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Freedom For All

Aditi Chaturvedi and Parag Rastogi interview Dr. Anil Joshi, the Chief Guest this Independence Day. *Dr Joshi is an environmentalist and social worker who took his scientific expertise and skills to the rural poor and did wonders for the impoverished, marginalised communities living in the border areas and mountainous regions of our country. He pioneered the use of traditional water-mills to generate electricity, along with numerous innovative schemes to make villages self-reliant.*

What made you give up the plum job of a reader in a government college and devote yourself to social work in the hills instead?

Since I am a botanist and research was part of my job as a teacher, I gradually realized that all the science and technology I had been talking about benefited only *me*, it was merely filling my stomach. This made me feel that my job was futile, in a sense, and I realized that our country needs action rather than theory. Gradually, my students and I began working in 1983 as HESCO (Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organization). We began to go deep into rural areas and learnt of the huge science and technology divide. We also realized that the villagers were ignorant about plants of economic importance and about water conservation. Various rural communities have rich resources but are not educated or informed enough to know how to use these resources.

Hence, by the 1990s, I was heavily into social work, and realized that I wasn't really being honest as a teacher, and then decided to devote myself entirely to social work instead. I felt that I *had* to do work in the mountains – specially in Jammu & Kashmir and the North East, where the mountains form our border, yet the people living in these areas lead lives of poverty and deprivation. These areas have no roads, poor infrastructure and are inaccessible. This is a hydra-headed monster as it leads to resentment and dissatisfaction which very often manifests itself in the form of militancy. Today, after 28 years of such work, I am not dissatisfied with my life – I feel I have done something, made a difference, and brought a smile to the faces of many a villager.

Why do you feel the government has proved so ineffectual when it comes to development and conservation in the hills?

The biggest reason is that our country has a terrible

education system – and most evils stem from this. Very few people in this country can afford a really good education. The majority of children study in schools that do not offer them a broad spectrum of activities. These individuals grow up with no vision, no exposure, and it is these people who become government officials. These people have no foresight or farsight and are hence totally ineffectual in bettering the country. Our country has become industrialized under these people for sure – a 'global village' as people like to call it. Yet, where is the 'village' part? Our rural areas have been ignored in every aspect and the focus on grassroots has gone.

What development do you see in the mountains over the next few years?

With our current development strategy, resources will soon be depleted. We have not thought enough about biomass and have ignored several important resources. We should think about the existing resources first, and then set about generating other resources. Infrastructure, as I see it in the coming years, will be regarded as the true measure of development. Every one will look at the number of roads and the communication lines – how-

ever, quality will be overlooked. Even if a road is virtually unusable and in a terrible condition, only the fact that a road *exists* will be looked at.

Do you ever see India and Bharat reaching the same stage of development?

As of now we are in India and your identity is India. You are all urban people; all decisions are made by the Planning Commission and other such bodies that exist in metropolitan areas. Only when the rural community has a larger say in the government of the country, will there be a prosperous *Bharat*. I believe that there are two things that define the identity of a nation – its language and its food. We have been ignoring all vernaculars and Indian food has taken a backseat to the junk food culture and other cuisines. I don't see a very bright future for *Bharat* if things continue the way they are.

Has the formation of Uttaranchal helped the hill folk?

As of now, the creation of Uttaranchal has not made any real difference to the hill people. *(The number of*

contd. on page 4)

REGULARS

JANA GANA MANA

The school celebrated **Independence Day** on Monday. The Chief Guest this year was Dr. Anil Joshi.

ROUND SQUARE ROUND UP

A **Round Square Regional Service Project** was organised for tsunami victims in the Vanagiri village near Chennai between May 30 and June 15. The following boys volunteered for the project and were escorted by Mr. Arjun Rao and Mr. Sandeep Mann: Akshay Dobhal, Alok Arora, Sahil Agarwal, Akshay Singh, Anish Dandoo, Pranay Budhiraja, Karm Choudhary, Ayoushman Jamwal, Vratul Kapoor.

A **Round Square International Service Project** was held between June 23 and July 15 in the Forfar region of Scotland. Anirudh Kapur, Anant Kumar, Dilawar Kapur and Samay Mangalgiri were escorted by Mr. Ambikesh Shukla for the project.

Karan Dhar, Abhimanyu Walia, Karma T. Bhutia were escorted by Mr. Arvind K. Chalasani to Stakmo village in Ladakh from July 6 to July 28 for a **Round Square International Service Project**.

MOUNTAIN MANIA

The following students and masters of The Doon School went on a high altitude trekking expedition to Mt. Everest Base Camp from June 7 to June 24: Mr. Manu Mehrotra, Dr. Shukla, Chirag Nangia, Pranav Matta, Shoab Ahmed, Vishal Sonthalia, Avyay Jhunjhunwala, Arjun Anjaria, Kushagra Kumar, Harsh Lalwani, Surya N. Deo and Rituraj. The team successfully completed the classic trek to the **Everest Base Camp** (5364M). They also climbed **Kala Patthar** (5545M). Well done!

