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# The Doon School WEEKLY

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## He Never Comes...

Sreemoyee Bannerjee reviews the play 'Waiting For Godot' staged in the Rose Bowl on Saturday 17, 2010

“Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes”—Estragon, *Waiting for Godot*, Act One

If that is the case, why should we call *Godot* a play? Isn't a play justified by its action? The two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon feel the terrible burden of time and hence devise myriad, if absurd, ways of making time pass



thereby imparting a fleeting semblance of rationality to their obviously incomprehensible and meaningless existence—a truth that both of them seem to be otherwise quite painfully aware of. It is precisely because of these contrived, perfunctory and often farcical efforts at passing time that we have a 'play'—something to be produced and acted out on stage. Thus the word play acquires a dual connotation. On the one hand *Godot* is a play because it is being performed by actors on a stage in front of an audience. On the other hand it is a play about 'play-acting'—involving pretence, assumptions, self-consciously contrived ges-

tures, expected behaviour and most importantly involving speech and communication. Motley's presentation of *Godot* did justice to both of these connotations of the word 'play'. I base this remark fundamentally on the pauses that intersperse its so-called action and its torrential current of speech which ranges from being incoherent, bawdy, aggressive, sentimental to lucid and thought-provoking. Thus when the first pause occurs, the silence fosters unease. Interestingly, it is possible for a person watching the play for the first time to suppose that the actors playing Didi and Gogo have momentarily forgotten their lines. One could think that the actors Benjamin Gilani and Akash Khurana had forgotten their lines and were just staring blankly at the audience, probably groping in the dark about what to say. The other possibility is that the characters Didi and Gogo cannot recall what they are meant to say, thus establishing speech and communication in life to be as much an act of conscious exertion, practice, and familiarization as it is with the dialogues of a play. It is the pauses that erase the subtle borderline between life and art, the latter here being the Absurd theatre of Beckett. What deserves mention in terms of the performance is the brilliant timing of the pauses in the play as well as Benjamin Gilani and Akash Khurana's extremely convincing rendition of the sense of perplexity, helplessness, and discomfort that the sudden disappearance of speech is likely to engender. Every time there is a pause the audience realizes afresh to what extent our existence happens to be shaped by speech, by linguistic constructs. Accepting this truth is however a little more difficult for the audience than it is for Didi and Gogo, relatively speaking.

Equally commendable is the play on the sound of words. When Estragon (Benjamin Gilani) says “We are not tied”, Vladimir (Akash Khurana) complains that he cannot hear anything. Estragon reiterates the word 'tied' thrice, eventually breaking up the diphthong /ai/ virtually into two separate vowels and exaggerating on the terminal 'd'. Beckett writes it as 'Ti-ed' in his play. It reduces the word from being a meaningful unit of language to a collection of hollow, deadpan sounds which do not communicate anything. Needless to say how crucial the enunciation of the same would be, bound as it is so closely with one of the fundamental themes in the play—that of language and the rationality of our being. Another instance would be the play on Pozzo's name when he introduces himself to Vladimir and Estragon. Pozzo (Naseeruddin Shah) first utters his name with utmost pompousness which is lost on the tramps. They thereafter get into a game of trial and error involving names such as Bozzo and Gozzo which make minimal pairs with Pozzo. Pozzo finally repeats his name intensifying the aspiration on the initial 'p' to such an extent that it comes to resemble an obscene noise. For the actor playing Pozzo it demands a lot of subtlety and a precise understanding of the effect of the sound on the audience. Naseeruddin Shah, as Pozzo, gives ample proof of both and establishes himself successfully as the ruthless, menacing, authoritarian figure of the first act who enjoys a laugh at the expense of others. This is further reinforced through the crispness of his delivery and the perfect synchronization of his words with the movements and gestures of Randeep Hooda (playing Lucky), when Pozzo issues orders to his menial. Just as he is quite chilling in the first act, virtually monopolizing the centre stage as he does, Pozzo's return as a helpless, blind man in the second act is chilling in a different way. His previous glibness and loquacity are replaced predominantly by the single word 'help'. His pompous words of the first act make way

(cont. on page 4)

## VISITORS ON CAMPUS

Sir Richard Stagg, British High Commissioner to India, accompanied by Lady Arabella Stagg, and Mrs and Mr Shyam Saran, retired Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, visited the School on Wednesday, April 21. They interacted with the Prefect body and addressed the entire School in the Rose Bowl.

