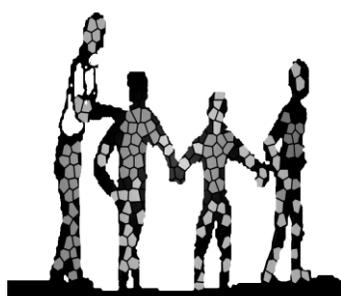


ESTABLISHED IN 1936



# The Doon School WEEKLY



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## **THE FINAL LAP**

*Pulkit Agarwal discusses the election polls*

With the results of the elections just around the corner, there are “Winds of Change” distinctly blowing across the nation. These winds are all the more pronounced in the Northern part of India i.e. states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Punjab, New Delhi, Bihar and of course, Gujarat, but one wouldn't be wrong to even conjecture a probable betterment of the BJP's performance in the states that were until now its weak spots e.g. Tamil Nadu and Orissa, both of which are dominated by strong regional players in Ms Jayalalitha and Mr Naveen Patnaik, but are predicted to play host to a few BJP seats as well. What this essentially shows is the patterns in which the Indian voter is casting his/her vote. I faintly recall a similar scenario in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election of 2012, where it was the Samajwadi that benefited from a highly dissatisfied electorate that voted out Ms Mayawati, and against all expectations, gave the SP a simple majority in the Assembly! In essence, vote swings in India prior to an election where anti-incumbency plays a huge role seem to be of great magnitude. The reason I feel this election is similar is due to a number of factors. Allow me to explain a few of them, albeit briefly.

Firstly, the Congress initially was rather reluctant to campaign as ostentatiously as their counterparts, and perhaps even less so than it did in 2009. But off late, we have seen them pull out their last card in Mrs Priyanka Vadra. While she is being perceived as an able leader, and perhaps even the one they would turn to eventually in case the results of the election do prove to be poor, the fact that she took center stage so late, shows that the Congress has seen its popularity dim over the course of the last few months, and is now in a seemingly desperate situation. Mrs Vadra is the first leader from within the family who has taken on Modi unperturbed and has matched his aggression with equally unequivocal aggression. However, while right up till December, all we heard was that she would be distanced from the campaign, off late she has become the locus of it; actually in Amethi, she has even to an extent eclipsed her brother who is contesting from that very seat. It clearly shows the Congress's slow realization of its increasingly disreputable state. Even so, her repeated personal attacks in reply to the BJP, have not created too much of a dent. Especially following Modi's huge rally in Amethi on just Monday, which many are now referring to as a master-move, we can see that even the Gandhi citadel seems to, for once, hosting a battle that is not only ferocious, but also real!

Another indicator is the way many regional leaders have been reacting to Mr Modi, and how their reactions have changed over the course of their campaigns. While on the one hand, we have leaders like Ram Vilas Paswan, who allied with the BJP a couple of months ago, we also have leaders like Ms Jayalalitha who have come out in explicit opposition to Mr Modi only very recently. To understand this difference better, we need to see that while the former is a leader whose party doesn't hold a single seat in the Lok Sabha, the latter is one who is predicted to win up to even 30 seats this election. In my opinion, the reason for this is that while there are some leaders/parties with not as much regional clout, like Mr Paswan's LJP in Bihar, which in its opportunistic ambition is joining the Modi bandwagon just in time, there are those that are well placed in their own right such as the AIADMK, which realizing that due to the ever-increasing support of Mr Modi, might not be required in a possible Modi-led government and are now distancing themselves from him in order to attract the anti-BJP crowd of voters, for they see that nothing good shall come from their remaining quiet on this front. Both, once again, are clear signs of the fact that Mr Modi's popularity has risen further over the course of the campaign, and various parties have perceived this phenomenon.

The last indicator that I would like to employ here is something that I experienced myself. As I carried out a Pre-Poll election survey in my home constituency of Pilibhit, U.P. this February of 1212 voters, I found that 578 respondents to the survey were going to vote in favor of the BJP. Their reasons, needless to say, were diversified, but the sheer magnitude of the anti-Congress and pro-Modi mood really struck me! This coupled with the various Opinion Polls that I have followed over the last few months, has clearly indicated a rising support for the BJP, which may even culminate to a simple majority. I must point out, that it has been a long time since the nation saw an election that gave us a majority government; this might just turn out to be one! No wonder then, Ms Jayalalitha is distancing herself from Mr Modi so late, realizing that her party's support might not even be required by the NDA to propel across the magic mark of 272.