DEBATING CIRCUIT

Our team consisting of Karam Vir Lamba, Vidur Sehgal, Tushaar Kuthiala and Shikhar Singh took part in the **Shri Ram Inter-School Debate** in Gurgaon from August 8 to 11. They won their first debate against St. James' School, Kolkata. Karam Vir Lamba was adjudged the Best Speaker. The school lost to La Martiniere Girls, Kolkata in their second debate. Tushaar Kuthiala was adjudged the Best Speaker in this round.

Vidur Sehgal and Dalip Singh Kang also took part in the semi-final of the **Frank Anthony Memorial Debates** on Friday, August 5, held at St. George's School, Mussoorie. They stood second, while Vidur was awarded the prize for Second Best Speaker.

QUIZ NEWS

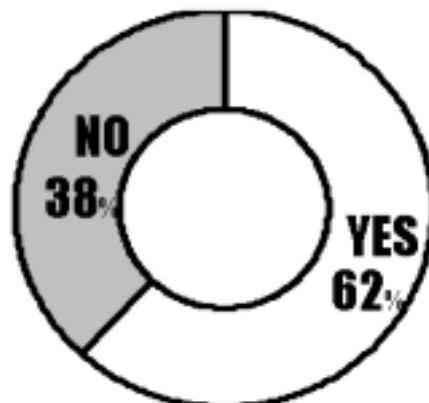
Ashish Mitter, Eeshaan Tiwary, Saurabh Tiwari and Gurbaaz Sidhu finished runners-up in the **ONGC Golden Jubilee Quiz** held at ONGC on Sunday, August 14. Congratulations!

LIBRARY HONOURS

Mrs. Abia Qezilbash was awarded a Gold Medal by the Governor of Uttaranchal at a ceremony held in Raj Bhawan on Friday, August 12, for topping a Library Science course conducted by the **Uttaranchal Library Association**.

OPINION POLL

Do you think the Tuckshop, with its recent additions, offers value for money?



Next Week's Question: Does the presence of snakes on campus frighten you?

Roving Eye

Chief Ed n' Ed

We're back. Sorry we took so long to write, but our COP was wrapped up in...ahem...personal matters and the Chief Ed wasn't in school long enough to put pen to paper before he emulated KPB and sprinted off to Delhi. As for the Ed, he was preoccupied with sighing and wishing the school had shifted to Rajasthan. He was last seen doing intensive research on the Nepalese aristocracy. But for the hard work and dedication of the junior members (three of whom have been kicked out in the past two weeks) the *Weekly* would have been excellent.

So...what's new? The ex-SEDS Sec seems to have got a double dose of debating *josh*, having scheduled debates for every weekend till the Commonwealth Games in 2010. He is also under investigation by the school authorities, after JHH read that he has made his younger brother the new secretary of SEDS. His plans were exposed by The School List squad, who are in the running for the Tehelka Awards for fantasy reportage.

The Scs have been eagerly waiting for tonight's Socials, especially Bunty, who lost his cellphone recently. Tonight's highlight was supposed to be an item number by Vidur Sehgal, dancing to '*Kajra re*'. However, in the interests of the visual trauma that would be caused to the Welhamites and DoscOs, Vidur will instead 'socialize with the villagers of Ramgarh. Someone among the higher powers has been especially brainy this year, in deciding to hold Socials so close to Rakhi. This prevents certain DoscOs from sneaking on to the bus to visit WGS to see their... sisters.

In the interests of the safety of the boys, measures to combat flood situations will be taught by the boys in the Bombay Party. Earthquake drills, on the other hand, stand suspended until someone can bring our COP down from Cloud Nine, though fire drills will be reinforced after the breaking of glass in the Main Building.

Someone is out to get the masters this season. KAR's broken wrist, AKC's torn ligament and BKC's undiagnosed injury all bear testimony to the influence of the cry "*Halla Bol*" from *The Rising*. Last heard, the Anarchy Club is desperately trying to screen the movie in school, with the explicit support of the enty sec, of course. So if there is indeed a successful rising, next *saptah* we shall greet you with a *namaskar*.

Organised Religion: Blind without Reason

Parag Rastogi writes on the misinterpretation of religion in today's world

For centuries, religion has held sway over human minds in a grip that has strangled the march of progress whenever rationality and logic threatened to overturn blind faith and belief. I believe that much of this malaise is a direct result of the organising of religion. Faith in itself is an intensely personal matter from which one is supposed to derive spiritual sustenance. Faith should not be confused with religion as if the former cannot exist without the latter. I may not call myself a Hindu or a Christian but I can still believe in god, or any power that I have 'faith' in. If I do not believe in any religion, why should I be dubbed 'faithless'?

