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REGULARS **2**INTERVIEWS **3**CHENNAI
PROJECT **4**CAREER
CALL **4**

The Mayday Story

Shikhar Singh reports on his publishing venture during Exchange

It is never easy to discuss a student exchange. The plethora of experiences and impressions, when recounted, can sound incoherent to even the most interested listener. Anticipating this, I have chosen to focus on a particularly valuable memory - kick-starting a school publication at St. Edwards, my host school.

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The concept was excellent, and the school bought my arguments. However, for a viable project I needed to sell this to the students. In retrospect, I believe, this became a major platform for interaction with my peers. My English lesson worked as a wake-up call for me. It was in one of our 'A Passage To India' debates that I stumbled upon the keenness of certain students to start a publication. The rest became history. Samuel Jay and Ione Braddick took the idea instantly and were all up for the scheme, which, in due course, would be entirely dependent on their enthusiasm and willingness.

In a hastily organized meeting in the quiet, old, conservative library, amongst sudden outbursts of ecstatic emotion, the magazine was named Mayday and its first issue reached the readers on the first of May (celebrated as May Day in downtown Oxford with people diving into the Thames from one of the bridges at midnight). Of course this was entirely student-run and it was populous rather than literary. I left the onus of its contents on its future karta-dhartas. Everyone wanted this publication to cater entirely to student interests. So be it! We began rather professionally by taking a detailed survey of 'who-wants-what' and on allocating space accordingly. The Sun, it seems, was the most popular newspaper and obviously the regular Page Three gossip topped the popularity charts. And so we inserted gossip, rumours, and sensational revelations on our second page. That agreed, we decided to be magnanimous to our music fans, who constituted a significant chunk of the student population. In the weeks to come, I was made to chase Dave Bayley, who being one of the few students lucky enough to attend the Strokes concert at Hyde Park, had to provide me with a review of the event.

(Contd. on Page 2)

Editorial

The gates to Chandbagh are open...once again. There were many melodramatic moans heard on the buses and trains on the way back to School, as is the case always, but one has to admit that there is some amount of joy as we step through the gates and come back to our home, away from home.

The Doscocs came back to a partitioned campus and incessant rainfall. Tragedy for some (Scs being boxed in a dorm instead of a study) and luxury for others as the Eagles perched themselves in Martyn and Foot Houses. Though it must

be quite an experience for some who can now proclaim that they resided in Foot, Jaipur and Martyn too, not to mention the five-star amenities now available to them. The CDH and the Art School have gone under the builder's hammer as the School's plans for expansion continue. Are we preparing for co-education? At the same time, the staff can expect grander houses. There is a lot to look forward to this term. Football, swimming, Chucks, Founder's, Tata House Pagalgymkhana, basketball, and, of course, preparation for the Boards (I'm sure the A and Sc formers are looking forward to it with a lot of enthusiasm!) And since brevity is supposed to be the soul of wit, I will sign off now and leave you to enjoy this, the first issue of an event-packed term.

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

[Next Page](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

Regulars

Welcome Sirs!

We welcome **Pravin Gandhi** to the Mathematics Department, **Vidhukesh Vimal** to the Hindi Department and **Anuj Ray** to the English Department. The entire school community wishes them a fruitful tenure.

Farewell

At the close of the last term the school bade farewell to the following members of the community:

Chandra Kant Dixit (CKD) - Physics

Kiran Singh (KRS) - English

Manu Mehrotra (MMR) - Mathematics

Surinder Pal Vijan (SPV) - Catering

We wish them the best in their new endeavours.

Holiday Happenings...

Over the summer vacations, while most of us were enjoying the break, several boys and masters took off on various projects and trips across the globe.

