

CONTEMPORARY

FICTION

INTERVIEW

ARCHIVES

THE DOON
SCHOOL *WEEKLY*

Issue No. 2756

"I SKETCH
YOUR WORLD
EXACTLY AS IT
GOES" WILL I
HOPE, BE THE
MOTTO OF
THE DOON
SCHOOL
WEEKLY. MAY
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SCYLLA OF
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AND THE
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AND SET
FORTH ON
A LONG AND
HONOURED
CAREER.

WEEKLY

Acknowledgements

Beyond the countless hours the Board of the Weekly has poured into this Issue, there are certain individuals without whom this Issue would not have been possible.

Firstly, we would like to thank Ms Abia Qezilbash for her assistance in curating the articles and photographs credited to The Doon School Archives.

We would like to further thank Professors Nishat Zaidi and Harish Trivedi, Brig. RS Thapa (Retd.) and Shri Amitabh Kant for allowing us to interview them and for sharing their worldview and insights with the Readership.

We would also like to thank Mr Arjun Bartwal for his assistance in contacting the alumni fraternity and encouraging them to share their experiences in and outside of Doon.

The alumni fraternity needs to be further thanked for contributing to the Issue with their stories and wisdom.

Furthermore, we are grateful to Mr Ajay Mehta for his immense support in ensuring and upholding the print quality of the Publication over the years, with this year being no different.

Lastly, the Board of the Weekly owes its utmost gratitude to the entire School Community. It is the continued enthusiasm, support, and patronage we receive from you every week that drives us to deliver our very best throughout the year. The Board will also forever be indebted to those who came before us, and we hope this Issue will help uphold the tradition that our predecessors have worked so hard to set.

Note On The Issue

This Founder's Edition, celebrating the venerable ninetieth year of the School and the eighty-ninth year of the *Weekly*, stands at a point of collective reflection. It is important for us to look to the past for standards; and to the present for an honest account of practice and how well we uphold the legacy of what the *Weekly* represents. Early ideals are set alongside current habits. Parallels of memory are constantly leveraged throughout the Issue with contrasting opinion polls and a timeline, inspiring us to take a step back and see all that we have done.

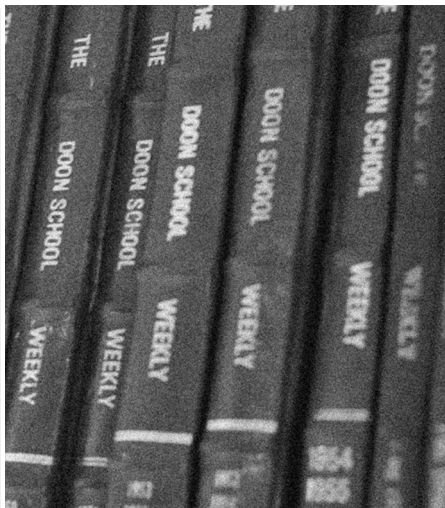
This Issue champions a minimalist aesthetic to draw the Readership's attention to the eloquence in the thoughts of each and every writer. It further includes the use of a varied range of art and illustrations, making way for the analysis and commentary of each piece to take the spotlight. Pieces on current questions such as censorship of speech and failing internationalism take centre stage, along with striking poetry that rewards deeper understanding and comprehension. The Issue also houses a short fiction section featuring a range of perspectives, from science-fiction and abstract narratives, to captivating alternate realities of the ongoing Founders celebrations. The outlook of the fiction section is aided through our findings from the Archives, which, with prognostications and humility, pose the question: where do we stand, collectively, today? Our Old Boys' section features alumni recounting their memories of their time in School, their thoughts and opinions on several subjects, all while drawing parallels between their School and professional lives through the "So You Want To Be..." section. To aid the clarity of the parallels drawn, a series of polls have been conducted to be placed against a series of polls taken over thirteen years ago with the aim of capturing the manner and extent to which the readership and School Community has changed. What emerges from this comparison is a living record of continuity.

Pictorial elements such as the iconic 'Dosco Doodle' have been kept constant throughout the Issue. The recurring visuals offer moments of levity amid the density of the Issue, grounding the reader in a familiar aesthetic that connects generations of contributors.

Each section and element chosen for this Issue contributes to holding the diversity of the *Weekly* true, with each being distinct in its own way. As an Editorial Board, it has been an absolute honour to be given the chance to uphold one of the only constants in the legacy of the School. In watching the *Weekly* and the School mirror and amplify each other, we have come to see that this Publication is a living pulse of thought, memory, and imagination, reminding us where we have come from and hinting at where we are headed next.

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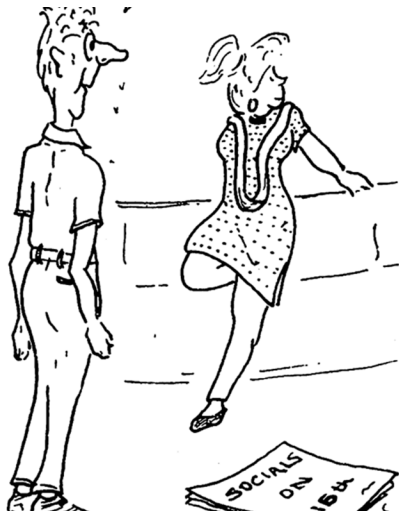
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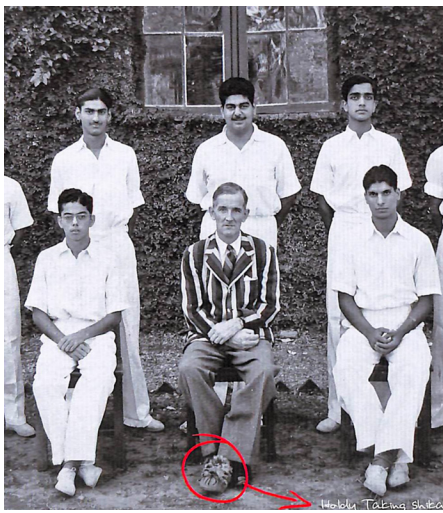
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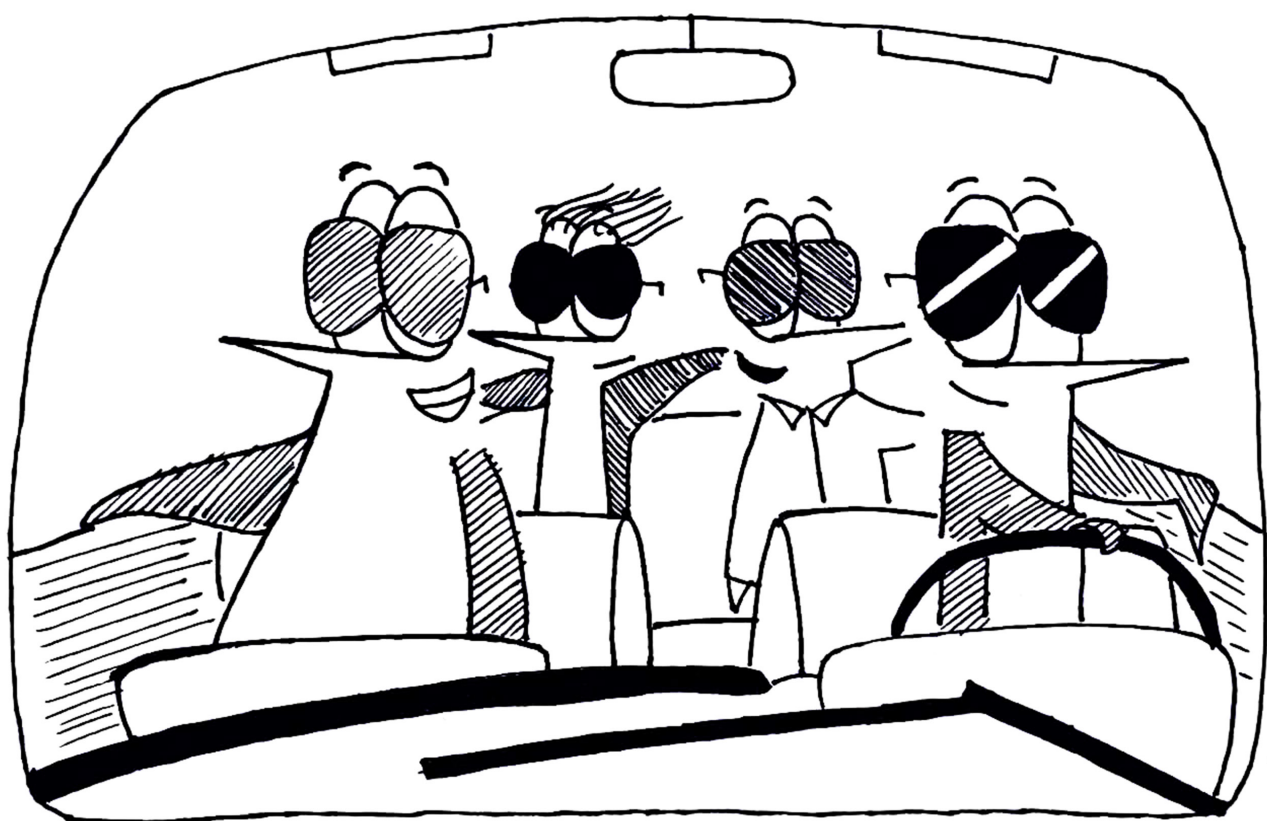


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Please Don't Be ME
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दून स्कूल के बच्चे
गुडरु लिखित

चांदबाग में गूँजती हिंदी
एकराज मक्कर और हृदय कनोडिया



*The comfort of the majority should never
silence the conscience of the few.*

The Doon School Archives

editorials

STUBBORN LOVE



Even the mightiest traditions began as small, stubborn acts, repeated faithfully. That has dictated the Weekly's legacy for over ninety years. It has been the willingness of a sore-eyed Junior on a Thursday night, the classes missed after Break on Fridays, and the desperate scramble to jot page-plan ideas down on the back of your hand. The end result of this restless accommodation is a few pieces of paper, a small anchor signifying the end of the week, only for the cycle to begin anew. While specifics change, the Weekly's story has mostly been one of stoic persistence and of the people who comprise its Board. Visions, focuses, and content have changed. The School continues to be made of the same bricks and mortar, yet it continues to evolve, and the Weekly evolves with it.

While it is easy to cast a cynical eye on whatever is happening in School and how it has inadvertently damaged the Weekly; I do not want to talk about that. Rather, assuming these things to be true, it is more pertinent to focus on questions such as: what is the Weekly, and what then pertains to the role of the Editorial Board?

The Weekly's purpose, I think, is to be stubborn; to publish even when no one seems ready to receive it. Because the final hope is that, perhaps someday, someone will be ready to receive it, and when that happens, the Weekly will reach the level of prominence I have only heard stories of. As I write this, I may be deluded by idealism. But if the Weekly worked at a grassroots level in aiding the stubbornness I had – to defend it to those around me, week after week – then I am confident that, over time, it will creep its way back into cementing its position as the heartbeat of the School Community.

