a training situation and will therefore have different objectives. However, there needs to be clarity regarding the focus overall which had to be shared at two levels: between the partner organizations, and also between facilitators and participants.

Towards the end of the programme, there seemed to be a struggle to find a balance between imparting skills (that can be used in the classroom) and providing inputs and an ambience in which the teacher can experience the creative potential of a particular art form and its pedagogy. There is the real danger of modules that neither provide an experience nor impart skills that are ‘usable.’ Partner organizations need to arrive at what are the possible avenues that can provide a meaningful overall experience for participants. It may not be possible for a particular art form to be translated into easily digestible tools within the space of two or three days, while another form might lend itself naturally to such a format. Facilitators should feel empowered to work within this and not feel 'obliged' to design an application package.
This shared understanding of the focus and approach for each module needs to be accepted and shared across the board. The design of the module and the tenor with which it is conducted needs to be in harmony with this intent. For instance, if a module is intended as a quick introduction that aims to give teachers a feel for puppetry, this needs to communicated clearly to participants. The sessions need to be facilitated with this as the central intent so that it unfolds in a relaxed and exploratory manner rather than as a condensed skill building session, which leaves teachers feeling frustrated (‘I haven't learnt enough’) and anxious about completing 'tasks.' If the intent of Kali Kalisu is to enable teachers to experience the arts as a 'culturally sensitized' way of relating to the world, the frame work of all modules for future workshops needs to accommodate this vision.

The review has revealed that those teachers who have seen the workshop as an investment in the individual have been able to imbibe the experience in a 'tension free' atmosphere. It has also been observed and reported earlier that these teachers who have been inspired to learn have also expressed the desire to make positive shifts in classroom interaction (especially in the area of creating a collaborative classroom). Perhaps this needs to be kept in the forefront while designing the next phase.

**Ambience**

It has been demonstrated by workshops so far, and corroborated by participants, that Kali Kalisu is a ‘different’ kind of workshop. Since Kali Kalisu has already made itself a space outside of the regular ‘government training’, one may build an aesthetic for the workshop that brings the focus onto the intent of the workshop. Would it be possible to create a learning ambience that is democratic, participative and conducive to exploring the creative in one? For instance, could we move away from the classroom rituals (like inauguration, vote of thanks, etc.) that are part of government training (and sometimes reinforce the hierarchy between the organizer and trainee) and instead create a new set of rituals, practices that work towards building a collaborative relationship between the facilitators and participants. Could rules and norms to be evolved and enforced by the group?

**Dynamic**

In any group situation where participants are expected to enable each other’s learning, maintaining a harmonious dynamic becomes essential. Facilitators need to ensure this. In some of the workshops there were cliques and groups that sometimes were inattentive of others’ presentation or inputs. In some instances, there was booing and obstructive behaviour. There were other instances where some
women were sidelined. Prejudices about ‘the other’ became obvious. Persons of a certain ‘stature’ (such as Block and Cluster officials) were obviously the ones in ‘charge’ of group activities with little room for participation.

These scenarios suggest the following kinds of interventions. At a more immediate level, it might mean that facilitators take a ‘directive’ stance in the interest of the larger group. Some of these scenarios may be explored in post session discussions in a more general level without singling out individuals. Since the tussle for power, display of hierarchy, gender and other biases seem to be consistently a part of these workshop groups, perhaps these ‘questions’ could be built into classroom activities and exercises to some extent. It may be possible in the theatre, puppetry and BGVS modules in terms of subjects for group work. It could also be reflected in the kinds of texts/poems that are worked on in other modules (Ananya, Atakalari). The details and modalities may be discussed and creative ways of addressing it may be arrived at. The one kind of intervention that will not work is one which is based on authority (‘because I say so’) as this will only reinforce already calcified notions that accept hierarchical relations as the norm.

This is necessary for any learning to unfold in a free and respectful space. If the intent is to allow teachers to experience their creative energies and express them, this space needs to be ensured, regardless of what is being ‘taught.’ The creative arts have in them the potential to seep deep into our consciousness. Perhaps this explains their use in ‘therapy’ of different sorts. I am not suggesting that the art education workshops become the vehicles for setting right classroom problems. Rather, what is suggested here is that one needs to make sure that the potential of the workshop is allowed to unfold more fully in an atmosphere that is respectful and participatory. Perhaps in becoming aware of how teachers transact with their peers, they might also become aware of how they might be relating to their children in the classroom. An experience of a group dynamic that is cooperative, dynamic and self regulated (even if this is their only experience) is sure to help teachers recognize its benefit in exploring their own creativity and perhaps that of their classrooms as well. Even if this experience cannot be replicated, perhaps it will remain as a possibility that can manifest sometime.

