



REGULARS	ESPN BEE	DOONSPEAK	VILLAGE VISIT
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*The Doon School Weekly wishes the School community on Independence Day.*

## A Year of Gyanodaya

*Tarang Khurana reports on the first Founder's Day of the Doon Gyanodaya Vatika*



On a hot and sultry Saturday afternoon, a group of twenty-one students along with some masters attended the Annual Day of the Doon Gyanodaya Vatika. It was the school's first annual day and was, obviously, a very special occasion: a lot of planning on the part of the organisers and practice on the part of the children was evident. The proceedings began with the traditional lamp-lighting ceremony, in which the Headmaster, his wife, Elizabeth, and Avinash Alag (ex - 160 H '84, and founder of the Gyanodaya Trust) participated.

The school was established last year after a survey of around sixteen slums by MCJ and AKC. However, it was an uphill task to convince the concerned people to establish such an institution, and the many sensitive issues involved in such a venture made its realization a long-drawn process. The school started with only a handful of children, which then grew to a 54-strong student population, of which 36 now attend the school regularly. Many of them were involved in the Annual Day's variety performance, which featured dances, a comic skit, a play with a message for young people on the dangers of addictive substances, and poetry recitals. The Doon School participated in the programme with fine performances by Yashasvat Kapur and Divyam Agarwal on the tabla, and by Harshvardhan Bansal on the electronic keyboard. Students of the Sapera Basti also took part in the show.

Despite a few technical glitches at the start due to the low voltage, the students of the Vatika kept their cool and their spirits high, and were greeted with enthusiastic applause at the end of each act.

The speeches received an equally enthusiastic response from the audience. The Headmaster reaffirmed the School's continued support to the Vatika and the initiation of vocational training programmes. He also announced the School's involvement in launching a similar Vatika in the Sapera Basti, near Doon University, followed by a promise to deliver his speech in Hindi next year! Avinash Alag praised the efforts of MCJ and AKC and commended the efforts of MAK, RLR, VKL and MIA, without whom the Vatika would not have been half as successful as it is.

Future plans for the Vatika include provision of health and hygiene facilities, computer education for the children, and vocational training.

Different from our school's regular social service projects which include construction of houses and providing sanitation facilities, the Vatika provides its students with a chance to discover their potential, and the means to put it to good use. As for us, this social service project was summed up best by Avinash Alag, who, in his straightforward but inspiring speech, said that The Doon School had taught him the value of sharing the privilege of his education.



## Regulars

### WELCOME

We welcome **Tony Hyde**, Round Square representative and Physics teacher at the Aiglon College, Switzerland. We wish him a pleasant stay.

### STUDENT VISITORS

We welcome **Max Thapar** and **Chris Hatton**, exchange students from the Tasis School in the UK and St Edward's School in England respectively. We wish them a pleasant stay.

### DEBATING NEWS

The following are the results of the preliminary round of the **Senior Inter-House English Debates**:

#### Tata vs Jaipur

**Best Speaker:** Dhruv Velloor

**Winner:** Tata House

#### Oberoi vs Jaipur

**Best Speakers:** Vivek Santayana and Arnav Sahu

**Winner:** Jaipur House

#### Tata vs Hyderabad

**Best Speaker:** Gursahej Oberoi

**Winner:** Tata House

#### Jaipur vs Kashmir

**Best Speakers:** Sachit Taneja and Arnav Sahu

**Winner:** Jaipur

The following are the overall house standings:

**1st:** Tata

**2nd:** Kashmir and Jaipur

**4th:** Oberoi and Hyderabad

Tata, Kashmir and Jaipur Houses have qualified for the semi-final round. Well done!

### ROUND SQUARE ROUND-UP

Seventeen boys, escorted by AKC and SJB, attended an international Round Square project on Phi Phi island, Thailand, in June this year. The project was hosted by Regent School, Bangkok, and involved the construction of a school building for the local community.

Six boys, escorted by AKS, attended a regional Round Square Conference for juniors, in Indore, in July this year.

### KNIGHTS AND PAWNS

In the recently-concluded **Inter-School Open Chess Tournament, 2009**, hosted by the School, Yojit Mehra, Aditya Kothiwal, Uday Shriram, and Ujjwal Dahuja represented the School. Selaqui World School and the RIMC emerged winners. The Doon School reached the semi-finals. Well played, all!



## Opinion Poll

Are you alarmed by the increase in the number of H1N1 (swine flu) cases in the country?

**Yes**  19 %

**No**  81 %

(356 members of the School community were polled)

**Next Week's Question:** Do you like the new structure of the Rose Bowl stage?

### BIOTECH CONFERENCE

In the **Quest First International Festival of Biotechnology**, eight boys represented the School. There were 108 schools from 12 countries. Piyush Gupta won the **Second Prize** in the **Poster-Making and Slogan-Writing Contest**. Our quiz team, comprising Pranjali Singh and Harshit Tiwari, reached the final round. Congratulations!

