Tanuj Kumar reflects on the current state of affairs in the nation and the challenges it is facing

Last week, when the country celebrated its 64th Independence Day, I found myself in a dilemma whether I should have sung the National Anthem with customary gusto or should I have joined the mourning Kashmiri widow in a dirge; if I should have savoured the fine language is “What is the actor motivated by?” and actions, which I then transcribed at night. I also went along with the production team to the shooting locations for a technical reconnaissance which was necessary before the shoots.

When the shooting started, work became more rigorous. It stretched, many times, till late-night or started too early in the morning. I felt that Ashvin appreciated my presence most often when he was acting, since he frequently asked me how he should play out scenes or the requisite emotions.

I gained a lot from my time spent with junior boys, working on and creating a few tabloids for a futuristic play which is a part of the film. It allowed me to interact with my juniors, become friends with them and learn from them. I sat down with Mandakini (our costumes designer) for hours, deciding the look of our ‘play-boys’, and discussed the pros and stage design with Sylvain (art director). From Sudheer (director of production), I tried to understand the lighting techniques whenever he had the time. I helped in the make-up of many actors for this play and realized how patient Mandakini, Paanchal (costume AD), Deepika (first AD), Kripi (second AD) and Aanchal (production manager) were.

Working on this film, with learned and accomplished professionals, was encouraging and helped me find myself amongst others, and within myself.

As a child and even until recently, I never gave a thought to how films were made. My knowledge was restricted to my belief that a director, a few film stars, and a bunch of other people, whom I casually reduced to an ‘et cetera’, alone made a film. And that was all. But perhaps I am not the only one who was wrong in thinking so. In fact, most of us are still so far in spirit from film-making that we only consider it a distant world full of glamour and style. However, in reality, there is a lot more that takes place in the production of a film than that which we imagine or see on screen. Being a part of the cast and production team of the DS-75 film (which still hasn’t found a name for itself) has been one of the most enriching experiences of my life.

The week before shooting, which I found most enjoyable, started with Dilip Sir’s (casting director and line producer of the film) theatre workshops for the main cast. In these workshops, I went through a soul-searching process of exploring and expanding my creativity. I played various theatre games that focussed on developing different creative skills and dealt with controlling the flow of energy. Sometimes, I was asked to close my eyes and sing, allowing my voice to flow fluidly and discover several new spaces. Dilip Sir told me to shed all the layers of my body and be completely vulnerable, transparent and truthful (the most valuable learning of my life as an artist). I worked on creating the history of my character, an exercise which comes from the school of ‘method acting’. I played various theatre games that focussed on developing different creative skills and dealt with controlling the flow of energy. Sometimes, I was asked to close my eyes and sing, allowing my voice to flow fluidly and discover several new spaces. Dilip Sir told me to shed all the layers of my body and be completely vulnerable, transparent and truthful (the most valuable learning of my life as an artist). I worked on creating the history of my character, an exercise which comes from the school of ‘method acting’.

I wondered whether we had truly gained independence. I’m not talking about the freedom which we earned from the British years ago, but of the freedom today, to live our lives happily, with dignity and without want.

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The Doon School Weekly Saturday, August 21
DEBATE UPDATE
The following are the results of the various rounds of the Junior Inter-House English Debates held over the week:

Hyderabad vs Kashmir
Best Speaker: Kunal Kanodia
Most Promising Speaker: Madhav Dutt
Winner: Kashmir

Jaipur vs Tata
Best Speaker: Utkarsh Jha
Most Promising Speaker: Vikramaditya Kapur
Winner: Jaipur

Oberoi vs Jaipur
Best Speaker: Utkarsh Jha
Most Promising Speaker: Prabnoor Singh Bal
Winner: Jaipur

Tata vs Hyderabad
Best Speaker: Armaav Joshi
Most Promising Speaker: Rahul Srivastava
Winner: Hyderabad

Oberoi vs Hyderabad
Best Speaker: Vinodam Nagpal
Most Promising Speaker: Suraj Bishnoi
Winner: Oberoi

Tata vs Kashmir
Best Speaker: Vikramaditya Kapur
Most Promising Speaker: Yuvan Kumar and Shivaan Tandon
Winner: Tata

Oberoi vs Tata
Best Speaker: Vinodam Nagpal
Most Promising Speaker: Jai Khanna
Winner: Oberoi

Jaipur vs Kashmir
Best Speaker: Kunal Kanodia
Most Promising Speaker: Ritish Shinde
Winner: Kashmir

The following are the House positions at the end of the Preliminary Round:
1st: Oberoi
2nd: Kashmir, Jaipur and Hyderabad
5th: Tata

Well spoken!