**Composition**

Should Block and Area resource persons be included with other teachers? In the three workshops (Gulbarga, Bidar and Udupi) I observed that the resource persons were vocal and often domineering in the group. Younger teachers (and often women) were sidelined when it came to discussions, group
tasks and performances. They were also extremely conscious of their stature and often referred to themselves by their designations. Many of them had considerably more training in their careers as compared to other teachers. In Udupi, one small group actually complained that the resource person had bulldozed the group into accepting his suggestions for a short play despite the fact that there were people with theatre and music expertise in the group. Keeping this in mind, I feel that the resource persons should not be included with other teachers. Perhaps a workshop for resource persons from a district (or two or more districts) could be organized separately.

**Role of Facilitators**

**Content**

The movement and theatre modules in particular may need to be scaled down for non theatre teachers. Many teachers may be inhibited and will need smaller and simpler steps to get into theatre exercises or movement. Akshara of Ninasam suggested that there may be a need for a small session on theatre appreciation as generally the awareness of contemporary theatre is low among government school teachers. The idea is to open them to the possibilities which might enhance their involvement in the theatre module.

The puppetry module may need to allow more time for reinforcement of techniques as many may not have had prior exposure to it. It might have more impact if theatre and puppetry can be taken as collaborative modules as they complement each other. Details such as script, voice, and performance can perhaps be worked on more effectively. The Gombe Mane facilitators have expressed the disappointment that puppetry remains a supportive aid to education; while it’s potential as an art form remains untapped. If this is to be corrected, the modules need to be designed to allow space for an exploration of the medium.

As suggested by many participants, it seems to make sense to design a music appreciation module that is broad in scope and introduces various kinds of music- folk and classical forms (Dhrupad, Carnatic and Hindustani). A detailed exploration of any one form may not serve the purpose of enhancing appreciation of music and it’s potential. Classical forms need to be included as most teachers may not have had access to them. There are risks involved in embarking upon an exposition of classical music in the midst of an audience that is alienated from it by virtue of socio-cultural locations. Folk forms should be included because they are part of their local environment. Some may be familiar with them
but there are a large number of persons who are either unfamiliar with them or uncomfortable about acknowledging their acquaintance. Value for cultural forms depends on the proximity to power, which in rural India is increasingly seen as residing in cities and urban culture. By including folk music in the module, one validates them as cultural forms. It also helps to build an appreciation of ‘local’ cultures for those who are alienated from them. The Ananya module needs to move towards a content that allows participants to experience the grandeur and beauty of classical and other forms of music. As mentioned earlier in the report, a 'skill building' approach may neither build appropriate skills nor give them a significant musical experience.

Although the BGVS session is perhaps very relevant to non arts teachers, it might benefit from a more flexible approach. Emphasis may be given to experimentation with various kinds of material and mediums, as art itself may be a new language for many. The number of inputs may be decreased and the sessions spread out in order to allow the exploration of visual arts in the classroom at a more leisurely pace, with a gradual building of skills/concepts from the simple to more complex. While consistency indicates clarity on the part of the faculty, there needs to be some flexibility built into it. For instance, faculty needs to modify exercises or limit the number in order to accommodate the dynamic in the classroom.

There needs to be room for discussion on the relevance of the exercises and an invitation to participants to contribute their ideas on how to modify/make these exercises relevant to their classrooms. One of the central ideas in the BGVS training module is to design activities that are relevant to a child’s life. Therefore the module could use issues that are relevant to the lives of teachers/individual adults as the starting point of some of the activities. If the classroom activities (to be later used in the classroom with children) are initiated with the question posed to teachers as adults (rather than asking them to come up with what is relevant or meaningful for children) it might give them an experience of working on something that is ‘close’ to themselves and therefore convince them of the power of such an approach in the classroom. It might lend a ‘here and now’ relevance to the activity in a real sense which is the intent of the BGVS input. If not, there is a danger of passing on an 'activity' model that can lend itself to mechanical reproduction in the classroom.

