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REGULARS

2

ART TOUR

2

RUSKIN BOND

3

BAPU JI

4

GIVING PEACE A CHANCE

The Doon School Weekly interviewed **Tejveer Singh**, Deputy Director, Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy of Administration, who gave a talk on the Ayodhya issue on Saturday, September 25

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): What interests you in the Babri Masjid issue?

Tejveer Singh (TES): I feel this is a topical issue and each one of us should be well-informed about it as it affects us, directly or indirectly. The issue is one which is related to the public domain and it is imperative for the young minds of the country to develop their perspective on an issue that has significance to the country's culture.

DSW: First it was the British Raj and then our own politicians who used communalism as a tool to fulfil their interests. Do you think that the mass media is using this tool for their interests now?

TES: The mass media is not consciously communal. However, it has failed to take a balanced and long-term stance on communal issues such as this. If, by any chance, they portray communalism they do this unconsciously. Communalism is a political ideology which helps parties expand their electoral abilities through religious means. It started when the British came to India, so essentially it is not an old school of thought. Communalism in its basic meaning would not allow the media to use communal disputes for publicity. However, it does provide political space for parties with rightist ideologies. Challenges faced by communalism in the 21st century are different. The political parties have changed their perspectives on this issue and have become far more moderate in their stand.

DSW: Do you think the deferment by the judiciary is justified?

TES: I am not in a position to comment if the deferment is right or wrong but it is imperative for the judiciary to take the right decision. If the deferment helps this in any way, we have no right to criticise it. In the long run this deferment would not make any difference. In such a dispute, a please-all decision can never take place, so there is no harm in giving peace a chance.

DSW: Do you think these communal disputes should receive attention or be ignored by the media?

TES: These disputes are forums for intellectual debate and should be dealt with in the correct manner. The common man should not be ignorant of such issues and must deal with them objectively, in an unbiased manner. So in that sense the media must not ignore these disputes. What they should avoid is sensationalising and glorifying these disputes unnecessarily.

DSW: What is the responsibility of the intellectual class when such disputes arise?

TES: Their main responsibility is to be well-informed. It would be criminal for intellectuals, and for that matter anyone, to be ill-informed and form biased opinions on such sensitive issues. They should have clear and holistic perspectives.

DSW: What do you anticipate the verdict to be and its impact?

TES: It is not easy to predict the verdict at this point of time. The only thing which I can say is that, unfortunately, the matter will last for a very long time. For both parties, there are post-verdict steps to take. The party against which this decision goes would most likely appeal to the Supreme Court and the party which gets the upper hand can also take it up if all their wants are not fulfilled. So I can't predict the verdict but I know the dispute won't be over even after it.

DSW: What would you have to say about the different far-right movements taking place across the world?

TES: These movements are xenophobic in nature. They are a response to globalization and are neo-fascist in nature. One instance would be the reactionary movement in France where there is this whole upsurge against the *burqa*. However, these are very small movements and countries like the United States cannot gather popular support.

DSW: In your talk you spoke about joining the Civil Services. In our School we have witnessed the phenomena where most DoscOs are being siphoned off into the private sector. What would you have to say about such a phenomena taking place at a national level?

TES: Today the opportunities have increased manifold and people choose to join the private sector because of the better pay and faster upward mobility. The salaries in the Government jobs are nowhere comparable to the private sector.

Also, people have a generalized opinion about the government which has affected its reputation. The government is always scrutinized more carefully. Due to the shameful activities of some officials, the entire government has set the same impression on the minds of the people.

However, government jobs will always be in demand, to a great extent. What we really want is for the best minds, with the best values inculcated in them, to take them up.

VISITORS

Tejveer Singh, Deputy Director, Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy of Administration, gave a talk on the Ayodhya dispute on Saturday, September 25.

The School hosted the launch of the commemorative edition of GRC Williams' *Memoir of Dehradun* on Tuesday, September 28, by **Ruskin Bond**, who visited campus and autographed books for the boys. Also with us at the event was **JS Pandey**, D-G Police (Uttarakhand). A panel discussion on the topic *Is Dehradun Still a Delight to Live In?* followed the book launch. Panellists included **Air Marshal BD Jayal, Ranjit Sikand** and **Sandeep Singh**.

