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Debate and Deliberation

Vivek Santayana reports on the recently-concluded, 54th Annual Chuckerbutty Memorial Inter-School English Debates, held on September 4 and 5

In quick and strenuous succession, we moved from one major “eagerly anticipated School event” to another. Even before most of us could recover from the DSMUN hangover, we found ourselves drawing for pools and speaker orders for the preliminary round of The Chuckerbutty Memorial Inter-School English Debates. It was a difficult build-up to the Debates, with logistic pressure and a scarce three practices, but the Organizing Committee and the four participants, Piroune, Shoumitra, Arnav and I, were as ready as we could possibly be. Personally, it was a much-awaited reunion with old friends on the debating circuit (each with a reputation preceding himself or herself), meeting once again the teams from La Martiniere for Boys, Kolkata, Mayo College Girls’ School, Ajmer, St James’, Kolkata, and Dubai Modern High School, Dubai, among others. It was also a fulfillment of promises made to old friends that we would spar again at *Chucks*.

On the administrative front, the joy was short-lived: forms were required to be filled in in block letters, stationery needed to be handed out, participants were to be briefed about the new semi-finals system and I had to prepare my opening speech for the following morning. The Chuckerbutty Debates this year highlighted the same spirit of experimentation with which we ran the Inter-House Debates. We followed a novel semi-finals format which required us to draft our own motions after viewing a series of slides, which, in keeping with our initial aim, was very challenging. Participants rose to the challenge during the demo, which was evident as they proposed provocative motions such as *This House believes in Victoria’s Secret*. After such a display, we could do little but anticipate the semi-finals, and debate well enough to get there. It was exhausting to handle the logistics and be a participant at the same time, and I had fortunately washed my hands of the organization that evening. The schedule allowed us to turn in early. It may not have been a long night, but the day was nonetheless exhausting.

The Oxford format is my least favourite. Shoumitra and I were in practice after the first two rounds of Frank Anthony, hence we spoke in the preliminary round. The motion was abstract and more difficult than what we usually debated, *This House believes intellectuals had best live in ivory towers*. Speakers argued that intellectuals were largely redundant in solving fundamental crises of human conflict and that an exclusive intellectual forum would benefit academia. The Opposition contended that intellectuals were an indivisible part of and perhaps the greatest asset to civil society, which is why authoritarian regimes would always silence intellectuals. We qualified to the semi-final round from Pool A, along with Dubai Modern High School, going up to face the runner-up and winner of Pool B, La Martiniere Girls’ College, Lucknow, and Mayo College Girls’ School, Ajmer, respectively.

The reason I prefer the Cambridge format is because, being a team debate, it gives us four times the time period the Oxford format gives us. It lets us begin with an abstract principle and develop it into a concrete model. The motion that was drawn, *This House believes there is no such thing as a just war* (one of the two we were pining for), allowed us such a method (and made for a sly insertion of wit towards the end of the debate). We challenged the motion on the lines that there existed a moral archetype of a ‘just war’. A war could only be judged post-facto. One also had to account for subjectivity of historical perspective, for which we presented objective parameters based on the Just War Theory. The motion was defended in our semi-final debate on the grounds that a war would always have a winner and a loser and hence there was no equality or justice in a war.

Although we lost in the final round, we have kept up with our reputation since 2005, of always reaching the finals. It is an achievement in itself, and there was no shame in losing a debate contested keenly (as the final one was), against Dubai Modern High School, the deserved winners of the tournament. While vetoing motions, we had eliminated the more abstract ones, lest we argued on stereotypes and generalizations again. Furthermore, we were convinced that we were competent to debate about more focussed and technical issues. Hence we chose to defend the motion, *This House believes fundraising for charity is another word for social marketing*. We had once again begun with vague principles and then equated models of social marketing and fundraising for charity. Where we lost out was in our engagement with the audience and the opponents: I spoke too fast (as I often tend to), our manner and method went awry (even haywire) and our arguments showed little aggression, clash or cognisance of our opponents’. If I may be overcritical, our debates resembled canned spiels rather than active debates, all stemming from, in retrospect, a lack of practice.