At a more mundane level, time management is important as participants felt rushed and pressured to complete their tasks in some of the sessions. Instructions, some teachers felt, were not always very clear or were too 'heavy.' This generated a certain amount of anxiety.
General Concerns

Apart from being the ‘experts’ in their areas, facilitators do have the burden of carrying the group with them. This means being able to be flexible in fine tuning the content depending on the particular needs of the group, being sensitive to on the ground issues and trying to address them in a collaborative fashion. It involves building space for reflection, discussion and processing of inputs. This is crucial because, as has been documented in the Ninasam workshop, that the method and quality of interaction between the facilitators and participants is as important as the content.

There needed to be some time built in for reflecting on the various group processes that were unfolding through the session. For example, in Bidar, there were contentious moments during the ‘telling’ of the story and preparation of the ‘script’ prior to the performance where there were multiple readings of the story. Feelings of ownership of the tale as well as the tendency to assume that the ‘other’ is not with the rest of the group (in this case the divide was obvious between some Carmelite trainees and some Urdu medium teachers) surfaced and in some instances intensified during the rehearsals. Facilitators could have used the more non threatening opportunities (such as the ownership of stories and readings/’misreadings’ of the same story) to help the group reflect on some elements that are relevant to their relationship with children.

In many workshops, there were moments when facilitators needed to exercise their discretion in order to maintain an atmosphere of harmony and ease in the classroom. This was particularly essential in those locations in which the participant group was split along language and possibly cultural lines. When there are disparate ethnic/linguistic groups as part of the participant body, there needs to be some dialogue that enables a conversation between them so that there is meaningful sharing of each others’ experiences. Facilitators need to be sensitive to this and perhaps need to be primed in advance so that they are better prepared to handle a diverse group. Exposure to the arts, as we have seen through the course of the first phase, varies greatly across specific areas of the state. This needs to be taken into account while formulating the content of workshops.

Re-looking at design

- The partners of Kali Kalisu may explore the possibility of enhancing the interdisciplinary approach of the workshop. Some of the modules have the potential of overlap and mutual enrichment – movement and theatre, puppetry and theatre for instance. They might also explore
dove-tailing the inputs of their modules in order to avoid repetitions (such as ice-breakers at the beginning of every module) or forge possible linkages between modules (for instance, the application of the poetry session of Ninasam in the choreography session by Atakalari).

- Conversations with the facilitators suggest that the three day format (for each art form) is inadequate, if it is to be the sole exposure for teachers. They have suggested that a series of modules be given to teachers so that their familiarity with the art form is built in stages. Akshara (Ninasam) suggested that theatre module will need to build a context for contemporary theater as exposure to this form is low especially for the constituency of government school teachers. He also felt that there needs to be some element of literary exposure worked into the module.

Dr. Raghavendra (Ananya) recommended various levels of listening/appreciation experiences for the 'uninitiated' teacher. He felt that the interaction with teachers needs to be planned so that there is a graded appreciation of music. He also suggested that the teacher could be given listening and text material which the teacher could share with her/his students.

Jayachandran of Attakkalari proposed the idea of a 'suitcase' show which would entail a series of traveling movement performances that could be done 'locally' (at the districts) for a group of host schools. This he felt would enhance an appreciation of contemporary movement arts which could be further built on in workshops.

Gombe Mane has suggested that their module is an introductory one that introduces the form to teachers. They feel that these workshops should be followed up by specific skill building workshops that would support teachers to bring puppetry into the classroom.

As far the BGVS module is concerned, their approach, they feel, needs to be modified to suit high school teachers. Their inputs are generally tailored for primary level teachers.

- Teachers have expressed their frustration with school environments that are not always conducive to trying new ways of being with children. Classroom practices seem to be regimented and codified. Or at least, teachers do not feel empowered to try something 'different.' One way of tackling this block could be to facilitate the formation of informal networks among teachers from an area or district. Sharing of information, resources and ideas might keep alive their enthusiasm and trigger new lines of enquiry into their relationship with education.

