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Why Vote?

Shikhar Singh's speech which won the first Shiv Mehta Memorial Assembly Prize, 2007

"An election is coming. Universal peace is declared and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry." - So said the noted English poet, T.S.Eliot.

The quote is current in its present context: two days from now, the hill state goes to polls. While most of us will bask in the glory of a public holiday, the 'poultry' will be out to exercise their franchise, or probably not.

Just a few days ago, on an NDTV programme, a young person responded to a question on whether he would vote, by saying, "they all are the same, it doesn't affect me and I don't give a damn". I agree I represent the other end of the spectrum, the politically virulent one, yet this behaviour is unhealthy for democracy. Essentially, as Uttarakhand is on the eve of elections, this Monday morning talk is an appeal to those who by constitutional right are entitled to 'vote'.

Let me go back to Eliot and the calm before the election. The campaign dust has settled and we are in the lull of the storm. Many will visit the polling booth, others would prefer to stay away from 'politics'. Today, as Paul Valery puts it, "*Politics has become the art of preventing people from taking part in affairs which properly concern them.*" The dangerous term 'apoliticisation' has come into being. The common man on the road is hesitant to enter the confusing world of governance, and is even more sceptical of the value of his vote.

The voting population is disillusioned with democracy. The likes of Emma Goldman have already started saying that "If voting changed legal". But I would beg to with your constitutional the fact that voting is a terms have long lost sig- World, but pray do keep this in your mind. Every right you exercise, speaking here for instance, is countered by a duty we must perform. Voting or Universal Adult Franchise is one such constitutional commitment we have entered into at birth.

"Elections are the only opportunity we, the people of this country have, to take stock of what our politicians are up to."

anything, they'd make it il-differ. I will not bore you obligations as a citizen and 'fundamental duty.' Such nificance in the Big Bad

Besides, the notion that one vote is insignificant stands negated. Elections are the only opportunity we, the people of this country have, to take stock of what our politicians are up to. This is the time you assess the government and give a verdict. If you don't believe me, ask any political party the worth of one vote. Ask those MLAs/MPs who won from their constituency with a margin of only ten to hundred votes. In the recently-concluded Punjab elections, voting carried on even after permitted hours because political parties went door to door to bring their 'voter out.'

This brings me to my third reason for voting: political significance. When a political party plans its election strategy, it targets the voting population. Those communities that are politically dormant are usually ignored and often not approached by parties. The logic is simple, if you are not seen as a potential voter, any amount of electoral swaps or enticements are a financial waste of the party. In the process, a non-voting population is often a low priority and underdeveloped. This is a cycle of mutually reinforcing conditions. The absent voter doesn't vote because he/she sees no outcome or worth of his/her choice, which he/she heaps on themselves by being politically insignificant.

Another important point is the danger of not voting - when one remains absent on polling day, the danger of false voting is higher. As a registered voter, you are entitled to a privilege that is in danger of being misused. False identity and booth-capturing are not alien terms in politics. Absenteeism can be contrary to your interests. Before someone makes the choice for you, get there and make it yourself.

This brings me to my last point: protest voting. On another of these TV programmes I learnt that every voter is entitled to go to a polling station and ink their fingers and then refuse to cast their ballot. Essentially you record your presence but refuse to support any of the candidates. This is recorded as a protest vote and you convey two things: you are a potential voter who cannot be taken lightly, you are not insignificant and that you are unhappy with the entire system and the politicians that run it. You make your point and ensure you are not marginalized.

This sums up the reasons for voting. The phenomenon of low turnout does not taunt only developing democracies like India. An interesting fact I learnt: there are more members of the World Wildlife Fund(WWF) than the combined membership of the two leading British parties: Conservatives and Labour. A universal observation, a loophole of democracy that George Will summarizes rather well: "Voters don't decide issues, they decide who will decide issues."

News-in-Brief

PLAYING THE GAME

The following have been appointed **Sports Captains** for the year 2008:

Cricket- Keshav Prasad

Hockey-Himmat Singh

Soccer-Rishab Bir Singh

Swimming-Pratham Mittal

Boxing-Saket Mahajan

Gymnastics-Ambar Sidhwani

Badminton-Vedant Chandra

Tennis-Abhimanyu Chandra

Squash-Salil Gupta

Athletics-Hanumant Singh

Basketball-Shaleen Chikara

Table Tennis-Sagar Aggarwal

School Senior P.T. Leader - Keshav Prasad

We wish them a challenging tenure!

