

ESTABLISHED IN 1936

The Doon School WEEKLY

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Report

The Lost Art

The Doon School Weekly interviewed Mahmood Farooqui (Ex 146-K, '90) who recently performed a dramatic reading of some of Saadat Hassan Manto's works

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Did the School help you become the author you are today?

Mahmood Farooqui (MMF): I think the School helped me because I first started writing in School. I also started reading avidly here. We had a teacher named Mr U C Pandey who encouraged us to read. But I was interested in theatre and I began acting in plays in my A form, and I was lucky enough to have witnessed a play staged by the Director of the National School of Drama, Mr Mohan Varushi. I even worked with him as the stage manager and this experience allowed me to do full scale productions of larger plays. I had the opportunity to explore my ambition, and myself. I was a Government of India Scholar. I don't know if it still exists, but earlier the Government of India would give a scholarship to ten children who were from moderate or poor backgrounds to come and study at The Doon School. So, for the ten of us that came from very modest families from Lucknow and Gorakhpur, this was a wonderful platform that gave us an education, and gave us exposure that we could never have had if we had studied back in our hometowns, because we were not necessarily studying in the best schools there. It was a wonderful experience, but there were quite a few culture shocks in the beginning, because a lot of us could not speak English and had never used knives or forks before. There was a lot of learning required in that phase as well. But, at the same time, it gave us friendships, opportunities and acceptance, and I think that that was a beautiful thing about School at the time we studied here. After a point, one realizes that one's family background is irrelevant because there are many ways to express yourself in School, through sports, debating, dramatics, and many more areas, and those aspects and those avenues allow you to create an identity regardless of your background. Everyone wears the same clothes and eats the same food.

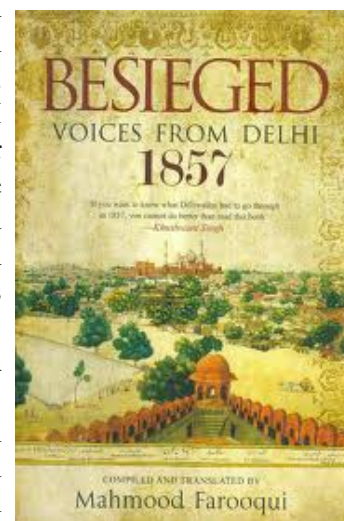
DSW: Can you please tell us something about Dastangoi and its relevance in History?

MMF: 'Dastangoi' is a form of storytelling. A 'Dastangoi' storyteller recited stories. They often improvised while reciting, and even created stories and composed poems spontaneously. Being a combined form of literature and performing arts, it was very unique in the art of storytelling around the world. It was a dead form of art in the 1920's in India. We have been trying to revive it in India for the last ten years under the guidance of Mr S R Farooqui, one of the greatest Urdu scholars. We perform shows around the world in a group comprising fifteen to twenty people. The traditional stories revolved around sorcerers, tricksters, kings and queens, women and wining and dining. 'Dastangoi' also tells modern stories, like the presentation I did of Manto's works, or the story of Partition. So it is extremely relevant to us because it creates great literature. In the present time, I think it is extremely relevant to India because in this form of theatre there is not much investment required; two people just sit down and tell a story. You don't need elaborate sets, sound or light. Their body and their voice is all that you need to pay attention to. If two people are sitting down on stage, and they manage to own the attention of an audience for an hour or two, then it is quite remarkable. People have responded with a lot of enthusiasm, especially in Delhi and in other parts of South Asia.

DSW: What are your views on Wendy Doniger's book, 'The Hindus: An Alternative History', and society's reaction to it? Penguin has been forced to recall copies of the book, and considering that you have also been published by Penguin, what is your opinion on this matter?

MMF: I do not have great knowledge of her book as I haven't read it. I do know that she is a world-renowned scholar of Hinduism. There is no doubt about her credentials at all. The ban, the so-called withdrawal of the book,

(Contd. on page 3)



Mahmood Farooqui's work on the First War of Independence



Regulars

GAMES BLAZERS

Devang Mehra, Suhel Karara and Shivan Tandon have been awarded the **Games Blazer**. Congratulations!