## CRACKING IT

The School Hockey team played its first match against Colonel Brown School in the Council Schools' Hockey Tournament on April 20 and won 3 – 0. Well played!

## ON THE COURT

In the semi-finals of the Afzal Khan Memorial Basketball Tournament, the team lost to Welham Boys' School 85–51. The team then played the Lawrence School, Sanawar, for the second time and beat them 47–34, finishing third in the tournament. Tushar Gupta was adjudged the Most Promising Player. The Welham Boys' School won the tournament, beating Woodstock School in the finals.

In the District Basketball Tournament the School beat Summer Valley School 30–10 and St. George's School 40–23. In the quarter-finals the team beat Moravian Institute 32–15 and in the semi-finals it beat Doon International School 51–31. Well played!

## 'PLAY'ERS

The cast of the Hindi Junior Summer Production staged the play *Woh Bol Uthi* in the Sapera Basti school on April 16.

The play *Waiting for Godot* was staged in the Rose Bowl on Saturday, April 17 by Naseeruddin Shah's troupe Motley. Naseeruddin Shah had also interacted with boys on the Editorial Boards of various publications on Sunday, April 18.

## DEBATE UPDATE

The School was represented by Shoumitra Srivastava and Vivek Santayana in the first stage of the Frank Antony Memorial All-India Inter-School Debates. Vivek Santayana was adjudged the First Runner Up. The School won the debate and has qualified for the next stage.

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

### Hyderabad vs. Kashmir

**Best Speaker:** Shoumitra Srivastava

**Most Promising Speaker:** Sachit Taneja

**Winner:** Kashmir

### Oberoi vs. Tata

**Best speaker:** Arjun Sethi and Shashvat Dhandhanian

**Most Promising Speaker:** Revant Nayar

**Winner:** Tata

The House positions at the end of the preliminary rounds are as follows:

**1st:** Kashmir and Tata

**3rd:** Hyderabad

**4th:** Oberoi

**5th:** Jaipur

Kashmir, Tata and Hyderabad Houses qualify for the semi-final round. Well done!

## SS ROUND-UP

The School conducted a social service project at Katta Patthar over midterms.

On April 18, forty students, escorted by MIA and SSW went to the John Martyn School, where they worked to paint and refurbish the buildings.

## WEDDING NEWS

Sanjiv Bathla got married to Natascha Nandi on Friday, April 16. Congratulations!

## CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

The Shriram-Bansidhar Chess Tournament, which is an inter-school event, began on Thursday, April 22. Thirteen schools from all over India are participating and the event is being conducted by the 64 Squares Chess Academy.

## ERRATUM

The article *Women's Week in Sapera Basti* (issue no 2246 dated April 17, 2010) was erroneously titled so. The celebration of Women's Week was held at Doon Gyanoday Vatika, Balbir Road. The *Weekly* regrets this error.

## Unquotable Quotes

*Check the name of your spelling.*

**PDT** spells it out.

*I'll rap you apart.*

**Nilesh Agarwal**, bully.

*Be a lady of your man.*

**Nilesh Agarwal** demands fidelity.

*Collect your Ouching Chits for PTM.*

**SJB**, in pain.

*To shut down and shut up a computer sucks up a lot of power.*

**PKB** celebrates Earth Day.

*Water is the food brain.*

**Shourya Gupta** rehydrates himself.

*Bring the book full of trunks.*

**Uday Shriram's** library is dukedom large.

*India is indebted to England for a great deal of its culture.*

**Arnav Sahu** on Indo-British relations.

## CAREER CALL

The Careers' Notice Board will feature 'Biosciences' as a career this week.