- A Round Square initiative in Chennai for tsunami relief was attended by Ashish Mitter, Rohan Gupta, Surya N. Deo, Akrit Soin, Gaurav Sood, Nikunj Nagalia, Rituraj Raizada, Mehul Goyal, Skand Goel, Ayyappa Vemulkar, Jaspreet Singh, Gurbaaz S. Sidhu, Nelson Kumrawat and Anirudh Gupta. They were escorted by AKC, ASH and AKS. A report runs in this issue.
- An art excursion comprising eleven boys, ATB and SJB travelled to Rome, Florence, Pisa and Venice to discover the rich heritage of Italian art and architecture. A report will be carried in a subsequent issue.
- Ankit Durga, Anant Johri, Rohit Khandelwal visited Scotland to work on a nature conservation project. DVS, PCH, AKC, ATB and DA attended an IB Diploma Programme Workshop in Athens, Greece from June 27 to July 1.
- Shoab Ahmed, Shubham Gupta and SJB went to village Stakmo in Ladakh to work on an international Round Square Project. After three weeks of work, they went on a trek, visited Pangong Lake and did river rafting. A detailed report will follow soon.
- A road trip was undertaken by PBR, ANJ, VRW, SSM and Anju Mann and Salil Rawat (gym coach) on four bikes and one jeep to Leh, Ladakh. They made it to Pang (17,000 ft.) through the Lahaul-Spiti valley. However, due to some members suffering from altitude sickness, only VRW made it to the destination. We applaud their adventurous spirit.

Unquotable Quotes

(Contd. from Page 1)

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My seat number is 4.5.

Kushagra Kumar needs more space.

I'm not light, I'm a light.

Rituraj fails to illuminate.

I'm a light-saving power pack.

Rituraj, the conservative environmentalist.

Take a piece of pen and a paper.

Shikhar Singh, going to pieces.

Please off these.

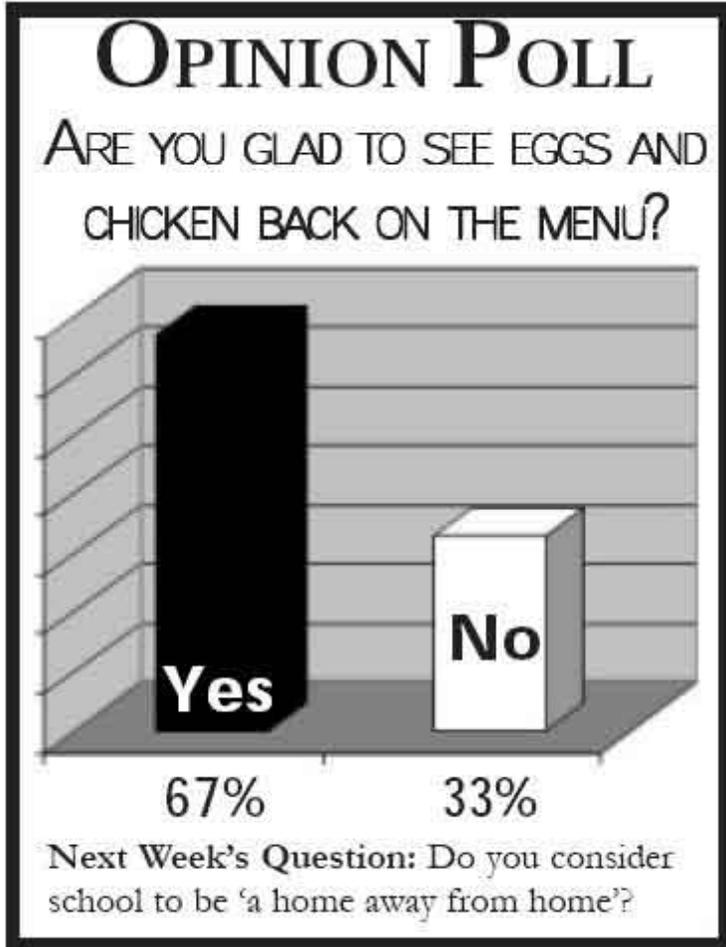
HMD refers to switches.

Let's see if you can hear it.

HMD wants all senses to be involved.

Aditya Ajmani is a perfect.

Naushad Khan's language attains perfection



highlighting the apparent atrocities committed by the administration against the students, and debate columns. In our second issue, it was my job to convince my housemaster to write for us on whether 'Laser Printers are Better than Typewriters.' For those of us, who think the English youth are driven by alcohol (beer, to be specific), premature relationships, beef and junk food, racist and shallow personalities, let me set the record straight. The British youth today, as much as I could understand, are an extremely health-conscious and progressive lot. They ally themselves with winners (except in the case of George W. Bush, whom they detest), debate on fatalistic notions like 'Whether the sun is setting on the West,' are keen on music and entertainment, accommodating and participating citizens of an assimilative hybrid society. Sachin Tendulkar gets his fair share of support in English stadiums, chicken tikka masala is the national dish (served twice a week in the school) and if they ridicule you for your third world mentality, they almost simultaneously see the danger of rapidly developing countries.