MUSIC APPOINTMENT

Ranjana Adhikari has been appointed Joint Leader of the **School Orchestra** for the coming year. Congratulations!

DRUMS IN CONCERT

The **SISU Percussion Ensemble** from Norway gave a concert at the Music School on February 7. The concert was sponsored by SPIC-MACAY. A report runs in a forthcoming issue.

VISITORS ON CAMPUS

A three-member team of teachers, Kevin McKellar, Tom Mann and Tom Jarvin, from **Hendon School, UK**, visited the School on February 13 and 14. They interacted with staff members and toured the School facilities.

BOYS-IN-CHARGE

Armaan Malhotra has been appointed the **boy-in-charge** of the **Paper Recycling SUPW** for the year 2008.

Anirudh Gupta and Madhav Bahadur have been appointed joint **social service secretaries** for the year 2008. Congratulations!

Unquotable Quotes

I had forgot to tell them.

TV Rishab Rao didn't remember.

He is standing in your left.

Shashank Peshawaria, is that right?

You must pay attending.

AKM puts a heavy price.

You get one point for participating in ICSE.

Netesh Dev, scoping.

When is Man-U City playing?

Jaiveer Jakhar loses his way.

He is so muscular.

Shivam Katyal, green with envy.

Pass the lunch please.

Chandrachuda Shukla, ravenous.

I took her for a candlelight dinner.

Dilsher Khanna the romancer.

He is dopstairs.

Shrivats Chandra, stuck in the middle.

All B and C boys must meet outside the CDH.

Himmat Singh, crowd-puller.

Roving Eye

ChEd, Ed and COP

Yeh hai chhota sa, chhoti hi si aasha, Weekly mein paste hone ki aasha. The little man from the green house did cause some little problems, but we want to blow his size out of proportion. So, we hope you are out of the *blue* after this. The poison pen is back in action (do look at the credits. It's not one person).

The School has changed. We were poised to ask ourselves since when self-appointed junior masters-in-charge became real masters-in-charge. But, *velle*, what can we do? Recently, the blackboard in his classroom read: *speakar, speaker, speakir???* Once he also indicated fierce fighting in France, pointing, in fact, to Russia. Perhaps, like Napoleon, he would like to reconstruct Europe. In the green house, man, the green birds were really getting it in *toye*, man. This man threatened to pelt students with coconuts if they were moving about.

In the red house, the panther won the rat race. The red warriors complain that the pep talks of their assistant happen to be OHTs. Unfortunately, the latter doesn't seem to sympathise with them and thinks that they are merely floundering when they ought to be discerning the implications entailed in his cogent arguments of erudition (we *said* it was all OHT).

In the yellow house, differential calculus prevailed over all with infinite(y) persistence. But, Old Faithful is the only old faithful remaining this term. They can also make cool-cool web pages using macromedia flash with utmost proficiency. By the way, there is also C++ for Dummies if nothing else works.

Our very own Mr Weatherbee was recently shifted to the mini green house, and we thought that the new green house would finally have enough space. He was seen giving tips to the caterers on how to provide healthy, fattening, nutritious *and* tasty food in school.

Full stop. Until next time, when the quill is dipped in the ink again. All resemblances to any person living or dead are purely co-incidental. We are not sorry, because we didn't offend you.

OLD BOY'S NEWS

Major Amarjeet Singh Khaira (ex- 104 K '90) was awarded the Vice Chief of Army Staff **Commendation Card** on 15th January, 2008 (Army Day) for his contribution in organising the 4th Military World Games held in Hyderabad in October 2007.

ERRATA

Skand Goel was awarded **School Colours**, 2007. His name was inadvertently omitted in the School Colours list published by *The Doon School Weekly* issue dated February 9, 2008. The error is regretted.

CAREER CALL

The **Careers' Notice Board** this week will focus on **Law** as a career option. All those interested in this profession should check it out.

Promises to Keep...

Nargish Khambatta recounts a teachers' tour of the villages supported by the School's social service programme

You give a man a fish; you feed him for a day. You teach a man to fish; you feed him for a life time...