The Weekly standing as truly stubborn means it remains unflinching to everything that surrounds it and creates a defamatory environment around it. It means that the stubbornness I had in making the

Weekly the marker of the beginning, middle, and end of my week – a stubbornness the Weekly itself instilled in me – becomes the defining temperament the Board and Readership are characterised by.

In essence, the Weekly is nothing more than a thoughtful and sincere effort. And that, I believe, is something anyone willing to put in the time and care can create. In the end, the final Issue, regardless of its quality, is a reflection of this. In fact, a predecessor's Editorial, kept in the dusty cupboard of the Weekly Room, put it best: the Weekly is a "labour of love." Despite the work, I could never despise it, and even after the toughest tests of willpower, the Weekly invites back.

However, in this self-proclaimed "love," the Weekly risks becoming a private pamphlet – the sole possession of the Editorial Board. This was a mistake I made far too many times – in thinking with conviction that the effort I put in always translated. It often didn't. Learning to take criticism, something I was unaccustomed to as a regular Board member, was the most important pill I had to swallow over the past year. While it stung, it was for the better. To set aside your ego while standing your ground is a difficult task. However, it is something you have to do, even if it causes you to fall out of favour with those around you.

In the end, love for something is not measured by how tightly you hold it, but by how willingly you let it change. My greatest hope is that those who follow us will love the Weekly enough to question it and make it their own. The layouts and bylines are formulaic and rigid, and so, it is easy to let them stay as they are. The Weekly may need change – and our stubbornness should be redirected from resisting change to ensuring it keeps evolving. To my own shame, I have often been the former, stubborn in my laid-out ideals for the Weekly, blind even to small things like the number of politically charged articles this year.

The Weekly and I

As is tradition, it is also my duty to talk about what the Weekly has meant to me.

That is a difficult endeavour, for my journey with the Weekly brings back a flood of memories: some mangled together by similarity, others standing out distinctly. Cajoling disinterested writers, desperately failing to lift the brown paper bag of Issues, and forgetting to send in drafts are the ones I remember best. But for me, the Weekly was much more than just another taxing activity. It gave me a purpose, an identity, and most importantly, refuge in a School where things move just a tad bit too fast.

When I first joined, I was petrified of speaking; my lisp basically reducing my self-confidence to nothing. So, for that unsure and unassured Krish, the Weekly was his voice, no matter how small his



Krish Agrawal

contribution was. Even when the world seemed to come crashing down, the Weekly's work was always there... faithfully.

As the years progressed, the *Weekly Room* grew even more cluttered, my height increased marginally, and Editors changed – yet the *Weekly* remained the same backbone for me. From the primordial instinct to gorge down food to reach meetings on time, to multiple late-night “emergency” proofreadings in Kashmir House, and a life in School that seemed to begin with Sunday page-plan meetings and end on Friday Break, with a purposeless limbo in between; when I tried to force myself to leave, I couldn't. The *Weekly* had given a voice to someone who once thought he would never be able to express himself properly. That is why I continued to pour my love into the *Weekly*, and why generations of *Dosc*os have continued to care about it rather than let it descend into obscurity.

I hope this remains the case for the new Correspondents who join the *Weekly*.

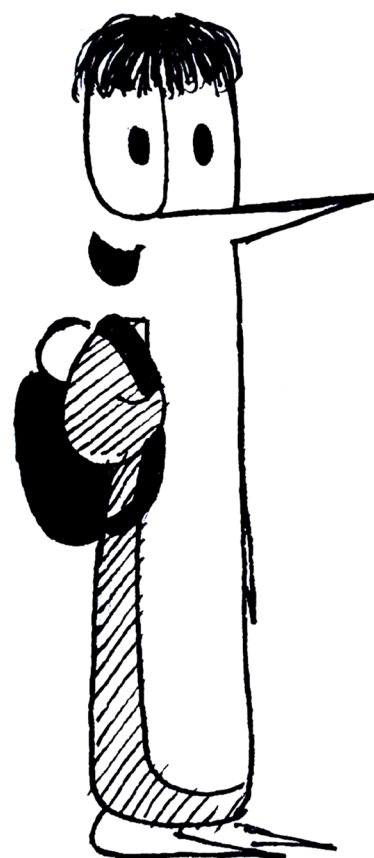
Concluding Notes

Before I conclude, I must thank the people who have made my journey possible. *Rathi*, my first Editor-in-Chief, for taking me in and instilling in me the confidence and care required to work for the *Weekly*. *Yashovat*, whose compassion and care taught me a great deal about leadership. *Vivaan*, for entrusting me with the privilege of leading something much larger than myself.

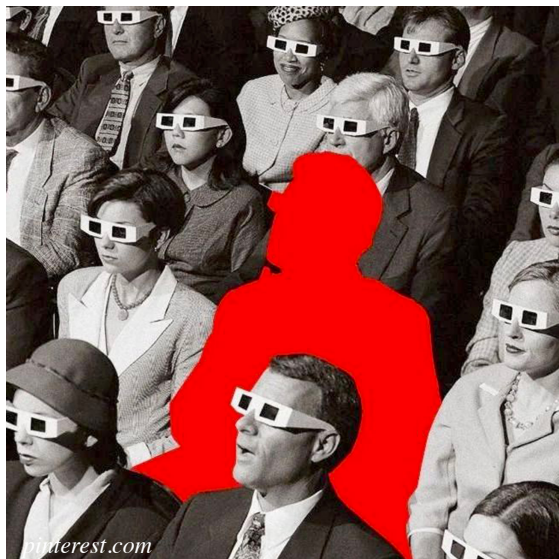
I am also indebted to PDT Ma'am for enabling and supporting me in all my improperly-picked battles and early run-ins while I was still wrestling with the ropes of being an Editor; STK Ma'am for her constant inputs and particular love for *Bammi's Week Gone Bys*; and SBG Sir, SVR Ma'am and SAS Sir for all their help with editing. KLA Sir, our dependable censor, who, despite our frequent clashes, always lent his support and believed in the work of the *Weekly*. Finally, I would like to thank RDG Ma'am for her efforts despite her rather recent arrival. To my Board, who, despite my constant demands of them, have remained steadfast in ensuring that the *Weekly* swayed steadily even in the most turbulent of waters – thank you.

Finally, to my fellow members of the Senior Board – the constants in my journey – while my views often differed from yours, I am glad you stuck by.

Ultimately, the story of the *Weekly* extends far beyond a person, a year, or any milestone. I will forever be indebted to having had the opportunity to write my line in a story whose pages, I hope, will continue to turn with clarity and purpose. As I hand over the baton, I am reassured by one simple fact: the *Weekly* is stubborn, not because it refuses to die, but because every year someone loves it enough to keep it alive.



IN THE MARGINS



It's quite puzzling as to why a Junior (me), at the whim of a Senior, bought into the ever-consuming role of joining the *Weekly*. I joined the *Weekly* because my Senior had asked me to help with the layouts, and I said yes before I really knew what I was agreeing to. In truth, I wasn't even sure if I belonged. I never imagined I'd have to contribute words to these pages, let alone write an Editorial. I joined almost by accident, more as a designer than anything else. I wasn't confident enough to give ideas. Even when I had them, I didn't know if they were good enough or if anyone would take them seriously. This insecurity characterised a large part of my early years on the Board, and I think it runs in my mind even today. Whenever the *Weekly* faced critique, a part of me always subconsciously took the fall for it.

At the start, my job was simple: design. Layouts, fonts, placements, and margins; things that made the *Weekly* look 'neat' without demanding that I speak too much or really do much of the 'editorial' or 'intellectual' work demanded of someone working for the *Weekly*. I was comfortable being the quiet one, hidden behind InDesign files and page plans, not the loud one throwing editorial ideas across the table. Even now, I'm still designing, still putting together the Founder's Issue, still fiddling with text boxes and image sizes. But somewhere along the way, something changed. I started to care.

It becomes important to understand why this 'care' magically appeared in me. My role wasn't a glamorous one or one I got pompous credit for at each dinner meeting. However, I felt in my own element. I realised how much each bit of missed spacing and typo got to me. Looking back, there were several things which could have instilled this in me, and I apologise for my uncertainty in pinpointing the one main cause. However, one of the things I can definitely credit the 'New Gana' to, largely, is the escape the *Weekly* gave me.

I began to care not just about whether a title was aligned or a page looked cluttered, but about the words themselves. I cared about what was being written, how it represented the School, and what it meant to contribute to something larger than myself. I started to pay attention to the conversations floating around the School, to the debates that filled the corridors, to the things that mattered to Doscos and Masters alike. Slowly, without even noticing, I moved from the quiet edges of design into the heart of what the *Weekly* really stands for: being a voice for the School.

In the process, this one 'designer' found his belonging and power within the delicate pages of the *Weekly*.

It started with noticing things I hadn't before. How an article carried the mood of the week, how one misplaced phrase could distort tone or how a title could change the way the School remembered something. The *Weekly* became a lens through which I saw School. And to help shape that lens, even slightly, felt like a responsibility worth staying up for. Now moving on to the second phase, or rather question of this Editorial. Sure, I started gradually finding my footing and started becoming more invested. Now, the questions I typically ask myself were: what if my idea sounds stupid? What if no one cares? In a room full of confident people tossing around sharp ideas, it was simply intimidating to raise my hand. There were weeks when I stayed silent, even when I had something to say. But silence doesn't last forever. Eventually, you have to take the leap. When I finally did, I realised something simple but important: it's not about whether your idea is perfect. It's about caring enough to share it, about caring for something beyond yourself; thereby standing for something beyond yourself.

But caring also comes with its cost.

There were weeks when the Issue came out thin, or uninspired, and it hurt more than I expected to know I wasn't contributing to the best of my ability. I remember once being told, "This idea is fine, but it won't work out." It stung, mostly because it was true. The *Weekly* doesn't forgive complacency. It teaches you to see how your small mistakes can echo through print, how every missed comma or bland report weakens something far bigger than you. To hear that someone didn't derive the same amount of satisfaction from the work I put out as I did working on it, it left a gaping hole in my heart. It always hit me deep inside.

And there's another truth no one tells you when you join: the *Weekly* isn't built on writing alone. It's built on guilt. On the guilt of knowing you could have written better. On the guilt of missing a meeting, of catching a typo too late, of falling short of the



Ganadhipati Aryan

standard set by those before you. There's an invisible pressure that follows you, the faint realisation that every piece you publish will one day be measured against ninety years of sharper words and steadier hands.

In my second term, I remember re-reading an old Editorial from 1964. It wasn't grand or poetic, just a short reflection by an anonymous Editor about "the difficulty of writing truthfully in a place that never stops watching." Sixty years later, that sentence feels uncannily familiar. Every Editor, since then, has wrestled with the same paradox: how to serve a tradition without being swallowed by it.

