



Established in 1936

# The Doon School WEEKLY



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## Editorial

*I go through the proofs of this Weekly as we attempt to wrap up one last issue for this term. Each article materializes from the past like a distant galleon through a thick fog. It is daunting to be writing an editorial for an issue, whose pages contain articles that carry such weight. The Doon School Weekly is mute witness to our School's literary tradition and creative expression. These articles, a window into the past, have been reproduced as a reflection of this tradition.*

*In his autobiography and writing guide, On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, Stephen King says, "If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot." As an editorial team, we hope to provide an eclectic collection of articles written by Dosco scribes during their schooldays. We also hope that this will encourage budding writers to explore their talents.*

*We decided to dig through the Archives and extract articles from the past that so confidently announce the clarity of thought in some Doscos. You may be surprised to find Dwaipayan Bannerjee's article challenging the average Dosco's intellectual competence featuring on the front page. However, we believe it is a statement that, more or less, summarizes the escapist attitude of the average Dosco as far as intellectual curiosity goes.*

*When Galileo and Copernicus proclaimed that the world is round, they were ostracized, even put to death, because they questioned conventional streams of thought. The Weekly has always hoped to question set views and to excogitate ideas that will serve as a beacon for generations to come.*

*Brilliance, we hope, will become a rule, not an exception in the years to come. If and when we do achieve this success, we believe The Weekly's illustrious history, and the line-up of ex-Doscos who have left indelible marks on its pages, would have played a hand in it. After all, if they could do it starting from here, why can't we?*

## Stop Fooling Yourself

*Dwaipayan Bannerjee, Editor-in-Chief, 2000, questions the creative genius of the Dosco of his time*

The Doon School, considered by some to be a self-sufficient, self-reliant oasis is, in fact, a desert of ignorance and mediocrity. The truth is, the average Dosco is too arrogant to glance outside to realize he has been eclipsed in all possible ways by the rest of the world. However, the Dosco only compares himself to the worst of what the world outside has to offer, and thus reassures himself of his superiority.

We, at The Doon School, are living on the vestiges of past glory. All traces of excellence in thought and action are slowly dying out, with brilliance becoming the rare exception and never the rule. The Dosco has begun to adopt cunning defence mechanisms in order to shield his mediocrity. One of them is to glibly dismiss the world outside as inferior, presenting a false bravado, which he hopes will meet a world of superior achievement. An average Dosco tries to limit himself to competing with his immediate, preferably inferior peers; and chooses to ignore far superior, real-world competition. He pursues lesser goals and deludes himself into believing that the lesser goals are important.

Let us explore one aspect of knowledge where the Dosco is found to be at a shocking loss. To make a generalization, the Dosco never reads and is blissfully unaware of contemporary affairs. It is indeed disturbing to realize that a public school of such repute churns out intellectually incapable individuals by the dozen. Many Doscos would admit to never having read a single classic, or for that matter, anything more challenging than pulp fiction. One cannot decide what is more disturbing: the fact that the Dosco does not read, or the fact that he is proud of being poorly read. Creative writing in senior forms has come to a grinding halt, with most dismissing it as a frivolous or even unworthy pursuit. Speech habits are atrocious, and even in the senior forms, our Dosco finds himself incapable of piecing together a single grammatically correct sentence. Is this the sum achievement of the coveted Doon School education?

To develop oneself in this community, one needs to isolate oneself from mainstream bombast. To separate one is not an option, but an absolute necessity. One needs to develop one's speech, thinking and reading habits instead of wallowing in mediocrity, where poor standards have become the order of the day. It is essential to realize that to compare oneself with one's immediate community is the beginning of one's ruination. We are a community of five hundred in a world of billions. It is more than presumptuous to believe that we represent the best of what the world has to offer, or even to believe that we are presentable to the world. Many have believed that peer pressure contributes to moulding the Dosco into what he becomes, and that is why the Dosco is respected in society. It is time to realize that this assumption is a sorry misconception and that peer pressure is what allows the Dosco to wallow in his mediocrity.

These beliefs cannot be a revelation. It will, and does, require years of conflict, mistake, self-censure and mental fortitude to come to the conception that what one has been moulded into is contemptible. But this realization is the first step towards redemption. This realization is what will feed the resolve to discard complacent mediocrity. One will come to regret mistakes, but then one will realize that regret is what reforms one's character. A conviction painful to realize is made strong by pain, and once realized will become an overpowering character trait, impossible to destroy.

Conformity may certainly mould a Dosco, but it moulds him into an arrogant, yet insecure cog in the wheel. This recognition will be the first step towards producing thinking, sensitive individuals.

## Oh, Wait my Friend!

*Karan Thapar*

*(Issue no. 994, 19th September, 1970)*

I've acted thoughtlessly, my friend,  
And I know  
I've been wrong, malicious;  
And yet, somehow, I go.  
You look at me; you hate me now.  
Perhaps you think:  
What sort of man is he?  
What could have led him on?  
You think I'm juvenile,  
Regardless and shallow.  
You judge me through what I've done;  
But you don't realize my friend,  
Nor do, I suppose, you care  
That I am wrongly judged.  
At first I felt no sorrow, no guilt.  
I was sure that I had won,  
But now my conscience  
Has carried me on.  
Forgive me, I plead.  
I realize I have not won.  
My heart is torn so far apart;  
A knifeless cut,  
But the pain is there.  
I've wronged you,  
And I've wronged myself,  
So now while you relax,  
I sit in remorse.  
Oh, hate me not,  
But try to forget  
The merciless deed that I've done;  
For that was not the inner me,  
As now I am restless,  
Perturbed and guilty.  
While you've forgotten,  
I still wonder  
If I am forgiven.  
And even if you've forgiven me,  
When will I forgive myself?  
And till then downfaced I shall stay,  
Ashamed and regretful,  
Alone and impure.  
So do not judge me, my friend,  
Until you are truly sure  
Of the sort of man I am.

\* \* \*

## The Heroes

*Amitav Ghosh*

*(Issue no. 1041, 5th March, 1972)*

Men, born to die,  
Wandering on,  
Lost in futile hopes,  
Wandering on,  
And believing,  
Believing, against all powers,  
The powers of black darkness and the  
Whitest of purity,  
And in belief, their resurrection.  
Criminals, lost in a haze of crime,  
But yet following the ordained path,  
The fools, proud, unhappy and very courageous.

## Sunrise and Sunset in the Doon Valley

*Wajahat Habibullah*

*(Issue no. 595, 15th February, 1958)*

The sun is rising  
And dawn is breaking.  
The bees are bustling  
From nest to nest.  
The last star's dying  
And birds are flying.  
All is awakening  
And no one rests.  
The light is fading,  
The owls are twitting,  
The cricket's chirping,  
The sun has set.  
The stars are peeping  
To watch us sleeping.  
The sky is reddening  
And we should rest.

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## | Short Story |

## Blood

*Kunal Pal*

*(Issue no. 1997, 19th October, 2002)*

I hate him. I really do. Not only because he has it all – the cars, the money, the women – but because he keeps getting more of it.

He has ten times everything I'll ever have. Actually, maybe that's too harsh. I have some stuff all to myself. I have some self-respect (yeah, I do), a little love, and this locket my mother gave me – you know, one of those with little cute photos inside. Let him try. He'll never be able to take these things away from me. My mother; she was the only one who ever understood me. Only if he could've understood; only if he cared.

