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Of Virtues and Vices and Many Variants in Between

Priyanka Bhattacharya reviews the Junior Summer Production staged in the Rose Bowl on Friday, March 12



What do you get when you put adulterous adults, an old-fashioned cupboard replete with cockroaches, a tempting bar, mobile phones, and torn pyjamas up on the 'Kidney' (er, I mean whatever the 'Kidney' is called these days)? A laugh riot that borders on lunacy at times, a play which is meant to set us thinking *deeply* about the big, bad world. Not many of us in the audience were thinking about virtue and vice that evening though, when we were helplessly giggling at the antics of the actors on stage. Amir Shah as the amorous politician, Mrigank Khemka as his socialite moll, Deepanshu Upadhyay as the upmarket burglar, and Rahul

Srivastav as his even-more-upmarket wife, put up a spirited performance that had the audience spell-bound, even in those parts where the play threatened to unravel a bit.

The actors seemed to be playing themselves for the most part: the moment someone said "Anyways!!" on stage, I knew that this was definitely a Dosco playing someone else but not managing to 'un-dosco' himself for even a moment! The dialogues were witty, and delivered on cue for the most part, if you discount the army of dropped articles that cries out for an obituary even as I write. If the actors were turning into jelly out of sheer nervousness, we never got wind of it, which is again commendable, especially in a junior production. Entrances and exits were spot on time; the flicking on (or off) of light switches was superbly coordinated with the technicians off stage, as was the killing of the ringtone once the phone call was taken. These small details add to the finish of a production, and no praise is enough for the unsung heroes who work backstage and rehearse the timing of these apparently insignificant things, as hard as those who appear on stage.

The play had some very dramatic moments: the audience held its collective breath when Amir Shah groped around in the cupboard in order to hang a coat while the terrified 'burglar' died a thousand deaths inside, and again when the cupboard door was quietly pulled to from within, without the others on stage noticing it. Then there was the slightly mystifying, but visually tickling 'Battle of the Pyjamas'. (A friend of mine had a point when she said that the characters' fighting over plain white pyjamas seemed slightly pointless—had the pyjamas been special, they should have *looked* special, and I agree.) Another high point was when the (apparently brainless) socialite showed the (apparently wily) politician the correct way of throwing the safety catch on a pistol and promptly handed it back to the flabbergasted man, urging him to put the gun into his mouth and shoot himself. How I treasure these rare moments when in life or on stage, gender stereotypes are overturned!

Talking of stereotypes, the play seemed to perpetuate many. Frankly, I am a trifle tired of seeing either bimbos or harridans or virtuous victims on stage! I kept being oddly reminded of last year's Founder's production, *Black Comedy*. The catty, insecure women, promiscuous spouses/lovers, the bingeing on alcohol, darkness as metaphor: *déjà vu*, anyone? I wonder what must youngsters think of the adult world, especially the one that inhabits (south) Delhi? I really feel we should rest the subject of adultery a bit, give the Indian *neta* a break, let south Delhi be (it being one of my favourite places in the world) and rest the darkness/light trope as well. Having said that, let me also say that all these thoughts came haunting me *after* the show was over. I thoroughly enjoyed the show, every bit of it; even more, perhaps, because many of the imps from Foot and Martyn whom I have screamed at during toye, were up there giving their best and enjoying themselves immensely, to boot. Siddharth Popli was brilliant in his cameo, showing good stage presence and control. Shivam Sharma played the role of the small-time 'small' thief with conviction. Vikram Kapoor was frankly scary as the lady of the house: his drill-sergeant's voice did nothing to help his female role, though! Rahul Sharma, as the burglar's wife, was very confident and poised. All in all, there was nothing 'Junior' about the Junior English Summer Production, this year. The play was big on appeal, finish and the all-important 'connect' with the audience. And I shall keep the superb brochure, designed by Abhilaksh Lalwani, as a keepsake for a long time. It will always remind me of the heart and soul that our boys (and masters) put into everything they do, and their ability to excel.

Regulars

INTER-HOUSE RESULTS

The following are the results of the matches played in the **Inter-House Cricket Competition** played over the weekend:

Round III

Kashmir vs Oberoi

Kashmir: 108 all out

Oberoi: 113 for 5

Oberoi House won by five wickets.

Tata vs Jaipur

Tata: 230 for 5

Jaipur: 166 all out

Tata House won by 64 runs.

Round IV

Jaipur vs Hyderabad

Hyderabad: 91 all out

Jaipur: 93 for 5

Jaipur House won by 5 wickets.

Kashmir vs Tata

Tata: 270 for 7

Jaipur: 64 all out

Tata House won by 206 runs.