HINDI DEBATING

The following are the results of **The Kamla Jeevan Hindi Debates** which were held on September 26 and 27:

Welham Girls' School, Dehradun vs The Lawrence School, Sanawar

Winner: Welham Girls' School **Best Speaker:** Aditi Bhowmick (Welham Girls' School)

The Doon School vs The Scindia School, Gwalior

Winner: The Doon School **Best speaker:** Chandrachuda Shukla (The Doon School)

Welham Girls' School vs. Unison World School

Winner: Welham Girls' School **Best Speaker:** Aditi Bhowmick (Welham Girls' School)

RIMC vs The Scindia School, Gwalior

Winner: RIMC **Best Speaker:** Devashish Upadhyay (RIMC)

Unison World School vs The Lawrence School, Sanawar

Winner: The Lawrence School, Sanawar **Best Speakers:** Seerat Singh and Gaurav Khurana (The Lawrence School, Sanawar)

The Doon School vs RIMC

Winner: The Doon School **Best Speaker:** Chandrachuda Shukla (The Doon School)

Best Speaker of the Preliminary Round: Devashish Upadhyay (RIMC)

Final Round (The Doon School vs The Welham Girls' School)

Winner: The Doon School

Best Speaker: Chandrachuda Shukla (The Doon School)

The following are the results of the **Inter-House Hindi Debates:**

Oberoi House vs Kashmir House

Winner: Oberoi House, **Best Speaker:** Vidit Sidana

Jaipur House vs Tata House

Winner: Tata House, **Best Speaker:** Varun Gupta

Oberoi House vs Tata House

Winner: Tata House, **Best Speaker:** Revant Nayar

Tata House vs Hyderabad House

Winner: Tata House, **Best Speaker:** Ujjwal Dahuja

Oberoi House vs Hyderabad House

Winner: Oberoi House, **Best Speaker:** Tarang Saxena

Final Round (Oberoi House vs Tata House)

Winner: Oberoi House, **Best Speaker:** Chandrachuda Shukla.

The House positions are as follows:

1st: Oberoi

2nd: Tata

3rd: Hyderabad

4th: Kashmir and Jaipur.

Well spoken, all!

SHUTTLING

The following are the results of the **2nd Doon School Individual Badminton Championship**, held from September 24 to 26 in the MPH:

Under 14: Aditya Panwar of Summer Valley School defeated Vansh Chaudhari of Welham Boys' School in the final.

Under 17: Abhisek Parasrampur of The Doon School defeated Arjun Khaitan, also from The Doon School.

Under 19: Vibhor Popneja of Summer Valley School defeated Arjun Khaitan of The Doon School.

Well played, all!

| Report |

ARTISTIC AMRITSAR

Suhel Karara reports on the C-form art trip to Amritsar from September 19 to 21

On September 19, fourteen of us C-form art enthusiasts, along with ATB, left for Amritsar on an art tour. We travelled by road, lest we miss the beauty of the drive travelling by other means. It was a long, exhausting journey and we reached by the evening. We began the tour shortly, after having rested.

The first destination was the beautiful Khalsa College. This impressive building, dating from pre-Independence days is in the Islamic style of architecture. After we had looked around, we headed for the Guru Nanak Dev University, one of the more recently established universities in Amritsar. It has a unique structure in the form of an inverted pyramid. After this, we went to Maharaja Ranjit Singh Panorama where the paintings and the belongings of Ranjit Singh were on display. This was the end of the first day of our tour.

The next day, we went to the renowned Golden Temple which is one of the most beautiful structures in the world today. In fact, the name of Amritsar is derived from two Hindi words 'amrit' which means nectar of immortality and 'sarovar' which is the holy water that surrounds the Golden Temple. We spent quite a while exploring this fascinating complex.

Jallianwala Bagh, where the infamous massacre took place in 1919, was the most haunting destination on our tour, with its bullet holes and bloodstains. We couldn't imagine that it was at that very place that over a thousand people were killed by soldiers under orders of Brigadier-General Dyer. Most horrific of all was the sight of the Martyr's Well, in which many of the victims jumped to take refuge.

Our final destination on this tour was the Indo-Pak border at Wagah to observe the famous Flag Ceremony. It began with a coordinated parade by soldiers on both sides of the border. After a display of goose-steps, marches and handshakes, the flags were retrieved amidst thunderous applause. It was certainly an interesting display. This was our last day in Amritsar. The next day, we headed back to School carrying vivid images of a memorable experience.

Opinion oll

Are you enjoying your involvement in the Founder's Day preparations?

 **Yes 62 %**

 **No 38 %**

(284 members of the community were polled)

Next week's question: Have you been following the Ayodhya verdict in the news?

Lost

Shashank Peshawaria

He was convinced that he was born to be a writer. In his childhood, he had topped the English class with his best score in creative writing assignments. His teachers had always said, and still say, that he has a way, an easy and artistic way, with words. But things have changed.