AWARDS & HONOURS

The following have been awarded the **Best Artist Award** in their respective forms:

D-form: Raghav Grover

C-form: Mihir Gupta and Jashan Kalra

B-form: Prabhsharan Mamik

A-form: Sabir Singh and Fateh Pratap Singh Phoolka

S-form: Amartya Tirtha Bhowmick

The following have been awarded prizes in **Hindi Dramatics:**

The Best Supporting Actress: Jai Ahuja

Best Junior Artist: Bhuvan Verma

Best Junior Actor: Tejit Pabari

Best Student Directors: Yash Raj Agrawal and Ritesh Shinde

The following have been awarded Distinctions in the various levels of the **LAMDA Award:**

Grade 4: Atrey Guruprasad

Grade 5: Jashan Kalra

Grade 6: Rahul Bhagchandani

Grade 7: Kabir Sethi

Congratulations!

CRICKET

The school hosted the **Inter-School T20 Junior Cricket Tournament** from March 4 to 8. The School lost to Maharana Pratap Sports College in the Semi-Finals.

Well tried!

ERRATA

In Issue no. 2367, in the article 'Inside the AAP', Anubrotto Roy's batch was incorrectly printed as the batch of 1963, instead of the batch of 1961. The *Weekly* regrets the error.

UNQUOTABLE QUOTES

This is the most toughest match!

Kshitij Goel, defining the superlative.

I am feeling so chilled!

Aryaman Agarwal, cooling down.

What time tomorrow paper is?

Prabhsharan Mamik, preparing for English.

My love for the paneer-cube is invincible.

Madhav Goel feeds his love.

You all give me a lot of complexion.

Yogesh Agarwal has a complex.

THE WHO?

Who is Robert Galbraith?

A dancer-Kalpita Sharma

A musician-Shiven Khanna

A politician-Madhav Mall

A philosopher-Palash Kanwar

An economist-Siddharth Sarin

A film producer-Nehansh Saxena

Robert Galbraith was the pseudonym of J K Rowling for the book, The Cuckoo's Calling.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 WORDS

Two people were killed and nine were missing as a gas leak sparked an explosion which razed two buildings in New York. Satellite images of the possible debris from the missing Malaysian Airlines flight have been released by a Chinese government website. Meanwhile, Barack Obama vows to stand alongside Ukraine in its dispute with Russia. In order to avoid a clash with the upcoming general elections, the opening matches of the IPL will be played in the UAE and Bangladesh.

The Week Gone By

Yuvan Kumar

After a much-needed hiatus, the Week Gone By is back! And just like this column retreated for a while, most DoscOs seemed to have done the same as Test Week raged on. The ISC and ICSE exams have brought about the usual discolouration in the faces of SCLs and ATs respectively, though we hope that they all do their preparation justice.

In other news, the School hosted its Junior Cricket Tournament again this year, and it is good to see that it is becoming an annual feature. Holi seems to be one of the highlights of the extended weekend after test week; we shall soon be witnessing the surprise that the dancers have in store for us!

The Prize Giving Ceremony is back, and with it brings nostalgia, tears, and the much awaited awards. Hopefully, the G-store umbrellas will keep us dry when the tears start to flow. On a more serious note, the SCs have a lot to look forward to, beginning with shifting into their new 'layers' (read lairs) to the socials (cue deodorant hissing) that soon approach. Speaking of socials though, there has been quite some calorie-burning activity on the Main Field and in other nooks and crannies all over school. It might be a good idea to have socials just after the Athletics Season every year: the kind of dedication and perseverance one would see would be awe-inspiring. All we can say is that practice makes perfect!