As I said before, Chuckerbutty reflects a lot of our Debating Society’s performance and working over the past year. It reflects many positives, like our willingness to debate complex issues, our ease with impromptu debates and a systematic method, as well as many flaws, like the lack of practice and the overall unavailability of weekends for society meetings (having met only three times this year, and never this term). There is a lot we can take from this experience and prepare ourselves accordingly for the competitions that await: the IISPC, Ottawa, the Gibson Memorial, Frank Anthony Memorial and Modern World debates being some of them.

SPORT REPORT

Sarthak Gupta and Ujjwal Dahuja represented the School in the **Council's Inter-School Junior and Senior Tournament** respectively, held on September 6 at **Ann Mary School, Dehradun**. Sarthak Gupta won **first position** in the Juniors' section for the third consecutive time and Ujjwal Dahuja finished **runner-up** in the Seniors' section. The School participated in the **10th Annual RIMC Soccer Tournament**. The School Soccer Team beat St. Georges' College, Mussoorie 4-1. Congratulations!

AWARDS

Vahin Khosla, Abhinandan Rajan, Uddhav Prasad, Shreyvardhan Swaroop, Neel Madhav, Shiva Gururani and Vigya Singh have been awarded the **Games' Blazer**. Netesh Dev has been awarded **Colours** in **Art**. Kudos!

CHUCKS AND QUIZ

The following are the results of **The Chuckerbutty Memorial Inter-School English Debates, 2010**:

Preliminary Round (Pool A):

Best Speaker: Vivek Santayana (The Doon School, Dehradun). **Most Promising Speaker:** Anirudh Sivaram (Dubai Modern High School, Dubai)

Winner: The Doon School

Runner-Up: Dubai Modern High School

Preliminary Round (Pool B):

Best Speaker: Richa Bala (La Martiniere Girls' College, Lucknow). **Most Promising Speaker:** Damini Roy (Mayo College Girls' School, Ajmer)

Winner: Mayo College Girls' School

Runner-Up: La Martiniere Girls' College

Semi-Final I (La Martiniere Girls' College vs The Doon School):

Best Speaker: Arnav Sahu (The Doon School). **Most Promising Speaker:** Vivek Santayana (The Doon School)

Winner: The Doon School

Semi-Final II (Dubai Modern High School vs Mayo College Girls' School):

Best Speaker: Anirudh Sivaram (Dubai Modern High School). **Most Promising Speaker:** Rohan Sampath (Dubai Modern High School)

Winner: Dubai Modern High School

Final Round (The Doon School vs Dubai Modern High School):

Best Speaker: Rohan Sampath (Dubai Modern High School). **Most Promising Speaker:** Vishwa Patel (Dubai Modern High School)

Winner: Dubai Modern High School

Runner-Up: The Doon School

The following are the results of **The Doon School Quiz, 2010**:

Winner: Welham Girls' School, Dehradun

Runner-Up: RIMC, Dehradun. Congratulations, all!

Opinion oll

Do we have the time to stop and look around?



(350 members of the community were polled)

Next week's question: Do you read the newspaper regularly?

SPLASHING SUCCESS

The following are the results of the **Inter-House Swimming Competition, 2010**:

Seniors:	Mediums:	Juniors:
1st: Oberoi	1st: Jaipur	1st: Oberoi
2nd: Jaipur	2nd: Oberoi	2nd: Tata
3rd: Kashmir	3rd: Kashmir	3rd: Jaipur
4th: Hyderabad	4th: Hyderabad	4th: Hyderabad
5th: Tata	5th: Tata	5th: Kashmir

Aditya Vikram Gupta, of Kashmir House, set a **new record** in the **50 m Breast Stroke** in the mediums' section with a timing of 40.15 seconds. The previous record was set by Dilsher Khanna, of Tata House, in the year 2005 with a timing of 40.68 second).

