

Seven years ago when I first came to Kodaikanal to visit Sholai, I thought that it would consist of a few buildings with multiple floors and when I had my first glimpse of Sholai, I was amazed. It was nothing like I had imagined, there was no one single building for all the classrooms nor one building for the dorm. There were many small buildings and no electricity from the Tamil Nadu electricity grid. I saw solar panel providing the electricity for the school's needs along with a Micro-Hydro power plant. These are just some of the things I learnt about Sholai on my visit.

I joined the school the following term, I thought the school was just there to get us through our 10th and 12th. I have learnt a lot through the seven years of my life in Sholai. Things that I would not have the chance to learn outside. Sholai provided me the space and time where I could learn to work with wood and to grow vegetables without using pesticides or fertilizers. Outside of Sholai trying to grow vegetables or making tables at my age would be ridiculed by others. Everyone else in my family would expect me to be studying all the time. In Sholai I realised that I could learn at my own speed and by learning, I mean actually understanding the concepts, instead of memorizing textbooks.

In the last few years I've become aware of a lot more things and their importance, such as: learning about myself and my relationships; the employment that the school provides to the nearby villagers and trying to be selfless and consume less and give equally back to nature. Sholai provides chances to live a better life that is sustainable, eco-friendly and where one learns about oneself. Though these may not seem like very much, contemplating on it, one understands the significance and importance of them.

Name: K. Poobalan
(Aged 17 in 2016)

Dear Mr. Jenkins,

I truly felt the need to thank you for allowing me to visit Sholai. Only after visiting, I entirely knew that Sholai is a much greater place than I had thought. The school has helped me and many other students to become better and conscious people, Sholai is most certainly a true gift to the students who study there and it's all thanks to you.

I also got to meet my friends after 2 years, which made me feel happy, but it's the school that made me feel extremely happy. I've found something had changed in me during the 5 days of my stay, after leaving I had managed to quit playing a mobile game I was addicted to, which has turned out to be very helpful.

I think visiting has made me realize I need to move on with life, but at the same time not to worry too much about the future. I once again thank you from the bottom of my heart for making me be a part of Sholai.

I hope Sholai helps many more students and Sholai becomes a better place, even though it's close to perfection. Take care and I hope to meet you again. I had more things to write in mind, but I've forgotten a few of them, maybe next time when we meet we could have a talk. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
Robin Treitinger
(Aged 19 in 2017)