- Since we are concerned with local forms of cultural expression, one way in which teachers can experience the arts in their specific contexts would be to build local art forms into the curriculum of the workshop. Local arts partners may be roped in not only as facilitators for the
workshop but also to maintain a sustained interaction with teachers in a particular area. This is not to suggest that these should be the sole elements of the workshop. The excitement in exploring something that is new and 'alien' (like contemporary movement for instance) should not be compromised.
8. In Conclusion

One of the significant spin-offs of the Kali Kalisu initiative is that it facilitated the coming together of art practitioners who otherwise function in separate spheres. Although all of them have an interest in education and continue to work with similar constituencies, the Kali Kalisu programme provided a platform for discovering possible linkages and forging partnerships. For instance, Ninasam and Gombe Mane have had a long association but the possibility of a mutual relationship between a theatre institute and a contemporary movement academy (Attakkalari) suggested itself in the course of this particular initiative.

The workshops have also had a transformative effect on facilitators who have been intensely involved in it. Some of the Attakkalari facilitators felt that they had understood the art and craft of teaching and communicating better. One of them mentioned that it had helped him become aware of dynamics that either enable or disrupt the learning flow of the classroom. For the young Ananya facilitators, the challenge was to demystify a form of classical music both for themselves and others. This perhaps has brought into focus their own relationship with their art.

There is a possibility that for arts practitioners and for IFA, interactions with teachers from across the state perform the role of an 'arts barometer' to gauge the level of exposure to local art forms and response to the arts in general.

In anticipation of the next phase of Kali Kalisu, some areas need to be given attention. The following are some suggestions:

- Interaction between all partner organizations and possibly with other 'stake holders,' in order to share learnings and assess their experiences. This could help to formulate the next phase. Details such as determining the constituency (for instance, should it be all teachers), the depth and spread (all districts or focused interaction with one district) and the broad intent of the programme need to discussed.

- Capacity building for facilitators based on their needs. The hearts of Kali Kalisu are its facilitators. They have not only been able to design and execute a learning experience that has been overwhelmingly appreciated, but have also been able to help teachers reconnect with basic classroom practices that revolve around acceptance and mutual respect. In order to enable facilitators to iron out the hiccoughs they might have faced and to refine their approach, a set of
capacity building exercises need to be designed. This ought to include inputs that will enable them to handle classroom dynamics that disrupt a democratic learning atmosphere.

- Exploring the possibility of linkages with arts practitioners at the 'local' level. These may be folk artists who could play a role in providing a local ambience and help to root art initiatives within the teachers' immediate communities.
9. After Word

Looking back at the programme in its entirety, there can be no mistaking the overwhelming positive response it has received from participants. Facilitators, for their part, have been struck by the ease with which teachers, with no prior exposure to the arts, have been able to enter its unfamiliar waters. They have also been confronted with habits, such as the one foot step (that all school teachers seem to drill into children) that persist even in the face of the fantastic variety available to them through local live forms like Yakshagana.

Learning, as we are aware, is a complex process. Changes in perspective and ‘behaviour’ are propelled by multiple processes- both internal to the person as well as external to him/her (environment or community). Therefore, it is hard to predict what might be the long term outcome of such an intervention. The question of 'utility' of the programme cannot be addressed in any direct, quantifiable way. Perhaps the experience itself, even if it is to be the only one in a teacher's life, can serve as an 'ah haa’ moment that has a transient but transformative effect on him/her. It might swirl as a memory haze to be tapped into consciously or otherwise, like Wordsworth's daffodils waiting to; flash upon that inward eye.’ Teachers themselves cannot clearly state the specific ways in which this might happen. Pragna from Shimoga district feels that the workshop is a background canvas, a dream-like memory from which different things begin to suggest themselves to her: “It is there at the back of my mind...I do draw on it, sometimes without being fully aware.”
10. Reflections of an observer

Currently education centers mainly on memory based learning that is all about information and not about exploration and experience. The experts tell us that so called ‘learning’ is more than this. Perhaps this is a window that can be opened by the arts. The arts take you into the realm of the senses. They give you the tools and the space to explore your immediate world, your relationship to it and also enable you to express it in a way that is your own. This is crucial for all of us...and of course essential for children. After all, the passage through childhood is one of discovery of the world and the self and the formation of impressions about the same.