Unbeaten 75... and the innings carries on

Sheel Vohra

... Evidently, nine other parents/guardians were quicker and I was the first no. 10 amongst the 70 boys who joined the School on its opening day on September 9, 1935. – Bidhu Jayal

September 9, 1935 saw the birth of a new institution. It was on this day the first boy, Athar Hussain, No. 1, arrived on Chandbagh and made his way to the present Hyderabad House. The sapling planted at that time has now grown into a massive tree and extends its branches and shade all over the world. Over five thousand Old Boys have passed through the portals of this School and continue to bring glory to their alma-mater.

The system has adapted itself to the changing conditions and environment, yet its basic structure remains the same. A number of physical changes are obvious to everyone. The heritage structures – the Main Building, Hyderabad and Kashmir Houses are still as imposing as ever. The Tata Housemaster's Villa is also in this category and is going through repairs and renovation but is still as majestic as ever. The campus has gone through some major landscaping and newly-laid gardens add to its charm and beauty.

The number of students remains the same: 500 plus. The facilities in the Houses have been made top-class. Games and sports find vigorous participation as always. So do debates, dramatics, quiz contests and essay writing.

Our ideals, however, have not changed. Secularism is still our creed, and fraternity our hallmark. Individual liberty and freedom of expression thrives, as always. The reputation of the School has spread all over and is acknowledged universally. We all once again pay our tribute to the founder-S R Das, C R Das, the first two Headmasters, Arthur Foot and John Martyn, subsequent Headmasters and all others who have nurtured it through these 75 years.

The First Ten:

No. 1. Athar Hussain	No. 6. Shaukat Rai
No. 2. Inder S Lamba	No. 7. Ranjit Rai
No. 3. Mahinder N Suri	No. 8. Shamsher S Puri
No. 4. M M Davar	No. 9. M C Sharma
No. 5. Jagdish P Vaisa	No. 10. Bidhu D Jayal

Letter To The Editor

The 'Viewpoint' in *The Doon School Weekly*, dated August 21, 2010, was interesting. I am glad that Kanishka Malik understood the power of the Right to Information Act. I hope the School's mustering of India's future leadership will help to inculcate among them the powerful democratic potential of this law.

(Wajahat Habibullah, ex 266 – H, '61)

Peepi Live- Uncensored

Shrey Nagalia

Last Saturday, the director of *Peepi Live* was disallowed from screening his movie in front of the School because of the Censor Board's decision to categorize the film as an adult film. For whatever reasons, the film was considered inappropriate for a minor audience, thereby barring thousands of students such as yourselves from watching it. Incidentally, while I was watching the film, I could not help but think to myself that this movie should actually be recommended to every student, contrary to what the Censor Board believes.

Peepi Live is one of those rare Indian movies which has something true to communicate, something real to show. It is the story of a simple farmer who has been facing repeated crop failure and is now on the verge of losing his land. Through this story, the film presents us with a

horrifying reality: the reality of some of the most backward and poorest parts of rural India, where up to 60% of our country's population resides. More specifically, the film brings to the forefront the biggest crisis in Indian agriculture in recent decades. Most of us, as the urban elite, have never even heard of the agrarian crisis.

Did you know that since 1997, over two lakh Indian farmers have committed suicide? That's one in every 30 minutes. This figure is not only shocking but also brings to light the complete collapse of agriculture in many parts of the country. Rising unemployment amongst farming communities has seen the migration of over 8 million farmers from villages to urban centres in search of jobs since 1991. Such is the plight of farmers that when the National Rural Employment Guarantee Program was introduced in Andhra Pradesh in 2005, within a week the government had over 2.7 million applications, mostly from farmers. Farmer families in some parts of rural India are so poor that up to 200 million of them have stopped seeking medical attention of any sort. This is in a country which boasts of a 10,000 crore medical tourism industry. This clearly shows that there is something terribly wrong with our present agricultural set up and that the farmers are facing the worst kind of deprivation, especially in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

