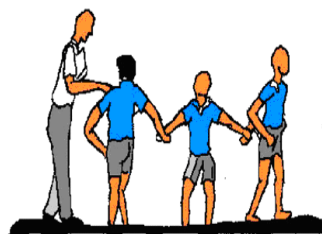


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The Doon School WEEKLY



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REGULARS

2

LTTE

3

COUNTER
POINT

3

SECULARISM IN
INDIA

4

DEATH TO THEM ALL?

Kunal Kanodia writes about the issue of the death penalty and its application in Indian society

“Capital punishment is our society’s recognition of the sanctity of human life.” - Orrin Hatch

Some of us flinched last week when we heard that all four convicts in the December 16 gang rape case had been condemned to the gallows. We shook our heads, commented with incisive disdain on the dismal state of affairs in our democracy today, and even conjectured the possibility of political pressure having been put on the judge to punish the criminals with death. But many of us felt a deep sense of satisfaction when we heard the verdict; high-fives were exchanged across campus, passionate cases invoking Poetic Justice were made, and an atmosphere of near jubilation developed. Just outside the court room in New Delhi, a celebratory crowd gathered soon after the verdict was read out, and cries of December 16 Kranti were screamed out. In this atmosphere of near hysteric elation, the views against death penalty have become inaudible. And rightly so: capital punishment avenged Nirbhaya, and I believe that questioning it is not only an insult to her ordeal, but an insult to the sacredness of human life.

In essence, capital punishment is permitted in most common law countries only for acts such as homicide or rape that were committed with “malice aforethought”. Only a handful of cases in our courts of law end with the victim being hanged. This is because of the inherent principle that death penalty will only be doled out in the “rarest of the rare” cases. But when capital punishment is awarded, it is for a reason. Opponents of the death penalty claim that no institution should have the power to take away the life of another human being, no matter the gravity of the crime that was committed. What they forget, however, is that this utopian belief is an element of just that: pure idealism, not real fact. Capital punishment, by its very nature, is a deterrent for horrific crimes. Even if statistics are quoted pointing towards another direction, they are baseless for a simple reason: most rape cases and homicide cases in our country are said to go unreported, and there is no conclusive evidence that capital punishment doesn’t deter such crimes. On the contrary, evidence does exist that for the common man, the possibility of committing a crime that could attract the capital punishment serves as a major deterrent.

What opponents of the death penalty must understand is that the essential nature of justice rests on the balance of punishment equaling the crime. Capital punishment restores the balance in society by condemning to death those individuals who have wronged the fundamental societal fabric: by taking away the means of living of, or condemning to death, another person. Death penalty is retribution and not revenge – and this is something that must be understood to understand the nature of punishment. According Immanuel Kant, even the most “miserable life” cannot parallel death and there can be no equality of crime and consequent retribution “unless the perpetrator is judicially put to death.” People who are prepared to take the lives of others, or destroy their essential means of living through atrocities such as rape cannot be, and should never be, under the impression that they cannot be punished appropriately no matter what the magnitude of the crime that they have committed. If the death penalty condemns some individuals to the gallows, it is only murderers or rapists that will be killed. But if death penalty is prohibited, and we as a society fail to abhor these crimes in the truest of senses, then we are condemning more innocent lives to the gallows.

For the benefit of those who are still scratching their heads or beginning to crumple this issue of the *Weekly* in anger and disbelief, I would like to present to you a rarely put forth view on capital punishment – the Aristotelian point of view. The Aristotelian theory on justice maintains that no matter what the nature of the crime might be, “fairness” means that the punishment doled out should be equal to the crime perpetrated by the free will of such human being. The most plausible alternative to capital punishment is life imprisonment. The murderer or the rapist is condemned to life in prison without any other punishment, then how is the suffering of the convicted equivalent to the crime that he/she has committed? The convict shall be able to live, and this is what I have a problem with. After depriving the victim of the means to live, he will be able to think, feel and breathe. Life imprisonment is merely a loss of certain civic liberties – it is the symbol of a society that fails to uphold the crux of justice and the inviolability of human life.

I don’t believe that every crime deserves death. I also don’t believe that death penalty always provides the right measure of justice for a certain crime. But what I do believe is that while capital punishment might be the worst form of punishment, it is the least worst available. And most importantly perhaps, true justice is served.