Looking back, my journey with the Weekly feels like a collection of these tiny moments. Staying up late to fix a page, giving feedback on a draft when I wasn't sure my opinion mattered, correcting an *Unquote*, or shifting an image by half an inch. None of it sounds significant, but together, they built my place here. They turned me from someone who thought he had nothing to offer into someone who understood that even the smallest effort counts. Because the Weekly, at its core, is built on small things. It's writers who are forced to squeeze in a piece after Toye, Editors who proofread for the third time just to make sure a comma is right, Correspondents who chase people for pieces, and Masters who still take time to give feedback. None of it is glamorous. None of it is easy. But all of it is necessary. That's what makes the Weekly special. It's not the grand controversies or the bold titles that define it. It's the quiet work that goes unseen; the hundred small efforts that, when pieced together, give us a paper we hold every Saturday morning.

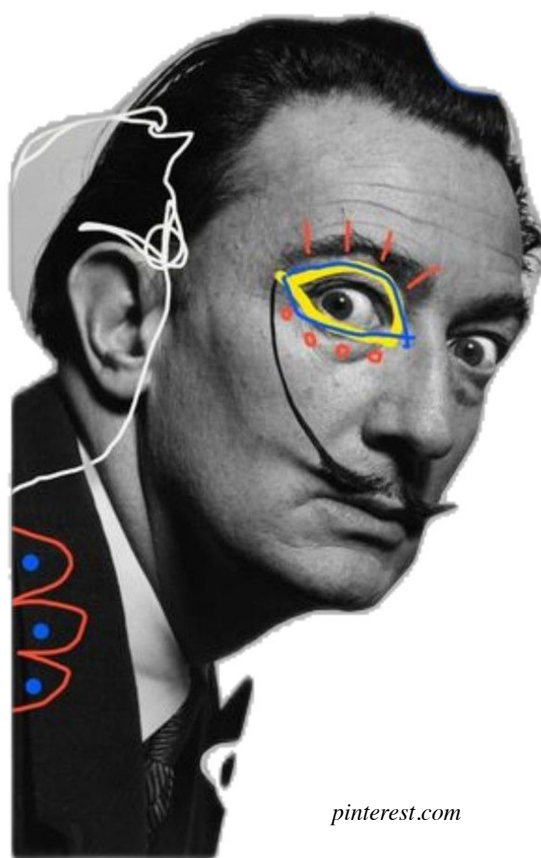
Even now, I don't consider myself the best writer or the most creative person on the Board. But I've learned that the Weekly isn't about being the best – it never was. It's about showing up when it's inconvenient, about caring when it's easier not to, about pushing a line one pixel to the left because somehow it just feels wrong where it is. It's about staying up, not because you have to, but because something in you refuses to leave it unfinished. Even now, I catch myself tracing the same familiar steps: re-reading an article one last time before it goes to print, wondering if we did justice to the week that was, the people who made it, and the institution that keeps it all breathing. And even now, after countless *Founders* Spreads and late nights, the same thrill returns – the feeling of belonging to something that outlasts you. To something that hums with life every Saturday morning, printed in black and white but living in colour for those who read it.

As I write this, I can't help but think how close I came to missing this journey altogether. If I had let my fear of being judged hold me back, I might have stayed a quiet bystander, just another student flipping through the pages at breakfast. But I took

a small step forward, and it changed how I saw myself and my place in this Community. So if there's one thing I want to leave behind in this Editorial, it's this: don't underestimate the power of caring. Whether you are a writer, a reader, a designer, or just someone glancing at the pages, the Weekly exists only because people care enough to make it exist. And the smallest act of care, a single article, a single idea, or a single late night spent editing, can make more difference than you think. And perhaps that's what the Weekly really is: a collective heartbeat that outlives each of us. We come and go, but everything the Weekly has stood for remains. Maybe that's the secret to the 'New Gana'. It is humbling to know that the Weekly doesn't belong to any one of us. It simply passes through us, gathering fragments of who we were, leaving us slightly more aware, slightly more human, before moving on.

So, if there's anything I've learned through these sleepless nights and imperfect issues, it is this: caring is both the burden and the gift. To care is to be changed. To care is to give yourself away, even in small, invisible ways. The Weekly taught me that. And maybe that's how it lives on through the quiet persistence of everyone who refuses to stop caring.

Maybe that's the ending, or perhaps it isn't one at all. Because the Weekly never really ends, only waiting for the next pair of hands to turn the page.



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MAY THE WEEKLY BE WITH YOU...

Foreword

While I care enough to want to write something meaningful, I also know that my inability to write something serious will let me down. So, I have decided not to be overly ambitious. Instead of trying to culminate a six-year journey into some grand sermon that must leave people inspired, and leave me looking like the ideal 'public school boy,' I am simply going to share some of my unedited, organic thoughts about the *Weekly* and its stakeholders.

I also know that most of you either do not care enough, or do not have the attention span to read much of this. It is highly likely you have stumbled upon this because you need a break from listening to speeches, or because you found this lying around at home and decided to give it a glance before returning to whatever it is you were doing. So, if I have managed to grab even a fraction of your attention, what follows is just me rambling on about this Publication and what it should ideally mean to different groups of people. Feel free to read the part which you believe suits you best. Personally, I'd say the entirety of it is worth reading, but that's just the narcissism talking.

For the Layman

The first Editorial I read was, as a layman, in D Form. It didn't make sense to me. I thought of it as nothing more than some nerd rambling on about the glory of some school magazine and its legacy. It has been almost six years since that day.

When my mother told me I should try writing for the *Weekly*, I rolled my eyes at her, thinking it to be lame. Even now I am not entirely sure what the *Weekly* is.

It is more than your average school magazine (in case you were wondering, that's *The Yearbook*). It is more than Inter-House reports and current affairs. These pages give the Community a voice – a place where writers pick up flair, and readers contemplate and conceptualise. Yet, it is a place that is slowly fading away.

For those not yet exposed to the *Weekly*, what you need to understand, is the value of what lies in your hands. Not just to us, but to the generations of Doscos who have served as caretakers of this esteemed publication. To put things into perspective, I think every single Dosco has given to the *Weekly* in one way or the other on at least one occasion. It's almost a compulsion. The *Weekly* is one of, if not the most, important things to come out of a school with a legacy as glorious as Doon's. To this day it tries to stand true to its purpose: being the voice of the Boys.

So, for you, dear Layman – enjoy this *Weekly*. Spend some time with it, and I'm sure by the time you finish reading, you'll have a fair idea of what it is about.



For the Dosco Who Reads (or Doesn't)

This may be the hardest part to write, because I don't really know what can be said about the simplest thing – reading. The main problem is that people don't really do it. It's quite *Tom and Jerry*, I feel. The reader blames the writer for not having written something good enough; the writer cannot blame the reader for not reading.

But the reader plays the most important role. The reader is the one who is informed, able to think and able to understand. At Doon, reading the *Weekly* should be one of the things that everyone remotely connected to this Community does, because it keeps you informed and tells you what those around you are thinking.

Let's clear something up. It doesn't make you cool to say things like "Who even reads the *Weekly*?" or "*The Weekly is boring.*" If you have a problem with what is being published, and you feel your opinion makes sense, then write about it. Every writer was once a reader, and bad-mouthing because you can't comprehend four pages of articles written by schoolboys won't get you anywhere.

I also think readers should read the right things. With every *Week Gone By*, *Roving Eye*, or humorous piece I've written, I've always been happy when people told me they enjoyed my writing. But what troubled me was that no one seemed to engage with articles that were heavier or more substantive in nature.

The role of the reader is to encourage the writer. The role of the reader is to provide them with an audience. It is to critique, not to criticise without having read anything. The most important Dosco for the *Weekly* is the Dosco who reads, because without an audience, there is no show.

For the Dosco Who Writes

Write not for the reader, but for yourself.

As a writer, I always felt burdened by expectation. It never showed, but as a C Former I worried that people wouldn't take me seriously if I didn't write well, and that Seniors would make fun of me and I'd lose the chance to write again. As a Board member, I feared being thrown out if my work wasn't up to par. And as a Senior Editor, whose literal job description



Kanishk Bammi

was “to be a writer, and to help writers,” I knew that if I wrote poorly, I wouldn’t be worthy of my position.

I could neither write poems, nor the most thrilling fiction. My Batchmates were always better at that. And that just increased the pressure. But I was funny. I liked writing the *Week Gone By*, and working on the *April Fools’ Issue*. So I did that, and I did it well.

What I’m really trying to say is: it doesn’t matter what you write about. You don’t need to conform to someone’s idea of a well-written article. You can appeal to the masses instead of a select group of intellectuals. Don’t feel pressured while writing. Just write. Find something you’re passionate about and genuinely interested in, and start typing.

It’s like this Editorial. I spent hours thinking about what to write, and while reading Editorials from past Founder’s Day editions of the *Weekly*, I realised something: I can write about practically anything I want to. It’s about me, my thoughts, and what I want to share. That’s the beauty of writing and the *Weekly* – it gives the average Dosco a chance to do just that.

You don’t need to be polished and flawless – you just need to offer perspective, and share your thoughts. That’s why the *Weekly* exists. Flood its inbox. Don’t be disheartened if something doesn’t get printed. Don’t stop writing. Worst case, you’ll have some practice under your belt before the day comes when you’ve got five college essays due.

For the Master

Being a Master at a School like Doon comes with immense responsibility. It is not just about showing up to the classroom with a lesson plan and a textbook. It means upholding the consistency of the *Weekly* and of the School, as Masters have done for the past ninety years.

It is hard to describe the direct role of a Master, but I would call it one of quiet strength. Yet, bureaucracy has caught hold of the unsuspecting Master. It becomes difficult, in that position, to stand up to what the institution pushes. Understandably so. But it remains imperative for the Master to act as the backbone, in the symbolic sense.

The Master needs to stand for the resilience and pride each writer has in every word, remaining consistent and true to what the *Weekly* has always stood for. In the face of a consistent decline in readership, being a backbone means breaking the surrounding narrative in the School Community. It means disrupting the trend of a lack of writers by contributing something noteworthy, and by engaging with pieces the *Weekly* puts out.

Whether or not there is genuine interest, it matters that the Master supports the efforts of the Editorial Board, matching the precedent set by the urban legends of earlier Masters who commented on, critiqued, and replied to what the *Weekly* produced.

This, at a grassroots level, pushes tutees and fosters writing organically from the D Form upwards. A very linear growth of writing can be encouraged, regardless of whether someone makes a conscious effort to read or write.

If a Master is reading this, I know it may seem odd to heed the words of a Dosco who has spent his time bunking the occasional class and stretching the School’s rules to their limit – but do reflect on what has been written. Support the *Weekly* for generations to come. By the time most of us on the Editorial Board realise its importance, we have only a few weeks left to work. You could be here for another decade. You are the most important – because the Layman, the reader and the writer are all inspired by the Master.

The End

There’s no denying it – the *Weekly* is a shadow of its former self. Perhaps that reflects the institution at large; perhaps it doesn’t. People wonder who is to blame for this. I say it’s everyone. The layman, for not being interested enough. The reader, for not being thoughtful enough. The writer, for not being confident enough. The Master, for not being responsible enough. And finally, us, the Editorial Board, for not being all of those things.

