

The Doon School WEEKLY

"I sketch your world exactly as it goes." -Arthur Foot
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Echo Chambers

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I have been fortunate to have friends who hold different social and political beliefs and are unafraid to disagree with me. Fiery debates on our way to the CDH or the Main Building have swayed me or, at the very least, made me reconsider my beliefs. After losing an argument, I would return to the House with a bruised ego and delve further into the arguments to strengthen my reasoning. My friends too, would do the same. What allowed our group dynamic to function was that we allowed multiple perspectives to co-exist. We carefully considered other arguments without labelling them as 'conservative', 'dumb' or 'hyper-liberal'. This dynamic helped develop our understanding of politics and our engagement with the rest of the world. Dynamics such as this, however, are becoming alarmingly rare.

Today, peer pressure is a dominating factor when it comes to deciding one's political orientation. This is partly due to social media, partly a lack of reading and partly due to increased stigmatization. Many are identified as liberals or conservatives depending on the beliefs of their friends. Certainly, friends have always had a role in shaping one's political beliefs, but never have they been such a dominating and destructive force.

The pervasiveness of 'Cancel Culture' is particularly responsible

for this. Despite having limited understanding of an issue or the other person's reasoning, one can very easily call someone out, without having to justify their actions. Rather, it is the other way around. This relieves them of any responsibility and encourages them to call others out at every opportunity. Certain political beliefs have been stigmatized or entirely cancelled by social media. I have friends who would

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not publicly reveal that they are conservative, Trump supporters, or even communists, despite having their own reasoning for their choices. The culture of stigmatizing and cancelling entire political opinions makes it legitimate for people to choose not to listen to others, often missing out on their reasoning. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficult to have the dynamic I have had with my peers in such a scenario, since opposing your friends

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means risking exclusion by entire friend groups. As a result, the gap between the Left and Right is widening so much that it is becoming difficult to bridge the gap in communication between peers.

What intensifies this further is the structure of social media. On social media platforms, you choose whom to follow and, consequently, whom to listen to, and most of these are likely to be your friends from the same group as yours. As a result, your social media is populated with mostly your own friends' political beliefs. Every second Instagram story you open is pushing a political orientation towards you. This is especially vicious when these posts contain only one political perspective and evaluate political issues on their surface. They often house misleading headlines or inaccurate facts. The 50-word limit of Twitter, the endless scroll on Instagram etc. compound the issue. It becomes

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even more difficult to reconsider these views when there is no direct way to engage with them. While comments are an exception in a way, the very fact that they take place online leads to limited engagement. The ease with which one can then repost such posts makes matters worse. To add to these complexities, COVID-19 has forced us to have all interactions online, so the opposition you might have directly faced from others around you has decreased significantly. As a result, you are confined in an echo chamber, making you conform to your friend groups' political orientation with no exposure to any contending rhetoric. This became apparent to me when posts about the farmer protests were circulating. Rarely

did I see a balanced post defending the arguments of the 'other' side. It was simply too easy to pick one side without understanding the heart of the problem.

It is during our teenage years that we begin to build our political beliefs, and therefore it is crucial that when we do choose a side, we pick it after careful consideration of every perspective. It is very easy to block out other perspectives, but that is why we need to make an added effort to listen to them. Whether this means switching on *Fox News* just to hear what they have to say or picking up the *South China Morning Post*, the effort to listen to the other side is crucial. More importantly, you must listen with an open mind and not jump to labelling the other side. How many of us ever watched Donald Trump

rallies and thought "maybe what he is saying could make sense?" It is important to remember that it does not have to make sense, but we must still make an effort to ask ourselves "what if it does?" Additionally, before publicly and adamantly voicing our opinions, we should research the issue and really delve into its nuances. Simply because a friend asks you to share a post on your story does not mean you have to.

To put it in a nutshell, it is important to be open to different arguments and perspectives and not stigmatize them. It is imperative that we think independently before making up our minds, rather than simply concede to peer pressure. You do not have to be liberal or conservative just because your friends are.

| New Voices |

A Topper in Lockdown

Anshul Gupta and S.J. Akhilesh *reflect on the impact of the lockdown on academic performance.*

It really is a tough choice, study inhumanly and try to get good grades while the rest watch Netflix, or watch Netflix and get the same grades and risk using WhatsApp to boost your grades. The temptation is all the more amplified by the fact that the last ten months have been nothing short of crazy, and when the world is on fire, linear equations feel less important.

