Impressions from a Visit to the Mysore Campus

When my husband and I arrived at the Mysore campus after a 30 hour journey from the U.S., the lush green landscape welcomed us. This is my second visit as a guest while my husband leads a three-week workshop in GEC-1. I enjoy walking the footpaths to explore the campus, stopping often to admire a vista, observe a detail, or listen to the symphony of voices and bird song. Buildings set into the natural contours of the land delight the eye and the imagination, and the people who move about the campus bring it to life.

Buildings have always been one of my special interests—perhaps because my father worked as an architectural engineer. What a pleasure to view the varied Mysore buildings both from a distance and close-up. Glass facades reflect and sparkle—the Multiplex dome and the angular planes of Buildings 7-8 fascinate me. Reflecting and cascading, water features invite me to stop at Building 4, GEC-1, or the Activity Center swimming pool. The Activity Center embraces many services and recreation choices while gracefully climbing the hill. GEC-1 suggests a classic Greek temple in a modern setting.

The gilded dome draws me to the GEC-2, impressive in size and detail. In 2008, we watched as workmen high above the ground formed the pediments while others poured concrete, painted, or prepared for planting. It is exciting to experience the space, with its beautiful inlaid floors, state of the art classrooms, and spacious library. The indoor-outdoor spaces in buildings here in Mysore intrigue me. They must reflect a traditional response to providing air circulation in the local climate.
When I stop to reflect, it becomes apparent that the Mysore campus has been designed with great care. Successfully placing buildings, roads, footpaths, and 21st Century infrastructure on a hilly site—and weaving it together with landscaping—demonstrates thoughtful planning. Even though thousands of people use the campus, it is surprisingly quiet. When people move about on foot or cycle, the loudest sounds may come from enthusiastic volleyball players and spectators. I’ve also observed that the residential areas—hostels and guest houses—are separate from the buildings for working and learning. Providing a transition zone are the Activity Center, Multiplex Dome, football field, amphitheater and cricket grounds.

Gardens and gardening are also among my interests. The variety of plants and trees on the Mysore campus impresses this visitor. Masses of color and texture line the roads and footpaths, compliment the buildings and hostels, and provide lovely views in every direction. I am happy to discover mass plantings of rain lilies, as several varieties grow in our home garden. Every day near the guest houses, I marvel at the spectacular sight of trees crowned with large red-orange blossoms. Our climate is more temperate, so most of the trees in Mysore are new to me. What a rich assortment—formal and casual palms, trees with upright or spreading forms, flowering and providing shade. From the trees, birds call and sing. What a delight to watch birds that are new to me and to spot the indigo flash of a kingfisher or the bright green of a parakeet.
Observing and interacting with people here on the Mysore campus is a wonderful experience. Morning and evening, the flow of workers and trainees walking or cycling is like a colorful parade. People here are friendly. They share a smile and a greeting. Often they ask where I come from. They gladly offer assistance when sensing a problem or question. The attentive staff at the Floating Restaurant explains the Indian food and insures we have plenty to eat. We communicate, despite language differences.

At meals we converse with workshop participants and Education and Research folks. These conversations provide opportunities to share insights from industry and academic perspectives. I’ve also added to my vocabulary. When I use my camera, I’m taking a snap. People power cycles, and motors power bikes. Timings tell when a shop is open. Best of all, these conversations offer a great chance to learn about India-- present and past, high tech and traditional-- from articulate and enthusiastic experts! I am truly grateful to Infosys for providing me this enriching experience at the Mysore campus.

Kathryn Tharp, visiting from Raleigh, North Carolina, USA 5 October 2010

Photographs by Srikanth Vader