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A 'UNIQUE' CONVERSATION

The Doon School Weekly and Vivek Santayana interviewed **Nandan Nilekani**, who conducted a talk in the Rose Bowl on Friday, March 11

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Is there any way of integrating the information of the UID with information in records of other departments?

Nandan Nilekani (NAN): Doing that may look very elegant but actually it's very difficult to get everything in one place and the fact is that different agencies function differently. We feel this is a better architecture. However, if two agencies want to combine some information, they can take the step. So, if the authorities want, they can combine a passport's information with the income tax details and make one card.

DSW: How will the UID take into account NRIs and students studying abroad?

NAN: We have a definition for a resident, which is in consonance with the Registrar-General of India. Only the people who come under the purview of this are eligible for this number. The Government may pass rules that may make other people eligible for the number but currently, only residents are eligible.

DSW: Have you faced any difficulties in dealing with the bureaucracy after entering the public services?

NAN: Not really; I have had a very good partnership with the bureaucracy and I have some fine bureaucrats working under me.

DSW: Can you mention any other department where technology is being used to implement policies and regulate activities as well?

NAN: The Tax Information Network, which is a very complicated system, is quite efficient. The Electronic Voting Machine is another example. India is one of the few countries where the entire voting is held on an Electronic Voting Machine. Mobile phones, which were very rare about 15 years ago, are ubiquitous now. So, there are many instances where technology is being used for the masses.

DSW: Speaking about entrepreneurship, are there any impediments that need to be removed in order to encourage entrepreneurship?

NAN: Entrepreneurs would like the regulatory system to do away with a legion of problems. We need better infrastructure. However, India has come a long way over the last twenty years in creating a much more liberal environment for business.

DSW: Drawing from the various instances of liberalization, do you think there would be more benefit if certain public services, such as the railways, were privatized?

NAN: I don't agree with that. I have worked with the Postal Services, which is one of our partners; it is a fine organization. We need both, organizations in the public sector as well as organizations in the private sector.

DSW: Is there any other area of the Government where the public-private partnership model has been successful?

NAN: One of the areas where this has been successful is in the setting up of warehouses where the Government is in partnership with certain firms. There are other such departments where this model is being used successfully.

DSW: Contrary to the working of Infosys, do you see a dearth of ethical standards in corporate India?

NAN: We have a large number of firms that run their business with very high standards of corporate governance.

India is one of the few countries, where the entire voting is held on an Electronic Voting Machine

However, we also have what is called 'crony capitalism', which can only be done away with the enforcement of the rule of law.

DSW: How would you say we maintain these ethical standards and implement the rule of law?

NAN: All of us have to work together for it. When we get the opportunity to shape public policy, we have to make sure that we create more transparency and more accountability and set the right example.

DSW: Speaking about philanthropy, what are your views on the distrust there is with NGOs and how well they actually use the money they receive?

NAN: You don't really have to depend on NGOs. You can start your own hospital or college without depending on any such organization. Since liberalization, a lot of wealth has been accumulated by a few individuals and they must share this with the underprivileged.



HONESTY CHECK

Conducting examinations without invigilators is an experiment that has been carried out in a couple of schools. The Doon School is yet to try this as a method to instil self-discipline. However, in order to do this, the School authorities would need some signs of encouragement from the students. Although a majority of the students believe that Doscocs can take examinations honestly and without invigilation, a large number of students still believe the opposite. If the experiment were to be carried out, it would resemble the experiment of 2009 where punishments were cancelled for 15 days in order to bring about self-discipline rather than enforce discipline.

Opinion oll

Do you think Doscocs can take examinations honestly, without invigilation?

Yes 54%

No 46%

(386 members of the community were polled)



Unquotable Quotes

Who the son of are you then?

Rishi Raaj Khan explores genealogy.

I have already answered to him.

SKD explains.

Are you saying me something?

SKD demands answers.

You don't listen the answers!

AKM, wants to be heard out.

I'm a good tie-ist

Banda S. Lamba, skilled professional.

I have Headmaster at the Dinner's residence.

Abhishek Pai, satisfies his appetite.

Sorry, that was a sleep of tongue

Abhishek Pai, sleep talks.

ERRATA

In Issue No 2275, dated March 12, 2011, in the subheading of the article titled *Brazilian Tunes*, it was stated that Zé Azavedo Kohli conducted a flute-tabla concert when he actually conducted a classical guitar concert. The *Weekly* regrets this error.

As If It Makes A Difference

Piroune Balachandran

When the world tries to stop you from singing,
Sing louder, shout up to the heavens
And ask for the rain.

Your tears are for your eyes only,
To any other man they are just weakness
And he can keep his pity.