To conclude, I just want to reiterate the fact that an election is never won or lost till Counting Day. After all, I am sure not many would have predicted the AAP 28 seats in Delhi this December, in the same way that few would have predicted the Indira Gandhi-led Congress a loss in 1977. It would be interesting to note how many pollsters are proven wrong or right on the 16th. In a small effort to strike gold though, I too would like to play the dice and try my luck. So, here goes my prediction for Lok Sabha elections 2014: NDA: 270-290 and UPA: 100-115. I look forward to welcoming your criticism/appreciation on Counting Day, as the case may be, as we shall all find out whether the voter's mood in our country, is indeed at all intelligible.



## Regulars

### WIDPSC, 2014

Six boys took part in the **World Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championship**, held in Lithuania.

The best rank achieved by students in the various categories are as follows:

**Parliamentary Debate:** Vrindam Nagpal (25)

**Persuasive Speaking:** Arth Gupta (31)

**Impromptu Speaking:** Vrindam Nagpal (21)

**Interpretive Reading:** Pulkit Agarwal (1)

**After Dinner Speaking:** Devansh Agarwal (20)

Pulkit Agarwal was awarded the **Best Speaker, English as a Foreign Language**.

Congratulations!

### HOCKEY

In the **Kandhari Memorial Hockey Tournament**, the School Hockey team played their second league match against **Wynberg Allen School** and **won** 5-0. The third league match was against **Mayo College** and the School team **won** 5-1. They played their last league match against **Welham Boys School** and **lost** 3-0.

Well Tried!

### ONE-ACT PLAY

The following are the results of the **Inter-House English One-Act Play Competition, 2014:**

**1st:** Kashmir House

**2nd:** Oberoi House

**3rd:** Tata House

**4th:** Jaipur House

**5th:** Hyderabad House

The following were the **individual awards:**

**Best Actor:** Anirudh Popli

**Best Supporting Actor:** Yash Dhandhanika

**Best Directors:** Vrindam Nagpal and Sudhansh Agarwal

Congratulations!

### FOOTBALL SUCCESS

Aditya Vir Roy represented the **IPSC Under-19 Football Team** at the **59th National Games** held in Pune. The team reached the finals where it lost to Kerala State 1-0.

Owing to his brilliant performance, he has been selected for the **India Under-19 Camp**.

Well Done!

### UNQUOTABLE QUOTES

*You is mad!*

**Suryansh Kainthola** makes it clear.

*The male man is the main character.*

**JKA**, what about the female woman?

*I am considering you close friends of my circle.*

**Husain Haider Abbas** has a closed social circle.

*Nice goaled!*

**Atrey Bhargava**, centre-forward extraordinaire.

*Please let me open my discimail.*

**Dhruv Johri** worries the IT department.

### The Week Gone By

**Yuvan Kumar**

At this point in the term, one can truly say, 'Keep calm, but *I* can't carry on!' This, readers, is the predicament of the average Dosco at the moment. It is going to be difficult to encompass the myriad activities that have happened, but we'll give it a try.

Hockey is one sport which is growing larger and larger every week. It is almost a given (once our school teamers come back from their inter-school matches) that they have trumped the opposing side by a margin of more than two goals. Recently, they also walked in to the CDH, holding aloft the prestigious 'David Inglis Cup' for the second year consecutively. Well done team! The School Team did well in the Kandhari Memorial Tournament at Welham Boys, but lost to PPS Nabha in the Semis. A tremendous effort nonetheless! Inter-House Hockey has also picked up pace, seeing a lot of upcoming talent from the youngest seniors this year.

Last Friday and Saturday nights saw the performance of several challenging and enticing plays. Tata House put up quite a daring and solid performance, using the third gender effectively to eliminate misconceptions. Kashmir House followed with a close to reality show, exposing the masked realities of the West. The audience saw the last act of Friday evening, the H House play, battle against points, judges and time. Taking the stage the next day, Jaipur House threw an absolutely power-packed display of voice modulation, rapid dialogue delivery and effective use of meta-theatre. Lastly, and by no means the least, O House kept the audience engrossed in their play, which set the mood for a thoughtful reflection.

With the onset of the last phase of this term, we can still see an array of activities (which should have subsided by now). The Inter-House Dance Competition is at the end of this week, with the Western Band lurking in the near future. Trials are a rising tide, ready to break onto the shore in less than ten days: grab onto anything that you find!

