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THE CLIMB TO DHUMDAR KANDI

Abhimanyu Chandra reports on the challenges of a high-altitude trek undertaken between May 27 and June 7

After some mandatory blood and fitness tests, and several coordination meetings, three masters (AKS, AKC and ASH) and eleven students (Abhimanyu Chandra, Abhimanyu Malik, Rachit Kaitan, Mayapati Tiwari, Dushyant Sapra, Sujai Banerji, Divish Sabhlok, Saket Mahajan, Ankur Saxena, Shashvat Sikroria, Keshav Prasad) set out for Harsil. Our guides and leaders, were ASH, the team leader, who is a veteran mountaineer and Vasudevji, a resident of Garhwal.

There is a difference between an expedition and a leisurely trek. Though a trek demands a reasonable amount of responsibility from every individual, this is increased in a high-altitude climb. In a climb like this, there is no path or fixed route for trekking, and for the expedition to be successful, a positive attitude combined with physical fitness, mental and emotional steadfastness and genuine team effort is required. I felt that mountaineering is not meant for the impatient and inflexible. Rarified air takes its toll and headaches, stomach cramps and sore limbs have to be battled with.

The Doon School expedition team started from Uttarkashi, and the imposing Dhumdar Kandi Pass, at a height of 5576 metres, was to be our destination. We scaled the pass after eight days of demanding ascents, having witnessed landmarks like Bandar Poonch I, Black Peak, Yellow Tooth, Jonli, Srikanth, Lamkhaga, and many more snow-bound peaks of Himachal, Garhwal and Tibet. The river Syang Gaad served as the Great Bear throughout our trek from the second day, guiding us along our path. Bare trees, rock-falls, landslides, avalanches, a growing number of threatening snow storms, bottomless crevasses, hanging icicles, and last but not the least, the unavoidable dying standards of hygiene, all became an everyday routine.

Our mornings would start early; sometimes even at 5 am to reach our destination of the day before being caught by snowstorms or melting snow. It is rightly said, "To appreciate the beauty of a snow flake, it is necessary to stand out in the cold."

At 3 pm, the punctual snow would cause us to retire to our tents. After a few hours of uncomfortable slumber, we

would move for dinner with mixed feelings. We had to leave our warm sleeping bags after a tiring day's trek, but still looked forward to the entertaining conversations we had over supper. With our good humour intact, the whole experience was lightened to a great extent. Our stay in the dining tent would end with a debriefing on the day gone by, plans and precise instructions for the next day, and the reporting of any problems.

From Jhala, we pitched the first day camp at a convenient site we located on the way and the next day we camped at

Kyarkoti. The evening was spent training in snow craft. We were also introduced to the use of the ice-axe and other mountaineering equipment. This session proved very useful. After camping at Dhariodari and Satiya Dhar the subsequent night, we moved on towards the Summit Camp.

The next morning, we set off at 5:30 with care, wearing fluorescent slings around our waists, carabiners, gaiters over our



Koflach snow boots and carrying ice-axes.

Our initial ascent was a straight one, which forced us to use the front-point technique of climbing on hard morning snow. At 7.30 we stopped for a long halt where our expedition leader discussed the route with his assistants, and decided to follow a ridge connecting the main ridge leading to Yellow Tooth Peak on our left and joining the main ridge of the Dhumdar Kandi on our right. By now, the snow had started melting and conditions started becoming treacherous. Every step literally meant pulling our feet out of a foot or more of spongy snow, and then putting them into more unmarked and spongy snow. The last hundred metres were the most challenging, as we had to face a gradient of 75-80 degrees. The slope was extremely avalanche-prone, and we proceeded slowly. ASH instructed us to be quiet and told us not to look down. We were also asked to focus on the footmarks to be followed. It took us almost an hour to negotiate that patch. Finally, we reached Dhumdar Kandi! Satisfaction, relief and triumph was reflected on all our faces. It was a very sharp ridge, and there was hardly any place to stand. As we

(contd. on page 2)

REGULARS

ALL-ROUNDERS

Ankur Saxena and Hanumant Singh were awarded the **Mehta Family Award, 2007**, for excellence in academic and extra-curricular activities. Congratulations!