Dr Joshi had been trying to organize this trip since last term, and on one pretext or another, our visit to Fathepur kept getting put off. This term, before we got enmeshed in our various responsibilities for the School (and ourselves), we set a definite date. The 'we' were a motley group consisting of STB, MTS, RBM, MAK, Smitha, Akansha, MCJ, SJB, Claiborne, Bobbie (Lamont) and yours truly. The reason we headed for Fathepur on a cold,



February afternoon was twofold: to meet the women in the village (they shied away from talking about their difficulties and problems with the menfolk), and to understand what we could do to improve their quality of life. Are the village ladies timid and shy? Was it a woman-to-woman talk that would make the difference and help them open up? Balderdash! These women were strong individuals who knew what they wanted and were vocal about their needs. But more about that later...

Dr Joshi had a well planned itinerary and our first pit stop was Apna Vidyalaya in Maluckchand. The villagers refer to the bus stop as the 'Doon School stop!' The Headmistress, Rekha, greeted us warmly.

She has been running this school virtually single-handedly for the last 15 years. The glint of pride in her eye said it all when she introduced her two assistants as girls who had studied in this same primary school – her school!

Mrs Nair had given us a whole heap of curtains from the House and there was a buzz of excitement when Dr Joshi and MTS pulled out the appropriate sizes to help block out the scorching sun in summers and keep out the cold in winter. RBM quickly sat down with a group of children sitting on the floor and got them chanting... *Ma se murga, Ta se tamatar!* STB and MAK got a conversation going with the family who lived next door to the school. A new-born girl was the topic of discussion and the mother was sure that she too would study in Apna Vidyalaya like the rest of her four siblings. Rekha narrated how 15 years ago she would have to chase the youngsters from the river banks and the fields (where they would be working) to attend school. Even parents were reluctant to send their children, but now, they bring their kids to school *because* of her. Predominantly Muslim, the numbers have now grown to 120!

When Rekha praised our boys who worked to construct the school building, we took the opportunity to ask her how we could help to sustain her good efforts. Her requirements were: desks and chairs for her students (*solution: old dining hall furniture?*), access to potable water, a toilet for the children, some stationery and books for the children (*solution: contribution of Rs 20/- by every student of every tutorial group at the beginning of the term?*), and some way to ensure that she gets her salary regularly. For one who has selflessly served for so long, without hope of gratuity or provident fund, it seemed a pity that even a regular monthly income was not guaranteed, as many children defaulted in paying their fees, which was her only source of income.

A discussion on the way to Dandapur veered towards possible ways in which we could help them become self-reliant. Would a silver jubilee batch of Old Boys be willing to take up the cause of village development and help set up a corpus that would generate a steady Rs10,000 a month to take care of all the village development activities?

A warm welcome awaited us on reaching the school in Dandapur. Manju, the Headmistress, and two of her assistants introduced us to the children. Grade four was doing double and triple digit multiplications on the veranda, grade three was cooped up in a classroom and craning to see what was going on and little Vikas of grade two was standing in front of his class reciting 'twinkle twinkle little star' with the panache of a performer who knows he has the attention of his audience. While the youngsters giggled shyly and were curious about us, the grade five students who were due to graduate in April sat oh so poised, trying hard to exude the dignity of the seniormost students. The curtains given by Mrs Nair created quite a stir here as well and the veranda and the rooms were sure to get a facelift. The problems faced by Manju and her team in Dandapur were similar in nature to those faced by Rekha in Maluckchand: no toilet facility, a drop in attendance in summer because there was no water available for the children, and no surety of a monthly salary. Manju spends Rs 40 just to commute to and fro everyday. Yet she remains cheerful and motivates her teachers to have the same level of devotion as she does. If we could bottle the essence of Manju's character, any corporate house worth its salt would vie to procure it. Our silent salute seemed to reach her and she said shyly, *'this is my world.'*

Our next pit stop was to visit Mr and Mrs Furtado in Bhimawala, who are well known in the hills for their association with SMTA. Mrs Furtado's kitchen garden boasts of broccoli and turmeric, blue lotus and parsley and her *elaichi* tea is wonderful! The hostel they run makes a great place for a night out as it is close by, comfortable and yet has access to so many places where so much can be done. They fondly recount their fruitful association with our boys and are very appreciative of the effort of the School in playing an important role in development and education in some parts of the hills. A meaningful discussion ensued on the merits and demerits of handing over to the government the primary schools that we started and are helping. The unanimous decision was that we should

continue to support them till as long as we can.