Trust no friend, no matter how close,
They always have reasons,
And at least you wouldn't have the agony
Of finding them gone,
When they were needed the most.

Trust in God,

Things that don't exist are always more solid,
Just like hope and aspirations.

And then when you feel the tingling of disgust in your
body,

The sorrow and anger rising,

Use it,

Because they can't fight emotion,

They can't fight something that doesn't exist.

Letter To The Editor

Emphasizing Efforts

It is indeed appalling to note that a gesture as significant as the institution of the special effort awards has become such a mockery amongst the boys. Perhaps we have been too adversely affected by the fierce competition of the cut-throat environment we live in. We no longer appreciate the value of effort and recognise people who have performed to the best of their individual capacities on their hard work, determination and spirit alone. I feel such an intense focus on the ends alone, the trophy, certificate or grade, is unhealthy.

While it is a new award, I feel the criteria for making such an award to an individual needs thorough revision. Who deserves an effort award? Is it only somebody at the bottom of the class who works his way up to respectable standings through hard work, or can it be somebody who has always put in tremendous effort but finished second or third? Does it necessarily have to reflect academic performance or can it go to somebody who puts in effort, but the luck of the examination paper works against him? Do we recognise people who are not particularly gifted or talented but are diligent, or do we recognise people whose individual gift and talent is their diligence and determination?

We need to answer these questions in order to bring about the requisite shift in our perception of the award. It is a great gesture to acknowledge effort. However, it is critical that we dispel the negative connotations of the award, lest we make it sound like an award for the greatest under-achiever. Nevertheless, such effort needs to be recognised. And I am glad the Sc Leavers set a precedent by recognising the significance of the award and gave a standing ovation to those who received it. Not even the greatest of achievers, the Scholar's or Games' Blazer holders, Proficiency Cup winners or School Colours awardees would have achieved anything without sheer effort and determination.

-Vivek Santayana

| Review |

About the 'Best'

Kunal Kanodia reviews *KV Arjun Rao's* book, *Third Best*

An intrinsic storyline accompanied by a passionate narration is something that one looks forward to in every book. In his debut novel, author KV Arjun Rao unfolds the plot in a way that endears the reader to his style of writing.

The character sketch of the protagonist is a myriad of probabilities, comprising the average image that one has of an Indian boy who has the burden of family expectations on his shoulder and aspires to reproduce the achievements of his brother. Nirvaan Shrivastava's persona seems to be a product of years of observation by the author and his likeable character is described extensively in the latter half of the book. This is notable in that the author, instead of allowing us to understand Nirvaan as a person first, describes the multitudinous traditions and conventional ways of life in a residential school. The author has done well in giving us a clear overview of the various interfering factors that shape life in a boarding school as most of the readers might not have been to one. However, sometimes this description becomes tiresome.

The book aptly extols the relationships that are formed in a boarding school, the implications that come along with them and the various unjustified prejudices and favoritisms that are prevalent. However, the author has not gone into the depth of the formation of these relationships; the reader has to make the effort of linking up similarities in characteristics to understand why such friendships, or enmities for that matter, were formed in the first place.

The book makes a great attempt to describe the conflicting thoughts that arise when one finds himself caught between good and evil, right and wrong. Though unfortunately predictable, *Third Best* does this well, and though it does not describe how one incident leads to another, it does not, in any way, typify the 'happily ever after' picture of such a storyline we have in mind. *Au contraire*, *Third Best* makes the reader understand both the causes and effects of various pressures in a boarding school and this difficult elaboration is definitely praiseworthy.

The author does not refrain from bringing us face to face with the realities of boarding life and the revelations in the book may startle any reader. Be it the relationships between seniors and juniors or between batch-mates, all are blatantly and frankly put forth, along with all the jargon of a co-educational boarding school. However, *Third Best* has received criticism for being another *Mallory towers* or *St Claire's*, save that it is about a boy in a co-ed school which is full of love and non-platonic relationships

Different aspects of the book appeal to different people. Personally, I focused mainly on the fervent description of life in a boarding school. However, it is a book that commands great loyalty as well, for many form mates of mine would not let me speak a word against *Third Best*.

Currently, it is rumoured that KAR is working on a sequel.

| Interview |

Master On Board

The Doon School Weekly interviewed *Chandan Singh Ghugtyal*, a new master on campus

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Please give a brief overview of your career as a teacher.

Chandan Singh Ghugtyal (CSG): Before joining Doon, I used to teach in Symbiosis school, Pune, which only followed the IB curriculum. Before that I taught in the Birla Public School, Pilani. I am from Almora.

DSW: Do you have any interests outside the classroom?

CSG: I have an avid interest in Hindi creative writing (I have written three books) and social work. I would like to contribute to the social service programs in School.