Arts education is not going to serve any purpose if it is ‘taught’ in the way most subjects are taught in schools with the teacher demanding that the child pick up x number of skills and be able to reproduce the ‘answer’ in the expected way. Whether it is visual art or theatre, this approach will only produce parrots and children who will grow up to hate painting because they cannot draw a sunset ‘correctly’ (which is what happens often in schools). For example, in an art class if you put observation of the tree in the school yard at the centre, you offer children a chance to look, listen, touch and feel and express how he /she ‘sees’ various aspects of the tree. They can move into experiencing the tree rather than be forced to reproduce a ‘perfect’ image of it. The variety of lines, forms, colours, and textures will go way beyond any unitary form of ‘a tree’ that a teacher might have to offer. Perhaps that is the beginning of creativity- the space in which one can make sense of one's experience and express it in one's own voice. It is also the beginning of a rooted sense of self, and perhaps a movement into that much sought after state of empowerment?
11. School Diaries

Passing through Jakanapalli, Gulbarga

On the second day of the Ninasam workshop, Ashok shared his photo album with me. He had painstakingly documented all the plays that he and his students had put up. I really liked the terracotta pillars in that photograph quite aesthetically done. Simple, he said, we used plastic buckets and smeared them with red mud and piled them one on top of each other. And what a great location - a village *katte* (platform) under a grand tree, I exclaim. O that, the children were not allowed to use the panchayat *katte*; some of them are *dalit* you see. (he smiles) but that's another story.

In July of this year, we drove down a bumpy road past Sadem and the drying fields of *thovar daal*. You can hardly tell it is monsoon- the fields look yellow at the edges. They are facing another drought and Ashok is sure that the daal crops would all fail. We hold our breath and pull in tummies, hoping to squeeze through the lanes of his village. Old stony structures with the flat slate-like stones piled one on top of the other in the way that is characteristic of this part of Karnataka.

The school is a little away from the village and set amidst open fields on all sides. Ashok and the children have painted the small stage using red, terracotta and white paint. The children are bi lingual - they speak both Telugu and Kannada. Some of them cycle or walk across fields to come to school.

Ashok says he is able to meet the children several times a week as there are few teachers in the school. Through drama he teaches language (Kannada) as the texts lend themselves to be interpreted theatrically. The children (who seem to be of mixed ages as the school is small), seem to enjoy drama and their teacher. The day of our visit, Ashok is polishing the play about the unfeeling unthinking teacher. They begin by setting up the stage. The only props are the library display frames (which Ashok designed) and the crates painted over in warm brown. A flute, a drum and a plate form the music section.

A refresher make up class is held – for our benefit as well as the children's. Rajanna, the star singer of the school, is transformed into a grumpy old man with a cotton mustache. Drum beats and the play begins. The story unfolds to reveal that the teacher realizes that he has been unreasonable in punishing a boy for not wearing his uniform. He learns that the only decent set of clothing the boy possesses is a school uniform that he has to share with his brother. An occurrence that is not uncommon in many schools. There are a ring of spectators - farmers on their way to the field watch from a distance.
Ashok has spoken to a local merchant and managed to get a good price on basic shoes. He feels that children's self esteem will be enhanced if they come properly attired to school. He has bought shoes for those who couldn't afford them.

The boys and girls really enjoy singing. Some of them are raunchy folk songs in Telugu. Others are songs that they have heard their elders sing while working in the fields. Some they have picked up from cassettes. The children seem to enjoy working with Ashok. There is an easy companionship that is perhaps not possible in larger schools.

He takes his role as 'educator' seriously. Every weekend he uses a good neighbour's TV set to show the children films- Chaplin, among other things. He says that he is running out of material and would like to source them from Bangalore. Part of his salary goes towards buying a make-up kit and second hand clothes for the costume trunk. He has also invested in a set of second hand lights which he uses. He feels that local people (and other schools) need to be introduced to good theatre. Currently, the state of children's theatre he feels is abysmal. The annual talent contests held at the District level (Pratibha Karanji) is crammed with plays that are rehashed popular themes. Mikes, long adult speeches and static performances are the norm. He feels that his students can make a difference by showcasing a different kind of theatre that is live and rooted in their realities. Ashok really wishes that the children could travel with their play to other schools in the area so that they can meet other children and perform for them. The school authorities are not very helpful in terms of organizing funds that would cover transport. Nor are fellow teachers from other schools or the local residents of the village (many of whom are constrained financially).

The local village leader (the Reddy) visits the school and joins our discussion. He feels that the high school has made a difference to the village and many more girls have enrolled in the school. Theatre, he feels, gives children confidence and a sense of self. One of the girls from his family also attends the same school.