## Opinion oll

Do you think the CC-TV in the School Hospital is encroaching too much on our privacy?

**Yes**  93%

**No**  7%

(200 members of the community were polled)

**Next week's question:** Does the prospect of acting in the DS-75 Commemorative Film enthruse you?

## Runs & Wickets

*Bharat Ganju reports on the Senior Inter-House Cricket Competition.*

Cricket, in school, is often considered as our forte in the sporting field. With practices starting from early February, it was inevitable that this year's inter-house competition was going to be an exciting one.

For the seniors, the run-up to the competition was intense, with Tata House fielding eight out of eleven school teamers in the House XI, and Hyderabad was not far behind with a formidable four. Jaipur, too, considered this year's underdogs, were fielding a strong team with a line-up of spin bowlers and a strong opening pair. Oberoi House came into the competition with much experience behind them, while Kashmir House fielded a relatively young team with many A and AT formers finding a place in the House XI. Each house ensured that their Leagues I team had practised well, duly noting the importance of their contribution to the overall tally of points.

The senior competition opened with a cracker of a match as Jaipur faced Oberoi and Tata put up against Hyderabad. Jaipur vs Oberoi went down to the last over with Oberoi needing only seven runs off the last over and Hemang Aggarwal containing them to clinch the match for Jaipur. Hyderabad vs Tata too proved to be one of the greatest upsets of the tournament with Hyderabad making quick work of the favourites of the tournament, chasing down a well-restricted 167 run target, with Siddhant Sachdev and Vihaan Khanna showing their ability of unsettling a bowling attack.

As the tournament progressed, Oberoi House yet again took a match down to the last over, this time against Hyderabad, but yet again failed to seal the match, and Chandrachuda Shukla's 66 run knock went in vain. Jaipur beat Kashmir convincingly, with Abhyun Chatterjee picking up a handful of wickets and faced Tata soon after, who were raring to get their own back and did so convincingly with their middle order comprising Pranoy Bohara, Sumaer Sandhu and Azam Jauhal scoring quick and convincing half-centuries. In the Leagues I, noteworthy performances were shown by Yuv Khosla, Aishwarya Karan, Karanbir Dhariwal and Shiva Gururani, who led their respective teams to conclusive victories.

The fourth round of the tournament was crucial in determining who would win the Cup. With Hyderabad attempting to cement their place in the standings and Tata confident after a resurgence in form, spectacular performances were expected. It was Jaipur that emerged victorious after restricting Hyderabad to 91, and managed to chase down the target after a determined effort from Hyderabad's Jayant Mukhopadhyay (picking up 3 wickets in one over) and Uddhav Prasad. Tata stole the show though, as their opening pair put up a record-breaking 170 run partnership with Rajdeep Deo Bhanj scoring 99 and Itihaas Singh 90.

By the fifth round, the tournament was perfectly poised, with there being a possibility of four houses sharing the Cup.

The Tata vs Oberoi House XI proved to be the decider and as the whole School surrounded the field to watch the final over, Oberoi needed just 9 runs to win. The end to the competition was intense, and Tata pulled off a nail-biting finish, leaving Oberoi trailing by a run, to seal the Inter-House Senior Cricket Cup 2010.

## Midterm Rewind

*Viren Kapur and Faraz Khan*

**Destination:** Ruinsara Tal  
**Party Leader:** Viren Kapoor  
**Party Members:** Faraz Khan, Devansh Khaitan, Chirag Ambekar, Aayush Jain, Arjun Sethi

When we first proposed the idea of going to Ruinsara Tal, ASH was reluctant to let us go, saying that it was impossible, owing to weather conditions and the difficulty of the trek. However, as someone has rightly said, "The greatest pleasure in life is in doing things that people say you can't do."