It may be off-putting to end this Editorial on a sour note, but I want my last contribution to the *Weekly* to be unlike any other – because sadly, that’s how I see the *Weekly* as I leave it. But still, it’s always nice to have someone funny and straightforward among a group of nerds, ‘scopats’, and pseudo-intellectuals.

So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish.



THE DANGEROUS PRIVILEGE OF NOT CARING

The Doon School Weekly is, in itself, an artefact that never blinks; that arrives every Saturday, stubbornly, as if to remind Chandbagh that the School's week can never be complete until it has been recorded, interrogated, and remembered via the agency that the *Weekly* holds. We have a relentless and persistent Editorial Board of teenagers hoping to serve this model precisely. It is, truly, the most dangerous privilege. A frail eighth-grade student inherits not just the Masthead, the Garamond font, or perpetual probation, but the weight of ninety years, or rather 2755 issues; each accommodating scrutiny, controversy, and reputation through a different lens.

But, to the many who become accustomed to the habit of seeing the *Weekly* on their meal table, the allure of it dies. And the *Weekly* becomes a routine; a privilege that can be ignored as easily as it can be revered.

To not care about the *Weekly* is easy. Too easy. And that is what makes it so dangerous. That is what risks the *Weekly* being caught up in a cycle of commodification, causing a deep-seated dread in each ambitious teenager.

The Privilege of Indifference

There are publications in School whose absence goes unnoticed; Issues delayed by weeks or months that provoke no outrage. This is not the case with the *Weekly*. When it stumbles, and its pages appear thin or perfunctory, there is an uproar — not necessarily spoken, but murmured in classrooms, joked about in the Main Field, whispered in Houses beyond Lights-Out. That is the test of a true institution: whether people care about it enough to criticise it.

But here is where the privilege creeps in. For even when a student does not read it, does not contribute to it, does not bother with its words, the *Weekly* continues. It does not collapse. It does not wait for their effort. It arrives anyway. And so, one can glide through Doon without ever giving the *Weekly* the respect it demands — without writing, without reading, without engaging — and still graduate under its shadow. That is a privilege, and like all other privileges, it blinds; unknowingly, intangibly.

Because the truth is this: no one deserves to be in the *Weekly*. Not me, not you, not anyone who casually assumes it is their platform by right. And that is the conflict every Editor, every writer, every designer feels: can my work live up to its past? Can my reception of the *Weekly* honour its effort? Can I be more than just “one” of the other thousand Board members?

Most of the time, the answer is no.

The Burden of the Name

The *Weekly* is named so because it must be — weekly. But that word is heavier than it seems. Weekly does

not simply mean frequency. It implies timeliness, constancy, and discipline (apart from the usual EBD mishap). It means that while other publications can afford to be ornamental, this one must always be essential. The *Weekly* must record what happened yesterday before it becomes irrelevant tomorrow. It must provide space for reflection before memory fades. It must choose truth even when truth is inconvenient, and print it before convenience dilutes it. And, it may seem uninteresting and banal, but that is what the *Weekly* should be, while perhaps aspiring to be innovative in its ways of bringing the daily to you.

Living up to such a name is exhausting. Especially for me. You see, I was never someone who could be associated with the label of the ‘Weekly kid.’ But, I was always amused by the sight of it arriving on Saturday, more so when I wasn’t in the *Weekly*, simply noticing my Formmates place it hastily on the meal table. I was inspired to be what I couldn’t, to be a part of the seemingly “elite” group of individuals here, and the pursuit helped me evolve and learn things about School in many interesting ways.

I remember the first time I wrote an article for the *Weekly*, an evaluation of Boris Johnson’s tenure as Prime Minister. In retrospect, it was perhaps my most meticulously planned piece. I obsessed over commas and chronology, convinced that if I misplaced even a single fact, the sanctity of the publication would collapse. Later that year, as a correspondent for a rather accommodating Editor-in-Chief, I discovered that the pressure was not lessened but multiplied. Now you do not just worry about your own words, but about every word entrusted to you. You inherit the responsibility of fairness, of tone, of ensuring that nothing slips through; nothing that diminishes the legacy.

And yet, no matter how hard you try, the pages sometimes feel average. A report that skims rather than questions. An Editorial that sounds hollow. A very basic design that does not capture the pulse of the event. The *Weekly* then becomes a reminder not of pride, but of inadequacy. That gap — between what the *Weekly* ought to be and what you can manage to make it — is where the conflict lives.

The Conflict of Falling Short

But, in my second year, the gravity of the Publication somehow diminished to me; of course, not to my liking. I did not stray from my hope to serve the Publication to the best, even if it did not seem that way to many at the time, even the Editor-in-Chief. I assumed a new role within the Board: the one who wrote articles fearlessly, and whose ideas and words had to carry more weight. Philosophical rants, commentaries on our nature and tendencies, or opinionated pieces on Doon. Nevertheless, an internal conflict was fueled when cartoon ideas



Krishiv Jaiswal

were constantly rejected; I couldn't contribute to the Issues as much as I would like due to my surroundings at the time. Certainly, I had strayed from the "ideal member" I aspired to be when I first joined the Board.

It is tempting to think of this internal conflict as temporary, as something that vanishes once the Issue is printed and stacked at the Nutritionist's office. But it lingers. For every member who submits a piece and contributes in a manner that fails to capture their ambition, there is a nagging voice: Was that good enough for the Weekly? There is this guilt: Did I betray the standard?

However, I have always held the Weekly in the right place: checking the Issue one hour before it has gone for print only to point out a grammatical error, writing a rather unconventional *Week Gone By*, or randomly dropping in to the meetings only to be convinced that I need to know more and immerse myself deeper in the process.

This is what makes the Weekly both beautiful and cruel. It offers you an opportunity no other platform does: to shape, in real time, how School remembers itself. But, it also forces you to measure yourself against ninety years of sharper minds, stronger pens and braver Editors. No one can live up to that every single week. The Weekly reminds us, sometimes brutally, that our writing is flawed, our diligence inconsistent; our truth partial.

However, that perhaps is the point.

The Necessity of Striving

If everyone deserved to be in the Weekly, then, it would mean nothing. Its exclusivity is not in who it allows, but in what it demands: a relentless striving toward betterment. The Weekly is not perfect, and neither are we. But its weekly rhythm forces us to attempt – again and again – to close that gap between what we can produce and what we wish we could produce.

Some weeks, we fail. The Issue is weak. The pages are uninspired. Other weeks, we succeed, and an Editorial or a satire sparks discourse that lasts days. The magic of the Weekly lies not in never failing, but in always returning. And, when we, as readers, skim headlines and ignore content, we weaken the very culture we depend on. The Weekly does not exist simply to inform; it exists to provoke, to be argued with, to be criticised, to be loved and to be hated in equal measure. It stands strong in reminding us that truth-telling, however flawed, must never pause.

This is why indifference is dangerous. Because to not care is to abandon that striving. That is to treat the Weekly as background noise rather than the heartbeat of School life. And when too many stop caring, the Weekly ceases to be a mirror. It becomes wallpaper.

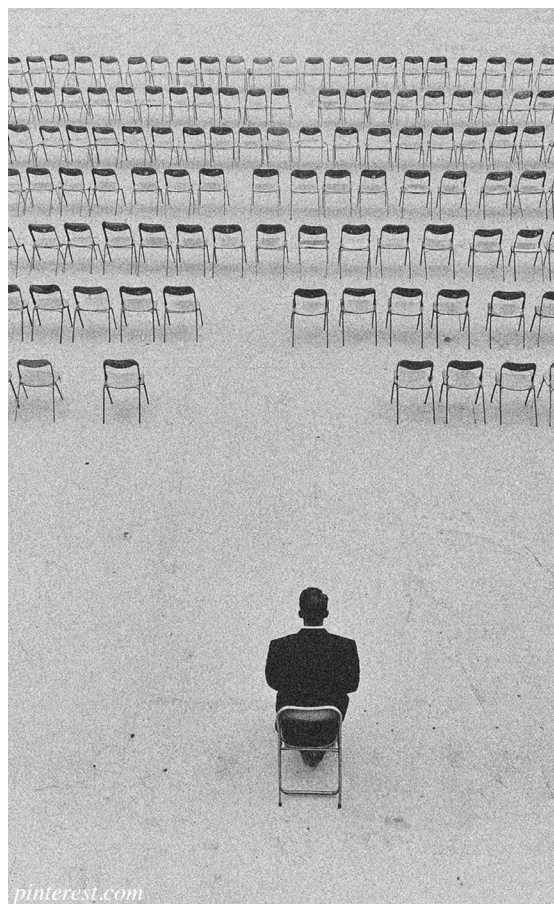
The Burden's Incidence

The truth is: the ship has sailed. It's now for you, my dear Reader, to decide what the Weekly should look like in an increasingly inconsolable world. For intentionally or otherwise, we too have moulded the Weekly to fit our liking: the sometimes irrelevant *Week Gone By*, the heavily-personal articles which can't be accessed by the community, the irrevocable comments passed on articles, or more importantly, the innumerable times we chose to stay quiet.

The dangerous privilege of not caring about the Weekly is the illusion that we can ignore the rhythm that defines School and remain unaffected. But whether we engage with it or not, the Weekly shapes us. It defines how our years here will be remembered. It captures our triumphs and our failures, our controversies and our silences.

So, when you next hold a Weekly in your hands, ask yourself: do I deserve this, an institution which many prioritise over their own trials and tribulations? The honest answer, most of the time, will be no. But, the act of asking, of wrestling with that conflict, is itself the Weekly's greatest gift. For in the end, we are all, whether we admit it or not, living Weekly lives.

From Sri Aurobindo to Harper Lee, this journey is one I'll never forget.



[pinterest.com](#)

weekly gone by

For Krish:

When I first met Krish, he came across as a quiet guy, a Senior whose interests lie in more solitary fields, like amassing general knowledge through random online quizzes. However, once you get to know him, you realise that he is someone who actually cares, offering invaluable guidance and doing everything in his ability to help his Juniors and the Board. In that way, Krish is someone who has, over the years that I have worked with him, always strived to best accommodate both the needs of the publication and those who constitute it. His openness and ability to disregard his ego when it came to handling the Weekly have made him easy to approach for anything from page plan ideas to 'advice.' The memories that I have made with him during my time on the Board are some that will stick with me even after my School life: from his binging of 'jalapeno poppers' during interviews to his midday 'goss' and very on-point impressions of his "G."

Through my three years on the Board, I have enjoyed working with Krish in all his roles and interactions with me: as a timid B Former getting to know an A Former, an A Former juggling studying for his Boards with reporting to an S Former taking charge, and now an S Former bidding farewell to his Editor-in-Chief. Thanks for the ride, Krish; I'll see you on the other side.