I envy him. I really do. Not only because he has it all – the cars, the money, the women – but because he keeps getting more of it.

My mother loved him. Left her home, abandoned her family and all she ever knew to run away with this man full of promises, sloppy kisses and fake smiles. Love for him is an act, not a commitment, and my mother; naïve and gentle as she was, ended up becoming his toy – used and thrown away.

I can feel him growing inside me. His blood gushes into my head and in front of my eyes. I'm not blinded, I'm pretty used to it by now. There is some of him in me, I can't deny that. In fact, I'm basically okay with it. But sometimes he speaks to me. Actually, he does so all the time. In a soft, droning voice like that radio my mother used to listen to, he keeps repeating himself. Mind you, he does say a lot.

Like right now, he's telling me about last night. About the hotel, the money and the woman. I can hear him laughing. I can see him slamming his credit card on the table and pushing the waiter. I can feel him bending over the table and kissing the blonde.

I killed him. I really did. Not because he had it all – the cars, the money, the women – but because he kept getting more of it. The man who ruined my life, the man I refused to call my father.

# The Dosco

*Adreyo Sen, Editor-in-Chief, 2003, highlights what a Dosco is all about  
(Issue no. 1988, May 25, 2002)*

With sixty-seven years of existence behind us, it is not surprising that many people regard Doon as yet another institution that symbolises India. Recently, Doon has got more than its fair share of media coverage with the *Outlook* magazine rating it the best residential school of the country. Not only this, *The Wall Street Journal* has published an article on us. Many people, however, associate The Doon School with Rajiv Gandhi and do not go further. They seem to feel that this, by itself, speaks volumes about the quality of the school. It is less commonly known that Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Kanti

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What makes the Dosco what he is?  
What is the Dosco product? Is there a combination of qualities that can distinguish a Dosco from other people?

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Bajpai and Karan Thapar studied here. Hardly anyone knows that reputed newscaster Prannoy Roy and the Editor of *India Today*, Aroon Purie, are both ex-DoscOs. The self-effacing Bunker Roy, formerly a bureaucrat and now head of an influential NGO is also one of our more prominent ex-DoscOs.

Indeed, while Doon has produced politicians like Rajiv Gandhi, Naveen Patnaik and Mani Shankar Aiyar, its Old Boys have mostly distinguished themselves as journalists, bureaucrats, social workers and in the armed forces. Even as businessmen, DoscOs can be recognised by their innovation and experimentation. What makes the Dosco what he is? What is the Dosco product? Is there a combination of qualities that can distinguish a Dosco from other people? Does the distinguished alumni of the school have common traits that go a long way in making them successes in their chosen fields?

As a Dosco, one discovers a field of activity that soon becomes a passion, be it photography, motor-mechanics, creative writing, philately or audio-visual work. The society we join goes a long way in developing our passion for a field of activity. We cherish some of these activities for the rest of our life and some of us, like Amitav Ghosh, might make them our profession.

Doon teaches us to be self-sufficient and independent. This is one of the few schools in the world where the student plays an important role in the daily administration of the estate. Boys control the audio-visual setup for movies and functions. Boys man the school bank and run the school's many publications. Boys train together as a unit for the Inter-House One-Act Play Competition, with little external guidance. Many school SUPWs are run, almost independently by the boys, with teachers acting as guides and motivators, not instructors. Most SUPWs give us a picture of the real type of work involved in these activities and again, might push us towards a particular career. Boys are also encouraged to make their own decisions and juggle their priorities.

As a Dosco, one learns how to manage one's time. There is simply too much to do and so little time to do it. Most of us try and involve ourselves in as many activities as we can in order to grab the essence of what the school has to offer. An average Dosco will be a member of at least two or three societies, an SUPW, an STA, two or three house teams, a publication and will involve himself in a minimum of two exhibitions during the Founder's Day Programme. If he actually wants to commit himself to his varied duties seriously and yet do well in his examinations, he will have to optimise the use of his time. Thus, without seeming to, school teaches us to manage our time properly; if only we care to learn. This will help us in our career later on.

It has been said that the best lessons are learnt on the games field; this is certainly true of Doon. One learns how to be a valuable member of a team through games such as hockey and soccer. We learn how to contribute selflessly to the success of our team and how to take pride in being members of a winning team. Later in his career, a good sportsman could well be a bright and valuable member of a company's team of executives, co-operative, cheerful and fun to work with. Other lessons learnt on the games field are endurance, the determination to succeed and stretch oneself to the limit, and fairplay. Boys also get a chance to umpire or referee matches. The skills we gather as umpires or refer-

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The ideal Dosco product, then, is caring and independent, passionate and firm, capable of managing his time properly and able to throw himself whole-heartedly into whatever he does.

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ees will keep us in good stead while working as administrators or heads of HRD departments.

The Doon School instills in us an understanding of our environs and a sympathy for our fellow humans.

During midterms, we come in contact with nature and also stretch ourselves to the limit. Students of the school can take part in the school's various social service programmes, or even interact with the poor and the needy through the Village Development Programme and the Child Education SUPW over a long period of time. We come to terms with the realities of India and understand, all too well, how we can help move our country forward. We become more sensitive and caring human beings, able to gauge and respond to the problems of the people we come in contact with.

The ideal Dosco product, then, is caring and independent, passionate and firm, capable of managing his time properly and able to throw himself whole-heartedly into whatever he does. Such a person would be an asset to whatever line of activity he chooses to take up, be it business, administration, creative writing or politics. It is our duty, then, to imbibe the best of what Doon has to offer us and grow as true and dependable citizens of our country.



# Mountains

*Ramachandra Guha delves into the riches of the Himalayas*

*(Issue no. 1078, 20th July, 1973)*

An oft-asked question is: "Why is man so attracted to the mountains?" Time and again, the answer to this query has been that the 'call of the mountains' is irresistible.

The call of the mountains is indeed irresistible. The cool fresh air, the aesthetic beauty, the joys of trekking; all these things appeal to the common man.

Every man dreams of attaining a lofty pinnacle in life, i.e. achieving something great. Nothing is more satisfying than reaching the lofty pinnacle of a mountain.

Mountaineers are not the only people attracted to the mountains. Most men yearn to breathe the fresh air up in the mountains, especially after a spell of hard work. It is this search for a source of relaxation that leads men to hill-stations like Mussoorie, Naini Tal, and Ootacamund. It is for this reason that in Europe, places like St. Moritz are flourishing. Once in a while, a man likes to escape from his daily drudgery, to ski or pursue some such pleasure. In Canada, people go to the mountains of the Canadian Shield to fish or shoot in the lakes that abound in this area.

The mountains are the pride of India. The most beautiful sight in India is surely of the Himalayas seen early in the morning, at the crack of dawn, from Tiger's Hill in Darjeeling. The sight of Mount Everest, of its two surrounding peaks, Lhotse and Makalu and of the great Kanchenjunga is breathtaking in its splendour. It by far eclipses the stately Taj Mahal that many more foreigners see.

Once, I was trekking from Mussoorie to Suakholi. The landscape was bleak, the rucksack I was carrying was heavy, and the weather offered no respite. I was cursing the road in particular and the world in general.

Suddenly, I came across a pass between two hills. As I turned the bend, a brilliant scene unfolded before my eyes. The great range of the Garhwal Himalayas lay before me. The snow-covered peaks were basking in all their glory; lofty and inaccessible. They truly looked like the 'abode of the gods'. It seemed that territory was forbidden, and that no mortal would be allowed to trespass. I could see Nanda Devi, the highest peak in India, Trisul, Bandar Punch, and Black Peak. There were many other peaks; some unnamed, which I could not recognize, but I was captivated by their beauty. Surely, beauty is omnipresent.