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### AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 WORDS

The infamous terrorist group Boko Haram, launched an attack in a Nigerian village, where troops, finding the hundred of schoolgirls abducted by this militant group, were stationed. In Texas, USA, a ninety-three year old woman, Pearlie Golden, was brutally shot multiple times by the local police force. An ambush near the Afghan border led to the death of eight Pakistani security force members. In the recent shark-culling program which was held in Western Australia, the government caught 172 sharks.

# Debating in the Lithuanian Parliament!

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**Pulkit Agarwal and Krishna Lohiya**

This year as the World Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championships travelled to Lithuania, six Doscocs along with Mr. Debashish Chakrabarty, set off to Vilnius on the 22nd of April, as proud members of Team India. Fortunately for the S-formers on the team, the championships were held a month later than usual, giving them the chance to use the exorbitant free time during their Boards to good effect in preparation! In an attempt to leave a mark on the international platform, we sent a “Crack Team” for the championships, comprising Pulkit Agarwal, Vrindam Nagpal, Devansh Agarwal, Arth Gupta, Manan Pradhan and Krishna Lohiya.

Our first challenge came our way even before any of us took our position on the podiums, as one of our team members, for some reason beyond our comprehension, took it upon himself to install an entire Indian kitchen in Lithuania! Thankfully for him, the airport officials in Helsinki turned out to be fond lovers of Indian food and spared him his Dal Makhani. We finally landed in Vilnius and were subsequently driven to a nearby town called Druskininkai. One simply couldn't help noticing the sheer lengths of land that remained unoccupied in Lithuania. The scenic beauty, coupled with the warmth of our hosts, made our commute and stay there extremely comforting. The main events began on the 24th with the Persuasive Speaking and Interpretive Reading categories. Since both these categories were prepared, we felt the pressure of doing well in them, knowing that some of the more seasoned speakers might do a little better than us in the impromptu rounds. Nevertheless, we all were really proud of our performances on the first day, and it gave us a good boost going into the more challenging days of the competition. But before that, we had the pleasure of enjoying our evening at the Aqua Park. It served as a brilliant chance for all of us to recover from the tiredness of our long travels.

The second day started a little late for us, but we were up to the mark and were able to perform well in our events with some seriously politically correct jokes being cracked in most of our Impromptu Speeches. Since this is one category that we hardly see performed back here in India, we considered it a good opportunity to take away the art of delivering a speech on the spot. From topics as quotidian as “Power” to some as nuanced as “Injuries must be forgiven, but not forgotten,” we thoroughly enjoyed the experience of giving speeches with less than a couple of minutes to prepare. The evening was set for a walk around Druskininkai, and we were really awe-struck by the natural beauty of the exceedingly calm place. It was quite antithetical to the usual environment that we are exposed to in India. We also used the chance to make some friends, as we met people from highly diverse backgrounds: USA, Canada, Hong Kong, Germany, Australia and even Pakistan. It was pleasing to know that the one common string in our lives was the passion for debate and discourse. No wonder then, we all got along really well, admiring each other's cultures and perspectives towards life.

The following day was the most exhausting of them all, with one round of Impromptu Speaking and two rounds of Parliamentary Debating. We were originally highly intimidated by the idea of participating in two debates on the same day, with barely an hour between them, but listening to some of the motions made each of those long nine-minute speeches, extremely thrilling. We debated motions as generic as “This House would ban religious symbols in state schools” to some as blatant as “This House would assassinate Vladimir Putin.” It was remarkable to see how due to the diversity at the competition, everyone brought in varying styles and examples from their homelands, thus making the entire experience of debating that much for vivid and memorable.

We were also privileged to hear the keynote address of Mr. Arnoldas Pranckevicius, the diplomatic advisor to the President of the European Parliament. Never before, had we seen a diplomat, personally waltz around the auditorium and receive questions from students who represented some of the finest debaters around the world. Nevertheless, his experience and aplomb was there for everyone to see as he answered every question commendably and didn't so much as break a sweat, or at least so he made us believe! In fact, he was so impressed with the speakers, that he consented to judge all the final rounds of the championships.