With great hope and excitement we left the school at 7:00 am on April 3. After a comfortable, though uneventful journey, we reached Taluka. The sky was murky and we cursed the very thought of a cold rainy night and a consequent muddy, slippery trek. We woke up to a clear sky, loaded the mules and set out to cover a distance of seventeen kilometers to our first destination, Devsu Thatch. It was a tiny patch of flat land, amidst pine trees and in the middle of nowhere. The place was so nondescript and uninhabitable that it could have even done without a name. As expected, the night was terrible: it was extremely cold and the water simply would not boil. We finally had our guide light a huge bonfire and put the utensils with water, MTR packets and everything else on it. After a hurried, cold dinner, we finally snuggled into our sleeping bags. The temperature had dropped to around eight degrees and, unless we were imagining it, the wind picked up further. As if this was not enough, it began to rain. We were slightly sore when we woke up the next morning. The temperature had further dropped to seven degrees. After having a light breakfast consisting of *Maggi*, we set out for what was to be the toughest trek of our lives.

The first kilometer was a steep downhill trek, after which we crossed a wooden bridge which was swaying dangerously with every step (we had to walk one person at a time). There were glaciers all around. The path was occasionally blocked by debris from landslides. There were also intermittent vertical climbs. Crossing the glacier was quite difficult. The snow was rock solid and slippery. On one occasion, Chirag had to dig his nails into the snow to stop himself from falling off. Most of us were hit by altitude sickness but refused to give up. The first glimpse of the Tal was so exhilarating, that it made us forget all our pains. The overall view of the lake amidst the snow covered mountains was breathtaking. After taking a nap for half an hour, we began taking photographs. Faraz, while crossing a part which had been affected by a landslide, slipped and saved himself by clinging on to a rock. On another instance, Viren slipped while crossing the glacier and had it not been for a small muddy patch, he would have plunged into the river. After conquering all these dangers we reached Seema, where we were reunited with the other parties and that night we finally slept comfortably.

Scaling Ruinsara Tal was like a dream come true. All the risks undertaken, all the hardwork done, was truly worth it!



(contd. from page 1)

in the second act for quasi–bestial movements and gestures. For the actor it is like playing two radically different and contradictory roles in the span of one evening before the same audience. The actor has the task thereby of substituting the impression that he himself had created in the mind of the audience with one that is totally different. Shah succeeds without doubt in this Protean task. His rendition of the blind Pozzo incorporates the pathetic, the tragic and the grotesque in such a way that the audience is somewhat at a loss trying to decide the appropriate response. If it is moved to laugh at a certain moment, then it is filled with horror and sympathy at another especially if it happens to recall the lordly Pozzo of act one. In this connection, I need to mention Pozzo's blind man's glasses in the second act. In most of the other productions that I have seen of this play Pozzo is made to wear dark glasses. In Motley's production Pozzo's glasses are white. It struck me that these glasses seemed to actually shut light out by their solid opacity thereby transposing blindness from the plane of the physical to that of the symbolic. This blindness is not determined by the mere lack of receptivity of the physical eye to the physical phenomenon of light. In *Godot*, props play a very significant role also because they are so meagre. The single fixed prop is the tree. Beckett in his stage direction mentions just a tree without giving any specifications. The tree that Motley uses looks more like a ghost of a tree. Its withered, desiccated look reinforces the sense of desolation and gloom that hangs in the atmosphere once the play starts. It also makes nomenclature difficult and hence discourages the gaze that tends to find solace in realism. It is a tree and yet it is not a tree in the sense we understand the word. The other prop that I found significant was Pozzo's coat in the first act. Beckett just mentions 'a greatcoat' without any specifications. The bright red velvet coat used by Motley reminds us on the one hand of the rich vestments of priests thus contributing to the various metaphors of Christianity evoked by the play and on the other hand it stands out in sharp contrast to the otherwise colorless surroundings and the battered, unkempt look of the two tramps. It is present in the audience's memory when the blind Pozzo returns dressed in ordinary clothes, the kind which would probably be worn by a humble government clerk of limited means. Red as a colour also becomes the visual surrogate for the theme of sin and damnation that is intermittently referred to by Vladimir and Estragon, especially when they talk about the two biblical thieves who were supposed to have been crucified along with Christ. This can be compared to Hardy's Tess wearing a red ribbon at the time of the May dance when all the girls are otherwise dressed in virginal white. The play's Christian overtones are conveyed visually in two other instances. The first instance is when Lucky takes off his hat and 'his long white hair', reads Beckett's stage direction, 'falls about his face'. The 'long white hair' of Motley's Lucky falls in such a way and he holds his head at such an angle that his resemblance to a traditional representation of Christ is quite unsettlingly undeniable. For a sensitive audience it is almost an epiphanic moment. This feeling is reinforced through the mention of Lucky's 'running sore'—a mark of his toil, suffering and maybe sacrifice—reminding us of Christ's stigmata. The second instance is that of the boy—the supposed messenger from Godot. In fact the child is the only character in the play that seems to enjoy proximity with Godot and hence has the greatest access to and knowledge of him whose identity one can otherwise endlessly speculate on without coming to any satisfactory conclusion. Yannick Shetty Menon performs the role with perfection through his extreme control over voice modulation and his striking clarity of diction. Both of these create a sense of detachment which coming from a child can be quite disturbing. He gives cryptic, mechanical replies to Vladimir's perplexed questions mystifying him as well as the audience about Godot. At the visual level the boy resembles a shepherd—a significant figure in Christian mythology. He could be momentarily taken for the child Jesus who appears to Wilde's selfish giant. But his voice and words have a coldness and objectivity that make any such association of benevolence impossible.