-Rafay Habibullah

For Ganadhipati:

At first glance, Gana might strike you as an apathetic copybara (or *Teddy* for those who know), with his casual gait, wandering eyes, messy hair, scruffy shirts, and that infamous stubble. But don't let appearances fool you, for once you peel back the layers of indifference, you'll find one of the most supportive and caring Seniors you could ever hope for; anyone who's had a late-night yap session with him knows exactly what I mean. Gana has a way with words: sharp, direct, and unfiltered – no cushions, just solid rock. But sometimes, not always (Gana to note), a reality check is exactly what we need.

During our induction into the Weekly, we were told that it is to be our girlfriend for the next four years. Gana took that a little too seriously. To this day, he calls the Weekly his first love (thankfully so, since we don't have a designer). And as for the second love... well, let's just leave it at *uhm, uhm*.

They say School is our second home. If that's true, then Gana has always been my second elder brother – the one Senior I respect, admire, and love unconditionally. For everything we've been through together, and for everything you've done for me, thank you, Gana.

-Ayaan Mittal

For Kanishk:

Having a conversation with him is hard. Not having a conversation with him is harder. If there's one thing I've learnt, it's that trying to describe him to someone else is pointless. It's very much like the line – "*You have no idea how Donna I am.*" With Bammi, you have no idea how *Bammi* he is. He is typically loud, unapologetic, and usually two steps ahead of everyone else.

But what truly stands out most about him is his unflinching boldness. Whenever anyone thinks, "*There's no way this works,*" and then it simply does, it's usually because he refuses to accept otherwise. That mix of cockiness and conviction is infuriating, but it's also exactly what made him such a force on the Weekly.

It was about doing things his way, and dragging the rest of us along until we realised we were better off for it. Yes, he took great pleasure in reminding you that he was right, but at the end of the day, he left behind a Weekly that is sharper, bolder, and louder because of him.

Beneath the bravado, there's someone who genuinely cares. Someone who listens when it matters, who will fight for what he believes in, and who, in his own chaotic way, makes the people around him better.

-Hrshikesh Aiyer

For Krishiv:

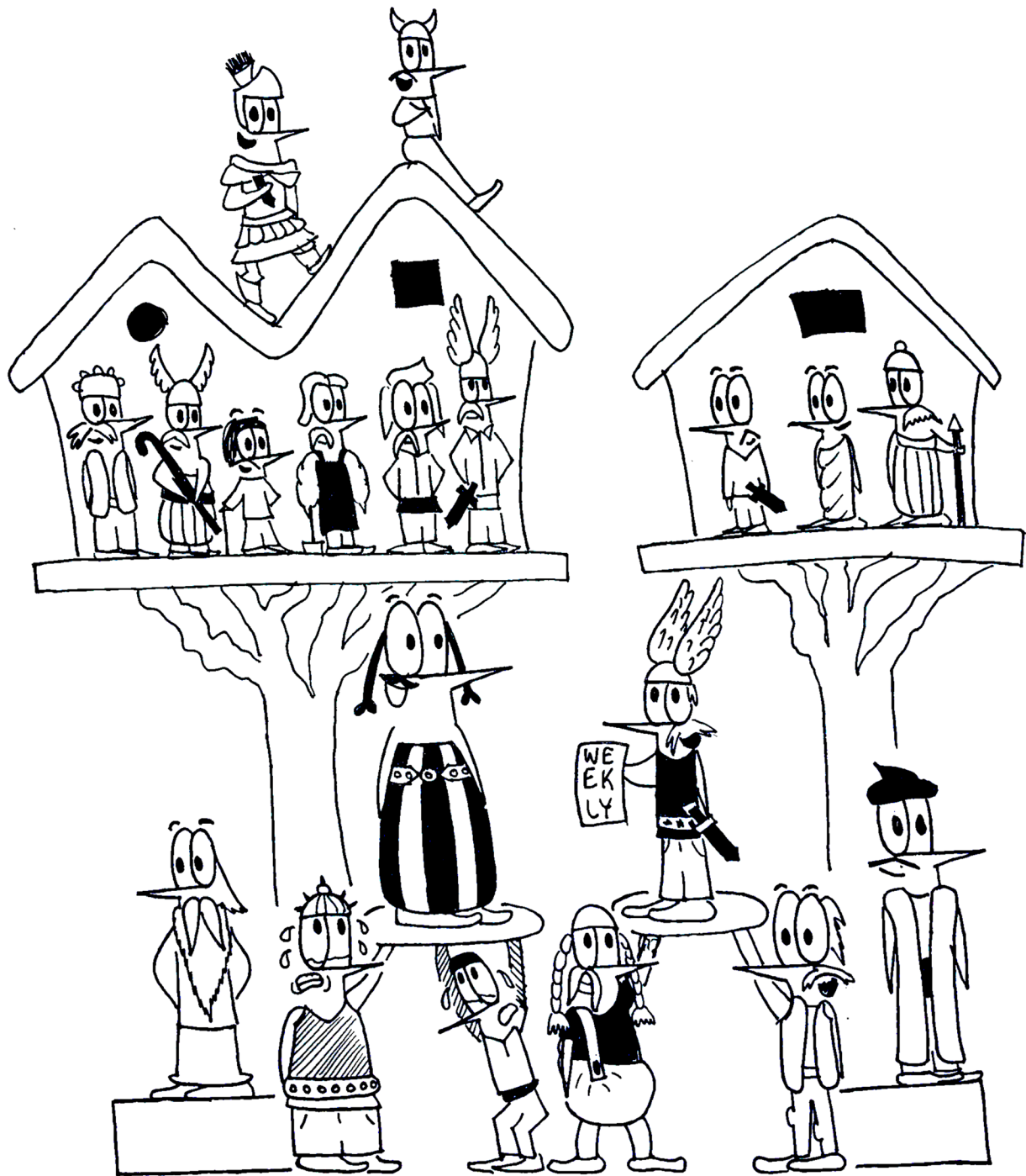
I am one of the few lucky people who joined the Weekly in my A Form. In my initial stint, I felt quite out of depth, overwhelmed with the work that others already seemed to know to do quite efficiently. Krishiv's sheer and palpable presence on the Board alleviated this in many aspects. His frivolous, instantly likable personality and innate creative talent in writing added an inspiring and colourful flair to Weekly meetings. Seeing him make my own passions feel recognised in a meaningful way. The friendly and warm environment he produced within the Board, which eventually permeated into everybody, will be cherished deeply.

Working with Krishiv means that you can look forward to a lot of spirited laughter, punctuated by his cheeky smile when he makes an 'inside' joke. He always has much to say about the affairs of School, and when he begins, he finds it hard to stop. His explosive last-minute pieces that the entire Board had to sit together to accommodate are examples of this.

It is notable how Krishiv remained ever-ready to help out a fellow correspondent at all times, whether it be last-minute edits on an article, or providing general motivation. As I reflect on our journey together, I am replete with gratitude for the conversations we had and the example of leadership he has provided. Thanks for everything, Krishiv.

-Rehnan Chadha





ONE SMALL VILLAGE OF
INDOMITABLE GNAULS

contemporary

[16]





The Sticker On The Helmet

Uday Thakran

The light drizzle gave little respite from the hot day. Steam lifted off the road as if the city were on fire. He waited at the red light on his bike, unnoticeable in a river of buses and SUVs. His phone glowed through a stained pouch. A new order slid onto the screen. He watched the little wheel turn and gave himself a grin when five stars blinked. The last customer had pressed a coin into his hand; it sat cool inside his glove. He lost himself in the thought of his family when a scooter swerved close. Someone leaned on the horn. Strange, he thought, how people watch crashes on a screen as entertainment, but look away when a rider wobbles right in front of them as if the man on the bike were an irritant; a delay to their work.

He rubbed the pale scar on his calf, where the exhaust had burned him last summer. He thought about the call he had missed from home and how he would have to say sorry again. He had promised to leave the late shift, to stop waiting for the good hours to appear like magic, but promises thin out when they are used too often. The boy at the counter said five minutes but meant thirty. He drifted to the side, under the shade of a half-shut shop. The fleet man stood there, cap low, ledger in hand. He saw the jacket and smiled. The man passed on a word about better routes. A hint about faster orders. A price, not spoken out loud. The rider nodded and pushed a folded note across. The man peeled a small sticker and pressed it to the helmet. It looked foolish yet important at the same time. The rider felt a ripple of calm. He sat on the curb, whispered his plan to himself, and let

the map tell him where to go.

Hours later, he rolled into his street, engine coughing. He was not sure if it was eight or ten. The city always sounded like nine. He drank water from a steel bottle; it sat in his stomach like a rock. He lay down on the mat with his shoes still on and watched the fan chop the air into thick sheets. A message from the app drifted across his eyes. "Great work, partner! Almost there." He turned the screen face down and kept still so that the ache in his back would not burn. A dog barked outside, then swallowed the rest of the sound. He slept with the phone resting on his chest.

He woke up to the sound of a whistle and the crack of a stick against his shin. A tired traffic cop stood next to him, pointing at the faded slip stuck to the bike. One piece of paper was handed over, then another. The morning suddenly felt heavier in his wallet. He hurried to the first pickup. The guard waved him to the side while cars slid in smoothly. The manager vanished behind stacks of steaming bags. He crossed to the back tap, and the cleaner shook his head. Not for riders. He knocked for the lift, and the man in the tinted car kept his face straight, jaw tight. Back on the road, heat picked at his neck. He said sorry at two gates and heard nothing back. He smiled at a child on a balcony who did not see him. At the tea stall, he asked for a half-cup now, payment later. The man pointed at a board that said what it had always said. This is a business. He touched the coin in his glove and walked away with a dry mouth.

Weariness pressed down on his eye-lids and the numbers in his head began to hum again. He looked down at his hands. These hands were the last thing he could spend. Hours could be stretched. Knees could be ignored. Sleep could be traded. The stars on the screen did not blink. The little clock did not blink. He remembered the fleet man's quiet line, said long ago like a joke.

If you are tired, there are boys who can ride for you. We handle it clean. Your name stays on the screen. Someone else does the moving. An advance makes the day soft.

He stood before he lost his courage and went to the same awning.

The man's eyebrow went up, then the smile came. A short call. A nod. A form on a cracked phone. Face here. Sign there. The plastic pen left a groove on the glass. The man took his helmet, wiped the new sticker with his thumb until it shone and handed it to a younger rider who had been waiting with a quiet engine. The boy pulled on the jacket. The name on the screen stayed the same. The body under it changed. The bike slid into traffic and was gone, his name moving away without him. He did not shout. He only watched once, as if he might catch his name and pull it back. The man pressed a thick stack of notes into his palm. He counted them with his lips, slow and careful, eyes bright with the neatness of it. His phone chimed. A new order flashed under his name, somewhere else, in someone else's hands. He slipped the cash into his pocket, sat on the curb, and returned to his quiet arithmetic.