When we got into the cars, MCJ and the Nepalese driver Jeet, broke into banter and reminisced about previous trips to Fatehpur and the arduous conditions in which our boys had worked there. MCJ showed us a document signed by KPB in 2004 which contained the blueprint for the development of the village in a phased manner over five years. Driving through the lanes lined with *pucca* well-adorned houses of upper Fatehpur, the stark contrast with the unpaved hamlet of lower Fatehpur became apparent. (The village adopted by our school has nine families who live in mud-plastered huts with one *garhat* as a means of livelihood for only one of the families, and the rest of them doing manual labour in the surrounding fields to earn their daily bread). The bumpy ride was forgotten the moment we were greeted with warm *namastes* and piping hot glasses of tea. The community hall constructed by our boys stood gleaming in the sunlight and we blinked in disbelief. All those weekend trips by the IAYP boys, the Appleby delegates from Canada and our masters, seemed to be quantified by that edifice. The ladies and children quickly gathered around us and I suspect we were the a source of amusement and on the entertainment menu for the day! SJB soon had a fan club going as he pulled out drawing pads and spanking new sets of felt pens for all the village kids and told them to fill them with drawings that would be judged the next day. They ran off excitedly to stake a claim for the first prize. Smitha and Aakanksha took Pinky, who was of their age, and went for a tour of the picturesque surroundings, leaving us adults to mull over what we had come to accomplish.

Rangi Lal and Premvati were the first family of the village by virtue of unconditionally donating their piece of land for the community centre. Rangi Lal had the only *garhat* which worked on a turbine which was set in motion by

Furniture making from the invasive lantana weed, biscuit-making in a portable bakery, pisciculture, goat rearing and poultry breeding are some of the activities of the villagers that help them to make a living.

a stream of water diverted by our boys from the nearby rivulet. A canal was built to facilitate the action and along with the innovation of the rotating stone and belt by HESCO, it was a successful venture.

Premvati supervised all the cooking for the visitors in her outhouse (she is the only one to have an outhouse for a kitchen *and* also have a latrine). She is being paid to run a nursery which caters to the need of providing rapidly growing trees that give a lot of fodder. The couple also has a vermi-compost pit that is harvested once in two months. It yields 2-3 quintals of superior quality compost that is sold at Rs 300 a bag and is popular with the surrounding farmers. Each of the nine families was assured a regular source of income by our School and HESCO. Synergistic interaction among the villagers, our boys and HESCO ensured that the outcome was a near model village with 5 proper houses constructed with concrete bricks which our boys set in moulds and plastered. Last June, KPB and Dr. M.S.Swaminathan visited Fatehpur and surveyed the progress. Furniture making from the invasive lantana weed, biscuit-making in a portable bakery, pisciculture, goat rearing and poultry breeding are some of the activities of the villagers that help them to make a living. (The goats were given to each family with a promise that they would give the first lamb of the season to a family in another village that HESCO had adopted. That promise has already been fulfilled). The man who was rearing carp in his pond had a rather unfortunate mishap. He was due to sell the fish when a spate of rain resulted in floods and the flood waters swept the fish and the pond water into the nearby rivulet. While we did not compensate the devastating loss, our boys helped him raise the height of the pond to prevent such a situation from recurring.

That night, over a piping hot dinner of *rajma*, *aloo gobhi*, farm-fresh carrots and radish, and *makai ki roti*, the women sat with us and talked nineteen to the dozen. They had come from dwellings that were higher up and wanted to know why we had not included them in our development programme. They too wanted to become self-reliant and sought help from The Doon School and HESCO. When STB asked them a pertinent question: what is it that *they* wanted from us, they readily came up with a long list. When asked to prioritize, they listed in order of preference: a latrine for every home, a source of income, and an outhouse kitchen like Premvati had! We explained our concept of helping them develop in a sustainable manner (EVE text books in action!) and that our School focuses on one village at a time. After our vision for Fatehpur was complete (by 2009 according to the blueprint) we would work with them too, we promised. They were curious about us and wanted to know our names and where we came from. Then in walked the darling of the evening... Gulabo! This colourful personality filled the room with her presence and started drumming the *dholak* for the next two fun-filled hours during which we all sang and some danced. When we learned her story the next day over a breakfast of *puri aloo* sitting on a *charpai* and the lantana armchairs, we were stunned into silence. Who would have thought that the life and soul of the previous evening had been through so much in life? No wonder she was having a rendezvous with life, trying to squeeze a moment of joy at every opportunity. No wonder, as Bobbie commented, there was so much soul in her singing.