I was filled with a sense of fulfillment and my lousy trek was forgotten. No man has the right to see such a sight more than once in his life. It was akin to seeing Krishna in his all-embracing 'Vishwaroop'. Just as Dhritarastra, after the defeat of the Kauravas, craved for a sight of Krishna in his 'Vishwaroop', I crave to see the beautiful peaks in the moment's sadness. It would certainly alleviate my sadness and make me feel that the world is a beautiful place after all.

The aesthetic beauty of the mountains is perhaps its most alluring feature. The finely-chiselled features of a mountain look as if they have been worked by Michaelangelo. The steep, almost vertical slopes leading up to the summit look unconquerable.

Hill people are among the most charming of people, wherever they be. Their tribal costumes and dances are as beautiful as the mountains in which they make their home. The fleeting melodies of their folk songs instantly strike a chord in your heart. They are simple and unassuming; they are quite content with their lot, and shudder when they are reminded of the hustle and bustle of city life. They are, indeed, an integral part of the mountains.

Trekking is a joy in itself. There are a few more enjoyable experiences than trekking in the Himalayas. You go through hill and glade, breathing the cool air and enjoying yourself immensely. You stop at frequent intervals and admire the landscape around you. Sometimes, a jar (jerk) in your back painfully reminds you of the heavy load you are carrying, but you go on undeterred and with renewed vigour. Then, frail-looking and undernourished hill people keep on overtaking you and you wonder how these people traverse the hills so quickly with apparent ease. This tickles, especially if you happen to be a portly and well-fed Mama's darling. Then the thought strikes you that they have been walking and trekking in the hills all their life, while you are still a novice! These folk think nothing of trekking up to fifty miles a day.

Mountains are more attractive with some wildlife abounding in them. In most places, wildlife has been ruthlessly wiped out. However, in this respect Kumaon is still unparalleled.

Another phenomenon of the mountains is the innumerable species of different types of flora which are everywhere. The Alpine flowers are famous, especially the edelweiss. The imposing stands of Douglas Fir and Redwood in the mountains of North America are worth going a long way to see. In India, too, are some beautiful trees; but these are deciduous, and are hence not found at great heights. The rhododendron flower parallels the beauty of Gulmohar, and Wringals are surely the most attractive species of the bamboo. At great heights are the lofty conifers. These include the Deodar, a species peculiar to India and both the Chir and the Blue Pines. A yet more beautiful pine (*Pinus caribea*) has been introduced from Mexico.

Of course, the mountains hold a greater appeal for mountaineers. They never seem to resist the 'call of the mountains' and just cannot be away from the mountains for any length of time. They zestfully and ceaselessly try to climb higher and higher summits.

The beauty of the mountains is indeed unparalleled. The magnetic charm of the mountains cannot be repulsed, and it is the ideal retreat for a spell of relaxation. I hope others share my views, for the mountains hold beauties that any man would go a long way to see. They are unspoiled and are blissfully ignorant of the changes in the world that have polluted and destroyed the beauty of our environment. The mountains are unspoiled and should remain so, lest in the future, beautiful mountains become the vestiges of a bygone era. The mountains must be preserved at all costs.

| **Short Story** |  
**Relations With a New  
World**

*Abhishek Maity, Editor-in-Chief, 2002  
(Issue no. 1987, 18th May, 2002)*

He was not named after any famous mythological creature, so obviously no one ever expected anything great from him. Some saw him as a loser. I saw him as 'misunderstood'. He always said new things (stupid, but new) and he wasn't scared to say them. That's what I liked best about him.

We had become friends, a day after I had 'accidentally' poured some ice-cold water down the back of his shirt. The cold look in his eyes could have frozen a volcano. Probably the only reason he spared me a few jabs was because I was a girl. In those days, the relationship between a boy and a girl in kindergarten was completely innocent, sometimes bordering on 'stupid'.

I apologised quite a bit after the incident, profusely, but it didn't help matters much. He remained gloomy and downtrodden. Then things took a turn the next day. He finally opened up and accepted my apology (years later he told me his mom had something to do with it), and from that moment we became the best of friends.

As revelations came by, we surprised ourselves as common links surfaced: Bruce Lee movies, Star Wars and Archie Comics. But we clashed when differences arose – remember coffee or toffee? Call it coincidence, but we lived quite close by and often studied together, oblivious to our competitive nature in class. I always beat him though. He would blame it on feminine partiality.

"Seasons may come and seasons do go, all things wither in time you know..."

In the summer of 1994, family trouble ruptured his life, but he kept his cool characteristically – still sleeping with Yanni blaring on his headphones, still riding his small bicycle to school, still helping me with math. Maybe his shell had hardened, but he was still soft inside.

We both passed out of school with flying colours. Simcala University was our obvious choice and we ushered ourselves in with ease. We were both grown-up now. We were both mature. We were still best friends. We helped each other out so often that every time we received each others' call, we would laugh and ask, "How may I be of assistance?"

There were ups and downs, loves lost and won, tests passed and 'flunked' (because we were too down from the 'bash' the night before). But no matter, we cruised, keeping true to each other and lying to everyone else.

Then, it happened, one blisteringly cold November night. Probably I had a drop too much and passed out in the 'Men's Room'. There were four, laughing, and I screamed for them to stop, but they just slapped me instead and then it was over. The aftermath...

News spread like wild fire. I was shunned and out-cast, not even fit to be an untouchable. The police: they said it was my fault. I was too drunk, so they couldn't take my testimony as evidence. Case closed.

I couldn't find my best friend for four days.

He too had rejected me...but it wasn't my fault! I had no one to turn to, except God, and I was going to

meet him when the phone rang.

"Hello?"

"I'm sorry."

"So am I."

"I just had to do it, I could never live with it".

"I can't either...where are you?"

"Jail."

"Why?!"

"Multiple murders in cold blood...fourteen years... time-up! Good-bye... I love you, take care!"

*Click.*

I never did take that trip to God. I just sat in the corner and cried...

It's been a year since his arrest. I really worked hard that one year. Tomorrow, I get him out. Then we go far, far away and live our dream...party till we're eighty. Just me and my best friend.

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## The Longest Year

*Kanti Bajpai, Editor-in-Chief, 1972, tells us about his last year in School, which was then S form, and the desire to reach it*

*(Issue no. 1024, 26th February, 1972)*

For most of the present S formers, it's like a four year dream come true. It's like a piece of Swiss chocolate – smooth, delicious and diminishing. S form! Four years of drudgery, waiting and healthy rivalry, four years of easy companionship, loose talk and prefect mania, four hard years and then...it's over – the final plunge into the dark, turbulent water of hard work, responsibility and alienation. The longest year.

It has been a month since we took the plunge. It has been smooth, delicious and diminishing, but also disillusioning. In the early years of our school careers, we yearned to strut about importantly like the B formers, and with each year, our fancies took over our minds. We did not think, though we thought we did. Then one day, we walked into class and with the first beams of the morning sun, our faces brightened to a triumphant glow – B form pessimism may have a lot to do with it, but to my mind, growing older means gradual disintegration of the world of fancy, and disillusionment. Inevitably, though, B form held the advantage of being neither giggling juniors nor grave seniors, it meant the end of our childhood, coming into the real sense of the word. Things were no longer like they had seemed in our early years. Inexplicably, a void had grown into our lives. Then, as the days went into weeks, and the weeks into months, the sense of something missing disappeared. This heralded instead, the yearning, at first cautious, then with uncontrollable force, for S form and the pomp of prefectship.