Amitabh Kant is a governance reformer and a public policy agent, having driven key reforms and initiatives during his tenure as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) (2016-2022) and the Secretary of the Department for Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) (2014-2016), Government of India. He has been a key driver of flagship national initiatives such as Startup India, Make in India, Incredible India, Kerala: God's Own Country and the Aspirational Districts Program. These initiatives have repositioned India and Kerala and have widely been recognised as transformational.

Policy to Progress

An interview conducted on August 18 with Shri Amitabh Kant during DSMUN'25.



The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Countries like Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia see themselves as leaders of the Global South. What makes India different from them? How can we make sure this representation doesn't simply become a struggle for influence?

Mr. Amitabh Kant (AMK): We collaborate closely with Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa in a partnership that is both influential and cooperative. Two-thirds of global growth originates in the Global South, which comprises nearly 65% of the world's population, and so the emphasis is on partnership, not dominance. At the G20, India demonstrated an ability to work constructively not only with Global South nations but also with China, Russia, and the United States, enabling consensus on critical global issues and reflecting intellectual leadership in shaping the agenda. India also played a key role in bringing the African Union into the G20, effectively making it the G21. It has helped advance priorities such as accelerated growth, the Sustainable Development Goals, digital infrastructure, and green development. With GDP growth near 7.5% and now the world's fourth-largest economy, India stands out among Global South countries as an economic, intellectual, and political leader.

DSW: What should India's stance be towards aggressive foreign policies that attempt to

limit its growth and influence, and how does this reflect on our diplomatic stature?

AMK: Two points. Firstly, our ambition must be clear. Very few countries have grown rapidly in the post-World War II era. Japan did it after the war, Korea did it, even China has done it. Most others fell into the middle-income trap. India must avoid that and accelerate the pace of trade. Trade is critical as sustained growth is impossible without it. For trade to expand, we must become far more competitive in manufacturing. Logistics, infrastructure and energy sectors must improve. All of this is critical, as trade depends on it. Secondly, America is vital. It accounts for 26% of global GDP and nearly half of global market capitalisation, despite being only 4% of the world's population. U.S. retaliatory measures, tariffs, and restrictions linked to our oil purchases from Russia impact India's strategic autonomy. We must never lose control of our energy security. If we give in now, we will be forced to give in forever, so India should safeguard its autonomy while diversifying its markets.

In time, America will realise its mistake. For the past 25 years, both Democrats and Republicans have encouraged stronger ties with India, recognising that India is the only credible counterweight to China. Trump's policies are adversarial not just for India but also for the U.S. itself. We should take a long-term view. Eventually, the policy will be

Why should we worry when we have a billion people? Indians should go out and capture the world. By 2047, 30% of the world's skilled manpower will come from India.

reversed, and India will emerge stronger.

DSW: Should Indian educational institutions push students to see themselves as global citizens first, or focus on solving India's challenges?

AMK: Both. We must learn from the best global practices and examples, whether from Europe or elsewhere, and implement them here. India cannot develop rapidly without adopting the best global practices. At the same time, we must remain rooted in our civilisational values, heritage, and traditions. So yes, we should think as global citizens, but with a strong commitment to India's own identity.

DSW: Given that many forward looking talented individuals eventually move abroad, to what extent does that constitute brain drain?

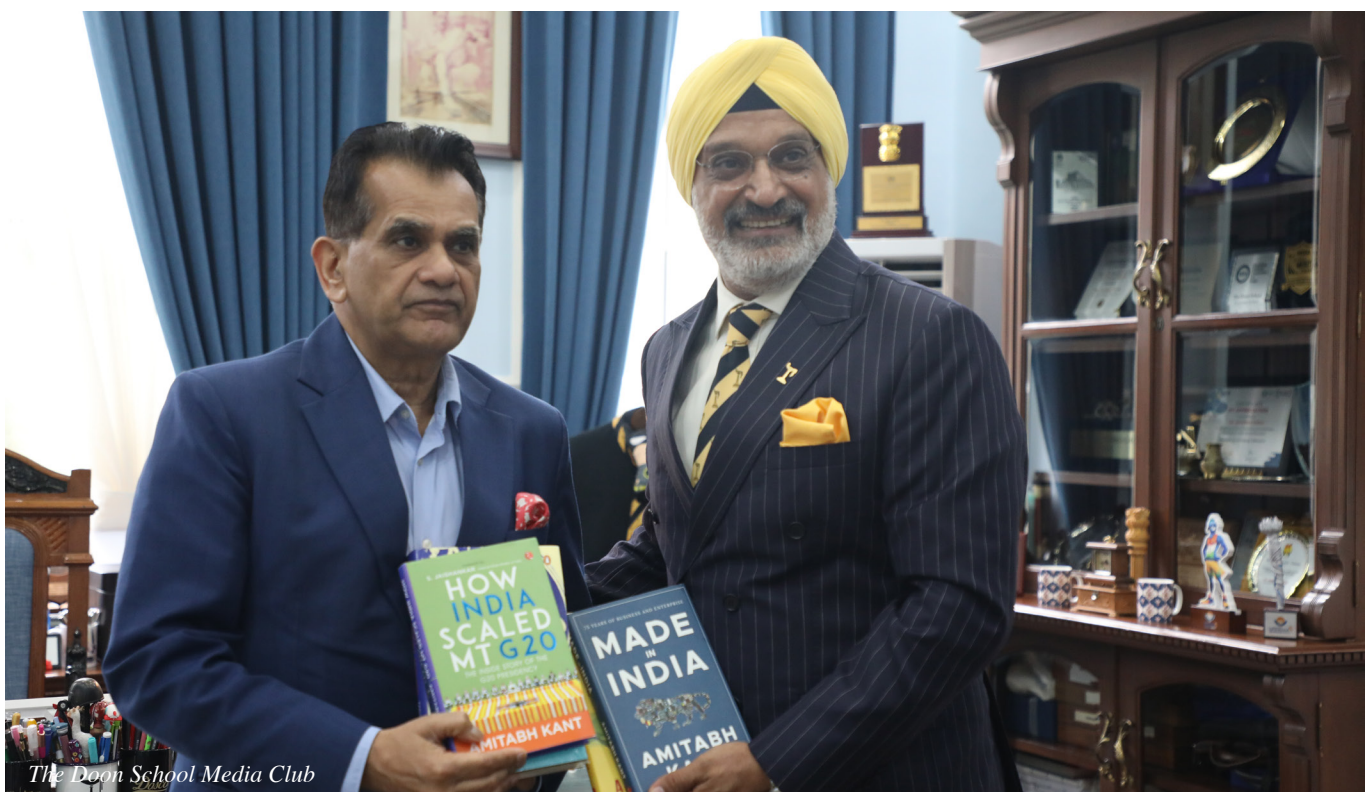
AMK: Why should we worry when we have a billion people? Indians should go out and capture the world. By 2047, 30% of the world's skilled manpower will come from India. But India must also create the best opportunities at home, through top-quality universities, scientific development, infrastructure, and

private enterprises. We must also clean up our cities — better air quality, more green cover, modern sewage and waste systems — so people enjoy a higher quality of life. If India grows at 9-10% annually, it will generate opportunities that retain talent here. People migrate because countries like the U.S. have built ecosystems around universities, research, and start-ups. India must build better ecosystems. If we create the best opportunities, Indians will prefer to stay and work here. Rapid growth and sustainable urbanisation are essential.

DSW: Soft power is often overlooked in India, especially among students. Do you think India has effectively used its cultural capital to extend global influence?

AMK: Not yet. Soft power is critical. India has thousands of years of civilisation, culture, art, and music. This heritage can be a powerful complement to our hard power. Growth must combine both hard and soft power to tell the Indian story. Tourism is one example: India should become a major global tourism destination, attracting visitors for its culture, experiences, and heritage. At the same time, in the age of artificial intelligence and data, we must build our own foundational AI models based on our data and values. If all AI models are based only on Western or Chinese philosophies, we risk losing control of our civilisational heritage. So soft power, through culture, tourism, and control of our data, is central to India's growth story.

If we give in now, we will be forced to give in forever, so, India should safeguard its autonomy while diversifying its markets.



Beyond the Page

Professor Nishat Zaidi

An interview conducted on April 23 with Prof. Nishat Zaidi, a panelist at The Doon School Literature Festival 2025.

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): You spoke about the problematic connotation of the term “vernacular.” When Indian vernacular texts are translated internationally, they are often framed through lenses of caste, religion, or orientalist views. How can translators resist reducing literature to just narratives of struggle and instead highlight a broader range of topics?

Prof. Nishat Zaidi (PNZ): In the global market, Indian literature, especially vernacular literature, is often sold to fit into predetermined categories. This is why authors who write theoretically complex or unconventional works, which do not align neatly with categories like caste, gender, subaltern, and so on, receive little attention. Many of these writers are among the best of world literature, but they remain underrated because their works are not ideologically charged or written as slogans to fit market demands.

As translators, we bear responsibility in this regard. The texts we choose to translate shape the image of Indian literature abroad. Every translator makes a choice, and those choices matter. When we translate, the idiom, tone, and the register of the target language determine what aspects of the text are emphasised. Unfortunately, many translations cater to market demand by selecting inferior works that reinforce narratives about caste, conversion, gender, or suppression. Translators must resist this trend by choosing carefully and translating responsibly.

DSW: There is a general trend of comparing the East with the West, or Europe with the rest of the world. But you have written about going beyond that. How do intra-Asian comparative analyses reshape our understanding of canon formation?

PNZ: Much of my recent work has been on this idea of transversal dialogues, that is, dialogues among peripheral societies without constant reference to metropolitan centres. The orientalist and even post-colonial approaches insist on passing everything through a European lens. For example, the way we understand history is shaped by colonial periodisation: pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial. This reduces over two thousand years of history into a colonial framework.

But there are other ways of looking at time. In Buddhist traditions, such as the *Jatakas*, time is cyclical; Buddha is born again and again, the same problems reappear, but with different solutions. The *Panchatantra* also reflects this worldview. The idea is that solutions depend on context; there is no single stock solution to a problem. This contrasts with linear colonial notions of history.

To resist the East-West binary, we must turn to these alternative frameworks of temporality and knowledge. Many African, Latin American, and Caribbean thinkers are also speaking of reconciliation, healing, and moving forward, acknowledging history without remaining subservient to colonial or neo-colonial structures.

DSW: Last year’s Supreme Court case showed how feminism in South Asia is often seen as an urban, elite concept. What would a structurally grounded,



intersectional feminism look like if it were to emerge organically from linguistic, caste, and rural contexts, rather than remaining only theoretical?

PNZ: Intersectionality has indeed helped acknowledge that gender alone does not determine marginalisation. Class, caste, religion, and other factors also play a role. Poor, rural women, for example, face challenges very different from affluent urban women. However, there is now a critique of intersectionality because it assumes these categories — caste, class, gender — are neat compartments that intersect. In reality, they are not so clearly defined.

Take caste, for instance. Within the Scheduled Castes, some groups have benefited from affirmative action and become affluent, while others remain disadvantaged. So even within a single category, there are multiple layers of inequality. That is why scholars are now moving toward the concept of entanglement. Rather than treating categories as fixed and separate, we must recognise their porosity and fuzziness.