I have been trying to study harder since the last grand fiasco that was the promotional trials but I am no monk and only a monk can resist the tantalizing call of Netflix and reject Google's help when we write our exams. Besides, school during lockdown is hard, with so many hours of online "classes" and homework that even Google begins to fall short in its aid and forces you to take a break from work and indulge yourself in that all-important series.

The point is that COVID has

helped us do a lot of important things but studying is not one of them, and after staring at a screen for months, taking our exams online seems impossible.

At School, despite the abundance of extracurriculars and competitions, we barely manage to get through the day, but online, the inordinate amount of time spent staring at chapters we did not even realise we had been taught results in lethargy that is nothing short of paralysing. And so, we are stuck having to do a lot of work we do not have the capacity to do until we get caught in a vicious cycle in which the only way out seems to be to binge on *Friends* till the end of time. Then, when exams come along, the absurd number of chapters we have to prepare in a few days can drive even the most righteous souls to the dark havens of Google and social media.

Fortunately, it is not all cloudy

skies. For some, lockdown is a boon. The ability to revise class recordings and take screenshots of boardwork is a superpower. Freed from the shackles of the draconian timetable of normal times, these fortunate souls use the extra time to elevate their intellect, thereby causing a wider than ever class difference between the haves and the have nots.

For the average Dosco, who is otherwise burdened by an array of activities, lockdown may seem like an oasis, but could open a Pandora's box of distractions: Instagram, Netflix and innumerable other applications serve as sanctuaries for our tired, procrastinating minds. When I ponder this issue, I do not know whether to gorge myself on course syllabus or on junk food and movies, but I believe that it is the path between these diverging roads that will make all the difference.

MIND GAMES

A psychology quiz was organized by **Fortis Healthcare** on November 6, 2020. A total of 15,000 students from 1,500 schools across India participated in the same. 27 students registered for the quiz from The Doon School and Advaita Sood secured a position in **top 100 winners**.

Congratulations!

WRITING PROMPTS

Juniors

Write a poem titled "Free". The poem must be no longer than 20 lines.

Seniors

Write about a specific experience, event or instance in your life that changed you in some way. Your story should have a clear narrative arc (a beginning, a middle and an end) and should be driven by an internal or external conflict that eventually brings about some sort of a change in your outlook on life.

Submissions in both categories can be either in English or Hindi.

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Hey Ram

The *Weekly* remembers the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, on his Martyrdom Day.

This Week in History

1933 C.E.: Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party (or Nazi Party) becomes the Chancellor of Germany.

1939 C.E.: Barcelona, the Republican capital of Spain, falls to the Nationalist forces of General Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War.

1942 C.E.: Thailand declares war against the United States, England, and the other allied forces in World War II.

1945 C.E.: Soviet troops enter Auschwitz, Poland, freeing 7,000 starving camp survivors from the network of concentration camps, thus revealing to the world the depth of the horrors perpetrated there.

1950 C.E.: India formally becomes a republic with the world's longest written Constitution. The new President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, takes the oath of office.

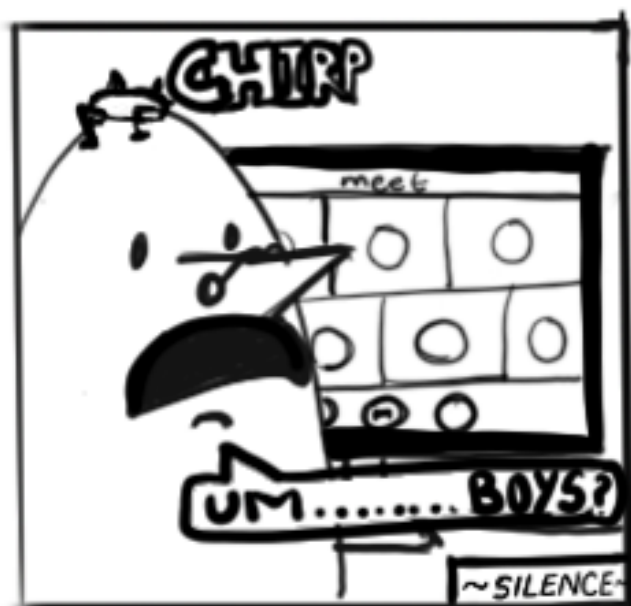
Around the World in 80 Words

World Covid-19 cases passed 100 million. Up to 40,000 people in Moscow protested against the arrest of Alexei Navalny. Violence erupted in New Delhi on Tuesday when farmers allegedly began marching ahead of schedule, which resulted in police using tear gas and batons against them. Anti-lockdown protests swept the Netherlands as rioters clashed with the police. Redditors and people on other social-media platforms made the stock price of GameStop, an American video game company, surge more than 40 percent.