It was not strange, therefore, that B form and A form were suddenly trivial, only stepping stones to the final plunge. In fact, the last two years flew and were gone in a flash of frenzied activity in quest of seniority. I am purposely not undermining this phenomenon, as it forms a very essential phase in the lives of all B and A formers and excepts no one. It is, to a great extent only natural, inherent in man's character – the desire to shine in a particular field and to rise above the heads of fellow beings. We always accepted it as such and took it in the stride of our daily lives in those two, hectic years.

*(Contd. overleaf)*

A form was a difficult year. In a way and in a great many cases, it was a year of responsibility without the authority. It was good fun with large doses of caution and the added burden of being no different to anyone else, in the eyes of the administration and the S formers. We had to behave with a good deal of restraint so as to not incur the displeasure of prefects, who were, quite frankly, waiting to pounce on us. The end of A form was rather melancholic. ISC made our hearts thud uncomfortably and the general void that ensues parting had its somber effect on us. We went away for the holidays, tired and happy at the end of a hard term, but with a curious sense of regret for those who left us, perhaps never to meet again.

The holidays dragged by, till the last week before School opened was spent in a welter of good-byes, resolutions for the new term and freshly laundered clothes. We arrived in School, full of hope (usually secret) and energy, vowing to cherish the ideals each one of us had fostered these long years and finding, to our intense

disappointment, a prefectship and the supposed glory of S form, comical and even farcical.

But it was not all gloomy. There was the aura of self-confidence we felt for the first time, the satisfaction of being trusted and what it entailed, the privilege (petty though it may seem) of wearing trousers to classes, of conducting assembly and PT, and the awe we inspired among the juniors – all very exciting, all part of the fun of being older than others and therefore gaining authority over them: the relic of a dying (patriarchal?) system.

A month has crawled by, a month during which we have reveled in the novelty of exercising power – our first test of leadership – and seeing life at the top. Now, after the first ‘kick’ of ‘landing’ or ‘sermonizing’, we are gradually settling down in the monotonous humdrum of life. That is the legacy of every Dosco today.

You see, we are no different from any of you. Just a couple of years older and slightly more mature when we choose to be; otherwise, no different.

A long year stretches ahead of us...the longest year.

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## Fellow Travellers

*Amitav Ghosh's winning Bakhle Essay recounts his experiences of travelling with a talkative companion (Issue no. 1050, 5th August, 1972)*

While travelling or touring one's surroundings, the mode of travel, the comfort of the journey and the journey itself are only half the factors of an interesting and memorable journey. The better half of one's delight is derived from one's companions. A journey on one's own is very rarely as enjoyable as a journey with one's friends.

The benefits to be derived from travel can easily be rendered null and void by one's company. Travel with strangers is interesting if one speaks the same language because one meets new people and one gets to know different kinds of people, and there is always that element of uncertainty. One does not quite know how interesting, or boring one's fellow traveller is and this adds an intriguing flavour to what could only, too easily have been a boring and insipid journey.

One neither remarks nor notices the presence of a fellow traveller, who sits in a corner and keeps to himself. But one cannot help noticing a fellow traveller who talks garrulously and at length. However much one may wish to escape his company, one cannot because he is always there, intense and loud, if not very forthright or frank.

There exists, however, a fallacy regarding talkative people that should be dispelled. It has been generally accepted that the term 'talkative' is synonymous with boring. Nothing can be more untrue. There are boring, talkative people and then there are interesting people who do not talk very much. As a matter of fact, there can hardly be a person more boring than the one who says nothing at all.

Talkative people have an unfortunate habit of talking at one and not to one. A nice delineation, keep in mind, is the first axiom of the good conversationalist – always talk about the other listeners – those people who have a little too much to say forget this very valuable rule only too often. In fact, there can be little in life as frustrating and exasperating as having to listen to a fellow traveller who also possesses the doubtful virtues of being talkative and very self-centered. All this while, one's nearest and dearest wish is to steep oneself in the glories of a sunset in the Himalayas, so speedily rushing by one's window.

A traveller who travels for many reasons, while out to see a certain country or area is only too glad to have with him a talkative and, if possible, interesting and informative fellow traveller who belongs to that very region.

When travelling in Garhwal, not far from Gangotri, and other places of veneration, one has to travel in ancient, dilapidated and ageless buses owned by a vague and definitely inactive body called the 'Tehri Garwal Motor Owners Corporation', written as one. There is little one can say for these jalopies, except that for relics of an age long gone by, it must be admitted that these buses are very active.

On these buses, one meets an incredible variety of people. Pilgrims travelling to Gangotri, men in the armed forces travelling to Rishikesh and back, trekkers (such as us) travelling to their road heads and, of course a phenomenal variety of Garhwalis. Garhwalis are generally considered to hold a place of honour among the most rustic of India's many races; yet, I will vouch that on one trip I met more interesting people (and most of them Garhwalis) than one usually meets in years. They were, most of them, uneducated, of course, but they spoke with understanding and perspicacity of education, politics and world affairs. This, perhaps, is a part of education of the transistor radio.

At a junction, there boarded a marriage party. The bus had been half empty, yet with the embarkation of the enormous party, some passengers prefer to disembark, considering, no doubt, discomfort and a little exertion to a fate preferable to death by asphyxiation. The marriage party was a sort of 'en famille' affair. Everyone in the party

was related to the other, however distantly and apparently they had celebrated the joys of family reunion with considerable amounts of alcohol and carousel. As a result, it fell to our lot to have besides us, a particularly inebriated gentleman who had no scruples when it came to the distribution of alcohol. The party had boarded fully accoutered for the coming ceremony. They carried with them a marriage bed, a 'palki' or palanquin, complete with a shy bride sitting inside, dowry in the form of a herd of excitable and unruly sheep, the musicians, the marriage party and the bride's grieving mother. Our companion succeeded in conveying to us, and very audibly, various tales pertaining to the immorality of the bridegroom's mother, the tight-fistedness of her parents in providing only twenty sheep as a dowry, the ugliness of the bridal pair and generally the iniquity of the family in not providing him with a particularly warm reception. His soliloquy would, no doubt, have been considerably longer, had not our friend's indiscretion come to the notice of the bridegroom's parents, who wasted no time in disposing of him at the next halt. We bid a reluctant farewell to a most interesting companion.

In the course of our trek, we also met another very interesting figure in the form of our guide. We met him on the road and he offered to guide us. Besides guiding us he also imparted to us some of his choicest pearls of wisdom. The old man's life in the hills was a happy one, and he had, like most of his fellow men, a profound and unshakable faith in God. As a result, his philosophy of life was simple and happy, bearing in it much of the peace and serenity of the high Himalayas. Unfortunately, the naïve simplicity of his ideals rendered his philosophy irrelevant to the viciousness of modern city life, so we profited little from his wisdom.

Besides meeting people while travelling, one also sees people. It is not necessary that one should always be the recipient of the talkative fellow traveller's attention. Only too often one is the helpless or amused onlooker of a situation arising between two talkative people, or a talkative person who bestows all of his attention on another fellow traveller.

