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Schools of Hope

Madhav Bahadur reports on a midterm spent interacting with the children of NGO-run schools in Meerut



These midterms, AKC, Anirudh, Hanumant, Aadhar, Shaurya and I went to Meerut to survey and review seven schools of the twenty-one being run in the less affluent areas of the city, by an NGO called Gyanoday. The NGO is run by Avinash Alag (ex-160 H '84). It has opened twenty-one *vatikas*, including nine vocational training centres, for special-skills development. The entire project has been in action for seven years now. The survey that we conducted is part of the School's plan to start a similar *vatika* for the children living in slums under the Bindal Bridge, in collaboration with Gyanoday.

On reaching Meerut, we arrived at the Wheeler's Club, where we would be staying, and were then introduced to our escorts, Vinita Chaube, Simran Chopra and Praveen Kumar. From them, we learned that *vatikas* are units which provide education to the less privileged. Simran was a Blossoms School teacher herself before she took up working for Gyanoday as a full-time job. Gyanoday monitors the teachers working in these *vatikas* and the work done by them. Some *vatikas* are also sponsored and co-sponsored by other people outside Gyanoday. Students excelling in academics, co-curricular activities or sports from these *vatikas* are sponsored for formal education by people willing to do so.

We visited Blossoms School, a formal school run by Avinash Alag, after breakfast the next day. We were pleasantly surprised to hear our school songs being sung there as well; all the teachers, too, had initials like the system in our school. Our first task was *shramdan* (donation of work and energy) at the *Handiya Mohalla Vatika*, which is very similar to the Bindal slums, and consists of migrants from the Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh. We were greeted by all the students of the *vatika*, who also performed a dance to welcome us.

Questions and answers were exchanged with the slum-dwellers during our tour, and then we helped re-cover the *vatika's* hut and planted a few trees around it. Each tree was named after one of us and one child from the *vatika*, who promised to look after the tree.

After lunch, we left for the next *vatika* on the agenda – the *Bhoosa Mandi Vatika*, housed in a *pucca* structure. A welcome dance and lively games session later, we visited the historic Victoria Park.

That night at the club was tambola night and we were joined by Narendra Singh Salkan (ex-81 T '54); he was the last wrestling captain of the School, before the sport was discontinued.

A cricket match was scheduled for us next morning at *Dayal Vatika*, one of the better-off units. It had two computers, and had even produced a few computer engineers in the past. It was located at a day-hospital, which was used as the *vatika* after lunch.

After a packed lunch, we reached *Mahroli Vatika*. In a telling instance of societal hostility, we learned that the teacher at this *vatika* had once been dragged out of the village by her hair. This was because the parents of the children studying in the *vatika* felt that they were being deprived of their daily income, as their children could earn some money through rag-picking. The students then talked to their parents and supported the teacher and the people involved had to apologize. Today, the teacher is respected for her courage. The *vatika* also has a vocational centre for stitching and has trained many tailors, embroiderers etc., who are earning well.

The next *vatika* on our list was *Jawahar Nagar Vatika*. The area was inhabited mainly by rag-pickers, and was the site of the first *vatika*. It was the place where Gyanoday was started. The plight of the people touched us. However, the good work being done in this *vatika* really made us happy. It gave the people living here hopes of a better future. We saw small children washing glass bottles, and tonnes of plastic bottles were lying all over the place. The students performed small skits for us, which were most entertaining. We were told that twelve children from the *vatika* had been sponsored in formal schools, with each of them scoring between 87-97% in their classes. In the colony, we noticed how the *vatikas* were changing the

(contd. on page 4)

News-in-Brief

A WARM WELCOME

We welcome to the School faculty **Samik Das**, who has joined the Economics, Commerce & Accounts Department. We wish him a fruitful tenure.

Rollo Marmion from Radley School, England is in Chandbagh to help in the Design & Technology Department. We wish him a pleasant stay at Doon.

IAYP-BADGED

Viren Kapoor, Ishaan Nagpal, Udhav Prasad, Saadman Chowdhury and TV Rishabh Rao have successfully completed the **Bronze** level of the IAYP. Congratulations!