Well played!

BOARD KINGS

The following are the results of the **Inter-House Chess Competition for Juniors, 2010:**

1st: Tata

2nd: Kashmir

3rd: Oberoi

4th: Hyderabad

5th: Jaipur

Well done all!

APPOINTMENTS

The following are appointments for the forthcoming year made recently:

School First Aid Captain: Bharat Ganju

Secretary, Senior English Debating Society: Vivek Santayana

We wish them a fruitful tenure.

‘NEW ARRIVALS’ ON CAMPUS

We congratulate Aditi and Harendra Chakhaiyar (HCH) on the birth of their son on February 24, and Asmita and Vidhukesh Vimal (VKL) on the birth of their daughter on March 12.

CAREER CALL

The Careers' Notice Board will feature **‘International Relations’** this week. All those interested should look it up.

Opinion oll

Does the prospect of going on the midterm break enthuse you?



(308 members of the community were polled)

Next week's question: Do you think the summer uniform should be implemented earlier this year?

SOCIAL SERVICE UPDATE

Angad Bawa, Smitha Nair and AMB were at **Fatehpur** on February 17 and interacted with Agatha Sangma, Minister of State in the Union Cabinet, during her visit there. The Minister was taken on a tour of the various development projects in the village carried out by the Doon School community.

Angad Bawa, Devashish Singal, Smitha Nair, Pranav Matta, Aviral Gupta, AMB, VKL and PVD attended the **Annual Day** function at **Gyanoday** in Meerut on February 25.

The School, represented by Faraz Khan, Sadmaan Choudhury, Harshit Tiwari, Yash Upadhyay, Divyant Sapra, Aviral Gupta, Chirag Ambekar, MAK, VKL, RLR and MIA, celebrated **Women's Week** in **Gyanoday, Balbir Road** between March 2 and 8 by organizing a health camp. Film showings, poetry recitation and extempore speeches by women and children were some of the highlights of the celebrations.

A **Dental Camp** was conducted on March 4 at **Gyanoday, Sapera Basti**, by Devashish Singal, Angad Bawa, Arjun Midha, Khaled Alawneh, MCJ, AMB, PBR, PVD and NPY.

Reports on these activities will run in a forthcoming issue.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- There will be a **Solo Piano Recital** by Nikhil Sardana in the Music School Auditorium at 6:30 pm on **Tuesday, March 30**.
- An **Art Exhibition** displaying works done over the past year by students and staff of the School will be put up in the Art School; (MDR) on **Saturday, April 10**, coinciding with the PTM.
- There will be a concert in the MPH, presented by the **Music School**, on **Sunday, April 11**, comprising vocal, instrumental and dance performances.
- The **Marathon of Hope**, also known as the Terry Fox Run will be conducted on **Wednesday, April 14**. This is organized annually by the Indo-Canadian Cancer Research Foundation to commemorate the spirit of Terry Fox, a cancer patient who faced a mortal illness with courage and stoic acceptance. This is the first time that School will be hosting it.
- The **Bansi Dhar-Shriram Inter-School Open Chess Tournament**, will be held in the Kilachand Library from **April 23 – 25, 2010**. Ten schools from different parts of the country will be participating.
- On **May 2**, an **Inter-House Art Competition** will be held by the Art School. As a run-up to that, submissions are invited from the School community of posters on the theme 'Art at Doon, 2010', which highlight the various programmes being initiated by the Art School. For details of these, please contact ATB. The last date for the submission of posters is March 31.

| Creative |

I woke up this morning to find that my bed was not my own

K V Arjun Rao

I woke up this morning to find that my bed was not
my own.

It was odd, really.

I went to brush my teeth

And came back to find someone surveying my walls.
Already pulling down my pictures in his mind, tearing
down my memories, ripping me apart.

Only now do I understand how whatshisname felt last
year.

I watch this young upstart mentally rearranging my
furniture,

His eyes lighting up at the thought of a settee where
my desk stands,

Scoffing at my choice of colour for my sheets.

It was happening all around me.

Everywhere I looked I found the rest also looking
weary,

Seeing it all change around us, seeing new people
everywhere.

Never again will I shout down these corridors.
Never again will I break these windows (accidentally,
of course).

Never again will I awake to the voice of my
Housemaster

Calmly asking me to wake up, comb my hair, shave,
polish my shoes,

Wear my uniform with pride.

Never again will I have to ask for permission to make
a phone call, to buy a pen,

To rise from a meal,

To leave home.

Never again will someone ask me why I'm not
dressed for dinner, why I'm playing football wearing
trousers,

Why I'm watching TV in the middle of the night.