On a train, one often sees an elderly matron embarking with a considerable ménage of children. If one is in the same compartment, one can view, with great delight, the trials of the lady in keeping her little group of children quiet. The process consists of one continuous monologue (punctuated by an occasional hard, ringing slap) during which she vacillates from child to child (as they indulge in their horse play), tearing the unfortunate young person's character to bits. It is, perhaps, fitting that no one, but the onlooker, pays the least heed to what she has to say. Her task is, in fact, Herculean, for as soon as she quells a certain group of children, another group begins to yell. As soon as she finishes with that group, the first one begins to make a noise, so that it becomes one endless cycle during which the poor woman loses her head and it becomes common chivalry to rise to her rescue.

In India, parochialism is a major social evil. One comes across it in the most unlikely of places. During the Haryana-Punjab dispute over Chandigarh, I found

myself sharing a compartment with two old gentlemen. During the course of conversation they discovered that one of them belonged to Haryana and the other to Punjab. An Englishman would have turned his head and stiffened his upper lip. Not so our volatile and excitable North Indians.

Within moments, I was embroiled in a highly emotional dispute over the ill-fated city, during the course of which there were long condemnations of the character of the inhabitants of both states. Very soon, that developed into a condemnation of each other's characters and, as the unfortunate third person, I was called upon to pass judgment. In retrospect, I remember that journey was quite interesting.

But then travelling is not always for pleasure. While rushing to the bedside of a desperately ill relative, the attentions of a talkative fellow traveller are not very conducive to a healthy state of mind. Under these circumstances, it is always most tactful to leave the unfortunate people to themselves; but the truly talkative person rarely adheres to rules of tact. He goes on to besiege the poor fellow with a barrage of questions and will, most probably, prophesy a speedy end for the afflicted relative. There is little one can do under such circumstances except turn one's deaf ear.

The talkative fellow traveller is an interesting phenomenon. He can be boring, interesting, quiet and intense, or loud and forceful. He may talk good sense or rubbish. He may be confusing or completely self-centered. In fact, they are rather like the leaves of a tree. All basically the same, but otherwise different.

\* \* \*

## The Weekly Victim's Song

(With apologies to Isaac Watts & Lewis Carroll)

*Vikram Seth*

(Issue no. 885, 25th March, 1967)

'Tis the voice of the Editor; I heard him complain,  
"You've got off it once, but never again  
Will you baffle my plans to trap you full well  
Into writing an article by lights-out bell."

"I order you here, ('twould be wise to obey),  
Write me a column by the end of this day.  
You may call it 'Cow Slaughter' or 'On Breaking Bounds.'  
But by Gad you shall do it or else will get rounds."

I passed by his garden, and waved out a greeting,  
Too late did I note 'twas an Editor's Meeting.  
Up jumped he in anger and shrieked at me, "Rounds,  
You have not writ your column; you *will* do two  
rounds!"

In haste did I mumble excuses galore,  
But 'twas rather obvious he was pretty sore.  
" 'Tis all your d-fault," he screamed in a rage,  
"That we'll now have to send in an unfinished page!"

This was a calamity; weird, but true,  
So I wrote this short poem; what else could I do?  
He forthwith *jalebed*, for his wrath was appeased;  
Even I must admit that I am jolly pleased.

# The Good, The Great and The Evil

*Mani Shankar Aiyar's prize-winning Bakhle Essay portrays greatness in the light of several defeats*

*(Issue no. 609, 31st May, 1958)*

*"Many men owe the Grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties." – Spurgeon*

The annals of time bear mute testimony to the fact. Almost at every point where the glory of Mankind has been eulogized, a tragic picture of adversity, misery and often defeat has been painted side by side. From grandeur, the spectre of peril has never been divorced. Where there is good, there has been evil. To climb the mountain the valley had first to be traversed; to reach Heaven, Hell had first to be crossed. Or so it would seem, if the records of history are to be believed.

Why is it so? Why is it that the greatness of Man should always be seen in the light of his many defeats? Has Man got to be crushed under the heavy foot of oppression before he can exhibit greatness? Perhaps it is so; perhaps nobility is a dormant virtue which flares out only under pressure from external circumstances. Greatness can only be attained, it may be said, when there is some outside catalyst, some stimulant which goads us on to greater things. So long as there is peace, plenty and prosperity, thus long will there be no feats to sing songs aloud; but, so long as there is strife, lack and poverty, thus long will man show himself in his most glorious form. Undoubtedly, there is much weight in this argument. To save his own life and his own honour, any man would, perhaps, display that latent nobility in him and so carve for himself a niche in the temple of fame. But this does not appear to me a very convincing reason.

Grandeur is something attributed to one by others. We are, in the eyes of posterity, as others see us. Unfortunately, man is invariably unable to perceive incidents and people with an objective eye. Take, for instance, a simple, everyday case. A child is about to cross the street as a lorry comes very near. Someone lays a hand on the child's shoulder and prevents it from crossing – and thus a life is preserved. Yet no headlines scream the fact, it is not discussed in public houses and drawing rooms. The labourer toils on, myriad stars twinkle in the sky, people go about their walks of life, unconcerned that a soul has been saved. But had that child crossed and been rescued from right under the lorry, a different story would have blared through the corridors of the world. "The lorry was almost upon her, you know." "My, what a brave man." "It shows guts, I say, nothing but guts!" And so the message would have flown around, and so his name would have been immortalized. Yet, what was the difference? The deed itself was the same but the circumstances were changed. That was all and yet historians point out the latter and say "This was the man". And he who had always saved the child by just preventing it from crossing would have 'blushed unseen'. Napoleon had to meet his Waterloo, Raziya had to fight her Altuniya, Prithviraj had to have a Ghori before the historian could sing his story. In death, in adversity, in struggle it is Man who has emerged in all his glory. Born in a log cabin, struggling to educate himself, pushed about here and there, perpetually an object of ridicule, striving to reach his goal and attaining it only to be sent hurtling down into the gaping jaws of death – that was Abraham Lincoln. Here was a man who set forth before him an ideal and relentlessly strove to attain it, who faced the music always, however harsh it sounded, who was prepared to sacrifice his every belonging in favour of this aim – the abolition of slavery – and so we revere him. His name is engraved in gold all over the scroll of history – and rightly too.

Grand must he be indeed who can rise.

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## On Living Dangerously

*Vimal Bhagat explores the benefits of living dangerously*

*(Issue no. 376, 19th May, 1951)*

Why do some people choose to forsake their lives and venture forth in this wide world to discover new things? Why is it that they do not live quietly in a town, respectably, with a steady income and a well-regulated life? It is because there is a strong, almost irresistible urge in them to go out, to hazard the elements, to see the things that are yet unknown to man. That is why men tramp into the forbidding gloom of the dark continents. That is why they brave the icy wastes of the South Pole; that is why they plunge deep into the murky depths of great oceans. It is the blood of these men that keeps humanity virile, strong, fresh. It is they who are the pioneers of modern civilization, who dare everything: to find new regions and new prospects for us. That is why I respect and admire them. Because they are men of action, who bring about all the pluck and fine fighting qualities of man.

From ages unknown, there have always been people who have lived dangerously and haved like it. Christopher Columbus was one of those and, with his strong determination, sheer will power and lion-hearted courage, he discovered the vast and beautiful landmass of America. Mallory and Irvin Scott of the Antarctic and Livingston, were all men of this caliber, and they all live in my memory as the most dauntless, courageous people in the world.