DEBATING

In the first round of the **Inter-House English Debates**, Tata House beat Kashmir House and Jaipur House beat Oberoi House. Yashvardhan Jain and Vishnukaant Pitty were adjudged **Best Speakers** and Anirudh Gupta and Vivek Santayana were adjudged **Second Best Speakers** in their respective debates.

Shaurya Kuthiala, Arnav Sahu and Vivek Santayana represented the School in the **Hugh Catchpole Memorial Debate** that was held at **RIMC**. Vivek Santayana won two awards for being the **Best Speaker** while Shaurya Kuthiala got an award for being the **Second Best Speaker** in the final round.

The School was represented by Akshit Batra, Ankur Saxena and Kanishka Aggarwal at the **Miss Linnell Memorial Commemorative Inter-School Hindi Debate** held at **Welham Girls' School**. Akshit Batra and Ankur Saxena were adjudged **Second Best Speakers** while Kanishka Aggarwal was adjudged the **Second Best Interjector**. The School was placed runners-up.

The School was represented by Akshit Batra, Dilsher Dhillon and Saurav Sethia in the **Saroj Srivastava Inter-School English Debates** that were held at **Welham Girls' School**. Akshit Batra was adjudged the **Most Promising Speaker**. The Doon School stood second, overall. Congratulations!

HOCKEY

The School Junior and Senior hockey teams played their respective matches against **The Indian Public School** on April 14 and won both of them by scores of 5-2 and 3-0.

The School Junior and Senior hockey teams played two matches against **Welham Boys' School** on April 16. The senior team tied 2-2, while the juniors won their match 3-0.

Congratulations!

PROPS MANAGER

Saksham Sinha has been appointed boy-in-charge of the **Stage Committee** for the year 2008.

Congratulations!

BASKETBALL

In the **Districts' Basketball Championship**, the School emerged runners-up, losing to Welham Boys' School in the finals.

Congratulations!

Unquotable Quotes

Why are you acting like a golly pig?

MLJ, the scientist.

Chandigarh is a much good city.

Nilesh Agarwal, comparing.

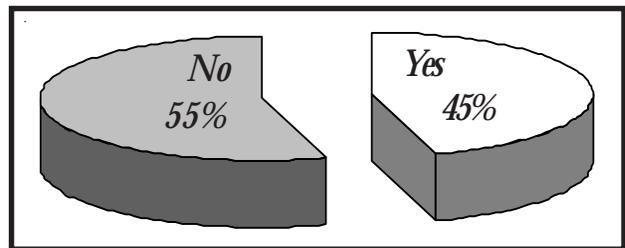
Hyderabad is a part of China.

Abhyun Chatterjee, all for a world without borders.

Don't drama. I know how much serious.

MNP, seeing through the histrionics.

Votalysis

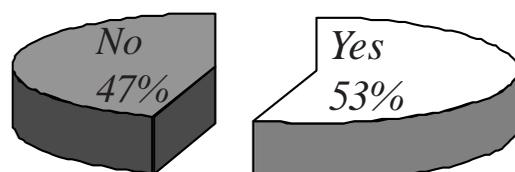


Last week's question 'Do you support Aamir Khan's decision to carry the Olympic torch?' was answered with results of 55% of the people polled voting 'No' and 45% voting 'Yes'. However, the Weekly feels that many students misinterpreted the question to be 'Do you think that Aamir Khan, as a film actor, is entitled to carry the Olympic torch?'. This clearly shows that *Doscos*, as well as certain members of the staff, have not been reading the newspapers closely enough. *Doscos* must understand that, apart from athletes, other eminent world personalities are also invited to carry the Olympic torch as the relay symbolizes world unity. What the Weekly had intended to ask was that, in view of the considerable human interest generated over the holding of the Olympic Games in China regarding the Tibet and human rights issues, would Aamir Khan's decision to carry the torch be justified? This, it is felt, would have generated a completely different response from the school community and so this poll is being taken once again to obtain true results. It is the sincere hope of the Weekly that such a misinterpretation of a poll topic does not occur again, and that our community becomes more aware of issues that affect the world. Two days ago, some seventy celebrities (including Aamir Khan) from all walks of life, carried the torch down New Delhi's Rajpath, ringed by 17,000 security personnel: an irony since the torch is supposedly a symbol of peace and brotherhood. On the same day, a 'Torch for Tibet' parallel relay took place in Shimla. Closer home, a protest march wound its way through Dehradun. Surely, this is one issue we should have an opinion on?