Never again will anyone cry with me when my team
loses.

No one will know that I actually love the crust of the
toast and not the middle.

No one will again quietly leave a bottle of jam on my
desk in the middle of the night.

No one will tell me that it's going to be ok and that I
will love again.

But I am excited, secretly, of course.

I dare not tell everyone that I am waiting to leave and
see the world.

They will think I am mad, if they don't already.

I hope that the old are right in telling me that this is
just the beginning.

I am waiting to fall in love, to tell my love the stories
of my past, to watch the look on her face,

Amazed that I remember how I didn't score a goal
and why it is still so important to me.

Waiting to try out all that I have learned here, at home,
out there, in the world.

I can't wait to fill the newspapers and magazines and
imaginings of the world with stories of my own.

And watch everyone try and take credit for it.

Yes, that will make me smile, I think.

Friends that I did not know, will emerge,

Teachers who told me that I would amount to
nothing in my life, will praise me forever

And insist that I learnt it all in their classrooms.

All those who hit me, hurt me, broke me, will bow
their heads.

And I will watch.

It isn't about revenge or vindication or justice.

It's about showing them all that there was so much
more to it all than ties and coats and beards that grew
fast.

That there was more to it all than the trees, the birds
and the bells.

That they all forgot about the dream that was my
home.

And I awoke to find that it was real.

I smile at the brat grinning foolishly at walls that will
soon be empty,

For it is now someone else's dream. It is this kid's
dream.

Look after it for me.

I will return.

* * *

Clouds

Arifeen Choudhury

They move in vast numbers,
Like a vast exodus of refugees;
With no destination,
No land to call their own.
They fly free,
With no complications.

Only a few feathered creatures,
Flying through once in a while.
How carefree they are,
Just lofting around
Vast amounts of space.

With no friend or foe
And love or betrayal,
How does it feel?
Being as pure as snow,
All alone, close to the heavens.

I muse: since we are
Under the same sky;
Do we all see,
The same clouds?

Whenver I see a cloud,
I give it a message;
Hoping it will fly to you,
And deliver it.

A Wish

Shashank Peshawaria

An eyelash drops on my hand,
A wish – that is the sign.
But if that wish could be fulfilled,
Won't god himself be mine?

The Inevitable

For a parting friend who will never return

Shashank Peshawaria

Tears well up in my heart,
For the days are now too few.
If there was a door for entry,
There is one for exit too.

The Ultimate Truth

Shashvat Dhandhanian

Philosophers have argued,
Their philosophies forgotten,
And the answer is still unknown.
Dare I say I have found the answer?
Dare I claim I know the truth?

Life is about what you think of it,
And make of it,
And take from it.

Live it,
Feel it,
Grab the moment.
Seize the day.
The night is forever.

Acceptance

Shashvat Dhandhanian

Life is about the path you choose,
Not about what destiny has in store for you.
Life is about making choices,
About doing what you want and what you like.

Life is about happiness,
In what you do,
In who you are.

Even though
I enjoy what I do,
I am satisfied with who I am.

Still, I am unhappy
Because:

I want to be trusted,
I long to be loved.

Why can't I be content?
Even after doing what I like
And being whom I want to be.

I need the courage,
To accept not being accepted
By family and friends.

It seems that life's happiness
Needs family and friends.
Even when your life in your small world
Appears to be complete.

Pause

Abhilaksh Lalwani

Every once in a while, there comes a time when time itself slows down – one of those moments when life goes pre-Kodachrome, and you actually get the time to look around, to look up (which most people never do).

When you look up, you see a whole world exists above you, just over you, and you want to experience that world. So you enter it. And then you look down on the world, perhaps like the bees do, or maybe the trees. Looking down, you observe that no one really notices this world you are in. There is a whole new thrill, then, in being part of this rarefied existence. When here, you feel quite invisible, as though you have found that one abode which is uniquely yours.

I find myself in this more and more often now, writing on the backs and margins of half-crumpled credit-card bills that were, until recently, lost in the silence of my coat-pockets. An enquiring bee flits about. It settles, for a moment, on one of the bills, perhaps trying to decipher the writings on it – “Iced Tea 2 360.00. Poetry is a more heady brew.”

The bee flies off, and my eyes follow it for some time, and then return to the ragged paper bills. I notice that most of them are already covered in my writing, not much space is left to write anything worthwhile. I laugh to myself and begin going through what I have already written on the margins and backs, but, just when I am about to make corrections, I notice that the ink has run out. Tears run out.

Looking around, you notice that no one really notices this world, this existence that has grown to become yours. All over, a strange silence settles; it is a silence of three parts.