Most of the older people utter 'living dangerously' in a rather contemptuous tone; as if they knew better. They may try to persuade the younger generation to give up their ambition of becoming a fighter pilot and try and make him a businessman. But in their ill attempts at advice, in their misguided fondness for the child, they are crushing his finest qualities. They are making him into a bovine, malleable creature, lifeless, soulless, spiritless.

To me: give me an adventure any time. I would prefer to die dangerously than live a long, monotonous life. I would rather have my bones bleached under the pitiless sun of the Sahara than live a coward and die a thousand times before I am actually called for. I would love nothing better than walking through dark jungles as yet unexplored, tiger-infested, with a big river flowing quietly, oilily on one side, and huge trees with thick creepers on the other; then hearing the menacing grunt of crocodiles behind me; then feeling the sinister thrumming vibrations of the tom-toms fill the air. I would give the best years of my life to climbing peaks yet unclimbed; to feel the sharp, icy, shriek of the wind on my back, to let my feet sink into the soft snow, and to see the vast panorama of the snow-clad ranges light up into different hues by the light of the red dawn. I would bring fame to my country by living dangerously and would fight for her when she needed help...and if I died, what harm, because I would have lived an eventful and adventurous life, I would thank the Almighty for having given it me, and I would breathe my last serenely, for how can Man die better than facing fearful odds, for the ashes of his fathers, and temples of his gods.

# Substance and Shadow

*C.P.S. Menon, Editor-in-Chief, 1945, explains the relationship between substance and shadow (Issue no. 182, 16th June, 1945)*

These are simple words and you would all have heard of them. Yet, how many of you would have thought more of their meanings and tried to apply them to your daily life? This article is intended to induce some of you to think and act on these lines and not as a philosophical disquisition on the antitheses between substance and shadow, but their ontological problem or axiological values.

Often we come across things which appear alike, but later comes the realization that one of them is altogether different from the other, as for example, are gilt and pure gold. One wears off and shows the baser metal underneath; the other remains true gold; one is a fake, the other is a real thing or substance. Hence, the proverb: "All that glitters is not gold".

The real thing stands the test of time; its shadow waxes and wanes with it. The former, indeed, stands all tests; the latter almost none. I am reminded of one of the most beautiful Sanskrit *shlokas*: "Sandalwood, however much it is rubbed, retains its fragrance; gold, however often it is heated, retains its attractive colour; great men, however much they are subjected to adversities, do not change their characters". Contrast these with the attractive veneer of modern woodwork, with plated metal goods, with meaner men.

We, very often, hear such statements as "So and so is a substantial chap" and "So and so is bogus"; this is usual when sides are taken in a dispute between two men, but even in other circumstances and motives, men often criticize, compare and judge other men. Think about what is actually meant by those lines. Again, what is meant when we say "Is this piece of timber substantial?". Contrast it with a piece of timber which is hollow, another which is light, a third which is attacked by fungus, a fourth prone to be an easy victim of white ants; then, we get some idea of substantial timber. Similarly, a substantial house.

House is understood in contrast with the 'semi-permanent sheds' which, this war has produced, much to the satisfaction of military contractors. Even in the realms of emotions and thoughts and facts and imageries, there seems scope for this distinction between substance and shadow. Take the interesting article on idleness that appeared in last week's *Weekly*. It was apparently a very good justification of the 'idle' ways of an idle fellow. I was tempted and knowing School, I felt sure many of us were tempted to throw away our books and pens and to get converted to this new religion of idleness – or rather, as the writer made one think, get reverted to the primitive religion of idleness, to the pristine glory of an idyllic doing-nothing life. But second thoughts made me wonder. Was the primitive man idle, roaming about freely in the countryside, picking fresh apples off trees and strawberries off the bush and reposing in the lap of kind Mother Nature, listening to the lark and the cuckoo? Or was he grappling with the blind forces of a cruel goddess, a nature red in tooth and claw, wrestling with monsters, forging new weapons, hunting for his food and building against the rigors of the wilderness? Did human survival and civilization grow up like a mushroom under the pink nose of an idle fellow, or was it built with great sacrifice which made it possible for an idle fellow here and another there to ob-

tain shelter and food free and spend his time in idle musings? What would happen if everybody in the world turned idle? It is rather unfortunate that social organization has deteriorated and it is now possible for some to be idle and to amuse themselves by playing cards, tennis, cricket and other 'sports'. While others have to sweat at the toil, whether it is production and distribution of materials, or the necessary ideas and intellectual processes involved.

So, it becomes clear that the attractive ideas of idleness were illusionary shadows and not substantially correct. Now, there is another kind of inertia which apparently resembles idleness, but is fundamentally different. This is the static repose associated with thinkers and saints; if you have not seen it in real life, you might have noticed it as a feature of ancient Indian statues. This is the substance of peace and happiness as distinct from mere laziness, which leads to unhappiness in the end; these two extremes which seem to meet are separated by the vast domain of action and power. The idle man is standing sullenly on one bank of the stream of life, the active man is in the stream, struggling to get across. The man of the quiet and peace has arrived home on the far bank of the same stream. The qualities of these three men and their stages of attainment are classified by our ancients as *Tanas*, *Rajas* and *Sittva* respectively.

Having got a fairly good idea of the difference between substance and shadow, we might be in a position to apply it in our daily life and to our surroundings. On the one hand, to the account we render of ourselves – in the eyes of god if not of our fellows – to the way we discharge our duties and obligations, assert our rights and observe our principles; and, on the other hand, to our discernment of right and wrong, of good and evil, of real beauty and eternal values; to our judgment of men and matters, to the shortcomings and needs of our homes, schools and society. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, or go under any other self-chosen label or one that is thrust on you is immaterial. If one cannot observe much within the limited world of one's experience, one should be wise to learn from the lives and teachings of great men of all ages, or from the large heritage of ancient wisdom that exists as traditions, folklore, or proverbs. "Do not unto others what you wouldst not have unto thyself", said Christ. "I had rather that my sons were deceived by others than that they should deceive others", said Mahatma Gandhi. Or, to take some of the proverbs, "barking dogs seldom bite", "empty vessels make most sound", "still waters run deep", "a full pot seldom spills", etc.

For anyone who is not muddle-headed or blind (naturally or deliberately), it is not difficult to tell chalk from cheese, sound from sense, or shadow from substance; for him, it does not seem fit to judge an Ethiopian by his colour, an Indian by his foreign accent or an Englishman by his compliments; it is not possible for him to regard the object of life as a selfish one, the method of life as expediency, competition and subordination of everyone and every ideal as means to an end, or (to talk shop) again, the object of education as the training of 'tough guys' and the method to put the Body before the Soul, the chariot before the charioteer, or the cart before the horse.

Goodbye. Or, in terms of the eternal substance as against the temporal shadows, *au revoir*.

# Musings

*Ardashir Vakil philosophizes on the essence of life  
(Issue no. 1226, 15th April, 1978)*

Can we compress into a summary a perspective of human life? It is impossible; for life in essence is a mystery, a river flowing from an unseen source; and its development an infinite subtlety too complex for thought, much less for utterance. And yet, the thirst for unity draws us on. To chart it is a wilderness of experience and history, to force into focus on the future the unsteady life of the past, to show the significance and purpose of the chaos of sensation and desire to discover the direction of life's stream and thereby, in some measure, to control its flow. The insatiable metaphysical lust is one of the nobler aspects of our questionable race. And so we shall try, however vainly, to see human existence as a whole, from the moment when we are flung into the world, until the wheel on which we are bound becomes a full circle in death.