CRICKETING GLORY

Rajdeep Deo Bhanj was chosen to represent the Turf Academy, Delhi, to play cricket in England, and was proclaimed **Man of the Match** for scoring thirty-eight runs in one of the matches. He also had the **highest average** of thirty-four runs in the series. More power to his bat!

WELCOME

Ahetesham Khan, Brijender Rana, Gompo Dorjay, and NK Ghai have joined the school as **Coaches** of the School Soccer team. We wish them a fruitful tenure.

Gastronome

This week, we will concentrate on eating hotspots in **Kolkata** as recommended by Saurav Sethia and Abhaas Shah:

Pan Asia- As the name suggests, various Asian cuisines are served here. The Japanese menu, especially, is delicious. *Must try: Sushi.*

Kewpie's Kitchen – An institution in itself, purveyors of authentic Bengali food. *Must try: Daab chingri, Ilish paturi.*

La Cucina- An Italian restaurant with a pleasing atmosphere and modern decor. *Must try: Sautéed asparagus, Risotto.*

Chinoiserie- It is, arguably, the best Chinese restaurant in the city. *Must try: Crispy spinach, Konjeenaro.*

Sonargaon- A restaurant with the ambience of a Bengali village. *Must try: Alur dum.*

Baan Thai- The rice here is served with the red curry or green curry and makes an excellent meal. *Must try: Papaya salad, Green mango salad.*

Zaranj- Sizzling kebabs and buttered naans, this restaurant defines the Mughlai cuisine experience. *Must try: Kaali dal, Lachchha parantha, Dahi ke kebab.*

Bar-be-que- One of the most popular Chinese restaurants in the city, its starters are most appetising. *Must try: Chinese salad, Crispy chilli babycorn.*

Little Italy- A lively restaurant that serves typical trattoria food. *Must try: the Pizze Napolitana.*

Fire-n-Ice- A restaurant that adds a certain poetic touch to Italian meals. Having established their first food joint in Italy, they went on to Kathmandu and have, most recently, come to Kolkata. *Must try: Pasta arrabiata, Pasta pomodoro.*

Jalapenos- Brings the real spice and flavour of Mexican food to India. *Must try: Enchiladas, Qesiladas.*

CAREER CALL

The careers' notice board will feature information on **Law**. All aspiring legal eagles should look it up.



doonspeak

Construction delays in school

Blocking all shortcuts – **Arjun Sethi**

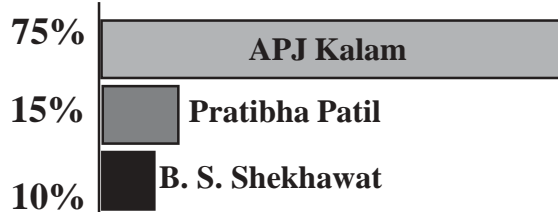
Hindering the normal arrangements, as the D formers join the main Houses without getting a feel of life in the Holding Houses – **Vaibhav Bahadur**

Bad monsoon – **AKC**

Nuisance for students, as well as teachers – **Nikhil Sardana**

Opinion Poll

Which of the following would you have supported for the office of President?



305 people participated in the poll

Next Week's Question: Do you think the dignity of Assembly is being compromised by the way it is being conducted in the CDH?

(contd. from page 1)

looked back at our route and the miniscule Summit Camp, we realized that this was no minor accomplishment. The journey had taken four hours. We stayed at the summit for thirty minutes and watched ASH pay homage to the mountain by performing some rituals.

While descending, we had to take great care. A rope was used to ensure a safe return. After that, the fun began. We slid down various slopes, and reached the camp in less than an hour.

A unique feature about Dhumdar Kandi Pass is that it is not yet commercialized, unlike a lot of other treks at similar altitudes. This fact made the entire trekking experience more hazardous, as there was virtually no sign of civilization. There was no room for error along this trek. This expedition made us experience physical as well as emotional endurance. It was like living the whole concept of being a Dosco – all-round character building.

Some vital skills that all of us picked up were the technical skills of mountaineering, unwavering team work and last, but not least, the ever-important 'mountaineering manners'. We celebrated our team work and success with *chana-bhatura* at an altitude of 4500 metres beside a small bonfire.

The expedition was a success and this was, in most part, because of our excellent support staff, which comprised more than 30 porters, a cook, an assistant cook, HAPs and guides.