INTERNATIONAL AWARD
The following boys have achieved the various standards of the International Award for Young People:

Bronze: Vidit Sidana, Avik Gupta, Pulkit Bansal, Eeshat Tiwary, Karan Singhal and Rishabh Pande
Silver: Spandan Agrawal and Vaibhav Gupta

Rishabh Chatterjee and Prateek Agarwal have been awarded the IAYP Blazer for completing all three standards of the IAYP.

Congratulations all!

FOOTBALL FEVER
The School Soccer Team played against the Asian School, Dehradun on Saturday, August 14, and won 8-1, the Old Boys’ Team on Sunday, August 15, and won 1-0 and RIMC, Dehradun, on August 17, and won 3-1.

The Mediums Team also played the Asian School, Dehradun, and won 9-0.

Well played!

COLOURFUL PLAY
The following have been awarded Colours in Gymnastics:
Half Colours: Sagar Kamnawat, Nivit Kochhar, Shreyvardhan Swaroop
Full Colours: Arjun Sethi, Abhimandan Rajan, Vignya Singh Dhiman

The following have been awarded Colours in Hockey:
Half Colours: Pranoy Bohara, Uddhav Prasad, Trivikram Singh
Full Colours: Vahin Khosla, Shiva Gururani, Harsh Varma, Shivam Katyal

ON CAMPUS
Victor Banerjee visited the School as Chief Guest for the Independence Day celebrations. He hoisted the flag and later addressed the entire School in the MPH. An interview with him runs in a forthcoming issue.

We welcome Harold Snedcoff, who is currently visiting School and advising Sc form boys on college admissions in the US. We wish him a pleasant stay.

A team of four musicians from the Worldwide Appreciation of Music Foundation, based in the United Kingdom, visited School on August 18 and 19. Sam Tannenbaum, Lucie Bebbington, Helen Allen-Williams and Gaspar Hunt held Master Classes on piano technique, violin and guitar playing and also gave a piano recital in the Music School on August 19. A report runs in a forthcoming issue.

Well spoken!
A stranger recently remarked that I was a ‘good man’. I was immediately taken aback, and a jolt of shock flooded my being. Not at the word ‘good’, but at the genuineness with which he had called me a ‘man’. ‘Good boy’ or ‘good guy’ or ‘good kid’ somehow seemed more appropriate adjectives to use. I had never before pictured myself as a man; I had never felt I was one. In my eyes, I was just a helpless and insecure teenager. When I got home, I gazed at my reflection in the mirror. I hardly recognized the creature that occupied the framed piece of polished glass in front of me; it somehow couldn’t be me. A distinct band of hair below his nostrils had become prominently visible as a moustache. His chest was broad; his jaw prominent; his cheeks outlined; and he had lost all traces of that roundness that one associates with the child. Yet it was his eyes that gave his true self away away: widened, full of curiosity and fear; insecurity and desire.

I contemplated all this with a growing sense of alarm. It was as if my body had kept up with the flow of time, while my mind and soul; more specifically, my sense of identity, was stuck in a kind of ‘time capsule’. It was struggling to keep up with the persona of an adult, but somewhere, it had lagged behind. I was somehow so young, so imperfect, and so insecure. Then beside my confused and helpless reflection, another ‘me’ emerged. I did not make him appear intentionally; he had appeared of his own accord. But he was different from me. He was my picture of a true ‘man.’ He stood inside the frame with an ease I had never known, exuding an aura of confidence and stability. He looked at me with a gleam in his eyes, and a twitch of a smile. There was a certain, very subtle sense of amusement with which he regarded my baffled and uncertain expressions. Yet there was no malice in his eyes; instead, there was a sense of benevolence, mixed with solemnity and genuineness.

After a gap of a few minutes, or maybe it was a few months or maybe even a few years, I found that I was also getting transformed—internally. The child was slowly fading away from the mirror. The man began to occupy the space more emphatically. He was becoming me; rather, I was becoming him. It was as if my heart was becoming enlarged to occupy the space in my chest. My brain broadened to fill the space within my skull. My presence had become so strong, so emphatic, so assertive. I now knew where I was and what I was doing: what to do and what not to. Yet the helpless, wide-eyed, desirous child often returns in the mirror. Such as when I wake up from a dreadful nightmare, my heart throbbing. Or when I get furiously angry. Or when I look through the glass window to view something that lures my churning insides, so vulnerable to temptation. Often, he battles against the man; yearning to push him out of the mirror. But nowadays, it is usually the man that triumphs. That is because I consciously support him.