(contd. from Page 1)

helps the book in the present moment, because if a book is banned, more people end up reading it. I am not too alarmed by the fact that there are people out there who will try and target M F Hussain or Wendy Doniger. These things keep happening. It is a huge country and I feel our freedom of expression is not really going to be taken away. I do not think that we should hold something someone has said or written about something or someone, because there is no merit in simply stating something. Even if someone says something about the Prophet Mohammad, what does their mere statement do?

DSW: What do you think about the state of history in school curriculums?

MMF: It is pathetic. Though I did not study history in School, for most people their only memory of history is of them cramming dates. Such an education in history is dilatory: it just deadens the subject. For instance, in college, we were taught about Mughal Paintings but nobody ever showed us any paintings. We did not get a first-hand idea of them. However, in Delhi, the NCERT textbooks are really good and having worked on some of them I can say that we need teachers to be as imaginative. It is often said that people who do not know their history, have no history left. A similar thing has happened with Wendy Doniger's book. In ancient India, all kinds of debates took place; there were people who said that nothing exists. The Charbagh said that God did not exist. There were sceptics from all the religions, so there was a great diversity and debate about theology. This is what we should have inherited, but instead we try to gag people and we insult our own history. There is a problem that occurred when the British took over, who were 'history-minded' people. They saw themselves as the heirs to the Greek and Roman Empires. They were the final victors of this modern cycle, so they placed a lot of emphasis on history. As a response, we began to try and see our history in the line of their history. They had a Reformation, so did we. They had a rise in capitalism, while we also had one. All our histories have been modelled under the British national history. The history of South Asia is the history of South Asia and not that of a single country. Pakistan and Bangladesh are very much a part of South Asian history as India is. It is not possible to pour all kinds of history into a single nation's history as the maps were drawn only after 1947, and there was no map before 1947. The maps extended up to Afghanistan and Kandahar at that time. The problem of trying to squeeze history into a nation's history has been a problem in school teaching as well.

The 'Selfie' Syndrome

Vireshwar Sidhu *comments on an already well-established trend in society today*

Flip your smartphone, point the camera towards your face, strike a pose and snap! That's a selfie for you. We have all taken selfies and we're not alone. Over the last few years, many people have practiced and perfected the art of taking a selfie. Just take a look at Justin Bieber and Rihanna's Instagram. More often than not, selfies are casual, improvised and meant for people to take a look at on the Social Network.

Recently, the selfie craze has been taken to a new height, quite literally, after an F-16 pilot captured the perfect moment a missile was fired from his jet. Then there is the Oscars' selfie: the most star-studded selfie ever, it even broke down Twitter as a result of the spike in traffic on its website. The selfie included Oscars' 2014 host Ellen DeGeneres, actors Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Channing Tatum, Julia Roberts, Meryl Streep, Jennifer Lawrence, Jared Leto, Kevin Spacey, Lupita Nyong'o and of course, Bradley Cooper. The selfie went on to become the most retweeted post on Twitter with around 3 million people having shared it.

But there is stiff competition for the best selfie ever taken. On Nelson Mandela's funeral, British Prime Minister David Cameron, US President Barack Obama and Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning Schmidt took time out to mark the occasion with what else, but a selfie! More so, even Pope Francis got into the act of taking a selfie. The Pope stood smiling next to a group of teenagers who were private audience to him at the Vatican.

Needless to say, selfies are immensely popular. One reason for their popularity is their empowering act; allowing one to control ones online or digital image. Pamela Rutledge, faculty at the Massachusetts School of Psychology claims, "The cult of the selfie celebrates regular people." People, most of all young girls, are extremely self conscious of the photos they click. Taking a selfie allows them control over the kind of picture they feature in, be it tongue-wagging or pouting. The most common selfie however, is one where you do your best to look cute and I dare say, maybe to some extent, 'hot'.

As cool as it might be, there, is also a flipside to this addiction of clicking selfies all day. Jill Weber, a psychologist, says that people start associating their self-esteem with the likes and comments that they receive on their snaps. People who add more and more selfies on a regular basis suffer with low self-esteem, she adds. This is where narcissism comes in. People become self-absorbed and pursue gratification through a social network.