The narrator of Beckett's novel *The Unnameable* sits 'nowhere nowhen' 'like a horned owl in an aviary.' Our Rose Bowl with its surrounding wilderness established the sense of the Beckettian 'nowhere' in a way possibly more effective than what an indoor proscenium could have done. The 'nowhen' found its expression through Ratna Pathak Shah's lights which dimmed to become night with the same suddenness that Beckett prescribes in his stage direction. True to the playwright, a translucent moon appeared to bathe the stage with its pale ghostly glow and hence added the dimension of an existential terror to the feelings of ennui, stagnation and repetitiveness that the play in its entirety conveyed.

It was interesting if not unexpected to see the Rose Bowl visibly emptier after the ten minutes break. Later many of my students confessed to having dozed off while the play was in progress. Illogical as it may sound, both of the above responses actually confirm the success of the play. The London run of the play in 1964 saw a similar if more aggressive response. According to Peter Bull who played Pozzo, "Waves of hostility came whirling over the footlights, and the mass exodus, which was to form such a feature of the run of the piece, started quite soon after the curtain had risen. The audible groans were also fairly disconcerting ... The curtain fell to mild applause, we took a scant three calls) and a depression and a sense of anti-climax descended on us all." Actually the play shakes some of our fundamental assumptions about life and being so vehemently at the roots that we are forced to confront certain unsavoury truths about ourselves and this is perhaps what people knowingly or unknowingly flee from. At a conscious, volitional level most of us shy away from all manifestations of meaninglessness because they can be quite frightening. So people switching off mentally or leaving the theatre annoyed is fundamentally symbolic of the play's success in representing the absurdity and meaninglessness that runs through our lives.

For the more courageous and tougher of us, Naseeruddin Shah promised another experience of the same absurdity, maybe another two and a half decades later, with the School a hundred years old, many of us with grey hairs and some of us no longer around. In the midst of such comfortable predictability we would perhaps realize once again how each one of us continues to wait for Godot.

| Interview |

## Dramatic Duo

*Uday Shriram and Shashank Peshawaria interviewed two members of the theatre group Motley, who performed Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot in the Rose Bowl on Saturday, April 17*



**The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Why do we need theatre?**

**Benjamin Gilani (BNG):** Can you imagine a world without theatre? You need theatre for many reasons. The most important reason is that you are going to introduce a world that has existed for more than two thousand years and is something that has grown and grown. And theatre for those who like it is a life plug and is like their diet, something that you survive on. That is why we, as in those who like theatre, do it. Seriously, I cannot think of a world without theatre and how I can survive in it. When you come and watch a play, it is for you to decide whether it is good or bad, unless you remain indifferent. When you come to watch a play, you have every right to like it, dislike it or criticize it, but at the same time we have the right to carry on doing such stuff. When we were young, how did we get into theatre? We watched those who have been doing theatre for a long time. It takes time but it ultimately expands your thinking, sensitivity and experiences.