The first is a dull, echoing silence, made by things that are not. If there had been a wind blowing, the leaves would have rustled and the silence would have fled. If only people would be looking up, someone would sound a name, and empty the growing quiesce. If only there was some music... but no, there was, of course, no music... There were none of these things, and so the silence was there in their stead.

Somewhere to the right, a couple of bees made their poetry in syncopated buzzing, avoiding any discussion. In doing so, they added a sullen, perhaps solemn silence to the previous one. Sound and silence met in counterpoint.

The third silence was much more difficult to grasp. If one listened for an hour, one might begin to notice it in the shade of the surrounding trees. It was in the ivy-covered walls that held the heat of a sun long gone. It was in the rust-coated staircase that held the memories of numerous stares, echoes of steps that had long ceased. It was in the hands of the man who sat with crunched-up credit-card bills.

This space above the rest of the world was his, just as this third silence was his. This was quite suitable, as this was the greatest silence of the three. It engulfed the other two within itself. It was deep and wide as an autumn ending. It was heavy as a guilt-laden prisoner. It was the silence of a lone man waiting for the end.

| Viewpoint |

I AM A ROCK*

Vivek Santayana

Other people's reminiscences are distressing. They throw into sharp contrast, and thereby accentuate, how few memories I have. This is probably why I do not particularly enjoy browsing through other people's photographs. For one thing, I am not in too many of them myself; either I am on the wrong side of the camera – taking the picture rather than smiling asininely – or I am simply elsewhere: asleep, studying, working or, simply, somewhere else. I sometimes claimed that *my* fun was different, and, indeed, I drew pleasure from a number of other things that no one else understood: pride and satisfaction in my work and my responsibilities. But, honestly, it was not as 'different' from everyone else's as I thought it was. I still needed respite from my schedule through more basic forms of enjoyment; I wanted the tuck shop, teatime and other such 'redundancies' which I never had time for. It is perhaps safe to say I was *too* focussed: I was never awake past eleven in the night to play hide-and-seek during my A-T form. I never climbed up to the roof of any School building. I never did anything 'wild' or 'exhilarating'; my choice of adjectives to describe my life in general reflects my reservations. What's more, my 'sacrifice' of the lesser pleasures never helped; I still did not get a 90% in my Board exams!

I am insulated, instead, in my impenetrable fortress of work and activity. I have no time (or need) for friendship. I have been the victim of the inherent cruelty of surly schoolmates far too often. I do not even feel the need for a girlfriend. Such distractions, I feel, prove counterproductive. I disdain such unnecessary (and, often, painful) expenditures of emotions. School keeps me engrossed enough for me to be satisfied with the very little that I have or I am. Even a personality is unnecessary if one is methodical enough in one's work. I find solace in my reading and catharsis in my writing. Somewhere, my hiding is effective: I can escape well enough. I have my own agenda, which does not include time for friends, outings and other such indulgences. My schedule does not allow me to have time for my problems, my emotional starvation and myself. There are many productive avenues into which I can apply every joule of my intellectual energy. "Occupational therapy", I often say to myself. I keep myself busy to keep myself from depression. If I may be more cynical, this demonstrates the popular IB joke, "I'd commit suicide, but I just don't have the time."

I keep myself aloof from all my problems and I am as steadfast as possible when I face pressure of any kind. But somewhere, I realize my problems do not resolve themselves. We encounter countless issues that, we would believe, are a part of everyone's life, issues that escalate in severity as one grows older. Rather than dealing with these issues, we try to escape them through our many pursuits in School. But how long can we run away from something that bothers us? How long can we stay aloof? The longer we can play this charade, the longer the moment of reckon-

ing can be delayed. I am fortunate: I am still surviving. There have been a couple of disciplinary issues in which the boys concerned were fighting their own demons. They had, also, failed to keep themselves busy enough to avoid devilish thoughts of idleness from getting the better of them. While the disciplinary action taken was justified, the callousness behind our reception of the boys appalled me. Clearly, one cannot consider punitive action alone without remedying the circumstances that led to the occurrence of the cases in the first place. My first question on hearing about the incidents was why the boys concerned, who were otherwise doing well, would do such a thing in the first place. The answer: circumstances tend to pervert boys. Would disciplinary action against them be enough? The boys have been punished for violating the rules, but the cause that made them do so has not been mitigated.

Rather than dealing with these issues, we try to escape them through our many pursuits in School. But how long can we run away from something that bothers us? How long can we stay aloof? The longer we can play this charade, the longer the moment of reckoning can be delayed.