We returned via HESCO's Shuklapur technology training centre which showcases all the activities it is undertaking in the villages. Some of the innovations were so simple, so usable, and so effective. It is amazing how a band of individuals under the guidance of Dr Anil Joshi have given up lucrative careers just so that they could make a difference to the lives of our villagers and help them live in dignity and harmony with their surroundings. In our fast-paced and competitive existence, such simplistic philosophy comes as a breath of fresh air.

We were impressed by what our boys have done so far, but there is so much more to do. ATs, when you go on your social service visit to Fatehpur or Shuklapur, don't crib too much that you are giving up your holidays. Remember that a small effort on your part will go a long way in making the lives of a few people a little more comfortable...

Future of the Past

The second, and final, part of Rohit Handa's (ex-22 J '53) article on landscape architecture in Chandbagh

In the first part of this writing I presented some of the initiatives that we have taken with regard to bringing the infrastructure in line with the technology that will see us well into the future. In this part I hope to place some of the considerations that have gone into the planning of space, buildings, sports facilities etc. before the school's community.

Let me start with the proposition that "space is the inverse of mass" and recall that "the sense of pleasurable relations [in the proportion of the shape and surface of things] is the sense of beauty; the opposite is the sense of ugliness."

These two quotes from Herbert Read are apposite as they have a bearing on all our efforts since 1984. From the moment we started to contemplate additions and changes to meet new requirements, that is, to introduce new *mass* to the *land-space*, such words as equilibrium, content, rhythm, harmony, form – the language of the appreciation of artistic works came into our diction. We have had to find our way to giving them meaning.

In our estates *equilibrium* is maintained in two ways: firstly, by keeping the (inverse) balance between open and covered area at around 87:13; and secondly, by controlling the relationship of mass between buildings and of buildings with their surroundings. It should by now be evident that the APC releases plinth area in a miserly way. When sanctioning a new building the first calculation is to take away by demolition as much plinth area as the new building(s) cover. As a result, now that all future buildings will be double-storeyed, we aim at the end of the master plan to *add* between 3000 – 4000 sq mts to open space thus bringing down the ratio of open area to ground cover in favour of the former and freeze the ratio at around 88:12. The balance of the relationship between mass is kept by fixing the height of the Main Building as a limit with no other structure threatening its dominance and ensuring that there isn't an agglomeration of construction in one area.

Content implies that whatever is done should be meaningful to the daily lives of the school's denizens, its flora and fauna and to the sentiment of the larger community without. Old Boys should not feel that the basic character of the estate has changed for the worse or so radically as to hurt sentiment or make the campus hard to identify with.

Rhythm is a difficult concept. In my view it would mean keeping alive and persuasive the forces of nature that touch positively on our spiritual being: the interplay of the light, breeze, colour and openness that uplift body and mind and add to that inexpressible joy that freedom of space, pleasing forms and foliage give.

Now two things are equally true: that Art is beauty – but often that Art has no beauty and is in fact horrific. Unless one is inured to gore, paintings of the crucifixion or the Inquisition or miniatures showing Durga slaying the demon or the bloodshed of the Mughals' massacres bring about a great uneasiness and discomfort. Nonetheless these are works of art just as much as those forms that uplift us to the sublime. I believe that in landscape architecture at least, the latter spirit should guide us. A build-

ing or garden should feel intuitively pleasing – we should not have to dissect it. While some might consider that buildings like the old CDH had merit, the overwhelming opinion was that it made us stop in our tracks because of the positive discomfort that emanated from it. It was out of place in context of the site's requirement and the demands of the wooded surroundings. In other words it interfered with the flow and therefore with the rhythm of life.

The developed landscape of the school provides the framework that has helped our intuition and edged us away from abominations. However, having said this, it is quite possible that some people are quite unaware of proportions and balance in the physical aspect of things. Read says, "Just as some people are colour-blind, so others may be blind to the shape and surface and mass. But just as people who are colour blind are comparative rare, so there is every reason to believe that people unaware of the other visible properties or are equally rare. They are more likely to be just under-developed."

One has only to visit our neighbour the RIMC to see a recent building, pink in hue and of unprepossessing elevations, set in an equally wooded estate with studiously Elizabethan timber buildings. Some people may point to our whitewashed chemistry laboratory as something that is equally out of place. But the saving grace of this building is its innocence. It also precedes the newer brick construction. Perhaps the building should be left as a reminder of a post Second World War period lean on finances and with architecture in retreat. We would not build it in the current milieu.

