



Established in 1936

The Doon School WEEKLY

"I sketch your world exactly as it goes." -Arthur Foot
October 5, 2019 | Issue No. 2550



MIDTERM REPORTS

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WORDSEARCH

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For Hills to Climb

Have Mid-term expeditions lost their sense of discovery and exploration?

I don't think that our midterm programme has lost the sense of discovery and exploration in any form. Yes, it is a different matter that we are hesitant to find this idea within us. We have started playing a little too safe. This sometimes takes away the opportunity to derive entertainment, excitement and element of experiential learning. Apart from this, another tendency that I see growing is the consideration of only those aspects of life which are considered significant by others. This prevents us from understanding the core concepts of our life. Our midterm programme is still related to the core values such as initiative, resourcefulness, sense of responsibility, co-operation, organisation, team-spirit, admiration for and appreciation of flora and fauna, sense of adventure and understanding of local culture I strongly feel that the midterm programme provides a unique platform to all of us to learn about life through exploration that starts from the outer world and ends in inner revelations.

Arvindanabha Shukla

Talking to Mr Kamal Prasad (Batch of 1964) last week, I couldn't help but be fascinated by the outdoor exploits of Doscos in the 50s and 60s. He whipped out, one after another, countless tales of boys and masters in the wilderness – ones I could barely believe, let alone relate to. Imagine a 'Holdy' or a 'Guru' asking a teen Mr Prasad in the darkness of 4 AM on a Sunday morning to grab his bike to search for Gurals at Benog (over Mussourie)! The adrenal thrill of such adventure now lies reduced to a strictly planned five-day itinerary scaling peaks already conquered and paths frequently trodden. I really believe that somewhere over the years, Doon has lost its zeal for adventure and its thrill for discovery in the wild. Will returning outdoors do more good than harm to our community at large? It's a no brainer!

Vijayaditya Rathore

Why should anything be lost at all? Human wonder and curiosity takes care of all such experiences. Those who are by nature easily bored will find mid-terms as pointless as a roller coaster ride. The hills, the treks, the friendships forged on the way, and the lick of the mid-term lolly are timeless. Minor details may change, the big picture remains.

Priyanka Bhattacharyya

In my opinion, there is no one answer to this question. Some things would suggest that mid-terms have indeed lost their wonder and sense of discovery- in the age of Google maps, no place needs to be "discovered" as such. Better road connectivity and transport facility have made the world a smaller place, and brought even the remotest places closer to the rest of the world. However, there are other aspects to mid-terms that could prove that they have not lost any of the wonder they held before. For our mid-term, we chose Valley of Flowers and Hemkund Sahib as our destination. Both places happen to be a favourite with tourists, and pilgrims. Consequently, the entire route is peppered with all the amenities that ensure a comfortable journey and stay.

However, a sense of discovery and exploration continues to thrive in individuals, I believe. This was not just my first mid-term but also the first ever trek of my life. I admit that I was rather worried before starting. However, I turned out to be the first person in the entire group to reach up to the base camp while walking up. This gave me a different sense of achievement and accomplishment; a self-discovery

that I CAN trek, after all. Knowing ourselves outside our comfort zones is the exploration that we are talking about here and I believe this is applicable for each and every person who went for mid-term expeditions. The places might have been the same, but each person’s experiences are sure to have been unique and memorable.

Anubhab Bhattacharjee

Adventure has always been an integral part of the Doon School ethos. However in the recent past it has taken a different form. From high altitude climbing expeditions we have shifted to cycling expeditions and the desert treks. These I think do something similar, to what the climbing expeditions did, albeit not to the same extent - to inspire and to lead us to test our physical limits and to go beyond them.

Manu Mehrotra

| Midterm Reports |

Har ki Dun

Gurmehar Bedi

Before mid-terms, I asked numerous seniors about the Har ki Dun trek, and to my amazement, there was rare unanimity in their reply. With a quizzical expression on their faces, they said, “B form?” and began to giggle uncontrollably. I pondered over their responses for a while. However, I refused to believe that the trek was as challenging as they had made it seem and chose to experience it rather than making assumptions.

Mid-terms began with us travelling to Sankri and spending the night in a guest house. Next morning was spent in travelling to Taluka, a village that would mark the start of our 11 kilometre long trek. These

11 kilometres proved to be the most dramatic ones I have ever spent in my life. Although three of my form mates along with my tutor lost their way, we reached our destination, all bones intact. Upon arriving at the base camp, I didn’t believe that I would attempt to reach Har ki Dun.

The next morning, however, I awoke with renewed energy. I decided to embark on the sixteen kilometre trek to the summit. We began at eight in the morning but by noon, we had covered only thirteen kilometres. Our guide kept persuading us to return as he knew what it meant to be in the hills after sunset. Somehow, we managed to convince him to continue, and pressed on. The last three kilometres were the most arduous. My blood froze. We could barely see the path in the dense fog; one wrong step and we would plummet to our death! Somehow, though, we managed to reach the crest. I was dumbstruck at the immense beauty of nature. When we reached the top, the guide told us that our group had set a record, as we were the youngest group of people to summit Har ki Dun in a day.