The finalists were announced on the 27th and though the list broke some hearts, we were glad to see that Pulkit Agarwal made the Finals for Interpretive Reading and, what's more, had been ranked first in that category in the Preliminary Rounds. After the brief events, we had the whole day free and spent it cycling around town in search of good food outlets. The organization committee had arranged for a fun evening of bowling that everyone thoroughly enjoyed, but we felt a little blue at the fact that we would be leaving that town the following morning. We began our bus journey to Vilnius at 9 am but stopped in a place named Trakai for an hour to admire the famous Trakai Castle, which served as the home of the King of Lithuania from the Middle Ages up until the 18th century. We could see all our history lessons fall in place as we got a deep insight into the political development that Lithuania went through, right up till the time it broke away from the Communist erstwhile USSR.

Lastly, upon our arrival at Vilnius, we groomed ourselves quickly and left for The Grand Finals of WIDPSC 2014 that were held in the Lithuanian Parliament- Seimas, a place which held a special place in their history, for it was the first Parliament to declare its independence by breaking away from the USSR in 1991.

The last few events were truly outstanding, and they deserved every inch of the applause they got. With speakers teaching us “How to Debate” in their After-Dinner speeches, to some persuading us to “Accept Homosexuality,” we were truly privileged to witness the highly competitive Grand Finals. We even witnessed a spellbinding performance of some traditional Lithuanian songs, and Katy Perry's 'Roar,' a cappella!

That night, we were greeted by an ostentatious and rather grand dinner at the Duke's Palace! All the bread in Lithuania was not enough to feed our debaters that night, who had developed such a deep hunger for knowledge and discourse following the truly memorable competition. We all left, albeit begrudgingly, excited about the prospect of applying every bit of our new experience to debates back here in India! We hope it will be evident the next time one of us faces the microphone here in Chandbagh and beyond.

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# Roving Eye

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Ed. & S.Eds.

“Oye, where's my cologne man? *Accha*, is this watch better or the other one?” In short, this was how the SC form's weekend was spent. These were one of few instances when the SC form was punctual, much to the delight of the Headmasters. As the anxious ‘men’ were waiting for the women to arrive, desperate attempts and deals were made on who was to be whose wing-man, with the School Athletics Captain leading from the front. Lucky for him: he apparently did win his race.

Socials started off soon enough with the usual suspects taking their strategically important positions and loading their WMAs (Weapons of Mass Attraction) and stealthily moving in for the kill. The KFC stuntman's antics on the other hand were found to be finger licking good and probably helped him sign the Lucknow Pact. The Pianist's confrontation with the Karate Kid went rather smoothly-luckily for us, he emerged unscathed. The highlights of the sit-down session were the surveys which threw up some rather interesting findings, with Ms La Rue having the most off-beat answers. However, one table that caught our attention was the one where a heated debate on the application of the Pythagoras' Theorem in thermodynamics and its relevance in the Doppler Effect was taking place. The lamp post, the Stammering Stud and the TT Captain were locked in fierce competition, desperately trying to outshine each other.

With the School Captain taking the lead, closely followed by the Cricket Captain and the Basketball Captain (who all had a good inning) and the Senior PT Leader giving counts, it was evident that they were enjoying the interaction. In this crossfire of Cupid's arrows, ‘the’ midterm party had taken these socials to newer heights with them being absolutely everywhere all the time! The jam session witnessed the science eagle leaving the nest and soaring high with his enthusiastic moves. And as the last song played, the crowd broke into couples, and suddenly even a certain House Captain who had claimed he couldn't dance was busting some crazy moves. Eventually, all the SC formers had to let the ladies go, and there were some near-tearful goodbyes, dates planned, and, of course, heavy hearts. And thus ended the SC form's first socials.

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| Short Story |

## LOST IN THE SHADOWS

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Yuvan Kumar

Walking to school everyday made me curse the fact that I lived in a small town, but it also gave me experiences that I would never forget. Out of all the myriad sights, smells and sounds I sensed; the sights were always the most vivid. A piece of cloth hanging on a thorny bush, dogs fighting over a piece of meat and the odd empty Black Label carton. As I would reach closer to the Ganges, the sound of the gushing water would soothe my buzzing mind, giving me a sense of solitude that I very much needed in the mornings. However, the sounds of shrieking from various homes would be juxtaposed with the river's orderly manner of flowing.