Ashok sometimes feels frustrated because of the constraints posed by hierarchy and red tape. He cannot take his play on the road (day trips to nearby villages) because the authorities cannot sanction a thousand rupees. One of the officials objected because the play depicted a teacher beating a student. Ashok got no response when he questioned the official about why they had thought it fit to include that particular story in the language text book. He is yet to receive a satisfactory response- both to his request and to his question.
Shettikere, Shimoga District

The wet green of Shimoga district is a sharp contrast to the languishing browns of Gulbarga. Many ponds and bamboo clumps have passed us before we turn into Shettikere. Apparently the village was culled out of forests in the 1950s to accommodate the displaced inhabitants of villages that went under the Bhadra river project.

Like many other village schools, the classrooms form a sharp C shape around the central ground which is used for the assembly. Shrill voices ring out from the Nali Kali class across the field. Grim faced sahitya academy awardees line the walls of the school. The stage, we are told, was demolished by mistake when the old school building (the primary section) was being renovated. It hasn't been rebuilt. I ask the headmaster if he has a plan for it. No, he says, the plan comes from the government. I suggest to him that Kusuma, the drama teacher, may be able to suggest some modifications that might improve the design. He promises to consider it.

The assembly, like all other assemblies across the state, begins with the paean to mother Karnataka and end with the morning news. Then the children march off in neat lines to their classroom. Today there is a little bit of excitement because of the film crew. The head master is all praise for Kusuma's work with the children and extends all his cooperation.

The class 9 children (boys and girls) are completely engaged with the tasks that Kusuma has set them. One group is fashioning models of their village to represent common problems they face. The well and water is central to it. Another group is using leaves to represent animals; a third has identified different kinds of mud to paint the human heart which has figured in their biology class.

Boys and girls have finally begun to work together, says Kusuma. The gender segregation has been imbibed at every stage and sometimes what I tell them goes against what others teach them here and at home- it is confusing for me at times, she confesses. But she continues to do what she believes is correct.

And what is this art/craft work doing in a theatre class? Kusuma explains that she includes a list of creative activities in her syllabus so that children get to experience different things. She laughs and says that she tries to stuff creative stuff wherever she can, both for herself and the sake of her children.
She is convinced that theatre and 'all these activities' makes them self confident. What about her colleagues? Kusuma seems to function in her own sphere but asks for advice whenever it is needed. Would the Kali Kalisu training make a difference to her colleagues if they were to be part of it? She shakes her head vigorously. Negative. It is has been exciting for me because I am a theatre person, she says. I have learnt a lot that will help me personally and also develop my craft. What it did was to initiate me into the role of a teacher. Earlier, I functioned as an actor and had no inkling about what it meant to be a teacher. The workshop helped me to understand this better. Coming back to colleagues, workshops of this nature are useful only if someone is already artistically inclined. After all, it is one's innate qualities that determine who we are in the classroom. I really don't see how this can help a maths teacher, despite the BGVS attempt to teach us to make models of cubes etc. Only if a teacher is inclined to explore his creative or artistic side, it is of some value. But for me, I feel it has definitely added to my development, she says nodding vigorously, but this time in the affirmative.

The girls are far more articulate than the boys in our group interaction with them. The head master had mentioned earlier that girls from Shettikere were staying on till class 10 because they now had access. Earlier, when children had to trek miles to attend the high school, the girls invariably stayed home. According to him, they are apparently 'brighter' and harder working than the boys. In our conversation we learn that the children find Kusuma's classes interesting and 'different' because they get to do 'all kinds of things.' They discuss relationships, talk about their personal lives, play theatre games, all of which they say is very important, especially when they can share feelings and experiences with friends and peers. I immediately recall the comments city mothers make about the endless phone calls and e chats that their children have with friends despite being with them all day in school.

*Miss makes us do different kinds of things which other teachers don't...we really like her class...*and other voices join in. One of the girls loves to draw and spends her time at home drawing whatever she can. She would love to join a class or have art taught in school. *But this isn't there in our village,* she adds. Another girl pipes in that these classes give her an opportunity to express her artistic gifts- her talent. They are already concerned that they may not get this exposure once they finish school.

*Udupi Town*

The Government Composite High School, Volakadu, Udupi, sits in the centre of Udupi town. Unlike its cousins in the villages we visited, the building is old and seasoned and beautifully crafted with wooden pillars and Mangalore tiles. The central yard is paved with well worn stones on which children
are marching in unison. The new high school building sits opposite the old one and is square and modern.