Opinions continue to vary and it is for one to decide whether the selfie culture is cool or just lame. Either way, the selfie culture is more than just a trend. It is here to stay.

| Report |

A Rediscovery of Hindi

Rishabh Sharma reports on the trip to the Mahatma Gandhi International University, Wardha, from February 26 to March 2

On February 26 a group of six students escorted by MHF departed for the Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University at Wardha, Maharashtra. The trip was meant for us to gain exposure and to enhance the skills required for our respective fields. The University aims to incorporate the spirit with which Mahatma Gandhi regarded Hindi language with in all its activities. The University is the centre of all Hindi-related advanced studies and learning technologies that are carried out in and out of India and it sets part of the course and the rules that govern the language. One of its key functions is to guide foreign based Hindi teachers, postgraduate students and research scholars all over the world and to account for all the research through Hindi medium in multi disciplines like linguistic science, linguistic technology and informatics, cultural studies, film and theatre, mass communication and media studies, translations from European languages like Spanish, Portuguese and Oriental languages like Mandarin and Cantonese.

The first day we were shown a presentation about the history and aims of the University. This gave us an insight and prepared us for what lay ahead in the programme. The second day we visited the Centre of Media Studies and the Production and Editing Centre, where we interacted with students and faculty members alike. At the same time we witnessed a group discussion happening in the Translation and the Language room. This room consisted of numerous computers that were meant to fulfil the sole purpose of aiding students to learn language through translation from their primary languages. The University's most evident global characteristics were the German and Chinese students we interacted with later on. All of them were learning Hindi in order to ensure a certain degree of convenience and flexibility in Indian markets they were seeking employment in. According to the University, a high number of international students is a potential indicator of growth for not only the state of Hindi language but also the Indian economy.

The third day we visited the Drama and Film Production Centre of the University where we read and discussed a script written by Abhimanyu Chandra, an Old Boy of the School. We also witnessed a play rehearsal being conducted by a student under the supervision of a teacher. Watching these rehearsals I thought about the quality of drama in School and its importance, even though it is not a professional drama academy like the University. We also spoke with the film crafting and editing professionals, touching on topics like the changing trends in film making in Bollywood and how, surprisingly, the University had contributed to these trends. There were various thought-provoking discussions, such as the analogy of life being the staging of a drama, how we have changed with a change in the movies we watch, how ambiguity in language can create inevitable confusion we can never think about, how translation can never even be satisfactorily accurate and the extent to which language can define the ways of culture. In the midst of all these interactions, they even offered the School short term student courses in language technology, translations, mass communication and film making and theatre in education. To top it all off, they generously offered refresher courses in language learning and technology for the teaching faculty of the School. Another noticeable observation was that all the streets, paths, corners and buildings were named after literary personalities like Nagarjuna, Shamsheer Bahadur Singh, Vijay Tendulkar, Ritvik Ghatak, Nazeer Haat, Birsa Munda, Savitree Bai Phule and Habeeb Tanveer.

To complement all these experiences, on the fourth day we went to Sevagram Ashram where Mahatma Gandhi had stayed for one and a half year during his travels. It marked a landmark in my spiritual and cultural experiences since the whole group was mesmerised by its beauty and peace. This experience was followed by a visit to Sant Vinoba Bhave's Panna Ashram. The last day we interacted with the vice chancellor, registrar and senior faculty members of the University over the course of a high tea where Mihir Kiran shared with them information about the Hindi teaching and related activities like drama, publication and creative writing in School, while also giving a vote of thanks on behalf of the school.

The experience was vastly enriching for us and we learned about cultural diversity and Gandhian approaches, subaltern cultural studies, mass communication, folk arts, and ethnic food. This was the maiden visit of its kind organised by the Hindi Department and it must become a regular feature in the years to come.

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