In my several efforts to sell India as a happening place, a global superpower, all the threats of outsourcing, nuclear weapons and technology went unnoticed. However, it took one of them to point out that, as it seems, some research concluded that if all the Indians spit in the ocean at one time, the rise in water level would be enough to wipe England off the face of this world. At least someone understood the potential of our human capital!

[Previous Page](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

[Next Page](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

Questions and Answers

The Doon School Weekly interviews Pravin Gandhi (PGI), Vidhukesh Vimal (VKL) and Anuj Ray (ARY), new members of the faculty.

DSW: What are your first impressions of the school?

PGI: On arriving here for my interview, at the Main Gate itself, I thought Doon was very similar to Mayo College, Ajmer; where I have previously taught.

DSW: What makes Doon unique?

PGI: The entire teaching atmosphere in Doon is different. The relationship between teachers and students and between the staff itself is very close.

DSW: If I could, I would...

PGI: I always wanted to be a philosopher. I am deeply philosophical and am inspired by Osho and writings in the Bhagvad Gita.

DSW: Similarity with Mayo being the first, any other impressions?

PGI: Similarity with Mayo College is purely infrastructural. However, I am amazed with this school in all aspects: infrastructure, teachers, students, discipline and activities. In retrospect, I do not regret making this decision to join school.

DSW: Favourite music is...

PGI: Old film music sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Kishore Kumar.

DSW: Do you have any regrets?

PGI: I missed the right time to appear for IIT.

DSW: What are your aspirations?

PGI: To be the best. Whatever 'best' means. I am inspired by successful people like the Ambanis but I want to do something different at the same time.

-Shikhar Singh

DSW: Tell us something about yourself.

ARY: My parents were university professors of English. As a result, I did my schooling and college in Kolkata, at St. Xavier's. My teaching career began in Raipur. I then moved on to St. James' School, Kolkata, and later, a school in Jharkhand.

DSW: What attracted you to teaching, and why English?

ARY: My parents' profession was what initially attracted me towards both the profession, as well as the subject. Moreover, I have always had a creative flair for the English language. I also became a teacher because I wanted to mould a generation of students. I believe it to be a noble profession.

DSW: What brought you to Doon?

ARY: I was attracted to the school by its reputation and the image it has around the country. I also came here because of Mr. Mason's long association with this school.

DSW: Do you find Doon different from the other boarding schools in which you have taught?

ARY: Absolutely. The school has multifarious activities, unlike other schools. The discipline here is also very good.

DSW: What are your first impressions with regard to the students?

ARY: Very good. They are up-to-date with everything and are aware of current affairs.

DSW: Describe yourself in one word.

ARY: Creative.

-Ashish Mitter

DSW: Where were you before you joined Doon?

VKL: I was teaching at the Mayo College for some years. I was also doing a course in mass communication and I'm used to taking interviews. It's nice to be giving an interview for a change!

DSW: What brought you to Doon?

VKL: Actually, I had always wanted to teach here. I have always known Doon to be a great school, and my friends and colleagues have always spoken highly of the school.

DSW: What are your first impressions of the school?

VKL: Perhaps, the most striking feature of the school are its boys. The boys here are very simple, polite and friendly. Moreover, they are extremely responsible, and practically run everything in school.

DSW: How close is the school to your expectations?

VKL: The school is exactly like my expectations, actually it's somewhat better than my expectations. I had the company of many Old Boys during my college days, and so had a very clear picture of what the school was like.

DSW: What, according to you, is the main difference between other schools and The Doon School?

VKL: The main difference between other schools and The Doon School is definitely the behaviour of the boys. In other schools it is only the junior boys that are friendly and loving, but here in Doon, even the senior boys are equally friendly and amiable.

DSW: But don't the students ever pull your leg?

VKL: All students like making a fool of their teachers, and new teachers, of course, make excellent victims. Having been a very naughty kid myself, I completely understand. In fact, all the jokes and tomfoolery remind me of my childhood.

DSW: What is your favourite pastime?

VKL: I love reading books and it's my favourite pastime. I also like writing plays and poetry. Theatre is my first love.