Opinion Poll

As a student, do you think that PTMs are productive interactions?



Next Week's Question: Do you support Aamir Khan's decision to carry the Olympic Torch?

INTO ANOTHER WORLD

Exchange student from Salem, Jonas Rosenbrück's dive into another world during midterm

"You are going into the Himalayas? And you will camp and trek in the mountains? Seriously? That is fantastic!"

This was the reaction of one of my friends in Salem, when I told him that I was going for midterms. You should know that in Germany, the Himalayas are considered as *the* symbol of majesty and purity in nature. It is a dream of many Germans to see these mountains once.

That's why I was really looking forward to going on the midterms. But the beginning was not *so* majestic. The bus journey resulted in making many of us feel rather sick. I will spare you the details! Suffice it to say that we were very relieved when we arrived at Barsu, our first campsite.

On the second day, when the actual midterms started, my expectations were completely fulfilled. During our first, rather steep, ascent the view was awe-inspiring and breathtaking. Unfortunately the rain soon destroyed this beautiful image.

As we approached our destination, the Barnala valley, I was to get to know what midterms are all about. Since it was still raining, we decided to stay in one of the rudimentary huts. It was cold, narrow and dirty, but I must say, I really enjoyed the novel experience. Spirits were high and all of us showed great enthusiasm to adapt to those coarse circumstances.

One of my personal highlights during the midterms was the third day. We trekked up till we reached another cluster of huts (at an altitude of 10,000 feet). During that trip we had a lot of snow, which made the mountains appearing even more ethereal. My notion of the Himalayas was confirmed.

Apart from these great experiences concerning nature, I also had a few more experiences revolving around the fourth part of our Round Square IDEALS: adventure. Some German impressions:

Our second last night, we stayed in tents, although it was freezing. The lack of all hygiene facilities that I was used to, proved to be quite adventurous. Trying to find the way from one hut to another, in order to get one's dinner during a rainy and completely dark night with only a torch, would also be considered adventurous, if you asked the average German. One evening a mule suddenly entered our hut and seemed unwilling to leave. This unexpected guest was contrary to our desire of having a somewhat comfortable and undisturbed night! The descent on our third day was slippery and made almost everyone fall down at least once.

In addition to these amazing experiences, I would like to mention my interesting introduction to Indian culture. On our last evening, I visited some Hindu temples and was given a fascinating insight into Hinduism by our masters. For a person with a western mindset, it is quite difficult to grasp the Hindu way of thinking, but therefore, it was even more enthralling.

To conclude, I can only say, that midterms were an awesome experience for me: a trip into another world.

Nukkad Natak

Shoumitra Srivastava reviews the Junior Hindi Summer Production staged last weekend

Having enjoyed the Junior English Summer Production recently, I was eager to watch the staging of the Junior Hindi Play. The play was staged on March 13, in the Rose Bowl to a packed audience. Several parents who had stayed on after bringing their wards back from the night out also formed a part of the audience. I noticed a tree 'planted' right in the middle of the kidney. The unusual stage setting whetted my interest even further.

Havalaat, written by Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena, opened with a scene which, at the very outset, conveyed the message the satire embodied. It is a play set in the post-Emergency times, and reflects the dissatisfaction that is felt with the system. The post-Independence euphoria is over and the masses are facing a harsh reality. The message is that of the paradox which is a direct consequence of uneven distribution of wealth. On one side we have two gentlemen expressing their desire to enjoy a frosty night by biting into ice-creams and on the other hand there are three vagrants who are homeless and helpless from the wrath of the cold. The role of the vagrants was played by Shubham Dhingra, Abhinav Parthi and Sambuddha Naha, who have nothing but a tree to huddle under on a cold night. Frustrated by their present condition, they make several efforts to woo and flatter the two policemen to take them to jail. So intense is the desire of the three to go to a warm, comfortable jail, that they concoct stories about having committed crimes. The policemen do not fall for their stories and decide to teach them a lesson or two. The rest of the play is the negotiation and lobbying that goes on between the tramps and the two policemen, who were portrayed by Parabhjot Singh and Kushagra Singh.