Organised religion is, more often than not, a chief cause in the proliferation of conflict, from the streets of Dublin to the *mohallas* of Moradabad (a town in Uttar Pradesh which erupts in horrific rioting at the slightest hint of communal disturbance anywhere in the country). This is a fact that cannot be denied by even the staunchest supporters of religion. True, religion often serves as a rallying and unifying force in times of calamity. But then, isn't this tantamount to putting that particular cause or movement in an ideological straight-jacket whose drawstrings are tightly bound by the manipulative opinions of a select elite, all in the name of god? A person none of us have probably ever seen, known, met, if he/she is a person at all. How then, can we blindly accept what our *purohit*, priest or *maulvi* tells us about the identity of this mysterious force?

The medieval poet-sage Kabir had much to say on this. He propounded the theory that religion is composed of two things – the abstract aspect and the physical aspect. The abstract deals with one's thinking, code of conduct for life, and so on, while the physical consists of rituals, ceremonies and the like. This is a very important division, for if this is not acknowledged, the entire argument against organised religion is turned on its head. A code of conduct must be distinguished from a code for ceremony; an intention must be separated from its interpretation and subsequent manifestations. A case in point is the concept of monks or parish priests. They are meant to be confidantes, counselors, supportive structures for society, who ask for nothing in return for sacrificing their lives in the service of the community. This is true, I agree, in a fair number of cases, but these monks and priests are as susceptible to the very human banes of greed, lust, and sundry 'faithless' desires. Often the very thoughts that they seek to uproot from their psyche are the ones that come to haunt them in the form of sexual harassment lawsuits or allegations of corruption. Kabir cuts fine the distinction between the physical and abstract aspects of religion with two succinct and hard-hitting couplets. One deals with the concept of the call that Muslim priests deliver from the rooftops of mosques. Kabir says "You collect stones and build a mosque; then the mullah climbs on to the roof and screams his protestations of love for god. Why do you shout so loud, is god deaf?" The other couplet deals with the concept of idolatry. About this practice Kabir has another acidly pragmatic remark to make: "If worshipping stones gave me god, shouldn't I worship mountains? Even the lowly grain-grinding stones are better than your idols, for it is out of their hard grinding that the world gets its food".

Kabir and other reformists attacked the superstitions and practices that prevailed in their times. So did Gautam Buddha and Guru Nanak, victims themselves of the mindless deification and blind faith they set out to end. Some rituals and ceremonies are probably pretty useful in their own places but aren't these subject to reform, improvement and rationalisation? Shouldn't we know the meaning behind the chants we recite along with a priest at a *yagna*? Shouldn't we question the burning of widows on their husbands' pyres? Shouldn't we question the logic of *jihad*? Shouldn't we ask for the audited financial results of unimaginably rich temple trusts and other religious bodies like the SGPC?

Perhaps the tone of this article can be interpreted as saying that religion is a bad thing. It certainly isn't, so long as it adheres to its purpose of bettering human lives. The day religion becomes hierarchically organised, exclusivist and discriminatory, is the day the faith dies and shallow ceremony takes over. Then religion becomes a dangerous thing for it starts to sanction the murder of innocents or exclusion of entire groups of people from society. Forget the nukes; pick up a holy book (its religious affiliation being irrelevant), and start preaching murder, hate and destruction in the name of god. Soon you'll be more powerful than the Prime Minister and President combined, with enough resources at your disposal to be able to destroy nations. You may even come to possess a limitless license to ruin lives, endorsed by the public as your very own fundamentalist fan-club spurs you on.

“Unquotable Quotes”

Did you get injured hurt?

Hersh Lalwani inquires after another player's well-being.

I want to go to Madrid so that I can see the French Open.

Shaurya Kuthiala, geographically confused.

My pyjama is not working.

Sachin Batra the techie.

I shampooed last yesterday.

Rushil Singh finally washes his hair.

Did you see Mr and Mrs Will Smith?

Amrit Kochhar enquires.

Germany and Japan have a common border.

Raghav Puri masters geography.

I have a Windows XP processor.

Rishabh Jain assesses his resources.

Do the rooms in the Lucknow Taj have a view of the Taj Mahal?

Deepansh Chaudhury asks AAQ.

Amrit Kochhar is allowed to visit the bathroom.

AAQ, signing a *hospi* chit.

The school will play a soccer match against Welham Girls' today.

DCB announces at Assembly.

Intellectual mags like Cosmo, Filmfare and Stardust should be kept in the library.

Uday Pratap Singh at the Library Council.



Career Call

Look out for information on Journalism and Mass-Communication on the Careers Notice-Board this week.

Harry Potter: Magic or Mayhem?