DSW: You have spoken about post-colonial nations retaining remnants of the West. Today, neoliberal management in universities often suppresses dissent. Can universities still be sites for critical and controversial thinking?

PNZ: Universities are among the worst victims of rising neo-colonial capitalist structures. They are supposed to be spaces of critical thinking, which is precisely why they are under attack. And this is not limited to postcolonial societies; it is happening even in countries like the United States, once considered icons of liberty and freedom. There, too, dissenting voices are being silenced.

Yet I believe universities have an inbuilt strength, and the power of youth is formidable. Bodies can be controlled, but minds and imagination cannot. Thinkers will continue to think. Ideas cannot be erased. I believe this phase, too, shall pass.

Do or Die

Brigadier R.S. Thapa

An interview conducted on August 15 with Brig. R.S. Thapa, Chief Guest of the 79th Independence Day celebrations.

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Looking ahead to 2026, when female officers will graduate from the NDA and be formally commissioned, what message do you have for young girls across the country who seek a future for themselves in the Indian Army?

Brig. R.S. Thapa (BRT): Female officers are already present in the Armed Forces. It is only that they are now coming through the NDA and other entries.

My message is very clear: they are equally good and at times even better than the male officers. We must give equal opportunities to all women to be a part of this organisation, in various fields, and in all fields for that matter. In other countries, you find women not only as officers but even as soldiers.

We have now recruited women as soldiers in a few of our combat arms as well. Very soon, this will be expanded to other arms as well.

DSW: We have started to see the rise of non-kinetic warfare, including drones, cyber operations, and the use of electronic weapons. How does this balance against traditional warfare? Is the Indian Army truly adapting?

BRT: The battlefield is evolving. In Operation Sindoor itself, you could already see the shift; drones and cyber tools were used alongside conventional operations. Modern conflict doesn't mean soldiers charging across borders anymore, but it also involves information and technology. The warfare you recently saw is certainly the order of the day, and anyone who does not adapt to this current warfare technology will be left behind. This is also why we are giving adequate impetus to our drones.

DSW: In operations like Parakram, where there is uncertainty regarding engagement, how do you maintain morale and readiness amongst your troops when you, yourself, and everyone else seem to be unsure?

BRT: Before we launch any operation or deliberate action, the uncertainty is overcome. We do not launch any operation or send troops without being certain. So, yes, there are uncertainties in combat situations, but we have various means and actions to ensure that those doubts are overcome, the uncertainty is removed, and we have a complete, concrete plan with parameters that are fully known. Once it is launched, there could be contingencies, and we work on contingencies. That is also a part of our planning.

Morale completely depends on how you brief your men: the kind of information you give them and the planning you have in place. It cannot be built in the spur of the moment; it develops over a period of time.

That regimentation, that feeling of pride for your national flag — once that is developed, morale automatically follows. It's like in cricket: as a captain, how do you build morale for your team? To win, you have to first be at the forefront yourself, participate, give them a lot of training, a lot of coaching, and even pamper them at times. At the moment when they are being launched, they should go fully charged. That's what happens in boxing, in football, and that is what



happens on the battlefield as well. You have to keep them fully energised. When you have fully charged troops with you, and they will never look behind. They will always be ahead of you. They will never let a bullet touch you. That is the kind of leadership we look for, and that is the kind of leadership we inspire in people.

DSW: Is there any correlation between the success of Operation Sindoor and America imposing tariffs, particularly after General Munir visited the United States?

BRT: In a way, yes. Like I told you, interests are permanent. Allies may change, but interests always remain permanent. So, to maintain the stability that the superpowers want in this continent, they have to keep certain countries on their side. Look at the dynamics that are now playing out in the seas and in the oceans, particularly in the Asian region, like China.

To maintain that kind of equilibrium and to ensure definite support, they have to patronise someone, whether it is Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, or the Maldives. India is an emerging economy; economic success is what everyone strives for.

Even the United States is looking at India — we have an extremely potent market, we have the population, we have the industries, and we have the resources, especially human resources. So, yes, they are envious.

(Translates to “dying young” in Japanese)



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A Shallow Now

Daksh Singh analyses the paradox of expressionism in a judgmental society.

We live in a liberal society; a liberal society which rose from ideologies that epitomised greed. And as time progressed, man found a voice; a voice that had been gnawing at his brain for a long time; a voice that could no longer be held captive. It was a realisation, an awakening that led to inevitable rebellion. But to what extent do we deem this idea of expressionism — a core and glorified ideology of the current generation — harmful? It goes to the extent that, the line between the fearless and reckless expression of opinions, is blurred. A weapon once meant for the greater good has now turned rotten, and as they say, all good things must come to an end. A tool that was once meant to liberate us is now being used as thoughtless and meaningless provocation.

We live in a world where people’s views, so headstrong in nature, indifferent to reason and devoured by ego, go against each other. In this battle of opinions, a few take the limelight while the others are sidelined to suffocation. The majority, the like-minded ones, dominate the scattered minority,

monopolising their own agenda. “It’s my way or the highway.” The marginalised are then subjugated to the extent where they remain fearful of speaking up, given that they do not want to be further left out. There is this desperation for inclusion that takes us back to square one — ‘the fear of judgement.’

Under the same umbrella of herd mentality and fear of judgement, we find ourselves in a world where people speak to please, converse with hidden motives, and dare not imagine, shying away in the fear of judgment and reputation. As people remain divided in thought, unsure of whom or what to trust, torn between the seemingly irreconcilable differences between truth and reality, they find themselves in a world encapsulated by lies and pre-existing norms. A truly shallow now. A shallowness I experienced firsthand.

I vividly and quite often ponder over my time in Germany during the School-led exchange programme, and often, there’s an irresistible annoyance that swells up inside of me. Every time, I am struck by the uncontrollable shock — almost humorous helplessness — I felt when I noticed people walking alongside me, shouting and singing typical Indian songs, and often, leaning into harmful religious stereotypes. It was as if I had lost my voice to the bearings of judgment.

But the question that still lingers in me is ‘Why didn’t I speak up?’ I had plenty of time to dispel these incorrect perceptions and explain the reality, but the truth was, I frankly didn’t have it in me. I didn’t care enough to tell them the truth behind the layer of muck created by the media and others, that tarnished the very name of India. I didn’t want to get into a debate or argue with the Germans around me, or even express my opinions if it meant risking my reputation in their eyes. If that meant keeping my beliefs to myself, so be it. The pressure of being judged under the public eye consumed me for the worse, and I write this article not just as a way of unburdening the wrongdoing I committed that day, but to confront and express the irritation that continues to pick at my brain, unyieldingly. And maybe, just maybe, to plant a seed of change in your mind. Open your eyes, dear Reader, to never make the same mistake I naively committed.

The fact that I end up seeing ‘Challenge’ videos on YouTube, with titles like ‘I survived the world’s quietest room’, highlights the miserable state of the world around us; a world so reliant on notifications and updates to stimulate oneself and provide entertainment, that silence itself is the new form of restlessness. We have a dying need for entertainment, and that same spur has replaced reflection. It has limited our attention span, shortened our memory, and redefined mental capacities. We must value solitude and, unlike the status quo, not mistake it for loneliness. Solitude, though seemingly mild and, to an extent, a distant relic, is in fact very much like a bud. A bud from which the flowers of imagination and optimism blossom. In an already constricting society that directs the way our lives are to be lived, creativity and imagination find themselves scarce. Rejecting solitude withers them even more.

I remain in awe as I recall the times I used to play with my cousins in my hometown. In our desperate boredom, we scavenged for scraps and ingeniously invented games from scratch, all just to get rid of the ennui I used to loathe. But as I now notice tiny details that taint our youth for the worse, words can’t express what I would give to be able to go back to those times of boredom and tranquillity.

This is exactly what makes the present so shallow. Not the lack of voice, but the noise that swallows it. Not the absence of freedom, but its misuse. Not the dearth of ideas, but the fear of silence under which we crumple.

Are We Listening Enough?

Mr Manu Mehrotra (MMR) evaluates the relationship between attention and listening in today's age.

"Aaj-kal ke bacche baat nahin sunte..."
Common rant!

The heart of the matter while listening is attention; its quality, span, and distribution across the many modes of communication that now shape our lives.

Attention Across Modes

Listening was once the primary way of learning and sharing. From the oral traditions of *śruti*, to the classroom lecture, knowledge flowed through speech and was received through concentrated attention. To listen was to know. That is how I remember learning both in and outside of the classroom, whether it was my physics teacher, Mr Suresh Pal, teaching me, or my mother showing me how to buy vegetables and fruits.

However, the modern world is layered with alternatives: podcasts, videos, chats, reels, forums, and interactive platforms. Each mode endeavours its own demand for attention, requiring us to adapt in different ways: a ten-minute video can hold us with visuals, an audiobook depends on imagination; a text message requires brevity, and a long seminar asks for endurance. The question then, is whether we are attentive enough across these modes. Do we give each form the focus it deserves? Or does divided attention dilute our ability to absorb meaning deeply in any one of them or all of them?

Comparison Across Generations

It is tempting to compare one generation's listening habits to another's. The claim often heard is that attention spans today are shorter than they used to be. I think that such comparisons are misleading. Each generation has had a different "pie-chart" of exposures and needs. A student in the 1970s might have listened to a two-hour lecture without interruption, because there were fewer competing modes. A student today may divide attention between multiple sources — short videos, podcasts, articles, each serving a distinct utility.

The real reflection should not be about one generation versus another. It should be about whether, within the same generation, people adapt their attention to make the best possible use of the modes available to them at any given time. Are we shaping our habits to maximise understanding, learning, and connection, or are we scattering attention too thinly across various demands?

This makes, "are we listening enough?" a more personal question. Perhaps, it cannot be answered at the level of societies or generations at all. Instead, it becomes a reflective exercise for individuals or small, homogenous groups. Each person, each class, and each workplace might ask: are we giving enough attention to what matters most in our own context? Are we truly present when a friend confides in us, when a

teacher explains a concept, or when a colleague outlines an idea?

Listening, then, becomes less about measurement and more about self-awareness. It is about noticing whether we are fully there for the moments that require us.

Why the Question Still Matters

And yet, despite these nuances, the question refuses to go away. Why does it persist? Why are we still compelled to ask, "are we listening enough?"

The answer lies in the fragile status of listening among the modes of communication available today. Reading, watching, and speaking have all found ways to adapt to new technologies. Listening, however, demands stillness, patience, and humility. It is slow in a culture that prizes speed, quiet in a world that rewards loudness, and self-effacing in an age that celebrates expression.

That is why listening may as well be the most endangered species of all our communicative skills. And that is why the question matters. To protect listening is to protect the very possibility of empathy, genuine understanding and connections that run deeper than words skimmed on a screen.

So perhaps the question was important after all — not in its literal sense of measuring how much we listen, but in reminding us that listening itself needs attention.