(A counterpoint is published on page 3)

DEBATING

The School was represented by Vrindam Nagpal and Abhinav Kejriwal at the **Akhil Bhartiya Memorial Inter School Hindi Debates** held at **RIMC** on September 9. The team was placed 3rd and Vrindam Nagpal was adjudged **4th Best Speaker**.

Congratulations!

MUSIC

The following are the results of the various events of the Inter House Music Competition, 2013:

Popular Band

- 1st: Hyderabad
- 2nd: Kashmir
- 3rd: Oberoi
- 4th: Jaipur and Tata

Hindustani Vocal

- 1st: Jaipur
- 2nd: Oberoi
- 3rd: Tata
- 4th: Hyderabad
- 5th: Kashmir

Hindustani Instrumental

- 1st: Kashmir
- 2nd: Tata
- 3rd: Oberoi
- 4th: Hyderabad
- 5th: Jaipur

Tabla

- 1st: Hyderabad
- 2nd: Oberoi
- 3rd: Kashmir
- 4th: Jaipur
- 5th: Tata

Choir

- 1st: Hyderabad
- 2nd: Tata
- 3rd: Jaipur
- 4th: Oberoi
- 5th: Kashmir

Drums

- 1st: Oberoi
- 2nd: Hyderabad
- 3rd: Kashmir
- 4th: Tata
- 5th: Jaipur

Piano

- 1st: Oberoi
- 2nd: Hyderabad
- 3rd: Jaipur
- 4th: Kashmir
- 5th: Tata

Dance

- 1st: Hyderabad
- 2nd: Tata
- 3rd: Jaipur and Oberoi
- 5th: Kashmir

The final house positions of the Inter House Music Competition, 2013 are as follows:

- 1st: Hyderabad
 - 2nd: Oberoi
 - 3rd: Tata
 - 4th: Jaipur
 - 5th: Kashmir
- Well Done All!

Opinion oll

Do you support the death penalty for those held guilty in the Delhi rape case?

Yes 77%

No 23%

(258 members of the School community were polled)

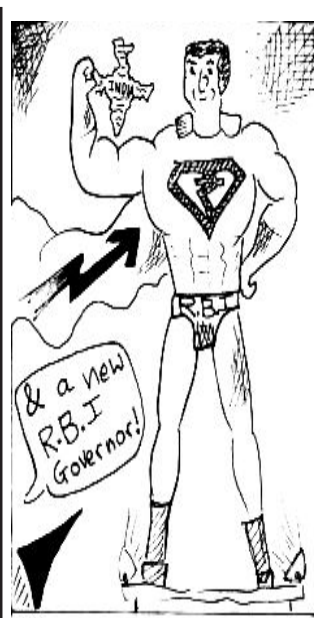
Next Week's Question: Would you be interested in shooting if it were offered as a sport in School?



Around the world In 80 Words

This week a hurricane hit the coast of Mexico killing dozens of people. Elsewhere, six Egyptian soldiers were killed by explosions in the Sinai Peninsula. Back home, four men were sentenced to death after they were declared guilty of rape and murder in the Delhi rape case. Ibrahim Keita was sworn in as the President of Mali after years of political turmoil. In other news, the Turkish government hired 6000 people to post political propaganda on social media website Twitter.

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Letter To The Editor

Dear Weekly,

I write in response to Aditya Bhattacharya's article on Service projects, "Are We Really Helping?" Aditya raises a couple of important issues, "is our help making a ...tangible difference?" and "responsibility is taken up as a duty or a passion". Yet, it sounds rather petulant when Aditya says, "It is not our fault that we cannot empathise with those whom we help".

Agreed that a Dosco's schedule is a tough one, but then can we think of a school or university that has regularly been creating leaders, whose schedule is not a tough one? As regards service, it is what we make of it. I had taken the Foot House to Rasulpur too and they did a great and honest day's labour by cleaning the School, and building a boulder path from the road to the school. I am sure many other groups of boys have similar tales.