3. The Doon School Weekly Saturday, August 21
Questioning by Right

Kanishka Malik on the potential of the Right to Information Act

Independence Day is of course, a day we commemorate the struggles of our freedom fighters and this time, among other things, we discussed the significant growth shown by our nation over the past two decades. As it is the week following Independence Day, I believe it is appropriate to discuss certain undertakings of the Government which have been discussed in the mass media, but not within the school community. Most of these undertakings have received criticism and praise by the mass media, but I believe it is necessary for the major ones to be discussed by the Weekly.

I remember the day before our Independence Day, when some of my form mates and I visited Saperia Basti to conduct a survey. Among other things, the inhabitants criticized politicians for certain promised allocation of funds for development projects which never materialized. It was then that I briefed them on the Right to Information and its potential. Of course, it was very difficult for me to explain the Right and the procedure for using it, but with effective propaganda, we can get every one of those citizens to use it. Apart from the fact that the Chief Information Commissioner, Wajahat Habibullah, is an Old Boy, it is the transparency it brings about that makes this Act unprecedented. The bureaucracy, as we all know, is a regular impediment for every citizen going about his business. Besides making paperwork difficult, it affects the implementation of promised undertakings and development projects. The RTI makes every bureaucrat and Government officer answerable to any citizen demanding information.

The last few months have witnessed an uproar from the conservatives in the Government sector, but we must understand that whenever there is some sort of liberalization undertaken by a Government, it is the conservative elements that oppose popular opinion. This statement typifies the atmosphere created by the RTI. One attack on the power of the bureaucracy has left the conservatives shouting for amendments to this unprecedented undertaking. Fortunately, powerful supporters of the Act have prevented the passing of any amendment that will reduce the prospects of obtaining transparency.

The other undertaking which occurred recently, in January this year, is the Right to Education. As the name suggests, it gives every Indian the right to receive secondary school education. The problem with this Act has been the cost of implementing it and the process of bringing private schools under the purview of the RTE. After ancillary expenses like the Commonwealth Games, implementation of the Right is becoming a tedious process due to the lack of funds. State Governments, like that of Uttar Pradesh, have asked for additional funds (the channelization of which is always controversial). The second problem, which involves bringing private schools into the purview of the Right, has brought the chilling class difference amongst students under the spotlight. Children of less affluent backgrounds will certainly have problems in mingling with those of the wealthy and privileged. However, as long as supporters like Kapil Sibal continue pressing for its implementation, the Act should see the results being achieved.

I have discussed these two undertakings as they are unmatched in their extent and nature. Implementing them will certainly be a tedious process but that is an inherent aspect of any such undertaking. That was the situation in post-apartheid South Africa. That was the situation in Alabama, when black students were allowed to study with whites. Hopefully, the implementation of such rights won’t face that kind of tension. Only optimism and true grit can save these undertakings.

Letter to the Editor

Knowledge Our Light Shoe

Dear Editor,

October 21 to 24, the 75th Founder’s Day, is the most awaited School event of the year. Everyone connected with School is excited and preparing with enthusiasm. But some of the commemorative merchandise that will carry the School logo does not seem graceful or elegant for the purpose, and, in fact, may be disgraceful to the School.

The logo is proposed to be printed on shoes. There will be a steel plate between the laces with DS-75 engraved on it which, I consider, is disrespectful to be wearing the logo of our School on our shoes. We feel pride to carry the School crest on our blazers and colours ties, but to carry the same on our shoes is disgraceful.

In a similar case in 2005, a line of slippers was removed from an exhibition in Singapore because it had Mahatma Gandhi’s image on it. Indians protested when they saw this as they couldn’t bear the thought of Gandhi’s picture printed footwear. In another incident in a previous cricket World Cup, a female cricket commentator, Mandira Bedi, wore a sari which had our Tricolour printed on it, but the setting of the sari was such that the Tricolour touched her feet. How could we Indians tolerate such an insult to our national flag? She had to change her outfit immediately because of the respect accorded to a national flag.

For us Doonians, our School is our alma mater. The logo represents our identity. And wearing our school’s lamp on our shoes reflects a lack of respect for it. I don’t think we are promoting the right sentiment for DS-75.

(Sachin Mehra)

Opinion

Do you think the Indian youth today takes pride in being a citizen of this country?

Yes 71%
No 29%

(338 members of the community were polled)

Next week’s question: Are the logistics of School events becoming increasingly inconvenient?

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4. The Doon School Weekly Saturday, August 21