Regarding the performances, the actors were rather over the top in their roles. The witty dialogues, with many puns on the condition in India and the whole corrupt system, provided some comic relief. The dialogue delivery was clear and audible, but in an effort to be heard clearly, the actors often overdid their delivery, thus marring the spontaneity of the scene. There was a lot of shouting and horsing around that could have been done without, and there were also a few gaffes such as the blindfolds covering the eyes of the three protagonists falling down onto the stage. The expressions, again, were overdone and that, coupled with the loud dialogue delivery, resulted in an average show. However, the director, Vidhukesh Vimal, pointed out that *Havalaat* is a fusion of street theatre and a stage play. The very nature of street theatre demands a certain raw quality in the delivery of dialogue. The concept of having a small chorus to come on the stage and sing out the proceedings of the play, as in Greek drama, was very effective. In my opinion, Sambuddha Naha and Parabhjot Singh were most convincing.

The duration of the play was unusually short, finishing in just under thirty-five minutes. On the whole, the efforts of the young actors must be commended and one looks forward to improved performances in such productions in the years to come.

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children, with the students of the *vatika* keeping conditions as hygienic as they could.

Next day, we visited the Coca-Cola bottling plant to discuss a proposal of this multi-national company helping Gyanoday monetarily, under their education banner. In return, Gyanoday would collect plastic bottles from all over Meerut, with the rag-pickers' help and aid Coke in their venture of recycling maximum plastic for a better environment.

Our next visit was to the *Mangat Puram Vatika*. The people of this slum were previously situated near the railway station. However, they were evicted from there and now live near the city dump. This slum was mainly inhabited by people who worked as boot-polishers at the railway station. The teacher at the *vatika* came all the way from the station to teach the children. Some students from Blossoms were also present when we reached. We were to pick a group of students each, and lead them to make a piece of art, preferably about their dreams. We helped the students with that and left for a well-deserved break after the long day, back to the club.

In the evening, we visited *Kaseru Khera Vatika*, which was located at a temple. They had a bonfire prepared for us to play *antakshari* and dance around. This was our farewell visit and we were gifted beautiful, handcrafted folders. We said our goodbyes, feeling that we could really change things for the better.

The *vatika* system is really worth the work and time it takes. Our school can easily implement this system anywhere with the help of locals. Also, the collection of plastic bottles serves a dual purpose: the families find a source of income and it also helps keep the environment clean. In addition, I think that parents of students studying in our school can easily sponsor one child each from these *vatikas* for formal education. I am sure that this would make a big difference.

Career Call

The Careers Notice Board will focus on **Electronics Engineering** this week. All those interested in following a career in this discipline should look it up.

Old Boys' News

The following Old Boys have done the School proud in the political arena, recently:

Jyotiraditya Scindia (ex-632 J '88) – Cabinet Minister, IT.

Akbar (Dumpy) Ahmed (ex-162 K '65) – MP, BSP, Azamgarh by-election.

Kr Jitin Prasada (ex-315 K '92) – Minister of State for Steel.

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Chicken Story

Shashank Peshawaria

“Your tender Chicken Cacciatore, Sir”,
Declares the man at his usual pitch,
“With chicken breasts, thighs, skin, and backbone,
It is so very rich.”

“Aah!” The customer then exclaims,
“Please do bring it out.”
He smells the dish from afar,
And water fills his mouth.

“The chicken is most tender,
The chef’s special, after all,
We found it in Italy, for you, sir,
Beak, claws, feathers et al.”

But actually the life of the chicken,
Was not as this man said.
He was not aware of the chicken’s life,
And how it had bled.

The chicken was called Sylvester,
An orphan it was then,
Its parents were sold in the market,
It didn’t know where and when.

Fully grown as it was now,
It loved its life the best.
The thighs were bulky, the eyes were magnificent,
It had a majestic chest.

Aristocratic as it was in society,
Each one loved it well.
It wept for all, and helped the aged,
Its heart it used to sell.

One day, when it had its own kids,
It pounced, clapped, sang, and frisky it became.
It rejoiced and threw a party,
Each friend in the farm came.

It fed its children stomachs-full,
And showed them how to live.
It taught them help and love for others,
And how to share and give.

It was always the only one for its children,
The only one they ever had.
But it is tender Chicken Cacciatore now,
And the customer is very glad.