Dosco Doodle

The Silent Treatment

Roban Taneja



Every 2nd Counts

Arjun Prakash writes about the importance of losing.

I could see the disappointment in my teammates' eyes as the ball flew over the crossbar and the referee blew the whistle. I knew I had missed an important chance for our team to win the match. I felt the burden of sheer guilt and frustration in every step I took towards the water stand. All the hard work I had put in went unrewarded, which led me to this question - how can I accept or learn from a result that puts me in second place?

We are obsessed with winning. Whether it be scoring a goal in an inter-house football match or reaching the 100m finish line first, all the hard work you put in towards achieving your goal leads to that moment of satisfaction. This inevitably makes it difficult for us to accept sub-par results. From a young age we hear success stories about great people and how well they did in their respective fields which motivates us to reach similar heights. However, the number of times these people have thought about giving up after failure is not talked about enough.

Is winning really everything everyone hypes it up to be? One thing for sure is that it does feel sweeter when you have failed before. Winning is not always in the form of a result, rather, it may be felt through a series of moments. You may not realize it but you win by making a successful pass that converts to a goal, by motivating your teammates to work harder, and by being in your ideal mental and physical shape before a competition. These small 'wins' ultimately increase your chance of being successful. Mentally, it is the big wins that have the highest effect on us, like winning or losing a match, but in reality, it is just an accumulation

of small moments that affect our mood. When we really pay attention to these moments and details, we realize that the smallest things make the biggest difference, and hence winning or losing holds no meaning in your actual development since the margin for error is often so slight.

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A failure is an event, not a person, and recognising the importance of this event is imperative to sculpting your success. The fear of failure is what makes us human, and each of us is susceptible to this emotion in our daily lives. Personally, the fear of missing a penalty in an important game keeps me awake at night. Even though I have practiced for hours on end, nothing can replicate the feeling of being in the moment. In the end, the adrenaline takes over and it feels like muscle memory. Eliminating this fear is extremely difficult but being numb to the anticipated pain of losing makes it much easier. Many athletes use this technique before their event to help prepare themselves mentally. They visualize winning as well as losing. The mental battle can often be more challenging than the physical one.

The recent test series result of the Indian Cricket Team is a perfect

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example of how victory tastes sweeter when one is used to being in second place. The Indian team defeated Australia in Brisbane for the first time in 32 years in a nail-biting finish. The team that won the final match was composed of "second team" youngsters. A majority of the first team players were unavailable and so the members of the team who were used to playing second fiddle to the normal roster finally had a chance to taste the sweetness of a victory. They played with passion and confidence to seal an unexpected win in a dazzling manner. This record win was crafted by the hunger of the players who were used to being in second place. To conclude a brilliant underdog story, they were applauded by the world for their incredible display of composure and grit.

All winners were losers at some point in time, but it is the motivation they drew on that propelled them to even greater success. To quote boxing legend Muhammad Ali "I am grateful for all my victories, but I am especially grateful for my losses because they only made me work harder". You may feel devastated when you don't cross the finish line ahead of the pack but remember that success will come if you make that second place count.

CLARIFIED



New Strains of the Coronavirus

Recently, there has been news of more contagious strains of the coronavirus that have been discovered in the UK and South Africa. What is worse is that this news comes just as vaccines are being deployed across the world. So, what are these strains and why should you be wary of them?

The virus that has wreaked havoc on our lives for the past year is the SARS CoV 2 virus, a type of coronavirus. Coronavirus is not a specific virus but rather a family of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from common colds to severe respiratory diseases. The SARS CoV 2 virus works by hijacking the cells of certain mammals using protrusions from the virus called spike proteins. It latches these spike proteins to receptors on the cells and then uses those cells to replicate itself.