Now, he is never asked, unlike the way he previously was, to write essays or poems rooted in his imagination or personal feelings. He is not told to solve simple grammar exercises to prove his linguistic accuracy. Instead, he must write critical and analytical commentaries on 'great' texts, which demand more the ability to dissect than to create. Dissection is not his forte. As a result, he fails English exams; his inability to accept his *failure* at English makes him fail exams in other subjects as well. Though failing at other subjects hardly affects him, he feels embarrassed. What matters to him is *his* subject: English.

Deep down, he is discouraged. The confidence, the fervour, the passion because of which words used to magically take shape in his head, has left him. When he sits for English class, he cannot speak, cannot read, without hesitation. He constantly feels the eyes of his classmates reading his face, his English, when he is not looking. Every time a wise, even analytical, thought comes to his mind, which he thinks can add to the classroom discussion, he does not express it immediately. He waits. For a while, he thinks of its validity. He deliberates whether he should say it or not, whether it actually is a wise thought or not. And by the time he decides that he will speak it, the thought is someone else's, the teacher's perhaps. In reverse, stupid thoughts don't pass through his mind before reaching the teacher's table; they easily exhale themselves out of his mouth. This is why he now dreads coming to class: the air, the wordless whispers of the teacher and students, disturbs him. The classroom gives off a kind of odourless and colourless gas which mixes with his blood and makes him think of himself as a 'loser'. When he is at home, alone in his room at the most silent hour of the afternoon or night, he picks up a pen and writes. He writes a couple of words, then throws them away, paper missiles into a bin. In his view, writing, creative writing, itself, has become alien to him. His own words, his own feelings, he thinks, are pretentious. It's as if his most true self, he thinks, has begun to lie to him. And for him, this is the end. But is it?

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| Report |

ON NOSTALGIA AND DEGRADATION

Vivek Santayana reports on the launch of GRC Williams' book *Memoir of Dehradun* held in the presence of Ruskin Bond at School on Tuesday, September 28, 2010

Despite protesting the insufficiency of the budget (one cannot possibly imagine Rs 300 to be enough money at a book sale), I bought a copy of Ruskin Bond's *Notes from a Small Room*. When I first saw its cover illustration, a cat sitting on a desk by the window, beside a typewriter, and a fountain pen, something clicked: I identified with it. My effects were similar, and my 'small room' resembled, in function, the room he described, (my housemaster's cat providing the feline presence!). I connected with the book on a number of levels, especially in his description of the "simple things in life that keep us from going crazy". I thought of this book and the many little things he describes in his essays: his father's death, lime trees, solitary brooks and countless other such little things, as portals of his inner workings. Until now, all advice I had on writing, besides what I got from teachers and old friends, came from Rilke's letters to Franz Kappus, Orwell's essay *Why I Write* or Hemingway's *On Writing* I had hoped to meet Ruskin Bond and maybe take away from him something invaluable, a sliver of his experience, an anecdote, inspiration, something.

I was disappointed to have my interaction with him limited to the mechanical gesture of his signing the books. No discussion, no inspiration, nothing was the outcome; only the words, "My best wishes. Ruskin Bond" scrawled on my book, just like on Arjun's, Raghav's, Yash's and everyone else's. But I guess it was natural: to him, I was another 'fan', standing in line to get a book signed, trying to start a conversation. The interaction was a logistic consideration. That same logistic consideration was, to me, a rare opportunity. Even this opportunity was curtailed for many of us, as we were made to take our seats for the book launch and the interactive panel discussion.

The book was launched without much ceremony, at least no more ceremony than is customary. The brief speeches about the book whetted my curiosity about the history of Dehradun. We learned a lot in the course of the discussion that followed. I was still curious to know about the people of Dehradun, who George Harrison described as "beggars in a goldmine" (in an unreleased song by The Beatles called *Dehradun, Dehradun*, sound clips of which are on the *Anthology* documentary). The panel discussion that followed was a trifle disappointing: as the analogy goes, it was like a drawing room on stage and the audience was playing voyeur. Still, we learned a great deal from the discussion.

Dehradun, as a city, is no longer the beautiful city it was even five decades ago. Perhaps we should each be issued a copy of this commemorative edition of *Memoir of Dehradun*. I feel it is critical that we know the history of the city in which we spend six crucial, formative years of our lives. I am not from Dehradun, yet I still harbour a sense of belonging to the city after having lived and studied here for so long, and am appalled by the deterioration of the city which, as Mr Sikand said, "became a capital by accident". I shall not make condescending references to other cities, but I shall simply reaffirm that we must become active members of the Dehradun community. Our School is, after all, named after the Doon valley, the beautiful valley bounded by the Himalayas to the north, the Gangetic plain to the south, the Ganga in the east and the Yamuna to the west. It is imperative that we are proactive as boys, members of the School and residents of the city, and inhabitants of the valley.