So what is this agrarian crisis we are talking about? Firstly, it is not the result of natural disasters or calamities. Instead, it is the result of some short-sighted policies implemented by the government. Consider this: since the mid-90s, the government has been persuading (read coercing) the farmers to switch from food crops to cash crops. This is because cash crops yield high returns when exported to international markets. It was explained that these high returns would find their way to the farmers, thus alleviating their financial status. However, a multiplicity of factors was not taken into account while enforcing these new agrarian policies. Firstly, the initial cost of cultivating cash crops is much higher than that of food crops. To bear this cost, a farmer has no choice but to take huge loans from the banks and pin all his hopes on the returns that are promised by the government. Secondly, the demand for cash crops within India is low. The main demand is from American and European markets and this demand itself is very unpredictable. For example, in 2006, the US, UK and EU decided to give heavy subsidies to their own cotton farmers, thereby reducing the demand of cotton imports from countries like India. Consequently, Indian cotton farmers were saddled with millions of tons of cotton with no buyers, leading to failure in repaying the banks. Driven towards utter ruin and with no option but to sell their pieces of land, most migrated to the cities to pull rickshaws or work on construction sites while many others decided to end their lives. In Vidarbha alone, a district in Maharashtra, 4000 cotton farmers committed suicide in 2006. The government responded by offering relief packages but nothing was done to replace those policies which had led to this agrarian genocide. Moreover, while the farmers are still being asked to grow cash crops at an extremely high cost of cultivation, over 4000 rural banks have shut down due to the risky nature of agricultural lending. So, while on the one hand the farmers are undertaking increased expenditure, on the other, the government is unwilling to invest in agricultural ventures, leading to severe poverty and unemployment in rural India.

In 2006, only six national reporters were present to cover the suicide of 4000 cotton farmers in Vidarbha. Just an hour away in Mumbai, over 500 reporters were busy covering the Lakme Fashion Week. Ironically, the theme for that year's fashion show was cotton.

made important themes within *Peepi Live* and are held up for scorn (if only the students were allowed to watch it!). In the film, when Nathha, the farmer, announces his plans to commit suicide so that his family can get some sort of compensation from the government, the event sounds sensational enough for all media channels to swarm in on the little village of Peepi. No channel wants to know the cause of such a strange and morbid proclamation. Instead, they are all busy discussing and holding opinion polls about whether Nathha will die or not, converting his life into one nice, juicy story. This truly mirrors the reality of the Indian media. In 2006, only six national reporters were present to cover the suicide of 4000 cotton farmers in Vidarbha. Just an hour away in Mumbai, over 500 reporters were busy covering the Lakme Fashion Week. Ironically, the theme for that year's fashion show was cotton.

The government has decided that the best way to tackle the problem of farmer suicides is by pretending that they don't take place at all. Recently, the government came up with the concept of 'eligible suicides' as a way of ascertaining the actual number of farmer suicides. They began by laying down certain ground rules and if a farmer

(contd. overleaf)

committed suicide, he had to make sure that he followed each one of them in order to make his family eligible for the ensuing compensation. Firstly, the government refused to recognize a suicide as a farmer suicide if the land was not in the name of the farmer, thereby excluding most women and young men from making the cut as the lands were in the name of their husbands and aged fathers. Secondly, most tribal and backward communities were excluded, as the title deeds were often unavailable or unclear, even though generations of the same family might have been tilling that piece of land. Thirdly, if a farmer committed suicide, leaving his family utterly destitute and without land, the suicides by his family members (there are enough cases where entire families ended their lives) were not eligible. While the family remained dead, only the farmer counted. Through this process, even though the number of suicides kept increasing, the government has been able to show a significant decline in the number of farmer deaths; simply by saying that the other suicides did not qualify to be called a farmer suicide. Consequently, the agriculture minister, Sharad Pawar, has confidently addressed the Parliament on the issue of farmer suicide, stating that since 2006 only around 3500 farmer suicides have taken place in the country including 6 in Vidarbha; other national reports placed the count around 40,000 and 373 respectively.