For all my life, I had seen the river as a commercial attraction, primarily due to the raging rapids. Also, at the end of the course, there was a famous refreshment stall, called the ‘Mastbhari Stall’. This feeble structure was a blessing for many sapped rafters, who had worked their way rowing down the river. The hawkers who sold food items had a certain way of marketing their products. When asked about what he was selling, a certain *banta* seller answered saying, “Something you will not find anywhere in this part of the country.” To his luck, a lot of expats who came to the river lapped up the story: giving him enough profit for the day. He also faced a certain competition from the *Maggivali* and the *Bhelwala*, but none of them really worried him. A smile as wide and perky as his gave the customers enough energy to lighten their pockets considerably. Behind that smile though, was an insecurity that would never leave his heart or mind.

There was another *banta* seller who stopped his cart a slight distance away from ‘the Stall’. The only reason he did not set-up inside, was because he was never to be found at the river on time each morning. His sales were decent, but he gave ‘the’ *banta* seller a scare by merely being present. The rest of the hawkers did not know much about him, except for the fact that he lived on the meagre income that few customers would pay him. His clothes were ragged and his hair dishevelled: practically all the time. His eating habits were simple. The money that he would earn would be spent to buy his meals from the hawkers who were his co-workers. The only one thing that seemed dear to him were his *peshawari chappals*. They were found to be on his feet every single day, all day, without fail. He also had a habit of walking down to the river to freshen up before lunch every day. During this time, he would leave all his clothes out, going in only with his *gamchha*. His *chappals* would be kept under the rest of his clothes, to avoid them being wet by the splashes of the river. He treated them with a prestige that most of the bystanders did not comprehend.

One day, while going in for his afternoon splash, he slipped on one of the rocks and fell into the river. The temperature of the water put him into a state of shock for a few seconds, causing him to lose control of himself and begin to flow away. Soon, he had gathered momentum and was heading towards a rapid. In all this mayhem, he was trying his best to take his *chappals* off his feet and throw them onto the banks. The crowd was gathering and running along the banks, extending whatever they could find for him to grab onto. They tried clothes, sticks, wood even, but the lethal river showed no respite. After about seven minutes of this incident, the man's head was submerged. He was gone. Their biggest loss was the fact that he was an enigma for them. They did not know where he was from, who he was or what his name was.

A couple of days later, near the small town of Shivpuri, a pair of brown *peshawaris* were found. A few children were seen playing with them. The elders who were part of the town council had heard about the fiasco that had taken place a few days ago and were on the lookout already, but their efforts yielded no result. The mysterious *banta* seller, with his mysterious ways, had simply disappeared forever into the waters of the Ganges. They had swallowed him up, just as they swallowed everything else up. It mattered not to the river who was a victim of its strength, it mattered not to the river who worshipped it and who did not. The sky would change its pallor, as it so often did, and the earth would shift its crust with heaving groans and in the end, all would be lost, just like the *banta* seller, to the shadows of the past.

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## ज़रा संभल के...

### • अनुमन गोयल

प्यार को करते सब स्वीकार  
परन्तु इसका करूँ कैसे इजहार,  
बच्चों के लिए खिलोनों की दूकान,  
नई बहू के लिए एक नया मकान।  
भूखे आदमी के लिए लजीज पकवान  
दिनभर की मजदूरी के बाद आराम,  
दो प्रेमियों के बीच का इकरार,  
महिलाओं के लिए कपड़ों का बाज़ार।  
प्यार के सिक्के के भी हैं दो पहलू ,  
जैसे दो भारतीय, दाऊद इब्राहिम और चाचा नेहरू।  
प्यार कर देता है हमें बेकरार.  
फिर सताता है यह बार-बार,  
दो प्रेमियों का अत्याधिक प्यार  
बना देता उन्हें लाचार।  
यह चाहे दिखने में हो कितने भी आसान  
परन्तु नहीं पहचानता कोई भी इस की चाल,  
क्योंकि अगर फँस गए इस के जाल में,  
तो काटोगे पूरी ज़िन्दगी मलाल में।  
पर, एक बार प्यार करके देखो  
दूसरों के चेहरों पर एक हंसी बिखराकर तो देखो,  
तो दोस्तों प्यार करो  
लेकिन ज़रा संभल के।