Memories of this fantastic trek will always remain with us. I feel expeditions like these are truly a great learning experience. That too, surrounded by immense natural beauty.

India's Tryst with Destiny

Dynamic Democracy

Ashish Mitter

As India prepares to celebrate sixty years of independence, it is easy to gloat over just how far we have come since we first vowed to 'build the mansion of free India'. Certainly, there is much to feel proud about. On the whole, there has been a vast improvement in the standard of living, and unlike many other third world countries, we have managed to keep our democracy not only intact, but dynamic, vibrant and relevant. Remarkably, India has remained united despite perhaps being the most diverse nation on earth. Nevertheless, I see this anniversary as an opportunity not to look back and reflect on the past, but to look ahead, at the challenges India faces in the 21st century. It is an exciting time to be an Indian. India is often talked about as the next big thing, the emerging superpower, the new (yet, not-so-new) kid on the block. As India metamorphosises from a lumbering elephant into an agile tiger, it can no longer be ignored on the world stage. So it is, as I say, an exciting time to be an Indian. But it is also a terrifying time. Terrifying, because almost every situation India will face in the coming years will be a novel one. Never before has the economy grown so fast. Never before have the rich been so rich, and the poor, relatively so poor. Never before has India been able to engage the countries of the developed world on an equal footing. We are literally stepping into the unknown, armoured by a unique identity developed over thousands of years, yet hindered by contradictions which have bewildered our society for generations. Indeed, as India liberalizes, these contradictions are exacerbated, and threaten to tear the delicate fabric of this country apart. Indian society is at once orthodox and radical, traditional and reform-oriented. We may have just elected our first woman President, but gender-discrimination remains widespread. We may no longer have famines, but large portions of the population still live in a perennial state of hunger. Our country is increasingly plagued by the scourges of terrorism, Naxalism and illegal immigration. And our relations with our neighbours are far from satisfactory.

For India to make the transition from a third world to a first world country, these contradictions must be resolved without tampering with the ideals that we cherish so much; the ideals of democracy, secularism and equality. When we attained independence sixty years ago, Nehru said "we are citizens of a great country on the verge of a bold advance, and we have to live up to that high standard." As we advance further and further, and the standard is raised higher and higher, we, as citizens of this country, have our task cut out for us: to remain vigilant and political, so that India may become a beacon of freedom and liberty in the years to come.

| Book Review | Harry Potter: The Finale

Dilsher Dhillon

Magic lies in challenging what seems impossible.

-Carol Moseley Braun

Finally it was here: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. The seventh book in a series that has captured the hearts of every book-reader and has made history as the most popular fiction series of all time.

At last, we read of the final confrontation between Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived, the Chosen One, the 'symbol of hope' for both the Wizard and Muggle worlds, and Lord Voldemort, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, the nefarious leader of the Death Eaters and would-be ruler of all. Good versus Evil. Love versus Hate. The Seeker versus the Dark Lord.

JK Rowling beautifully captures the essence of her characters once again in this novel; from Hermione's sagacity, composure and unnerving intelligence, to Ron's quirkiness and sarcasm, and then to Harry's solemnity and precociousness, she has crafted a riveting tale around these three main characters.

Harry has already lost his parents, his godfather Sirius and his teacher Professor Dumbledore (all mentors he might have once received instruction from), and in this volume, the losses mount with speed: some key characters we have come to know in the Potter series die in these pages, and many others are wounded or tortured. Voldemort and his followers have infiltrated Hogwarts and the Ministry of Magic, creating havoc and terror in the Wizard and Muggle worlds alike, and everyone is faced with the problem of choosing sides.

Harry often seems overcome with disillusionment and doubt throughout this book, as he struggles with the mind-possessing skills of Voldemort. He battles to keep a hold on himself, as he, Ron and Hermione search for the missing Horcruxes, secret magical objects in which Voldemort has stashed parts of his soul, objects that Harry must destroy if he hopes to kill the evil lord.

Harry's psychic connection with Voldemort (symbolized by the lightning-bolt forehead scar he bears as a result of the Dark Lord's attack on him as a baby) seems to have grown stronger too, giving him clues to Voldemort's actions and whereabouts, even as it lures him ever closer to the dark side. One of the plot's significant turning points concerns Harry's decision on whether to continue looking for the Horcruxes — the mission assigned to him by the late Dumbledore — or to pursue the Hallows, three magical objects said to make their possessor the master of Death.