### BROADCASTING

Seven boys appeared for the **Amateur Station Operators Certificate Examination** held on April 16. All seven successfully qualified in their categories:

Pranjali Singh (Grade 1)

Viren Kapoor (Grade 2)

Chirag Ambekar (Grade 2)

Arjun (Grade 2)

Ritvik Kothiwal (Grade 2)

Amarinder Sodhi (Restricted Category)

Arvind Sharma (Grade 2)

Congratulations!

### SCHOLAR

Vivek Santayana has been awarded the **Scholar's Blazer**. Congratulations!

### OPENING FIXTURE

The School Soccer team defeated the **Headmaster's XI** 4 – 0 in a friendly fixture held on Tuesday, August 11. Well played!

## The Who?

*Who is Zulu?*

A weird German alien – **Jayant Mukhopadhaya**

African revolutionary – **Yuv Khosla**

A Chinese man – **Yash Aggarwal**

A mad scientist – **Aditya Vir Roy**

A magician – **Shantanu Seth**

An African tribe – **Eeshat Tiwary**

A warrior – **Shivan Tandon**

A god – **Gursahej Oberoi**

A British watchman – **Abhilaksh Lalwani**

Me – **SSM**

*Zulu is the Headmaster's cat.*

## Unquotable Quotes

*The swimming pool will shut tomorrow.*

**Sagar Agarwal** announces.

*There are many chicks in the CPU.*

**AKS**, the mover.

*Fan ki speed on kar de.*

**Siddharth Bidasaria** feels warm.

*Eeshat has come blank-handed.*

**Abhilaksh Lalwani**, furious.

*My camera captures dark light.*

**Chirag Ambekar**, techy.

*We're independencing tomorrow.*

**Kanishka Malik**, celebrating.

*You can get swine flu with bird feathers.*

**Rishabh Gupta**, wildlife expert.

## Spell-bound

*Rahul Shrivastava recounts his experiences at the ESPN Spelling Champs contest held between June 8 and 11*

It all began in school. Last term, it was announced during Assembly that there would be a Spelling Bee, which would be aired on ESPN. The prospect of being on TV excited me. The odds were against me, but I thought it was worth a try. To my surprise, and I'm sure to everyone else's as well, I got selected! And so, I went back home, with only a week to prepare. Within those few days, I did all that I could: I read up on commonly misspelt words, the etymological origin of words, etc.

The set was inside the auditorium of Ryan International School, Delhi. Inside it, you didn't feel like you were in a school. There were fifty-two contestants from many schools across India, and all of them looked like they were ready for the challenge. Some of them were mugging words up (like a Dosco would in preparation for SAT) trying to learn every single word in the dictionary, while some relaxed. Many boys and girls were simply enjoying being on the set. They appeared to be confident of their spelling ability.

Our host was Rajat Kapoor, who acted in *Bheja Fry* and the commercial for *Act II* popcorn. Two experts on language were also present. They were given air-conditioned rooms while we were crowded into similar-sized rooms with only fans to keep us cool in New Delhi's scorching summer heat.

On the ninth, we had our shoot. It was extremely humid on the set, so we were all soaked in sweat. But that wasn't the bad part. What irritated all of us was the amount of 'special treatment' Rajat Kapoor needed. Every five minutes, he would stop the filming because he wanted a large fan next to him, or because he wanted his makeup touched up. The moment he would signal, three people would come running to him. One did the makeup, one his hair and one brought the fan. The only thought that crossed my mind was that if someone like Rajat Kapoor fussed so much, what would it be like with the more famous Bollywood and Hollywood stars?

Our routine was not a particularly exciting one. We used to arrive at 8 am and leave by 7 pm. Our timetable was not too hectic. Overall, I enjoyed my debut appearance on TV and finally got to know what a real set was like. I learnt many new words. I'm not sure whether I'll remember them or not, but I'm sure I'll never forget one: 'aberrant'.



An enormous amount of bloodshed – **Jayant Mukhopadhaya**

A fading legacy – **Vivek Santayana**

That what I possess forever – **Shashank Peshawaria**

A reminder – **Abhilaksh Lalwani**

An inspiration – **Ritvik Kothiwala**

A holiday – **Ishaan Khanna**

## At Shri

*Vivek Santayana reflects on the Shri Debates, held between July 28 and 31 at the Shri Ram School, Mousari*

The Shri Debates were going to be held during the last week of our holidays, which implied logistic difficulties. Of course, the stagnant traffic on the Delhi-Gurgaon highway, coupled with the unexpected, torrential downpour made it impossible for us to meet. But on the bright side, we managed to reach the various venues punctually. We were perhaps the 'fortunate' team. Every topic we received and every stand we took favoured us, although a valuable lesson learned was that we should never underestimate our opponent, which we did on all occasions to a degree nearing complacency.

The team's strength was in its preparation: we were already trained to prepare in under two hours, which was just about all the time we salvaged. We had no problem brainstorming, planning, rehearsing, and putting up a good performance, given the time constraints. We did not require any additional research for the debates or any last-minute phone calls to teachers for help. We pulled it all off ourselves.