DSW: So, would you have been associated with the theatre if you were a not a teacher?

VKL: Definitely. I had always wanted to pursue the line, and if I had got more support from my family, I would probably be an actor or a director today.

DSW: What are your views on IB, which is soon going to be introduced in the school?

VKL: I think it is wonderful that it is going to happen to the school. I really like it because the studies are more logical and give students more exposure. IB places more stress on the learning part of studies instead of just cramming and scoring marks.

DSW: What is your life's mantra?

VKL: I believe that we should always be sensitive to the needs of other people, because what goes around comes around.

-Naman Goel

[Previous Page](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

[Next Page](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

A Southern Sojourn

Ashish Mitter reports on the Round Square Project in aid of tsunami victims

As we proceeded towards the security check amid the pushing, the shoving and the general chaos that is Delhi Airport to board Spice Jet Flight 222 to Chennai, we looked around for our escorts. Our parents had abandoned us to our fate, and as the seconds ticked by, we looked forward with a mixture of excitement and apprehension to the prospect of going to a relatively unknown city without having a clue about what we were supposed to do. However, at 3:50, all fears were put to rest when our masters arrived on the scene, just in time to board the plane. The ubiquitous traffic jams of Delhi had held them up.

When we arrived at Chennai, AKC and Skand realized that their baggage had been unloaded at Hyderabad, where we had stopped for a short time. It was already turning out to be an eventful trip!

After spending a night in Chennai we were introduced to the boys from Welham's and Assam Valley School, who were to work with us. We then took a six-hour bus journey to Chidambaram, a small temple town, and checked into the Hotel Saradaram, which was to be our home for the next thirteen days. Our rooms were simple, but they had what we wanted – TV with a cable connection! AKS joined the group, and we were ready for our task.

Our work began the following day in a small fishing village called Muzukuthurai, a forty-five minute drive from Chidambaram. We were greeted by the village elders and Mr. Sampat and Mr. James, who helped in coordinating our work. After a quick tour of the village, which included a visit to the small grocery store (it quickly became a popular haunt), we began our manual labour – laying the foundation of a fish-market. The work was a strenuous and involved the digging of large pits, mixing of concrete, shifting of cement bags and gravel and laying of the iron rods.

However, we quickly realized that not everyone was being involved equally at the work site, and so a system of rotation was started. The students were divided into four groups, with three groups being at the worksite at any one time. The group not at the worksite stayed in the hotel or explored local areas.

Our rather monotonous work was, thankfully, coupled with frequent breaks for coconut water, soft drinks or boat rides. Towards the end of our trip, we also interviewed some villagers (with the help of a translator). The village had been severely affected by the tsunami, and the villagers recounted, in graphic detail, their terrifying experience. They also talked about the monumental aid they received from the government and various NGOs, and this raised a whole host of doubts in our minds – were the villagers being robbed of their initiative because there was so much aid pouring into the village? Was their way of life changing for the worse? Was our trip really worthwhile? These doubts were to linger in our minds for some time to come.

Before we knew it, our stay in Chidambaram was over. The fish-market had a definite framework, and the villagers seemed happy with our work. The food in Sardaram had been quite unparitable, despite everyone's best efforts, and the weather unbearably hot, but we made new friends, managed to watch the World Cup (even though the commentary was in Chinese), and came away feeling satisfied. Before going home, we went on a whirlwind tour of Mahabalipuram, Pondicherry and Chennai. Although I fell sick during this period, the rest of the party seemed to have had fun. It was only when we reached home did we realize that seventeen days of our holidays had slipped by with our hardly being aware of it.

Freaky Facts

- Ketchup was sold as medicine in the 1830's.
- If you pour a small amount of beer or liquor on a scorpion it will go insane and kill itself.
- A lobster doesn't have a real brain. It can't feel emotions or pain so if you boil it alive it won't feel it.
- The longest word in the English language, according to the Oxford English Dictionary is pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis.
- On an average a 100 people will choke on ballpoint pens.
- Human thigh bones are stronger than concrete.
- The first kind of pencil was a bunch of graphite sticks held together by string. Then someone decided it would be better to push the graphite into the inside of a hollow wooden stick.

Career Call

The Careers' Notice Board

will focus on Architecture this week.

All budding builders should

check out the blueprint.

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[Previous Page](#)

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

[Previous Issues](#)