## अनुशासन

### • उज्ज्वल माहेश्वरी

'अनुशासन' आज के समाज में सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण गुण है। आज के समाज के हित एवं सुख के लिये हमें कुछ नियमों का पालन करना पड़ता है। ये नियम इसलिए बनाए जाते हैं ताकि जीवन में एकजुटता हो और वह आनंद से भरा-पूरा हो। आज के काल में अनुशासन मानव जीवन का एक आवश्यक अंग है। सच तो यह है कि अनुशासन हर व्यक्ति के चरित्र का एक महत्त्वपूर्ण हिस्सा है जो उसे जीना सिखाता है। मनुष्य के जीवन के हर एक क्षेत्र में अनुशासन का पालन आवश्यक है, चाहे वह खेल का मैदान हो, कक्षा हो, घर में बिताया जाने वाला दैनिक जीवन हो या गीत-संगीत आदि कोई भी कला हो। आज समय बदल रहा है। जीवन में प्रतियोगिता बढ़ती जा रही है। समय की कमी है। इस लिए आज के तकनीकी युग में अनुशासन सभी विद्यार्थियों के जीवन का अमृत है।

एक गणना के अनुसार दुनिया में सबसे अधिक युवा भारत में हैं। युवा का अर्थ है शक्ति, उत्साह, हिम्मत और बिना थके कार्य करने की क्षमता। हमारी पुरानी पीढ़ी अपनी भूमिका निभा चुकी है। उन्होंने अच्छा किया या बुरा किया, वे सफल रहे या असफल रहे यह बहस का मुद्दा नहीं है। आसली बात यह है कि आज हमारा समाज और

देश जिस जगह है उसे वहाँ से आगे ले जाने की जिम्मेदारी युवाओं की है। अब युवा पीढ़ी की बारी है। युवा-वर्ग अपनी जिम्मेदारी को अच्छी तरह समझ कर देश को तभी आगे ले जा सकता है जब उसके जीवन में अनुशासन होगा।

संक्षेप में कहूँ तो अनुशासन का अर्थ है 'आत्मशिक्षा' तथा 'आत्मनियंत्रण'। जब कोई भी दूषित एवं भ्रष्ट विचार लोगों के मन में जगह बनाने की कोशिश करता है तब आत्म-अनुशासन ही मनुष्य को उससे बचा सकता है। जीवन में उच्चता कायम रख सकता है। उच्चता को जीवन में बनाए रखने के लिए लोगों को अनुशासन बनाए रखना जरूरी है। आज आवश्यकता है कि समाज के सभी वर्ग अनुशासन के महत्त्व को समझें।

## बहुमत

### • श्रेष्ठ मेहरा

मैं हमेशा एक प्रश्न पर बहुत सोच-विचार करता हूँ। मैं यह सोचता हूँ की आजकल दुनिया किस मुताबिक चलती है। पैसा और ताकत या फिर सच्चाई और भरोसा। इस सवाल के बारे में सोच-सोचकर मैं एक ही नतीजे पर पहुँचता हूँ कि अब केवल बहुमत की भाषा चलती है। चाहे वह राष्ट्रपति का पद हो या फिर संसदीय चुनाव हों। जहाँ भी बहुमत होता है, वहीं विजय होती है। बहुमत समाज को ऊँचे स्तर के साथ-साथ ताकत भी देता है। परन्तु बहुमत के लाभ यहीं तक ही सीमित हैं। संवैधानिक और प्राकृतिक रूप से हमारा देश और समाज लोकतांत्रिक है। जनमत की अवहेलना नहीं की जा सकती है। इसका परिणाम यह होता है कि हर प्रस्ताव के पीछे एक बड़ी और विस्तृत सोच काम करती है।

हमारे जीवन के हर स्तर पर बहुलांश की धारणा हमारी ज़िन्दगी को संचालित कर रही है। कई बार इसके नुकसान भी सामने आते हैं। एक छोटा सा उदाहरण लें, अगर आपके कमरे में पंखे की गति पर लड़ाई हो रही हो, ऐसे में सिर्फ बहुमत की ही बात मानी जाएगी। फिर यह कोई नहीं देखता कि सही कौन और गलत कौन है, सिर्फ बहुमत ही कार्य को आगे बढ़ाता है। हम अगर अपने विद्यालय में ही देखें तो बहुमत की ही भाषा प्रचलित है। जैसे अगर किसी कक्षा में आधे से अधिक बच्चे साहित्य की किताब ले आएँ जबकि उन्हें व्याकरण पढ़नी थी, तो शिक्षक भी साहित्य पढ़ाने में मजबूर हो जाते हैं।

कई बार बहुत लोगों के लिए बहुमत की भाषा इन्साफ़ की भाषा नहीं होती है। इस कमी को किस प्रकार दूर किया जाए यह विषय में विद्वानों और चिंतकों के लिए छोड़ता हूँ।