The quality of our 'matter' did see a rise, and that was one of the most heartening observations at the debates. In the semi-finals especially, our arguments covered the various disciplines of psychology, philosophy, literature and religion. As far as delivery was concerned, we were reminded occasionally by the judges that we must speak with more conviction. Again and again, we were reminded that it doesn't matter whether we're right or wrong. What matters is that the judges think we're right and opponents, wrong. Then, there's the issue of humour: the use of canned jokes and pet one-liners does help to an extent, but more important than style or substance is our capacity of style and substance and our originality. The use of such pet lines is only a façade of wit. We must, so to speak, sharpen our own tongues, develop our own style and come up with our own witticisms.

We finished runners-up, with a team-mate winning a best-speaker in every debate. When the result for the final round was declared, I honestly wasn't disappointed. We were told by each of the judges and by the chief guest as well that both teams were winners. For the first time in my life, I believed it. We got a smaller trophy. We didn't win. But we didn't lose, either. By the end of it, we had had a surfeit of argument, counter-argument, posing questions, answering questions, identifying logical fallacies, thinking and thinking some more. However, it was a learning experience, all the way down to the point when there was no winner or loser, and perhaps only we will truly know the value of what we learnt. The result was just 'debating protocol'. What we really gained was exposure and exercise. We pulled off a spectacular show against tough circumstances and crushing pressure, and we did so ourselves.



# A Day in a Masai Village

*Sriyash Kishorepuria recounts the Kilimanjaro team's visit to an African village*

Six days of trekking had not left us with too much energy or enthusiasm about the proposed visit to an African village.

But when we finally reached the village and met our guide, Rubin, our eagerness grew and we realized that there was a lot to be learnt and a fascinating tour awaited us. Rubin was twenty years old, and unlike most of his people, had gone to school. Yet, instead of finding work in the city, he decided that he would use his education and help his people, a noble choice for a young man of his age. We were taken to the Masai village of the Eselelei tribe. Eselelei village has been a settlement since 1977 before which the Masai lived a nomadic life. They still enjoy free access to the land, including the country borders. Nowadays, the village comprises over 500 people living in around 50 separate *bomas*, covering the area between Manyara Lake and the mountain ranges running from the north-west to the east. Each *boma* has five to six houses, depending on the number of wives the elder has. The village has one chairman called the *mwenyekiti* and each of the four parts of the village has its own *mwenyekiti* (due to its large size). They look after and resolve any conflicts in their area, apart from those that cannot be resolved locally.

The village we went to was built by two brothers of whom one had four wives while the other had two, and in between them, they owned three hundred and fifty cows. The structure of the village was also fascinating, with two fences: one surrounding the inside homes and another in the middle, which enclosed the cattle. The fence had to be strong enough to prevent cheetahs from entering. We were enthralled to know that the entire village was made from material found in the forest and was built by the six women and children. The men would hunt and mind the cattle.

Rubin explained the different stages of a Masai's life to us. Till the age of thirteen, the boys are made to graze the cattle while the girls are taught to milk cows, and do chores. Girls often marry early due to the disproportionate ratio of women to men. Once married, the women play a critical role in running the *boma*.

As for the boys, from around the age of 15 they all train to become warriors. This involves spending the first 3 to 6 months in the bush, utilising their skills and living without water. Their only means of survival is a cow which they can use for blood and milk. The final

step in becoming a warrior is to kill a lion to prove mental and physical strength.

Rubin was not like most of his people. He spoke five languages which included English, French and Dutch. He told me, that he admired many of the Masai traditions and the fact that the tribe never fought among themselves. Yet, he disapproved of some practices such as polygamy. He also said that he would marry a girl he liked, and not one he bought by trading cows.

At the end of our tour, we were glad that we took some time off for this day with the Masais. I personally learnt a great deal, and became more aware of a way of life I would have never experienced in the normal course of things.

\* \* \*

## Falling Leaves

**Abhishek Chowdhary**

Walking the straight path,  
The air crisp and fresh  
With trees of red, gold, and brown,  
I feel beautiful just being here.  
A leaf will occasionally fall  
And if I am lucky, I'll catch it,  
Close my eyes and brush it against my red cheek.  
The winds may send a gust  
And the leaf will go free from my fingers,  
I'll turn to watch it sail  
Through the air with other leaves  
In circles as they dance,  
Teasing the other leaves  
Because they are attached and cannot dance.  
Looking at the leaves attached to their trees,  
I'll understand them.  
Wanting to be free from the world that protects me,  
Wanting to dance and sail through the air.  
Walking the straight path,  
The air crisp and fresh  
With trees of red, gold, and brown,  
I feel so beautiful just standing there.  
A leaf falls, and I try to catch it  
The leaf falls short of my stretched hand  
And I watch it fall to the ground  
With the other leaves, unfortunate enough  
To not have someone to catch them  
And save them from the cold ground.  
I look up at the other leaves still attached to their trees,  
I understand them,  
Happy to have something to hold on to,  
Happy to have somewhere to belong.  
I continue down the straight path,  
And like a leaf, I silently wonder  
If I do fall, will I have someone to catch me?

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