The new strains of the virus were created through mutations (small errors made in genetic code while it was replicating). These strains are more contagious than the original strain. A more contagious variant is cause for alarm not because it causes more severe illnesses, but because it reaches more people. This translates into more cases, mild or severe, which means more hospitalizations and more deaths.

As a variant becomes more common, transmission will surge, and as the number of cases go up, the rate of transmission will only worsen and there will be more cases and on the infections will spiral.

While scientists do not exactly know how much more transmissible these strains are, one variant in particular known as 501Y.V2 is estimated to be 30 to 70 percent more transmissible. This strain, which is found in South Africa, is more contagious because of a mutation known as E484K, which appears in the spike protein, and although the precise impact of the increased transmissibility is yet to be understood, it is distressing epidemiologists and public health officials alike.

So, what are the implications of these mutant varieties for the vaccines? According to research, the new variants are not affected by antibodies in people who have contracted the old variant. Furthermore, if you had a milder case of the original virus, meaning you have a lower antibody count, you are less likely to be immune against all versions of the virus.

A study by Rockefeller University scientists, however, indicated that the antibodies produced by the vaccine might be more potent than those produced from an infection. Even the number of antibodies induced by a vaccine are so high that it is potent against the variant. Therefore, while there is concern regarding the efficacy of the vaccine, even if vaccine effectiveness drops from 95 to 85 percent, it is still largely effective. That is why scientists are advocating for everyone to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

Still, there are mixed results when it comes to the efficacy of vaccines against new variants. To fully assess the threat the mutations pose, clinical trials will need to be conducted on a diverse group of people because there are huge variations in immune responses among individuals.

The most serious cause for worry is that these variants are just the beginning. While they may come to pass, we have seen that this virus can mutate and change and there may be new variants to come, some that may even be more deadly with the ability to undermine the vaccine. Therefore, it is paramount that we follow precautions to curb virus transmission and prevent its variants from mutating.

Sources

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The Problem of The Week

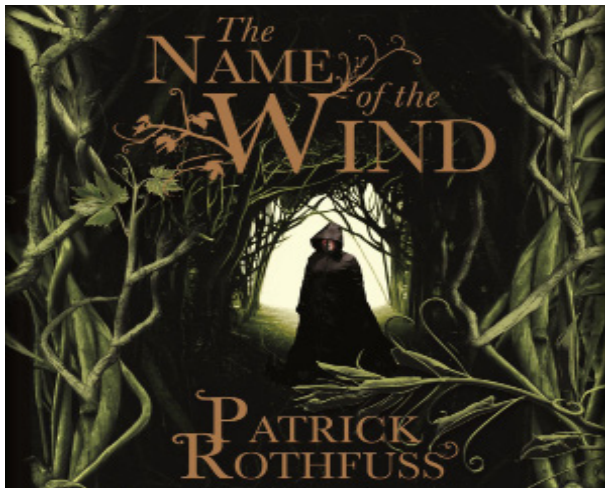
There are 100 lights in a room. A switch panel outside the room has 100 switches (each switch corresponds to one light in the room). None of the switches or lights is labelled, so it is extremely difficult to identify which switch turns on which light.

You are standing outside of the room. Your task is to map each switch to its corresponding light in minimum number of trips to the room. Initially, all the switches are turned off.

What is the minimum number of times you need to enter the room to complete the mapping of each switch to its corresponding light?

Source: *Logically Yours*

What Have You Been Reading During the Lockdown?



The Name of the Wind

Author: Patrick Rothfuss

The Name of the Wind is a fantasy novel that follows Kvothe on his journey to avenge his parents' murders. The story of Kvothe's quest for revenge is split into three books, the first of which explores how reputation and rumours are the strongest weapon one can have. The book has an amazing magic system that really drew me in. It is also extremely well written and the world-building is one of the best I have ever seen in a fantasy novel. I would definitely recommend reading this series.

- Vir Mehta

What Have You Been Watching During the Lockdown?



Dunkirk

Director: Christopher Nolan

Dunkirk is a war film set during the battle of France. It portrays the events after Allied soldiers retreat to Dunkirk. It follows Tommy, a young British private, who is the only survivor of a German ambush. *Dunkirk* transitions from a war film to a survival film as it shows the evacuation of British soldiers who get trapped in the harbours and beaches of Dunkirk. The movie was intense to watch and kept me on the edge of my seat.

- Sriyash Tantia

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