As a school that aspires to belong among the best, such reminders may help in the mission to bring the under-developed into the fold of the enlightened, to imbue a sense of discernment in every boy and every master so that no one is indifferent to ugliness or that robust good form is not intuitively appreciated. This could be the rhythm that a broad-based schooling such as ours infuses for life in the new millennium.

Harmony. We began with the library (originally the Silver Jubilee Hall of 1960) and the architect, Romi Khosla, opted for conformism by a faithful adherence to the Renaissance feature of arched structures, inspired by the southern elevation of the Main Building. This wasn't plagiarism but it wasn't original enough either. And frankly we weren't that clued up in 1984. However, by the time Oberoi House came up in 1987-88, we had started to grow up. There has since been far more freedom of expression, only the use of brick for exteriors having been mandated.

Form. It was this word that helped us to liberate ourselves from a prosaic understanding of harmony – for form not only means the proportion inherent in relative ratio of things, it also covers the absolute shape of three-dimensional mass in the case of buildings and sculpture and two-dimensional representations in paintings. It is what triggers judgement about the beauty or ugliness of mass. It was not till 1994-95 that this revelation came to us fully. But after it did, we were able to progress on the Palladian path far more innovatively, with

Ram Sharma's expressive use of arches both for structural support at the entrance on the south side and ornamentation of the west face in the biology block. Since the library and this block stand adjacent to each other, visitors can easily appreciate the transition. While conforming to an Italianate influence, this block does show the transition to a modern design; yet it incorporates all the attributes and flourishes of heritage like corbelling and ox-eye roundels taken from the school building opposite.

This kind of evolution is ever recurring in architecture: our Main Building (1914) is inspired by Palladio's Basilica (1549); Lutyen's dome (1931) of Viceroy's House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan), the Sanchi Stupa (250 B.C.). There are many other examples.

There has been debate that the school's buildings should be freed from the restraint of 16th and 17th century Italianate and Jacobean influences. Rococo is what springs to mind when such freedom is spoken about – and while such displays of freedom in form and materials as on show at Frank Ghery's Los Angeles Opera or the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum are termed computer-aided post-modern, they are in my view in relation to the architecture of Walter Gropius – say- what the Grand Trianon at Versailles (rococo) is to the Medici tombs (baroque) in Florence. Ghery seems to be influenced both by Le Corbusier's sculptural use of concrete and other earlier use of metal to clad surfaces.

This trend or form was commented on in the first part of The Master Plan presented by the APC to the Board of Governors and the IPSS General Body in 2007. The Art School is under construction. The architect, Sandeep Khosla, an Old Boy who won the Arts prize while in school, has given us a design that contrasts colour in stone and metal against walls of brick-tile with grooved courses that take us well into the 21st century. Whether this building will be termed post-modern or post-Rococo in respect of the Main Building will be for professional architects to judge.

"All artists have the same intention – the desire to please – and art is most simply and most usually defined as an attempt to create pleasing forms." The Architecture and Projects Committee (APC) always out to please- and the Board of Governors imagines that it does offer a new departure that keeps form and harmony, while gradually working towards a more liberal and lively conformism.

The fervent hope is that by following the guidelines enunciated above, all of us who have been caretakers of the estate have succeeded in achieving the intention we set out with! The jury we know is deliberating a verdict.

A word on quality : even the best conceived projects come to grief if their execution is sub-standard. The Taj Mahal would not rank among the sublime wonders of the world if it weren't for the finish. An improvement in the quality of work has been one of the obsessions of the APC: those who follow the period from the Golden Jubilee to the Platinum will see the improvements through the years; the science quad, the new CDH and the Pavilion area would not show as they do if it weren't for improved supervision – and with the Art School we hope to come level with

or surpass the very fine workmanship bequeathed to us by the Imperial Public Works Department of 1908-1914. This is a way of the Empire surpassing its colonial heritage – it carries the same flavour as the winning of the first cricket test series against England! To carry the analogy further, it is like a Doon School cricket team coached by Holdy, winning against Eton.

This may well also be "the future of the past." I am tempted to advise that we should write this in the present tense.

(I am indebted to an issue of **Cam**, the magazine of the University of Cambridge for the title of this article)

* * *

Pigeons' Piazza

Shashank Peshawaria

Upon a sunlit day,
Without a cloud in the sky,
In pursuit of hedonism,
I was willing to die.