**Akash Khurana (AKK):** I do not think the world needs theatre, in fact, very few people need theatre, but there is a need for it. There is a need to perform and watch theatre. Then, the question arises, why is there a need to perform? Theatre is a means of communication and expression, taking up identities by carelessly living more characters than yourself. It's a form of art and mankind needs to be entertained by it.

**DSW: How can a student become an actor?**

**BNG:** If you have an interest in acting, there are many opportunities for you to express it. You have school plays, you have drama in college. My advice: read as many plays as possible. That is the only way one can get used to that role. It is like saying, what should I do to become a cricketer? Play as much as you can but you wouldn't say you just want to bat because these days to get into the team you would have to be an all rounder. You might be a great batsman, but then you still need to understand the whole game. It is something you do by choice and nobody can compel you to do it. When somebody does so, you will walk out of it.

**AKK:** The passion to want to act and the capability to act well is what it takes to become an actor. I do not know whether acting is a god-given skill. So

you are in trouble if it is god-given and you don't want to become an actor. If you really want to do it passionately you'll end up doing it, provided you can deliver. Test your talent, prove your craft and follow your dream. The journey is important so go out and take the first step. Theatre is not a career. None of us have it for a career. It's a vocation, not a career. For my part, I'm a writer, a film actor, the vice chairman of Nimbus Communications Ltd, a professor and a trainer.

**DSW: What is the scope of English theatre in India?**

**BNG:** Well, limited. It is limited to bigger cities and satellite towns. We can't go into the interiors but the same logic applies when the folk theatre does not come into Bombay, so we miss out on one of our greatest and oldest cultures. Some of folk theatre has been lost as no one does it. But yes, since English is spoken more, what we have done is for audiences who are 'English-literate' in that sense, like you people in many schools and colleges, is that we have brought theatre to school children and our interest is that they'll become good actors. The scope of a profession in this is limited. In the last thirty years of my career, we have done a number of plays but if you were to make a list of it, we have done 20-30 plays including the short plays we did. And you see in thirty years we only did 5-6 major plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *King Lear*. That's why it takes a lot of effort to repeat the plays and we try to make as much sense of the texts that we have, we just don't mug up the lines, that anyone can try to introduce you to a new world. A lot of people when they see *Waiting for Godot*, say that they found it difficult to understand but they enjoyed it. It is not a question of what you understand and what you think. It is a theatrical experience and if it makes sense to anybody at any age, then I think the work is not messed up. If you see *Waiting for Godot* and you say you didn't understand it but you would like to see another play then I've helped you in taking the second step which I think is a great thing because youngsters need to get away from multiplexes and television screens.

**DSW: Why was Motley born?**

**BNG:** It started because Naseer and I wanted to do theatre together, frankly, and we had a similar mindset. So that's how it happened: we had a common background and, if you read that little note in the brochure, it was really a simple desire that gave birth to Motley. And it was just coincidental that we both belonged to Delhi and had heard of each other, despite that he, at that time, had not seen anything I had done and neither had I seen him perform. Both of us had been to the same institute and had decided to do a play together. And that is how Motley came to be!

## The Gobar Speech Trophy Contest, 2010

Winning Entry in the Seniors' Category

### *Religious Practices and Godly Ways*

**Bharat Ganju** on how religion has been perverted by deliberate human misinterpretation

When a daughter asks her mother the most dreaded question of all, how was I created, she usually gets two answers. Either, your father and I loved each other a lot and we prayed to god and we got you. Or, the mother gives the longest possible answer ever with the most technical terms possible, so as to ensure that the question is never posed again.