DIFFICULT DISCLOSURES

Kanishka Malik highlights the flaws in the Whistleblower's Bill, 2010

If there is any reason why Indians are unable to note the conscientiousness of people in our society, it is because conscientious people are unable to act due to a lack of provisions for their personal security. Just the way DoscOs are hesitant to report harmful activities carried out by community members due to the fear of the consequences, any conscientious employee or citizen is unable to disclose information concerned with illegal activities of an organisation because his/her security is not guaranteed afterwards. This insecurity was made manifest by the death of some RTI activists recently and this example, along with many others, deters conscientious people from disclosing the corruption that is pervasive in our nation.

Fortunately this topic has found some room for discussion in Parliament and this materialised with the introduction of the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection to Persons Making the Disclosure Bill or the Whistleblower's Bill, 2010. The idea of the Bill was first made public when Veerappa Moily, the Union Law Minister addressed the topic of the death of RTI activists, at the Fifth Convention of the RTI this year. The minister guaranteed some undertaking of the Union Cabinet to make provisions for the protection of those trying to disclose information. This was followed by the making and immediate introduction of the Whistleblower's Bill by Prithviraj Chavan (Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions). Usually, a Bill is discussed by civil society and amended before it is introduced in Parliament. Once it is being discussed in Parliament, civil society is not allowed to know the amendments it has received. The immediate introduction of the Bill in Parliament therefore did not allow for its discussion by the public. This is probably the cause of the inherent flaws that render all effort futile.

Firstly, the Bill does not guarantee the protection of the person disclosing the information. If the Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) feels that it is required, then the identity of the complainant may be revealed to the head of the organisation under dispute. This clearly goes against what the Bill is meant for. Also, the complainant may be deterred by the provision that makes him/her liable to arrest if the CVC feels that the complaint is unnecessary. The complainant has to be able to prove that the harmful act was conducted wilfully by the bureaucrat and the act should have harmed the Government in some way. These provisions do not assure the complainant of his/her security.

Secondly, the Bill does not include private corporations and military, intelligence and counter-intelligence groups. So a person disclosing any information on the acts of such powerful organisations does not receive the provisions of this Bill. Such influential organisations must come under the purview of the Bill as illegal activities are omnipresent.

Lastly, there is a restriction on the recipient of the disclosed information. Under our Bill, only the CVC is supposed to receive the information while under the provisions of the US government, anyone can receive this information.

These flaws can put an end to any prospects of achieving the goals the Bill hopes to achieve. If these flaws are addressed then the Bill will be a monumental undertaking. If not, it will be superfluous. I have addressed this issue because as a DoscO, I understand the difficulty in disclosing information, although that is at a much smaller level.

Reference: 'Restricted Reach' - B. Venkatesan, September 24 issue of the Frontline

Remembering Bapu

Tanuj Kumar

Today the whole world is celebrating Mahatma Gandhi's 141st birth anniversary. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, or simply, Bapu, was the man who unified the whole country, for the first time in its history, for a single cause. To unite a country so fragmented and diverse in culture was a mammoth task and our 'Father of the Nation' managed it fairly well! He called his ideology of protest, *satyagraha*. In his own words: "Truth (*satya*) implies love, and firmness (*agraha*) engenders, and therefore serves as a synonym for, force. I thus began to call the Indian Movement *satyagraha*, that is to say, the force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence." He began his mission at a severely impoverished, famine-struck district, in Bihar called Champaran. His success in Champaran echoed throughout India and set him on a track that led to India's freedom in less than 30 years. Not for nothing was he called a '*mahatma*', which means pure soul ('*mahan*' for pure and '*atma*' which is the soul). Dressed simply in a hand-woven dhoti, he knew what it was to live austere. He worked hard to make rural areas self-sustaining. He said: "I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too. India will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will be lost. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers."

A question that still haunts many of us is whether his values are still alive in the 21st century. Do people still believe in his principles? Considering the prevalent issues such as the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi conflict, the Kashmir imbroglio and the Maoist insurrection, the answer is evidently 'No'. The secularism which he proudly spoke of is dying and the situation is that people are still fomenting hatred over religious issues, instead of addressing the real ones and reaching peaceable solutions.

Talking about Gandhism in School, I would say that there is still a long way to go: when each one of us will be ready to turn the other cheek. But till then, we DoscOs can make an attempt to follow what he says, "*Live as if you were to die tomorrow, and learn as if you were to live forever!*"

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