Let me now come back to the three issues raised in my first paragraph. Let me take the third one first. I think we have failed as a community (parents, teachers, students, old boys, IPSS *et al*) if students feel that it is not *their* fault they cannot empathise. Herein lies the response to Aditya's other charge that Social service should not be mandatory. But why single out service? What prevents boys from asking why Sports or Maths or English ought to be compulsory for that matter? Service is, like academics, at the heart of The Doon School curriculum and not a mere imposition. The sooner we accept this, the more effective our engagement will become. I do understand that individual experience colours our perception. Yet it cannot be an argument against Service itself.

As regards the responsibility issue, the school has always given a *carte blanche* to senior boys and masters to take initiative in coming up with new projects which they are passionate about. Boys in the past have made a real difference when they have wanted to. "Duty and Passion" too are what we make of them.

Finally, on the issue of tangibility of our efforts let me briefly narrate a parable from *The Ramayana*. When the bridge of Lanka was being laid under the supervision of the architects Nala and Nila, all the warriors sought to outdo each other in carrying the heavier load. A small squirrel too wanted to do its bit. It went and wet itself in the ocean waters, came and rolled in the dry sand and went to the bridge site and shook the sand off its tiny back into the crevices between the boulders. Though the Monkey lords took breaks, the squirrel did not. After some days, the squirrel fell in the path of the Monkey prince Angad, who disdainfully kicked the squirrel out of his way and said that its efforts were more a distraction than service to the cause. It so happened that the squirrel fell at the feet of Lord Rama. When Rama heard of the squirrel's tale of woe, he called the general assembly and said that there is no superior or inferior service. There is only the will to do or not to do. Saying this he stroked the little creature's back and said that from then on it would carry his blessing on its back forever. It is said that the Indian common squirrel owes its three or five vertical stripes to Rama's blessing.

Let us learn from the Squirrel's parable...

Sincerely,

Debasish Chakrabarty

COUNTERPOINT

Utkarsh Jha

"Many that live deserve death. And some die that deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then be not too eager to deal out death in the name of justice, fearing for your own safety. Even the wise cannot see all ends." I quote JRR Tolkien, for these words strike a chord with my views on the death sentence for those found guilty in the Delhi rape case.

Firstly, what must be understood is the fact that no person is born a criminal. Even our own constitution lends weight to this argument by presuming a person's innocence until he is proven guilty. The transformation from a child or teenager to a criminal is triggered and catalyzed by a range of familial, social and socio-economic factors. A secure source of income and an education can greatly reduce a person's chances of committing a crime. Therefore, any crime is not merely the result of an individual's actions but rather a result of the failures of a society and government. In the case of the Delhi gang rape, I do believe that the guilty were at fault, but, I also stand by my interpretation that the crime was a reflection of the way that Indian society objectifies, disregards and exploits women. These men came from a society where almost every household displays its contempt for women. They probably knew no better. Is ignorance of 'what is right' or the law an excuse? No it is not. However, it is something that should be kept in mind.

Additionally, the clamor for the death penalty is understandable. As, Preethy K, wrote in *The Hindu*, a majority of people cry when the actor in a film is hurt. To the vast majority, who care little for argumentation, and I do not say so with contempt, the court judgment has lightened their hearts. It has provided a sense of 'justice'. Unfortunately, the clamor is not a real desire for justice. Rather, the death penalty seeks to appease a mass thirst for revenge. Herein, we stumble upon the real danger. In a country where judicial proceedings are not always fair, can we afford to fly the flag of justice by taking someone's life? Furthermore, the question that begets itself is whether we are going to demand the same revenge for the countless rapes that have happened and the domestic abuse that goes unnoticed? Are we going to demand death for every eve teaser and every drunken husband? Is there going to be any consistency in its application? After all, any crime against a woman is a serious one which has large ramifications on the country as Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze argued in their book 'An Uncertain Glory'. When do we define the 'rarest of the rare'?

Another argument, one which I find rather absurd, is that capital punishment serves a deterrent. This argument has never found any statistical support or been verified by any organization of international repute. The United Nations encourages all its members to ban the death penalty or become abolitionist in practice. Countries that have been handing out the death penalty for certain crimes continue to see the very same crimes. If anything, yet again, it is a reflection of how the 'correctional system' adopted by society is broken beyond repair. By sentencing a person to death, we do not solve any problem or force anyone to feel remorse. Capital punishment only sends out the message that we are a hypocritical society – one that believes, rightly, in a girl's right to live by wrongly taking a life.