While a boarding school proves to be effective in making boys responsible, independent and self-sustaining, it continues to be an unnatural environment. We simply do not have the familial environment that everyone needs as he or she grows up. For the sake of narrow-minded conceptions of masculinity, we display ourselves to be hardened and impervious to emotional turbulence. We are all crippled inside, concealing our emotional turmoil behind a veneer of being strong young men. The answer to everything, diminishing respect in the eyes of the community or an impoverished self-esteem, becomes involvement in activities to earn oneself a reputation and a surrogate personality. We do not acknowledge the difficult phases boys of our age go through with issues such as identity, sexuality, budding egos and career dilemmas. We avoid such questions rather than answer them.

In School, we have the term and its suffocating schedule for our refuge. We are emotionally emaciated by then. Maybe the world outside is really this cruel. We will have to harden ourselves correspondingly. These 'negative emotions' that we would inevitably face once we leave the security of our campus will otherwise overcome us. The 'issues' will often be too severe to deal with. Escapism is definitely our only option. Putting us through such misery is, perhaps, just a bizarre rite of passage. We will have to live with it, hardened and isolated, as "a rock feels no pain / And an island never cries."

(* from the title of a song by Simon and Garfunkel)

| Viewpoint |

BARRICADE

Tanuj Kumar

Ever since I joined school in my C form, they have been standing tall on our soil or, as Tagore may have put it, “with their heads held high”. It all began with the Art School. Soon, other buildings followed: the CDH, Masters’ Houses, Pavilion, Old Tennis Courts and now the Headmaster’s Residence and Tata Villa. Not a single day has passed when they have not struck my eyes.

To an optimist, the barricades might seem like harbingers of progress, and why not so? As we all know, in the end, we’ll have a marvel of modern architecture on that very spot. But, somehow, as I walk alongside them, optimism just fails to register. I have been seeing them *ad nauseum*. Yes, they have sickened me and made me go colour-blind. They have long affected my life in school, and I have many reasons for it. The first being that these barricades, covering such a vast expanse of our campus, leave very little space for ‘larger’ people like me to wander freely. The other day, I almost bumped into one when I was reading a book while walking. Their presence on our land makes me feel claustrophobic. The second reason is rather hellish as the barricades reiterate the message “Abandon hope all, ye who enter here,” because of the fact that no one is allowed to trespass on these sites under any circumstances and, in case we do, we will be rewarded handsomely for the courageous act with a Yellow Card. I sometimes muse, as I walk along those monstrous apparitions, about the activities going on on the other side and I try to catch a glimpse through the spaces between them. I am often met with a sorry sight: the faces of construction workers marred by dust, their skimpily-clad children wandering and whining aimlessly, which only adds to my depression. Often, the head of a child pops out through the space and we hear a *sotto voce* “Hi”. Sometimes we see an expression of utter weariness or a howling face and every time this happens my heart fills with pity and I fail to concentrate on other matters.

To some people, I might not be making an iota of sense, but there will be some who will understand my grief and equally abhor the looming green tin sheets. Perhaps, each one of them is affected by their presence in a different way. I must confess that I am happy to see them fall as they have in most of the places except the Tata Villa and Headmaster’s Residence (and I hope that will happen before the DS-75 Founder’s). Maybe these divisions are a necessary evil, but they certainly impede more than mere physical movement.



| Report |

AN EVENING OF CLASSICAL DANCE

Ritu Bahl Mohan comments on Smitha Nair’s
Bharatanatyam recital in the Music School on March 10



Classical dance has purity of form which reflects the beauty and the perfection of this art, and Smitha’s performance in the well-decorated Music School’s hall was one such example, and had the audience enraptured.

The thirty-three-minute solo performance of *Varnam* was performed with grace, clear footwork and in fine rhythm. Her expressions were intricate, reflecting seven years of hard work, dedication and regular training.

We were trying to decipher the tale through the demonstration of the various ‘mudras’ that had been explained in the beginning. The tale began with the narrator’s longing for Lord Vishnu as she went on to describe the beauty of his face, eyes and lotus-like feet, and the grace in his postures. The second half of the recital began with the dancer calling to her God, asking whether her love and devotion were ardent enough, and imploring him to come to her and save her, as he had saved the mighty elephant from a crocodile, with his divine power. In the end, Smitha portrayed the resignation of a futile love.

We could see the expert training of her dance teacher behind this sensitive performance, and would certainly enjoy an ‘encore’.

75 ATTENTION, WRITERS!

A commemorative coffee-table book is being published this year for DS-75 with stories, anecdotes and tall tales of School. All those wishing to contribute should send their stories via email to KAR (kar@doonschool.com) by the end of term.

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