Fifty four kilometres of trekking, no electricity and barely any water, and yet, one of the most memorable adventures of my life.



Hemkund Saheb

Ivor Ismail

At 5:30 AM on the 28th of September, we piled onto the bus in eager anticipation of going to Hemkund Sahib. After a rather bumpy fifteen-hour drive, we reached Govind Dham and spent the night there.

Early next day after breakfast, we set out for the trek, once our accompanying masters PRY and MHS joined us after seeing off the loaded the mules. Once they came, we started the climb. The rainy weather made our trek tougher than it already was. To add to that, there were mules everywhere and a lot of time

was spent going around them. After many halts and breaks, we finally reached our destination, Ghangariya in the evening. After a superb dinner, everyone went to bed tired yet excited for the next day.

After breakfast the next morning, we started out for the Valley of Flowers. Once again, the weather was inclement, slowing us down in our trek. After obtaining our permits from the Forest Department office, we set out once again for the Valley. The trek was arduous and steep, but what made it stand

out was the lack of other people and mules. In two hours we entered the Valley of Flowers. Because of the cloudy conditions, nothing appeared special on first glance. But when the sun came out for a few minutes, the entire look changed and it seemed much more picturesque. After feasting our eyes on the breathtaking scenery, we turned around and headed back for our guesthouse.

The day after, we were told that due to the uncertainty of the weather and logistical issues, we would not be able to go to Hemkund Sahib, and instead would be heading back down to Govind Dham. Dejected, we loaded the mules and began our descent. We had assumed that the steepness experienced on our ascent on the first day would help us trek down faster; on the contrary, it added to our troubles, as we cautiously looked for footholds while rappelling. After a few

stops here and there, we reached the base and waited for everyone to reach and then started back for the hotel by jeep.

On the 2nd of October at 4 AM, we climbed onto the bus and began our journey back. This too was beset with problems, as one set of rear wheels of our bus came loose. This was remedied, but further down it happened again, resulting in some improvised repair. After this point we got stuck in traffic jams caused by work on the Char Dham Yatra route. Finally at 7 PM we reached School.

This midterm posed a different set of challenges, as, among other things, this was the first time that we were trekking in the rain. Nonetheless, like every midterm expedition, this too prepared us for future expeditions and endeavours.

Chaur Peak

Saksham Makin

After a stressful week of September Trials, during which many of us succumbed to dengue, Kashmir House A form started their much-needed midterm expedition to Choor Dhar (or Chaur Peak) under the guidance of SSW, PVD and AYT. We started out early at 6 AM on the 28th of September and, after surviving the jerky bus journey (which was also blessed with a breakfast stop to consume delicious dhaba paranthas in Nahan), we finally reached Hotel Chureshwar Resort in Barog, Himachal Pradesh. We had lunch there and retired to our rooms for the day.

We were supposed to sleep early in order to summit the peak the next day, but violent thunderstorms and landslides made us postpone our trekking plans. It also resulted in 15 adolescents with plenty of free time, a pack of cards and a TV, which was bad news for our teachers. Eventually, we spent our time playing poker and other card games and watching much-loved Bollywood music videos. Not the ones to miss out on the fun, our teachers soon joined us, and especially enjoyed guessing their colleagues from the impersonations we made. Later, SSW recounted to us interesting stories from his time in college, while

PVD unveiled his hidden talents as he recited his poems to us, offering help to many of the hopeless romantics in our form.

The rains continued the next day, forcing us to postpone our plans for the climb further. This caused a little bit of unrest in the form, with many being already bored and tired. But all was solved as soon as we received our much-awaited tuck bags. When the weather cleared in the evening, some of the daring souls decided to venture out on a 'horse-shoe' shaped trek to a waterfall quite aptly named 'Jharna'. We were accompanied by a cat, as adrenaline-rushed as us, and a pack of wild mountain dogs. After the trek, which offered a brilliant reward for our hardwork in the form of serene atmosphere and a picturesque view, we went back only to realise that our legs were covered with blood-sucking leeches with only one of us emerging unscathed.

Then, on the 1st of October, the skies cleared, giving us the last chance to summit Choordhar Peak. We climbed up to an altitude of 7500 feet along a curved, steep path but were stopped again by rains, forcing us to descend to our hotel. Finally, we returned to School the next day after a painful 11 hours of bus journey, to be greeted by pizzas and coke from Domino's. Even though we didn't summit the peak, I think that it was a mid-term which brought our form closer together due to the late night Truth-Dare games and long late evening walks. We even got a crucial break from our Chromebooks which resulted in many of us interacting after a long time. Moreover, we became closer to our tutors and even though we weren't able to fulfil our main objective, this midterm addressed a more crucial aspect of our lives, which is to cherish the company of those who are around us.