We emerged into the pigeon menace,
Or as they call it, St. Mark's Square.
On our way, we meandered through Venetian alleys,
Not expecting an experience so fair.

But when we were really there,
It took me a while to acknowledge that we *really* were
there.

Amidst the twittering, chirruping, the clamour, the
cacophony,
For me, the architecture lost the appreciation that was
its share.

Surprisingly, to the buildings and the two towers,
I preferred the exhilarating experience of pigeons
flying over my head.
I liked the pigeons, the pigeons at every second step,
More than anything that stood instead.

The square was bubbling with lovers,
Some who liked roses and some who liked fine wines,
But lover-by-lover, love was sung, and yet,
The pigeon warbles had the best lines.

The pigeons had more love, joy, and treasure,
They had more price than silver or even gold,
It has been ages since they have been here,
But their hearts are simply not old.

People lavish love on what they find in the bordering
cafes,
And on the history of the buildings, and the art on
display,
Indeed they neglect the vivacious flock,
They omit to enjoy their frisky play.

But everyone has choices, different definitions of
pleasure.
Each has variations in liking and believing.
I know what I like,
And I had a fantastic, an amazing evening.

Media Talk

Vivek Santayana and Bharat Ganju interview media persons Bizeth and Sumanta Banerjee, who addressed members of the School publications, on Saturday, February 9

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Tell us something about yourselves.

Bizeth Banerjee (BB): I grew up in Hyderabad. I did a PG in journalism from Osmania University. I was interested in advertising and after a brief stint in journalism, I went into advertising. I was put off by the false claims made by my clients. I was in cigarette advertising at one point but left, as my conscience began bothering me. I then got into film-making and made many serials that were aired on Doordarshan. There was this science-fiction serial called *Sigma*, and then *Maila Anchal*, which was our last production, based on a Hindi novel. I went all around India making documentaries as well. It was freelance and we had a professional crew that had actually worked for Hollywood. Now I have had enough of the media. It was just too hectic. You have to work donkey's hours in the media and I don't have the stamina for it! I have settled down in Dehra Dun and am now teaching.

Sumanta Banerjee (SB): I started my career as a teacher and eventually joined *The Statesman*. I worked in Calcutta and am doing research on the underworld. I also covered the streets and political demonstrations and the Bangladesh war. I never had any run-ins with the underworld, fortunately. I had access to a lot of archival material, the Delhi archives, Calcutta archives, the British Library. I also had to use sources like memoirs of police officers and confessions of criminals. I had written a small monograph on organized crime in Calcutta as well.

DSW: You had made the country's first animated film. What kind of an experience was it?

BB: There were three partners; there was an animator from the magazine *Target*, a cameraperson and myself. We made the country's first animated film. We had our own studio. We began mostly for business, and we had to do something which no one else was doing. So obviously we had to do animation. At that time, it was very expensive. We couldn't even afford our own animation table. We had to get a carpenter to make a table operated on jacks and we had a camera mounted on the ceiling with one person sitting up there operating it and we clicked frame-by-frame. We didn't have computers to animate on at that time, but we did use the computers to colour. Most of this was a self-taught method. It was all a series of experiments really. The animation was, however, worthy enough to be broadcast several times, and it was a TV serial. We managed all this at less than one per-

cent of the actual cost. No one thought it was possible, but we had done it.

DSW: What was the experience of making documentaries like?

BB: We had a very professional crew. They had worked for Hollywood and believed in only one line, "The show must go on". We had run into a lot of trouble, as I had mentioned in my talk earlier, and they handled it by themselves and we never got to know until we sat down to talk in the evening because they knew that we would not approve of their negotiations. One day, one of our cameramen looked very depressed. We asked him what the matter was and he told us that his father had passed away that morning. I told him that he had no business to be with us and miss his father's last rites and all he said was "The show must go on." Our crew was willing to make any personal sacrifice just to get the job done.

DSW: What do you feel when you look back to those days with the media?

BB: Life then was exciting and interesting. I have no regrets. My advice to anyone who is looking forward to join the media is that you have to work hard and be courageous. Not only do you have to deal with pressure, but you have to deal with threats from the mafia or the government and you have to work amidst all this. This was all very taxing, but I feel it was all worth it.