Life is that which is discontent, which struggles and seeks, which fights to the very end. No mechanistic scheme can do it justice, or understand the silent growth and majesty of a tree, or encompass the longing and tenderness of children. See him, the new born, dirty, but marvellous, ridiculous, infinite in possibility, capable of that ultimate mystery - growth. Can you conceive it - that this queer bundle of sound and pain will come to know love, anxiety, prayer, suffering, creation, metaphysics, death? Childhood may be defined as the age of play, therefore some children are never young and some adults are never old. Passing into the world, youth, petted for years and now for the first time free, drinks in the deep delights of liberty, utters its wild barbaric yawp, and advances to conquer and remould the world. And so, youth marries and youth dies.

Hence, it is in work and parentage that middle age finds its fulfilment and its happiness. As youth's ambition and hopefulness stabilizes into quiet industry and patience of the central years, the rest of things done replace the dream of conquered worlds with maturity - like Sancho Panza, referring to an island in the Mediterranean as a continent in Utopia. "Men ought to die at their zenith", says a merciless philosopher. But they don't; and therefore, youth and death meet one another as they walk the street.

And yet, what if it is for life's sake that we must die? In truth, we are not individuals; and it is because we think ourselves such, that death seems unforgivable. We are temporary organs of the race, of cells in the body of life; we die and drop away that life may remain young and strong. If we were to live forever, growth would be stifled and youth would find no room on the earth. Death, like style, is the removal of rubbish, the excision of the superfluous. Through love we pass our vitality onto a new form, before the old form dies - through parentage.

We bridge the chasm of generations, and elude the eternity of death. Here, even in the river's flood, children are born; here solitary in a tree, and surrounded by raging waters, a mother nurses her babe in the midst of death and life renews immortal.

So wisdom may come as the gift of age, and seeing things in place, and every part in its relation to the whole, one may reach that perspective in which understanding pardons all. It is one test of philosophy to give life a meaning that shall frustrate death, wisdom will show that corruption comes only to the part, that life itself is deathless while we die.

Three thousand years ago, a man thought that Man must fly, and so he built himself wings, and trusting them and trying to fly, fell into the sea. Undaunted, life carried on in the tree. Thirty generations passed, and Leonardo da Vinci, spirit made flesh, scratched across his drawings, (drawings so beautiful that one catches one's breath with pain seeing them) planned his calculations for flying machines; and left in his notes a little phrase that, once heard, rings like a bell in the memory - "There shall be wings". Leonardo failed and died; but life carried on the dream. Generations passed and men said Man would never fly for it was not the will of God. And then Man flew. Life is that which can hold the purpose for three thousand years and never yield. The individual fails, but life succeeds. The individual dies, but life, tireless and undiscourageable, goes on, wondering, planning, trying, longing.

Here is an old man on the bed of death, harassed by helpless friends and wailing relatives. What a terrible sight it is- this thin frame with loosened and crackling flesh, this toothless mouth in a bloodless face, this tongue that cannot speak, these eyes that cannot see! To this past, youth has come, after all its hopes and trials, to this past middle age after all its torment and its toil. To this past health and strength and joyous rivalry; this arm once struck great blows and fought for victory in virile games. To this past knowledge, science, wisdom; for seventy years this man with pain and effort gathered knowledge; his brain became the storehouse of a varied experience, the centre of a thousand subtleties of thoughts and deeds; his heart, through suffering, learned gentleness as his mind learned understanding; seventy years he grew from an animal into a man capable of seeing truth and beauty. But, death is upon him, poisoning him, choking him with congealing his blood, by tripping his heart. Death wins.

Outside on the green boughs, birds twitter and the chancleer sings his hymn to the sun; light streams across the fields; buds open and stalks confidently lift their heads; the sap mounts in the trees. That is what makes them so joyous, running hardily over the dew wet grass, laughing, calling, panting for breath, inexhaustible? What do they care about death? They will learn and grow and love and struggle and create, and lift up one little notch, perhaps, before I die. And when they pass they will cheat death with children, with parental skills that will make their offspring finer than themselves. There, in the twilight, lovers pass, thinking themselves unseen; their quiet words mingle with the murmur of the insects calling to their mates; that ancient hunger speaks, though eager and though lower, dies, and a whole madness courses through clasped hands and touching lips. Life wins.

| Short Story |  
**Bella Paola**

*Wajahat Habibullah*

*(Issue no. 1226, 15th April, 1978)*

She was a fine, compact little chestnut filly - a thorough-bred. Her long, shining legs, her round barrel, her curving neck, surmounted by a beautiful, flowing mane reflected the very pinnacle of perfection in her thorough-bred looks. But, by far, her most remarkable features were her large, dark eyes. The striking fact about them was their immense size and the twinkle that never left. Her name was Bella Paola. Bella Paola was an extremely fast steed. Indeed, she was coming up so well that she was a source of great discomfort to the owners of the horses entered for the Derby that year. But so fast was she and so divinely beautiful that even in the midst of their alarm they could not suppress in themselves a profound feeling of admiration and ecstasy in witnessing her graceful stride and wonderful action. Bella Paola's master was one Walsh. Though kind and generous at heart, he was a trifle impatient and had a quick temper and when he was enraged he possessed that terrifying tendency that sensitive men so often have, of taking a sadistic pleasure in hurting the one he loved best in the world; and he loved Bella Paola best in the world.

It was Derby day. The stands were filled with a cosmopolitan crowd, which hummed and droned as the people gossiped. There were gentlemen wearing top-hats and ladies dressed in the very essence of fashion itself. The whole racecourse was a blaze of colour and of gossip, which sounded from a distance, like an aeroplane coming down over the crowd, as people tossed their heads or laughed or jumped to greet a friend. Bella Paola was there, jumping in excitement on her springy forelegs. Her eyes were more luminous than ever. The spirit of the race was in her and Walsh standing before her smiled happily, confidently, as he observed her frivolity in the stable. The horses came out into the paddock. The crowd surged round them and began to discuss the competitors. Then Bella Paola was led out. A gasp seemed to run through the crowd, and every face expressed astonishment at the extreme beauty of this hitherto little known filly. Bella Paola was established as the firm favourite.

Warren was Bella Paola's jockey. He was young and gay. He was confident that his mount would beat any opposition and with a beaming smile he centred Bella Paola to the post. He too loved Bella Paola; loved her grace and beauty, loved the rides she gave him, for so smooth was her gallop, that she seemed to fly under him. At the post, Warren looked proudly at Bella Paola, and scornfully at the other horses, whose jockeys couldn't take their eyes off Bella Paola., the light, springy, fast favourite.

The gate went up; the horses were off. The crowd stopped chattering and looked expectantly at the runners. A big, grey horse was in the lead. Bella Paola was placed in the fourth position. Running close on the heels of the grey horse was the beautiful Bucephalus. He too, was famous for he had won the largest number of races that year. This great, handsome horse soon took the lead. The field came round Tottenham corner. Bella Paola then made her run. She flashed into the lead. Warren became excited. So ecstatic was he at the speed of his mount that he became like a man obsessed, oblivious of all the niceties of riding. He began to urge her on faster and faster. A hundred yards from home, fifteen lengths separated Bella Paola from Bucephalus. The crowd began to roar. "Bella Paola! Bella Paola!" was heard all round.