Harry's journey will propel him forward to a final showdown with his arch-enemy, and also send him backward into the past, to the house in Godric's Hollow where his parents died, to learn about his family history and the equally mysterious history of Dumbledore's family. Ambiguities proliferate throughout *The Deathly Hallows*: we are made to see that kindly Dumbledore, sinister Severus Snape and perhaps even the awful Muggle cousin Dudley Dursley may be more complicated than they initially seem, that all of them, like Harry, have hidden aspects to their personalities.

(contd. on page 4)

(contd. from page 3)

All the elements of pathos, action, passion, valour, courage, zeal and flamboyance culminate in a heart-racing, bone-chilling confrontation and an epilogue that clearly lays out people's fates.

In the end, the priority is not about getting to the finish line. It's about living the adventure and savouring it for years to come.

KNOW YOUR SPELLS

The Weekly traces the origin of words used in some of the spells and curses in the Harry Potter series:

Expelliarmus – derived from 'expel' and 'arms', it is a disarming spell.

Avada Kedavra – Aramaic word 'Avada': 'I kill' and 'Kedavra' means 'as I speak' - a killing curse.

Imperio – derived from 'imperial', it is the king of all dark hypnotic spells.

Crucio – derived from 'excruciating' and 'cross', it is a torture spell.

Homonum Revelio – derived from 'homo' and 'reveal' – shows human presence.

Diffindo – a severing charm derived from the Latin 'diffindere'; to divide.

Lumos – derived from 'illuminate'; a spell providing light

Nox – the Roman goddess of night, it extinguishes light produced from 'lumos'.

Protego – a shield charm derived from 'protect'.

Expecto Patronum – from Latin. 'Expecto': 'I wait'; and 'Patronum': 'protector' – invoking the patronus to ward off the Dementors.

(Sourced from the Oxford English Dictionary and thefreedictionary.com).

sudoku

Vishnukaant Pitty

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| Technology |

iPod Juggernaut

Abhaas Shah

Digital media is clearly one of the most commercially lucrative industries in today's wired world, and if there is any single brand which inexorably seems to be the most photogenic representation of this industry, it is the Apple iPod. Despite countless predictions by business and tech pundits contradicting the success of the iPod, it has dominated the world market faster than anything ever seen before. With its sleek look, universal popularity and thousands of compatible accessories, the iPod is looking more and more like an unstoppable juggernaut. The strongest point that every person who did not believe in the iPod's success had was that Apple is making the same mistake with the iPod that they made with the Macintosh in the 1980s. Many people had a preconceived notion of Apple as a company that throughout its history produced innovative, elegant products to great acclaim, only to see competitors sneak up behind them, copy their designs, lower the price, and take the majority of the market – leaving Apple as a struggling niche player. The problem back then was that at a critical juncture in the late '80s, when they should have gone for a market share, they went for profits, and earned it, but in the process lost their monopoly to Windows 95, because their products had become mediocre. Of all the myriad ways that Apple iPod's position today differs from their Macintosh position twenty years ago, this is perhaps the most vital: with the iPod, Apple is going for a market share.

Despite having products that are better than the iPod by just about every reasonable standard, competitors such as Sony and Creative are unable to even come close to Apple iPod's dominant market share. They're cheaper, they have more memory, they support more file formats etc, but it doesn't seem to matter – they still have single-digit market shares while the iPod owns more than 85% market share. The truth is that most people don't care about these features, because if they did care, iPod sales would have plunged by now. The simplicity of the iPod is one of the prime reasons for its appeal and popularity – that it lacks many non-essential features, is by itself a feature.

One remaining argument against the iPod juggernaut is that Apple can't do it alone. However, they are *not* alone. The iPod peripheral makers are their biggest partners. The *New York Times* reported that "iPod peripherals are a billion-dollar-per-year industry" – and growing.

The iPod turns five years old this October, and whatever may happen to its sales from this point onward – its success to date has been so great that it's bound to be remembered as the greatest pop culture phenomenon of this decade. Do you know anyone today, who doesn't know what an iPod is?