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 powerful enough 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.
O h, W ait my F riend!

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,
And even if you've forgiven me,
When will I forgive myself?
And till then downfaced I shall stay,
A shamed and regretful, alone and impure.
Do so 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.

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
gaining 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 laugh-
ing. 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.

| Short Story |

Blood
Kunal Pal

2. The Doon School Weekly Saturday, May 31
With sixty-seven years of existence behind us, it is not surprising that many people regard D oon as yet another institution that symbolises India. Recently, D oon 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 D oon School with Rajiv G andhi 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 A mitav Ghosh, Vikram S eth, K anti Bajpai and K aran Thapar studied here. Hardly anyone knows that reputed newscaster P ram noy R oy and the Editor of India Today, A roon Purie, are both ex-D oskos. T he self-effacing Bunker Roy, formerly a bureaucrat and now head of an influential NGO is also one of our more prominent ex-D oskos.

Indeed, while D oon has produced politicians like Rajiv G andhi, N a s een Patnaik and M anni Shankar A yay, its Old Boys have mostly distinguished themselves as journalists, bureaucrats, social workers and in the armed forces. Even as businessmen, D oskos can be recognised by their innovation and experimentation. W hat makes the D osko what he is? W hat is the D osko product? Is there a combination of qualities that can distinguish a D osko from other people? D oes the distinguished alumni of the school have common traits that go a long way in making them successes in their chosen fields?

As a D osko, one discovers a field of activity that soon becomes a passion, be it photography, motor-mechanics, creative writing, philately or audio-visual work. T he 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 G hosh, might make them our profession.

D oon teaches us to be self-sufficient and independent. T his 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 the administrative staff to become more sensitive and caring human beings, able 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. O ther 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. T he skills we gather as umpires or referees will keep us in good steady while working as administrators or heads of HRD departments.

T he ideal D osko 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.
The beauty of the mountains is indeed unparalleled. The magnetic charm of the mountains cannot be repulsed, and surely the most attractive features of the mountains are 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 the weather offers 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 Dhritarasatra, 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 as if they have been worked by Michaelangelo. The steep, almost vertical slopes leading up to the summit look as if they have been worked by Michaelangelo. The flowers, as mentioned earlier, add a touch of beauty to the mountain range. The beautiful flowers that blossom on the mountains add a touch of beauty to the mountain range. 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.

**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.

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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.

It has been a month since we took the plunge. It has been 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 world of hard work, responsibility and alienation. The longest year.

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 world of hard work, responsibility and alienation. The longest year.

The Doon School Weekly, Saturday, May 31
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 not to 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 feeling 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 (pretty 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 (paternal?) 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.

Amitav Ghosh’s winning Bakhle Essay recounts his experiences of travelling with a talkative companion

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 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 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 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 acclimated 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 naive 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 menage 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 occasional hard, ringing slap) during which she

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 Caroll)*

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 well‘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 jibed, 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

"Many men owe their greatness 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 need 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, Pirvithing 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. * * *

Vimal Bhagat explores the benefits of living dangerously

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

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, respectively, 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 have lived 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 dangerous than live a long, monotonous life. I would rather have my bones bleached under the glaring 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, obliquely 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 shrieke 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 base 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 wanes 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 shadow. 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.

9. The Doon School Weekly Saturday, May 31
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 yawn, and advances to conquer and remodel 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 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.

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 cracking 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 cannot speak, these eyes that cannot see! To this past, youth has come, after all its hopes and trials, to this past...

Ardashir Vakil philosophizes on the essence of life (Issue no. 1226, 15th April, 1978)
Oblivious of all the niceties of riding. He began to urge her the speed of his mount that he became like a man obsessed, into the lead. Warren became excited. So ecstatic was he at winning the largest number of races that year. This great, hand-position. Running close on the heels of the grey horse was another horse was in the lead. Bella Paola was placed in the fourth position. Eyes couldn't take their eyes off Bella Paola, the light, springy, extremely fast steed. Indeed, so smooth was her gallop, that she seemed to fly under him. At the post, Warren looked proudly the rides she gave him, for so smooth was her going, that she was a source of great discomfort to the owners of the horses entered for the D’ebry 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 a 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 freshness in the paddock. 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 gape 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 and with a beaming smile he centred Bella Paola to the post. He was confident that his mount would beat any opposition.

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 left. Her head from Bella Paola. The horses were led back to the stables.

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 haughtily, hardly audible. Dected, 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 pitiful screams that could melt the hardest hearts. But Walsh, obsessed with rage, beat her, until the blood oozed from her flaring 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 D’ebry. 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 D’ebry 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 the filly, and bit at them. 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.

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It was a race to be won. So close were the competitors that the outcome hung in the balance until the very last moment. The crowd surged round them and began to discuss the competitors. Then Bella Paola was led out. A gape 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.

She was a fine, compact little chestnut filly - a thorough-bred. Her long, shining legs, her round barrel, her curving neck, surrounded 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 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 the filly, and bit at them. 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.

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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 pitiful heap on the floor that had once been Bella Paola. Her large eyes staring at him, he seemed to say, "What have you done to me?" And the groom was overwhelmed by self-suppression. 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 consumed 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

"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 'Hindoos' 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 to stop him from breaking away from the general trend 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 to specialize.

The 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 unhappiness 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.