यह हम सब पर निर्भर करता है कि हमेशा बहुमत की ही जीत होना ज़रूरी है या नहीं। हमें लगातार अपनी बात को कहना सीखना ज़रूरी है। कहा भी गया है कि "बहुमत्यसाराणम् संवायो हि दुर्जयः", इसका तात्पर्य है कि बड़े समूह को हराना कठिन होता है परन्तु असंभव नहीं।

# Sankat Mochan Music Festival

**Vihaan Bhatnagar** reports on the three-day tour to Varanasi's famous music festival

“Stage performance is the best way of learning for an artiste”. The experience that comes after giving hundreds of performances on a stage is what makes a musician an ‘Ustad’, one who has reached a consummate understanding of his art and its communication. To witness some of the country’s greatest maestros in performance, ten of us, escorted by our music teachers, PRY and ADS, attended the Sankat Mochan Festival in Varanasi from April 20 to 25. This Festival is an annual feature of the ancient city, and is held inside the compound of the Sankat Mochan Temple. It is interesting, and inspiring to know that the artistes who perform here do so with love and devotion, and not for any commercial reasons. The Festival is also unique in that there is a high level of communication between performer and audience, with the latter sitting casually wherever it suits them, at times even on the stage. In fact, many people consider this ‘Sangeet Samaroh’ as a gathering for ‘alaap’ (conversation) with the musicians and their music.

The Festival is an all-night affair, which begins around 7.30 in the evenings, ending at dawn the next morning. We would attend the performances through the night, and there were no restrictions on sitting, standing, even sleeping, while the performances were going on. At times, even the temple’s monkey population would peacefully doze through the music. There was an enlivening and invigorating atmosphere around the temple, generated by the variety of music. During the day we would catch up on our sleep, but also found time for sampling traditional delicacies like the Banarsi paan, the delicious lassi and the many kinds of sweets, while we went sightseeing.

On the first evening, there was a lot of excitement among the audience, as we awaited the performance by the famous Srinivas brothers on the mandolin, accompanied by none other than the master percussionist, Sivamani. His customized drum kit was an array of usual and unusual instruments, from the traditional cymbals to the humble ‘ghungroo’. And what marvellous improvisations he did with his kit! We were amazed to see that he used a software console to enhance his sound quality, showing how technology can complement music-making.



The next evening saw us wedged firmly into our sitting area, with no possibility of getting up, because there was a packed audience for performances by the santoor maestro Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma, and the great tabla players, Pts. Kumar Bose and Suresh Talwalkar. Raga Durga and a ‘Dhun’ based on a Kashmiri love song brought out the resonance and beautiful sound of the santoor, handled by a true ‘Ustad’, who played with the utmost intensity and passion. After the dawn ‘aarti’, even the sleepest of us were awoken by the breathtaking tabla performance by Pt Suresh Talwalkar and his daughter. He connected the tabla ‘bols’ (vocables) with the words of a composition (‘bandish’) and explained his improvisations through different ‘taals’ (rhythmic cycles). The majestic sound of the pakhawaj showed us a new dimension in the art of percussion playing.

The last day of our musical experience was one to remember, with a sarod recital by the iconic Ustad Amjad Ali Khan. He played three compositions in Raga Mishra-Khamaj, then went on to play the hauntingly melodious bhajan ‘Vaishnava Jana’ (which is our new Assembly song), and ended with the best-known perhaps of all devotional hymns—‘Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram’. Ustadji’s genius was revealed repeatedly through his exploration of the music. There were more remarkable performances awaiting us. One such was by Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan, who is 106 years old, but whose voice had the strength and clarity of someone half his age— or even less! Pt. Ulhas Kashiwar’s vocal recital was also memorable, and he was joined on stage by his student, who was none other than our own ADS. The end of the Festival saw a performance by Pt. Sanju Sahai of the Banaras Gharana who emphasized the ancient styles of tabla playing to convey the clarity and beauty of the ‘bols’.

As we prepared to leave Varanasi, I was reminded of the words of the great conductor Leopold Stokowski, “A painter paints pictures on canvas. But a musician paints their pictures on silence”. Never have I seen silence more powerfully imprinted upon than at this musical feast.

**Online Edition:** <http://www.doonschool.com/publications/the-doon-school-weekly/latest-issue>

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