But, Warren had taken Bella Paola too fast. Gallantly, she galloped on, but fifty yards from home, she blew up. Walsh, sitting excitedly, without a sound escaping his lips, gasped. Bucephalus closed the gap, and snatched the verdict by a head from Bella Paola. The horses were led back to the stables. Walsh, white as chalk with the anger resulting from disappointment, stared malevolently at Warren. "I did my best," cried the jockey. "It was not my fault." "You may go," said Walsh hoarsely, hardly audible. Dejected, Warren left. But Walsh looked at Bella Paola; looked at the filly on whom he had pinned his love and so many hopes, and suddenly he hated her. In a passion, he lifted the riding crop lying on the floor and without a word, began to beat Bella Paola so cruelly that the horrified filly gave vent to such pitiable screams that could melt the hardest hearts. But Walsh, obsessed with rage, beat her, until the blood oozed from her heaving flanks and from her exquisite neck. Then, flinging away the crop, Walsh left her, and sold her to the first person who made him an offer.

A year had passed since that fateful Derby. Bella Paola had grown thin and weak. Her large, once shining eyes had become dull. The scars of the undeserved beating she had received had not left her. She had not a single race to her name after the terrible Derby defeat. Bella Paola had developed a horror of men after her treatment. She, who had once so loved human beings, now hated them with a hate born out of horror and fear. She would not allow jockeys to mount her or grooms to condition her, but kicked, reared and bit at them. When she was alone, her unhappy mind led her to dream of the days when she had been happy and healthy. She would stand and gaze at the azure sky and it seemed as though her eyes were always filled with tears - tears of regret and unmitigated remorse. She seemed to know that she was dying, but she no longer regretted it. She had loved life once, but now it held nothing but sorrow for her. It would be a relief to die - to die and sleep forever, never again to awaken on this harsh, cruel world. The love for life had died in her when her spirit had been broken, never to return. The groom brought in her food. He looked apprehensively at her, for she had often bitten him. She did not want food. She did not even want to go for the groom as she usually did. She did not care now what happened to her. She felt a strange rebel come over her unexpectedly, and it seemed to lift the whole burden of life from her. She felt gay and joyous once more but it was at the prospect of death, for death would relieve her agony.

The sun was setting in a sky ablaze with the red of the setting sun. The hills were frowning on the calm earth before them. A gentle wind played with the leaves of the trees. The clouds, red smudges of blood, were moving slowly westwards over the otherwise clear sky. Bella Paola's groom came towards her stable to settle her for the night. He was wondering why she had not attacked him that morning. Perhaps, she was recovering at last. He would know for certain now, and then it would be good to tell the master. He would be pleased.

He came into the stable. His expectations were fulfilled, but in an unwanted way. He first saw one leg outstretched; then he looked at the piteous heap on the floor that had once been Bella Paola. Her large eyes, staring toward him, seemed to say, "What have you done to me?" And the groom was overwhelmed by self-reproach. With tears in his eyes, he bent down, and closed the eyes that upbraided him. Then, quietly and with a heavy heart, he prayed for Bella Paola's soul, while his person was convulsed with sobs. He was the last to have loved the filly.

# "In Defence of The Individual"

*Vikram Seth, Editor-in-Chief, 1968, in his prize-winning Bakhle Essay, expounds the need to judge people for their individual traits  
(Issue no. 891, 13th May, 1967)*

"Each case should be judged on its own merits" is a cliché, but nevertheless it is true. Nowadays, in the free world more and more emphasis is being put on this maxim and people are not treated as groups but as particular people who have their own traits and personalities.

Excessive generalization has done much harm to many. Scots are treated as misers; all Americans are 'Uncle Sams', and Englishmen – 'John Bull'. The 'Hindoo' is always portrayed as a small, black, turbaned person, who speaks English with an atrocious accent, and the Chinaman says "me no savvy" or "Velly nice" to everything. The images are not only hurtful to one's pride, but also, in most cases, untrue. The nation or group has been degraded indiscriminately and the individual has been suppressed.

There are groups of people in this world who have similar characteristics, but no two individuals are exactly the same. Instead of grouping similar people together, one should try to treat them separately so that the differences in their characters can be brought out in full.

Individuality should be brought out and cultivated from youth. Many persons are in the habit of saying that they dislike children, but this is an unpardonably foolish generalization. Children, like adults, are individuals, and the group they form consists of an assortment of different characters. Their education is somewhat the same, but even in their schools, their peculiar traits can be made to flourish. In progressive schools, for instance, classes are small, and the number of students is kept, as far as possible, under twenty-five. The teacher's attention is thus shared by a small number of pupils and he can point out their individual mistakes, give them encouragement, not as a class, but as individuals. This is a most effective method because when one is young and one's mind is malleable, encouragement or praise which is rendered to one individually gives much more confidence than if it is administered to everyone in the group. Extra-curricular facilities in modern schools also help to make everyone excel in their particular spheres.

In Nazi Germany, the individual was suppressed, and the German people were treated like a herd of sheep who could be driven from place to place quite easily. Anyone who expressed anti-Nazi views was thrown into a concentration camp, and the chances were against his ever being heard of again. Berlin, the capital was a haven for those who wanted to suppress the thoughts of the people, and there was no love lost between the people who had been cowed to fight for the father land, and their Nazi slave drivers. It was no wonder that Berlin fell to the Russians without any resistance; the state of affairs was so pitiful there that there was a joke that the Russians would spend two hours and fifteen minutes to capture Berlin – two hours to laugh their heads off and fifteen minutes to enter it.

There are countries today which restrict the individual's expression, cramp his field of thought and force him to do the work allotted to him by the state, irrespective of whether he likes it or not. In China, for example, there is no prospect of asserting one's exclusive traits, no possibility of specialization. As a result, millions of Chinese have escaped from their country, and their numbers are steadily increasing. No one escapes from the free world, however, where the individual's place is emphasized.

The individual has a vital place in free society, for it is the individual who makes society. Here the peculiarities and eccentricities of the individual are fully portrayed and the expression of his thought forms an integral part of world opinion. He can show that he is not one of the crowd, by being a non-conformist, a beatnik, a 'pop musician', or an 'op' artist. He doesn't have to suppress his emotions and can bring out all the facets of his character. There is nothing to stop him from breaking away from the general trend of thought or from branching from generalized work to specialized work. He can explore new branches of modern art, jazz and fashion, and he will, very likely, be encouraged in this.

An individual is a highly complex mechanism and if he is taken for and treated as what he is, the mechanism of his mind runs smoothly. He becomes more confident of himself, takes a greater pride in his work and responsibilities and becomes a happier person. If, on the other hand, he is treated as 'one of the crowd', he gains anonymity, and cannot assert himself or express his ideas. The root of happiness lies in freedom of thought and expression. Plato insisted that the suppression of freedom could only lead to unhappiness.

It is not society that makes individuals, but individuals who make society. They were its founders, they are its members, it is they who will, in years to come, uphold its dignity. We, as individuals, should work towards definite ideals – ideals of our own making, aims which we are content to work towards, goals that we would like to reach. It is only by making a supreme effort that we can earn a place for ourselves as individuals and for others who do not have the strength of mind to express their views. For it is thus, and only thus, that we can make our world a happy, cheerful place to live in, not only for our lifetime, but for many generations to come.

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[weekly@doonschool.com](mailto:weekly@doonschool.com)



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