Tushaar Kuthiala

One of the things that struck me while I was re-reading *Harry Potter and The Half Blood Prince*, apart from the integral plot developers that I had missed, was that when Snape described the Dark Arts in his DADA lesson, he spoke of something that we in today's world are already familiar with. Swap the words 'Dark Arts' with 'Terrorism' and you could be describing the basic credo and foundation of terror tactics.

Take the case, for instance, when Voldemort threatens 'mass-Muggle killings' and destroys a bridge when his demands are not met. Many of his followers worship Voldemort and call him 'The Dark Lord'. The modus operandi of Voldemort and his Death Eaters is strikingly similar to that employed by terrorists across the world today. I suppose the closest parallel to Voldemort in real life would be Osama Bin Laden. But I would draw the line at comparing George Bush to Dumbledore. The American president reminds me a bit of the new Minister for Magic, and his motley crew of advisers closely resemble the Ministry in the novels.

Another disconcerting parallel is that of the role of werewolves in the book. They, too, are led by a sinister bloodthirsty figure, who believes that children should be "bitten young; and raised away from their parents..so that they grow to hate". What with *maulvis* and *pandivs* alike shouting hate slogans around the world, it's not too difficult to see why the youth of today is poisoned by them.

There is conclusive evidence that the terrorist training camps have started up again. Almost every month, a terrorist attack takes place that destroys the lives of hundreds of innocents. And, lest we forget, people in Iraq and Serbia live in constant fear, with the threat of war looming over them each day. At least Harry can perform magic. We could use some too.

The Leafless Tree

Saurav Sethia

Silhouetted against the dusky sky,
Hope was flickering and so was light.
Amidst all this was something forlorn,
The leaves had withered
And the twigs were dry.
The winds had passed howling by,
Destiny had never been shy.
What is the tree trying to hide?
Oppression, disaster or catastrophe?
Mother Nature wasn't on its side.
"Upon that tent of blue,
Which prisoners called the sky,"
The tree like an outline would lie.
The tree still bears no leaves and
It still hasn't unveiled its mysteries.

(contd. from page 1)

MLAs and bureaucrats may have increased but development stops there. There is no great change in villages and people are dissatisfied with policies. A person in a border village will be unaffected whether the capital is Lucknow or Dehra Dun.

Could you tell us something about your Ecological Food Mission?

Our human physiology differs from region to region. In the mountains crops like buckwheat should be grown because it grows easily and is useful for diabetics and heart patients. If properly marketed, a crop like this could have immense economic benefit. Food crops have a local land type bearing. There has been no value addition or marketing, however, for these local crops. Rather than growing spices or wheat all over India uniformly, the local crops of a particular region should be encouraged. Chemical fertilizers and the uniformity of crop growing in the Green Revolution has adversely affected agriculture in India.

LETTER To The Editor

Your Library

This letter is a reply to the article titled 'Library Revamped' in the *Weekly* (August 6). Thank you to Saurav Sethia for his words of both appreciation and matters we at the library need to take on hand and develop for the future.

However, we at the library feel that changing the physical ambience, making the library hospitable with its tea-coffee machine is certainly not to be undermined but also on the other hand it is not the only way forward; for one we need genuine student input, actively bringing us bags of enthusiasm and a world of ideas to move forward with. We hope the new arrivals of books will have a catalyst effect and encourage you to come and read. YES, READ! At the library, in your class/free time, join the reading club or just take the books away to read at your favourite hub.

Now you will be saying, 'What is so cool about reading?' Reading is so much more than just deciphering words on a page. Reading informs us about events, facts, amuses us and trains our minds to find meaning in the world around us. Certainly reading is all this and much more.

In short, reading is the key to understanding. It gives you detailed information for your research project, inspiration for a piece of coursework or it can simply give you the pleasure of devouring a book by your favourite author.

We feel your library is the ideal environment in which to do all of these and more. It is peaceful, informal and relaxed. What better place to discover the school's extensive resources? So go ahead, come to the library, give us new ideas, and, who knows, reading this letter could have just changed your life.

(Toral Sharan)

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dsw@weekly.org



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Editor-in-Chief: Tushaar Kuthiala. Editor: Parag Rastogi. Senior Editors: Raghav Puri, Salman Chowdhury, Karam Vir Lamba, Vidur Sehgal. Hindi Editor: Deepansh Chaudhary. Associate Editors: Ayushman Jamwal, Uday Pratap Singh, Akaash Pathare. Special Correspondent: Naman Goel, Shikhar Singh. Correspondents: Shaurya Kuthiala, Saurav Sethia. Online Editor: Omaer Khan. Chief-of-Production: Aditi Chaturvedi. Assistant Managers: Stuti Bathla, Priya Chaturvedi, Arvindanabha Shukla. Special Assistance: K.C.Maurya.