In the same way when I was a child, I asked my father, "How was the world created?" and I got a long answer of which the only words I got were 'big', 'bang' and 'universe'. This definition left me confused and when I consulted a local priest I got a simple three letter word as an answer. That word satisfied my hunger for the truth at that time but as I grew older I realised something: that very word and the story behind it is just a story; an oral story that has been passed down through word of mouth from father to son to grandson and so on. Somewhere down the line, the growing, changing story was written down. This piece of writing was then copied and copied and copied. Soon, the codified story was then translated from Hebrew to Arabic to English and so on until we, the believers, get the final book which is, at the end of the day, a translation of a translation of a translation of a copy of a copy of a copy of an oral story passed down through countless generations. And yet, we give so much importance to the three letter word and the story behind it.

The word for which religions were founded; the word which gives a reason to kill one another; the word for which wars were and still are declared: the word 'God'. For centuries the progress of man has been strangled by so-called 'believers' whenever there was a chance of science overturning belief. Today, the belief in god has been confused with the practice of religion. The distinction which was once present is now blurred by fanatics who preach that the amount of times you pray per day, the sacrifices you make, the amount of pain you can endure in god's holy name and so on are the measures of your belief. Religion is not just a belief anymore, it has become a way of life. How can people now believe that barbaric acts can be justified if they are done in the name of god? How can something justify men committing mass murder and genocide? How can something tell us to listen to and obey the commands of a select few who have been given the title of a priest or guru? How can a god who taught love now have a religion created after him that practises cruelty to those who do not belong to it? Those are my questions.

God is a spirit and hence one has to connect in spirit

and truth. It doesn't matter how big your Christmas tree is, how many crackers you burn on Diwali or how many goats you slaughter on Eid. What matters is how you engage in godly activities.

People, this disease is widespread; the fact is that it is a complete misunderstanding that god causes people to hate and kill one another. The fact is that god is an embodiment of love, a source of goodness, kindness and compassion. It is religion, which is man-made, that causes a divide among people, and these two things are completely divorced from one another.

I want to drive home this very point today, that the compulsory following and practice of religion to show that you do have a belief in god is wrong. And it is due to this very confusion that, bit by bit, humanity is slowly tearing itself apart, starting from the destruction of a city's skyscrapers all the way down to the bombing of a bakery.

Frankly, the practice of religion has happened not because it is needed, but because people have perceived it to be. Because just as cold is the absence of heat, just as darkness is the absence of light, the practice of religion to uphold a belief in God is the absence of reason.

| Short Story |

## Just Another Day

**Shashvat Dhandhan**

The sun had started setting and the streets were thick with men returning home from work. He sat in a creaking chair with a lit cigarette in his mouth. He stared at the blank wall ahead. No one around him knew anything about what was going on in his mind. His wife was completing her daily chores. His son was studying, diligently, with his nose buried in his books. He was caught in a financial tangle that year: no one was willing to buy his products, and the economic recession was breathing down his neck.

His wife walked into the room and asked, "Would you like to have a cup of tea this evening?" "No, a small peg of whisky will be better," he answered. "I refuse to let you drink again today. It's becoming a part of your daily routine," she admonished playfully. He shouted back, "I am your husband, you have no right to question anything I do. Just get me what I want." She moved away reluctantly and came back with the drink, leaving it on a table beside her husband, along with a glass of watered-down milk for her son. Embarrassed to even look into his eyes, she asked him in a soft tone, not knowing what sort of reply she would receive, "I hope you are not having a hard time at work these days." "You do not need to worry. I'll achieve whatever you want me to," was his curt reply. She sighed and walked back into the kitchen, then went into the verandah, to hang out the clothes to dry.

After completing her task and before she began preparations for dinner, she sat down for a moment, lost in thought. Tears began to roll down her cheeks and she murmured, "I only hope my son doesn't end up like him!"

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