DSW: What do you hope to achieve in your tenure at Doon?

CSG: My goal is to be an ideal teacher and to produce the best citizens of tomorrow. I would also like to learn from my students. In the past, my students taught me many things which I must give them credit for.

DSW: In the recent years, the attitude of students towards math has changed. As a math teacher, what are your comments on this claim?

CSG: When I started teaching maths, I was young and children didn't like maths. Nowadays, assessments are project and activity based, so the attitude has changed for the better. Children are now aware and their attention has been drawn towards the application of maths in careers.

DSW: What do you think about the new plan of the ICSE to abolish marks and replace them with grades like various state boards?

CSG: I am already used to the grading system. The grading system puts less pressure on students. The grading system should have a fair marking criteria. They do acknowledge 100% in IGCSE. There should be healthy competition. In IB, math is compulsory but in CBSE, you can choose to leave it

DSW: What is the Government doing to resolve the dearth of teachers in India?

CSG: There is no lack of teachers in India. Teaching has changed but the teachers have not changed to suit the demand. All the teachers want to move to the cities for better jobs. That is why there are fewer teachers in rural areas. The government should create a system where teachers should work in the rural areas for five years and then work in other schools.



| Report |
En Passant

Vivek Santayana reviews the **art exhibition** held at Inderlok Hotel, Dehradun, in which the photos of **Nilesh Agarwal** and paintings of **Saarthak Singh** were on display

One of the reasons I always enjoyed photography was that I learned to see the most mundane things differently through the lens of a camera. I would reflect upon the objects and moments that would otherwise pass me by. Saarthak Singh and Nilesh Agarwal's exhibition, *Reflections in Passing* was exactly so, a collection of reflections on fleeting moments that pass us by and moments captured on canvas or through a CCD. While this loose theme was a common thread in both artists' works, their form, style and artistic focus were diametrically opposite.

There were times when I was astounded by Nilesh's photographs from his expedition to Mont Blanc (*Misty Mountain Hop* and *Overshadowing Ambition*), wherein he showed how the journey itself was worth more than reaching the destination. Other times, I was absorbed by Saarthak's surreal self-portraits, (*Solitary Catharsis* and *Introspective Turmoil*), which were more mind over matter, dealing with existential themes and how our inner workings affect how we perceive ourselves. Their media of choice and their styles reflect their artistic perception and their personalities. Nilesh, being the photographer, captured life in media res. Each of his photographs were moments snatched from the continuum, from his shots of the seagulls in the backwaters of Alleppey to the portrait of a child in *Ephemeral Escape*. As his briefs on the photographs said, one sometimes had to imagine oneself in the photograph and become part of the moment. Even his still life was



Ephemeral Escape by Nilesh Agarwal

mystifying, particularly his *Jude the Obscure*. Saarthak, on the other hand, disassembled whatever he saw into constituent thoughts, ideas and emotions and rearranged them into a surreal montage. In *A Sudden Surrealist Reverie*, he worked on different layers to simulate the effect one sees when one's reflection merges with the image through the pane. Clouds were a recurring motif in many of his paintings, from the watercolours of waterfalls to the expressionist *Ecstasy*.

Three of Saarthak's works exhibited the sheer power of his imagination to re-present [sic] experiences. The first was his sketch of the Rose Bowl like an orange peel, which featured as an illustration in the *Yearbook*, 2010. The second,



Kerala by Saarthak Singh

also an illustration for the *Yearbook*, was his painting *The Human Condition*, which was originally commissioned to supplement one of my essays titled *Whirlpool*. The image in the painting was one far more horrifying than the strand of thought I began with as I wrote my essay. The jaw of a person becomes the eye of the vortex and the painting, with its dark colours, violent strokes and such surreal imagery, depicted a bleak, absolute image of the conflict and despair. Saarthak's ingenuity in using different media was truly demonstrated in *TTYL*, an installation on how we are increasingly becoming lost nodes in a social network. He projected a slideshow of Facebook screenshots onto a painting of people on their cell phones. That is to say

nothing of the composition itself: the central figure's face became an iPhone screen and his mind another computer keyboard.

The exhibition was breath-taking and heartrending at the same time. Nilesh's eye behind the lens and Saarthak's mind behind his brush presented to us things we would otherwise overlook. They showed us how profound the most mundane of sights can become. More than that, it was a showcase of the talent of two of the School's acclaimed artists. This is a fine beginning for Saarthak and Nilesh, as well as a call to the School community and the many budding artists. Boys who do not need to wait for Founder's or School exhibitions, but can go ahead and organise exhibitions by themselves and take their talent beyond the walls of Chandbagh.

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weekly@doonschool.com



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