The Principal is very proud of the new computer lab and the technical facilities that the school offers, which he says has become available to the under-privileged of the area. 40% of the students come from the nearby slums and are children of labourers (migrants from North Karnataka). The school, despite being a government school, has drawn several donations from private sources which have been utilized to update facilities such as computer labs. The Principal, however, is convinced that children need outlets in all areas, including the arts. There are yakshagana classes arranged for children after school hours. As we speak we see the younger children painting the floors of the corridor with rangoli patterns. It is a rangoli competition in progress.

Gaithri teaches maths at the primary level. She feels that her enthusiasm to try new approaches in the classroom is somewhat dampened because of the lack of support from peers and colleagues. She feels that the one important thing she learnt from the workshop is to bridge the distance between herself and her students. She recalls the open atmosphere that the facilitators established, where 'all were equal.' Gaithri does not feel that the arts are the only avenue to open up a person's creativity. Mathematics, she feels, has plenty of space for creativity. Gaithri insists that if a teacher is able to encourage a child to find different ways of solving a problem, it would nurture creativity in the student as well as herself.

Venkataramana Upadhya, who teaches Sanskrit at the high school level, seems to feel that education is all about producing doctors and engineers. He comments that the real child, his/her abilities and interests seem to have faded out of the screens of parents, teachers and society at large, and no thought is given to nurturing these aspects of the child. He too feels constrained by the larger structures in which the current educational system is embedded. Even the classrooms and the time frame for teaching seem to curtail any effort of moving away from the one way lecture system of teaching. As a language teacher, he feels that drama is essential to get through to the emotional content of literature. Although he feels that drama could be effectively used in class, time and spatial arrangements of classrooms curtail him.

While Upadhya's Sanskrit class was in progress, an art session was in full swing next door. The art teacher introduced himself to me and clarified that he had been widely interviewed and recognized for his work. He pointed to his oil paintings of children that were hanging on the walls. I stepped into the class which was actually an art test. Children had prepared a set of drawings at home (most of them
had xerox copies) and were called on to draw on the board. When I asked the teacher why the students needed to draw on the board, he explained that he was gauging their ability to use chalk and draw steady lines. He also showed me their books which were filled with exercises that included simplified ways of drawing objects such as wine glasses, birds, etc. One page was devoted to the drawing of neat horizontal lines. Many pages were filled with reproductions of scenery, images and cartoon figures. The children were engrossed in studying their pictures and waited anxiously for their turn to draw on the board. Palm trees, village dwellings, suns and hills filled the board.

I went back to the principal at the end of the afternoon and asked him if he felt that visual arts were important for children. One of the functions that art served, he said, was to build children's overall confidence by helping them to be proficient in all areas. Art competitions, he felt were good because they helped students to put out their best. It was a skill that needed to be developed and showcased. The school has a policy of displaying the best of children's work on the walls on a monthly basis. The classrooms and corridors are adorned with water colours of scenery and trees. Occasionally you spot the oil paintings of the art master depicting young children engrossed in activity.

Kakabe, Kodagu

From Uma's Nali Kali room, we can get view of the large, green hill and purple clouds. This is an old primary school at the edge of a coffee estate and generously supported by the estate owners. Uma stands in the centre of her classroom directing children to play a wild game of finding animal partners. There is much mewing and crowing and barking. The naughty ones mew and bark in order to run away from their blind-folded partners and lead them on a merry dance!

So what do you find different about the Kali Kalisu training, I ask Uma. She replies that the big difference is that it focused on the individual and gave them space to explore without feeling constrained or watched. It brought her back to experiencing the classroom as a child which she feels is essential as she works with young children. Other programmes, she clarifies, are more skill oriented and sticks to the confines and demands of the school syllabus. Even the Nali Kali training is formulaic and demands that one learns and uses a definite set of approaches. The Kali Kalisu workshop she felt had given them the freedom to experience and enjoy the arts. The methods used were also different from the lecture mode that most training programmes follow.
Most of the teachers in this school are women. The children tramp across estates and sometimes walk several kilometers to reach the school. Most of them belong to labouring families. Trees, birds and the lushness of the hills are part of their everyday lives. It would be a challenge to teach them about nature and the environment from the confines of a book.