Tough as it may be to find a solution to this grave problem, death to sexual offenders is not the answer. To argue that death penalty is the least worst solution available is not enough. The judiciary and society must strive to create the best solution possible.

3. *The Doon School Weekly* Saturday, September 21

Secularism In India

Pulkit Agarwal writes about the issues revolving around secularism in India

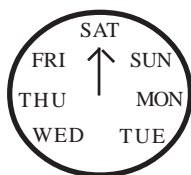
Recently, I have had the privilege of reading the nihilistic, yet very much realistic stories of partition, written by the glorious pen of Saadat Hasan Manto. Apart from the religious conflict of the times, there is one issue portrayed through his tales that struck me: the fact is that India, despite basing itself along secular lines, has still not accepted all communities equally. I wouldn't be lying if I said that I knew of Indian Muslims who rue the fact that they didn't migrate to Pakistan when they had the chance to, and to be completely honest, I sympathize with them, for I believe India has disappointed them repeatedly and given them every reason to feel the way they do. This simply begs the question, "Is India really secular?"

A community comprising roughly fifteen percent of a population is a minority no doubt, but it is not a minority that you can neglect out of your system. Unfortunately, the nature of our political clout has caused this to happen on repeated occasions, and when it hasn't, it has exploited the Muslims as a vote-bank, simply to gain political prominence. Evidently, both these scenarios are applicable to the two 'national' parties contesting the upcoming election in the Centre. Secularism is not just a word that forms the crux of our Constitution; it is a notion that forms the very basis of our being. We are, after all, a pluralistic society, and therefore, as a nation that prides itself on being home to host of communities, it becomes our responsibility to manage the clash of interests well. This is precisely why Pakistan can doggedly discriminate against Hindus without the world questioning; it is by name itself "The Islamic Republic of Pakistan."

At the very grass root level, if we notice, how many Hindu families actually go into the Muslim occupied parts of city on Eid to hug their friends? Likewise, not many Muslims engage in burning crackers with their counterparts on the eve of Diwali. Yes, there will always be that fine line of differences between the two communities, but why should it always favour the one with the more numbers. Why is it so that today, Narendra Modi has the nerve to refer to the Muslims of our country as mere 'puppies,' and still be a hopeful for 7, Race Course Road? People are asking him to apologize for the 2002 Gujarat riots; but the truth is that he is riding on the Hindu votes he is getting because of those riots. In contrast, Congress is banking on the Muslim votes simply because they know these people would find it very hard to side with Modi. But has the Congress itself done really anything for the Muslims? The answer is a re-

sounding 'No.'

What irks me the most is the fact that people today can go to the extent of saying that since India is a Hindu majority country, Hinduism here is secularism itself, since it serves the interest of the larger part of the population. The only solution to this problem is that Muslims stop being treated as simply voters, but as citizens. For that, firstly, the government needs to ensure the uplifting of this community in terms of education, living conditions and security. Only then will they truly feel a part of our system. Moreover, as for the people, they need to try making a greater effort to gel with each other. This includes celebration of festivals together, sharing of public services and most importantly, compromise. This can go on to change the image of our nation, and only then can we live in a joint India. Otherwise, much like Manto's India, our country is cracking!



The Week Gone By...

Vireshwar Sidhu

Though Monday was a holiday, it was not long before we were back to the regular schedule of rising bells, PT and of course, classes. It was expected to be a week of relaxation post exams, but expectations, as they say, remain mere expectations.

J House took the lead in the newly instituted Inter House Injuries Competition, 2013, with a record number of crutches and plasters. With new players from Jaipur on the benches each day, other houses will have to work hard to claim this cup. Additionally, I am sure that the Wellness Centre will also see tremendous returns from their sponsorship of this Olympic event.

A large number of Sc Formers are also excited about today's second chance at finding that perfect someone. Other than a notable few, including the Hindi Debating AT Former and the K House dancer very few had met success last socials.

Midterms are also around the corner. With the Sc Former's going home and the rest of the School headed for social service or historical midterms, the School is going to remain deserted for the next few days.

Weekly Selects

Why is Zambia so poor?

Pacific Standard

Leifland

La Weekly

Conflict Minerals

National Geographic

Inside the National Suicide Hotline

Time

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