Moreover, the economic growth of the country has been marketed by the government as a sign of progress. According to the government, even the poverty figures have been on the decrease! What else can a nation want? There are more people eating food and leading a healthy lifestyle than ever before. This claim too needs a bit of scrutiny. For the past few years, the government has been constantly tweaking the markers of poverty. For example, earlier, any family residing in rural India which was consuming less than 2400 calories of food per day was considered poor due to its inability to procure that much amount of food. Now, that number has been brought down to 1800 calories. So earlier, if a family was consuming 2000 calories of food and was considered poor, that same family is now richer by 200 calories. Nothing short of a miracle! Moreover, markers such as health, education, sanitation, and rising inflation are not taken into account while determining the poverty line. So while unemployment, hunger, farmer suicides and mass migration from rural areas is on the rise, our poverty levels keep dipping miraculously .

I guess the Censor Board, like us, is unaware of this grim reality. Otherwise why else would they ever categorize *Pepli Live*, a film that holds up to scorn a corrupt government machinery and two-penny media reporting as an adult movie simply on the basis of its language? Does the movie not have something to convey? Is it not making people aware of a sustained agrarian genocide? Should boys of The Doon School not know about rural plight, a small step towards becoming members of an “aristocracy of service”?

Artists' Day Out

Anvay Grover reports on the D form Art excursion to New Delhi between August 22 and 24

As I sat in the bus and tipped my seat back, I wondered what this journey had in store for me and my form mates. We were about to leave School for Delhi, as part of our art excursion. There was a sense of longing in my heart, as I lived in Noida, only a few minutes from our destination. Unfortunately, the rules dictated that meeting parents was not allowed. So I tried to concentrate on the long journey of over eight hours that lay ahead, and not think of home.

I knew that the commute from Dehradun to Delhi would be a long one, having done it before, but despite dozing for a couple of hours and having a quick snack at Cheetal Grand, I found myself getting horribly bored. I have to find a way of making journeys more enjoyable.

Later that evening, we found ourselves at a place called Hotel Waves, where we were to stay. We were divided into groups of three to four people per room, and after a quick dinner we called it a day.

This outing comprised two nights and three days, and we were to visit the National Gallery of Modern Art and the National Museum. I definitely needed a break from the routine of school life. Accompanying us were the new Art masters BAB, ARM, TPB, LKA, APC, SKK and ATB.

It wasn't quite an early start on Saturday morning as everyone slept in, and after a hasty wash-up and breakfast, we were on our way to the NGMA. It was a short drive and in no time we were heading towards level one of the Gallery where there were many Company paintings of the 18th century which depicted the lives of different people during the British Raj. There were mainly portraits of kings and famous people such as the Nizam of Hyderabad. Level two had paintings of deities like Rama, Durga and Laxmi. Level three mainly featured canvas paintings by Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore and Amrita Shergil. Exquisite woodprints and etchings of ink on paper were also displayed. Level four featured numerous interesting art abstracts as well as modern art. These were paintings by MF Hussain, KH Ara, VS Gaitonde and other renowned artists. The abstracts each had something to say. I was astonished to know that some of the masterpieces were worth up to Rs. 6.6 crore. Soon afterwards, we climbed back into the bus and visited the National Museum. This museum had sculptures, ceramics and other artefacts from the Harappan age. We had to make our way through a maze of pots, utensils and clay figurines.

Of course, we had our share of fun: a South Indian meal at the museum cafeteria, a visit to Ambience Mall (where we watched the film *Inception*, which puzzled most of us with its intricate and incomprehensible plot).

I enjoyed myself immensely and slept soundly that night, but, before I knew it, I was entering the gates of Chandbagh. I feel such excursions have an important role to play in our education and should be incorporated in the School calendar.

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