SB: I agree with the fact that it is very taxing and there is a lot of pressure from the top. There are certain things I do regret, but overall I don't think I regret coming to journalism. It has left me enriched and has helped me grow as a person. I understand the common people better. It was all a very enriching experience.



The Who

The Doon School Weekly asked some of the 'better-informed' members of the community, who they 'thought' Segolene Royale was.

"The owner of Royale paints"

TV Rishab Rao

"A sports star"

Sparsh Batra

"A writer turned poet"

Jaiveer Mehra

"An author"

Aishwarya Karan Singh

"Director of Casino Royale"

Abhyun Chatterjee

"Some guy"

Zuhayr Haque

Segolene Royale is a leading French politician. She contested the Presidential elections against Nicolas Sarkozy.

An Experience to Remember

Vishnukaant Pitty recounts his experiences at the recently-conducted Prefects' Workshop

Friday, February 8, found twenty-one prefects and two masters, PBR and PRC, on their way to a weekend that, I am sure, they will remember for years to come.

We left the school early morning on Friday and headed for Aqua Terra, a camp on the banks of the Ganges, with a sprawling white sandbank and a swift, gurgling river alongside. Near Rishikesh, it organises white water rafting expeditions. We were to participate in a workshop arranged by an organisation called 'iDiscoveri'.

As soon as we entered the camp, we were greeted by a cheerful instructor who introduced himself as Ravi. He promptly took charge of us and explained the activities planned for us. What began with groans of reluctance and exclamations of laziness soon ended in peals of laughter. The activities that we did, apart from being lots of fun, were ingenious, and also taught us something about ourselves and about our fellow prefects. The instructor himself was very open with us and it was partly because of him that we got used to the place so quickly. Soon we were in the groove of things. After every activity that Ravi had outlined for us, we used to discuss it. Surprisingly, we discovered, through those activities, that while doing the simplest things, we were conditioned to a common response, never considering the alternative, and perhaps easier, method of achieving our goal. Also, the activities made us realise that during our daily routine, we do certain things instinctively, and don't even stop to think about them.

The first day's activities were mainly about gaining an insight into one's own mind and learning to cooperate with one another. Close to lunch time, the Headmaster joined us at the camp. Before lunch, we were left to ourselves, during which time we availed of the volleyball court in the camp. After lunch, Ravi spoke to us on the various styles of learning a person can have and the fact that one has to encounter all kinds of people in life.

As dusk fell, a roaring bonfire was ready for us, around which we sat with our dinner, and began chatting amongst ourselves, till, exhausted, all of us got up and went to our tents to sleep.

The next day was, if possible, even more fun than the first. We were taken to a nearby forest for an outdoor activity called the 'target jump'. We were to jump off a tree branch and hit one of three 'target' bottles that were placed at some distance from the branch. This turned out to be tremendous fun. Despite feeling really scared of getting up on the tree at first, we still did the 'jump' and enjoyed it immensely. Even KPB, PBR and PRC tried their hand at it. After the jump, we had a brainstorming session in which we gave some thought to our feelings about the activity and had a discussion about self-confidence and team-confidence.

We learnt about how it is as important to trust one's team members as is it to trust one's own self. Also, during the discussion, the importance of setting appropriate targets was realised. After lunch, we again sat down for some discussion, but this time it was different. We were spoken to about leadership and then divided into groups yet again. We were given some questions to which we had to come up with answers and present them to the others. The questions were: why we joined School, and what keeps us here; the things that we are comfortable with in School and those that we aren't comfortable with. During the group presentations, some very interesting thoughts came up, like the fact that the very things which we struggle with in School, and finally overcome, make our attachment to School even deeper.

With those thoughts, Ravi called it a day and we made our way to the bonfire, where a splendid barbecue was laid out for us, that night being our last in the camp.

The next day, we had a discussion, supervised by Ravi, about leadership and the qualities that a leader should have. We were told to devise a common vision for School that we would all agree upon. After we had presented it before everyone, Ravi wrapped up the workshop and organised a small activity for us, teaching us to be frank with each other and to build each other's trust more easily.

In retrospect, the workshop was a memorable experience for all. We all agreed that this was the first time in our lives when so much was imparted in such few words. The entire workshop was more about imbibing knowledge ourselves, rather than learning from others. Through practical exercises which were both fun and instructive, we were encouraged to find solutions. Now, what remains is how effectively we put this learning into practice in our day-to-day school life. The sandy riverside of Aqua Terra had definitely left an everlasting impression on our minds.

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