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Beyond Grades

Dr Jagpreet Singh (HM) comments on the importance of ethics in school settings.

Should I get **ChatGPT** to write my essay?

Should I **falsely accuse** my classmate of stealing so I'm not caught?

Should I pay to **buy the question paper** for the government recruitment exam?

Should I stuff their **pockets with bribes** to win the lucrative contract?

Or...

I will tell the teacher that **I broke the box of test tubes** in the Chemistry lab.

I will stop the new boy from **being bullied**.

I will teach our cook's daughter to **speak English**.

I will **develop an app** that links artisans to buyers.

So, what sort of child will emerge from our schools and colleges? The former or the latter? What sort of citizens are we teachers and educators creating? What sort of minds and personalities are we moulding? We know that education is the bedrock on which the human race grows and progresses, but the weight of the academic syllabi compels us to concentrate primarily on study sessions and examinations – because the children must become employable. While this viewpoint is valid, as every student must eventually follow a successful career path, but at what cost do they? The dual pressure of ambition and competition far too often results in people choosing a somewhat twisted path where morals, ethics, rules, fair play, compassion, and respect for the law, are thrown by the wayside.

Expediency and pragmatism are the reasons given for such options. "You can not do business in this country if you have high moral principles." "Everyone else is breaking the law – if I don't, I'll be left behind." "Expertise is of no use. You only need money and contacts." "Just make sure you don't get caught." How often do we hear these statements from financially successful people who have all gone through our education system? Where did we fail them? What did we not teach them?

Value or values-based education

The remedy lies in value education, or values-based education, which is a system of education where academics is bolstered by a clear focus on developing a student's value system. At one time, many schools had a subject called Moral Science, in which morals and values were taught, but the sessions would become so preachy that most students tended to zone out, especially as there were usually no marks or grades attached to the subject. For decades now, there has been very little headway made in true value education.

The question then arises – can values be taught throughout a child's educational journey in School? Yes, they can, when teachers and administrators teach the finest values – by example. By their behaviour and the choices they make, they send out clear morals and values that each student can recognise and imbibe. When students see their teacher treating each of them fairly, without playing favourites, they learn a value-based lesson. When they hear of a teacher who visits a slum in their free time to coach the children there, they learn a value-based lesson. When no teacher in a school ever mentions religion, region or caste as factors in their judgement of people, the students learn a value-based lesson. Through their everyday behaviour, conversations, and story-telling, an empathetic teacher can impart a plethora of values, and be an active practitioner of value education.

A teacher plays a pivotal and transformative role in imparting value education. The basic need is to instil qualities like honesty, empathy, compassion, inclusivity, and justice. The children must be taught self-awareness and the importance of a moral compass. While their responsibility to their community and to their own selves has to be inculcated early on in their impressionable minds, they must learn impulse control and develop the ability to stop themselves when on the verge of committing an unsavoury act. They must understand and accept that there are completely ethical ways to earn a good living, without feeling envious of the rich. Worshipping and chasing wealth and fame should not become the primary aim in the minds of our children.

Changing times and changing lives

We are all horrified when we read of a student stabbing another to death, or students caught molesting defenceless girls. These incidents can be justified by labelling them as

exceptions — a few bad apples — but these cases seem to be on the rise in the past few years. Some commentators explain this away by saying that such cases were always there, but are now being reported much more, thanks to technology. This is only partly true. Yes, we have many more channels to learn about such incidents, but the incidence of wrongdoing has undoubtedly increased. Technology itself has opened the doors to the underbelly of society by placing a powerful device called a smartphone in the hands of the young. This device is more powerful than the technology that took man to the Moon, and should be used primarily as a means to access knowledge and usable information. Instead, it is used to spew forth all forms of harmful communication through reels, games, chats, and more. Children from every section of society get access to such corruptive influences, many of whom do not have parents or elders to provide a guiding hand.

Today's teachers need to play a bigger role in the lives and mindscapes of their students, simply because these technology-driven influences are so pervasive. They have to get increasingly familiar with these channels or apps — so they speak the students' language. They should adapt to the arrival and development of new digital applications and they have to learn from their students what sort of effect the digital exposure is having on them. Continuous communication in an open way, and giving students a safe space to talk has become extremely important.

The 21st century educators have to use their critical faculties and their creativity to be able to combat the negative flows of ideas and the toxic flows of mind control. There are millions of so-called influencers, gamers, and chat hosts who aim for the students' minds, simply because that is their revenue stream. For the student, everything is free, no money outlay required, but they are paying a huge price by getting dumbed down and, worse, by making unconscionable acts not just acceptable, but desirable.

Introducing value education lessons in the curriculum

The idea to combat today's unique challenges and encourage value education is to demarcate short periods of time in the school timetable dedicated to value education. It could be two periods a week, the last ten minutes of two periods a day, or something similar. The task of the teacher would be to either speak on a chosen topic or spark off a conversation in the class. The subject could be inspired by a news report, an event, or an experience related by a student and so forth. The students could then discuss the moral and value-based parameters of the subject and tell the class how they would react to a situation in real life. It is very important to make the students feel safe in expressing their thoughts, ideas, fears and dreams. The teacher must not be seen as a source of censure or judgement, but someone the students can open up to. The teacher must be a confidante, a story-teller, and a wise guide.

It does not matter what sort of school we are talking about, whether run by the government or a private institution. Such steps can be taken at any school where the faculty not only cares for their students but is also anxious about the kind of psychological environment the students are living in. It is obvious that the pressure on the faculty is very high for their students to obtain high grades in the Board exams — that is the demand of every parent. But the teachers, heads of school, administrators and parents must be equally convinced as a community that value education is at least as important as math lessons, if not more. As a functioning adult, most people would find less use solving binomial equations than learning how to tackle a demand for a bribe.

We often wonder what sort of world we are leaving for our children. Every aspect of life seems more complex, each decision has to evaluate endless options, and each path is crowded by hordes of other competitors. We now see that political decisions have a far greater and more immediate impact on our lives and the lives of our children than ever before. There are many more opportunities for success but also many more pitfalls for failure. Today's children are facing economic volatility, climate crises, political upheavals, and a high level of uncertainty. Their dreams and aspirations are sky high, but disappointments and disillusionment can also follow. No parent can insulate them from these realities and no parent should insulate them. The children have to make their way in the world on their own steam, fuelled by their own strength. Their parents and teachers have to equip them with the moral and intellectual abilities to help them make the right decisions for themselves and for the world.

If education is the tree of life, growing forever upwards, then value education and values-based education are the roots which must be strong, nourishing, and supportive enough for the tree to flourish. Let our children's paths be lit by the finest values and their compass be a moral one. Only then can we hope for a better future.

**The children
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Dwellers of Dystopia

Ayaaz Ferozi examines the impacts of perspectives shaping the actions undertaken by society.

Before 1991, a land of control, suppression, and authoritarianism used to exist. The U.S.S.R. was a country infamous for its tight grip on narrative and optics, directly influencing perceptions across the country. They had brilliantly created a cage to contain and concentrate control. Citizens could not criticise or speak about the policies of their own government for fear of being labelled as 'traitors' by society. People were devoid of the ability to analyse critically, think independently, and make decisions freely. Today, few nations resemble the iron-fisted U.S.S.R. Yet most of us, even in this so-called 'free society,' subtly live under a new form of tyranny: the tyranny of comfort, conformity and distractions. The *gulags* are gone, but the prison remains, built not of barbed wire, but from the depths of our own minds.

The world has 8.2 billion people — people with their own families, friends and lives. Out of these billions of people, how many of them do you think paved their own destiny? How many of them led a life which they could be proud of? How many questions of theirs would be left unanswered? These kinds of answers do not lie in newspapers, books and research papers from prestigious universities. They don't lie in the information people get from sources that only give half of the story. But this isn't an article about how fake news shapes perception; it's about analysing the how's and why's as to how it happens in the first place, and how the aftermath leads to something deeply rooted in our psychology.

Imagine rushing back to your Housemaster's study after the Golden Night dinner to collect your phones. The first instinct the Doscors, in status quo, generally have is to check their social media and other updates. Then come our doomscrolling sessions. During this time, we end up coming across various forms of media, most of which are unverified, censored and harmful. Now the consumption may be convenient, which in fact is the best bit, but its verification certainly isn't. This forms a gap, a gap that causes conformity.

Conformity is comfortable, and that is why it is dangerous. Opinions are now spoonfed, and slow questioning is becoming unnecessary. We tend to believe that we are informed, but the truth is that we are aligned. Aligned with the narrative that is the easiest to accept, the hardest to question, and the most believable. This is the modern tragedy humanity faces:





A society that doesn't need silencing — a society that silences itself under false perception and the pressure of dominating narratives.

Conversations no longer have crossroads or disagreement; rather, what they have are desires for validation. If someone disagrees, they risk isolating themselves, so they choose to nod along or stay quiet, sowing the seeds of submission deep within them.

The prison we live in is ever-growing, and the more we nod along, the more power it gains.

The U.S.S.R. censored its people by force. Our dystopia does it by choice. When chains are visible, breaking them is still possible. But when they are invisible, woven into our habits, our screens, our own desire to belong, we do not even notice that we are bound. Once compliance becomes the default, freedom is not taken from us; it is surrendered by us.

The danger of this silent dystopia is not simply personal; it is civilisational. A society that ceases to think critically is easy to rule and even easier to manipulate. Democracy cannot thrive on citizens who parrot headlines; it demands citizens who question, analyse, and debate. Without this, elections become spectacles, policies become slogans, and leaders become entertainers.

The same applies to creativity. True art emerges from the courage to question and to disrupt. If everyone aligns in their thought and actions, everything begins to look and feel the same. A society of conformists cannot produce visionaries. And perhaps the most chilling consequence: truth itself begins to dissolve. When perception is endlessly shaped by algorithms, truth is no longer what is real; it is what is trending. In that sense, our dystopia may be far more enduring than the U.S.S.R.'s, for it colonises the very ability to distinguish fact from fiction. If the prison is invisible, how do we escape it? The answer is not in destroying technology or abandoning society. It is in choosing discomfort over conformity.

First, we must reclaim the act of questioning. Every time we consume information, we must pause: Who is telling me this? Why are they telling me this? What do they gain if I believe it? Such questions may not always lead to answers, but they create resistance, and resistance is the first crack in the walls of conformity.

Second, we must embrace disagreement. A healthy society is one where people can debate fiercely and still share a meal afterwards. Disagreement should not be feared; it should be welcomed as proof that people are thinking for themselves. Validation feels good, but it does not build strength. Resistance does.



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Consensus Is Not Clarity

Hrishikesh Aiyer discusses self-censorship in speech today.

There is no preamble here. No disclaimer, no distancing irony. This is not about being balanced, and it is not about being brave. It is simply about being honest. And honesty, especially now, feels harder than it should. The spaces that claim to be progressive and value the justice of the spoken word, under the pretexts of equity and inclusion, have become some of the most rigid and unforgiving.

We are told we live in a more informed era, one where fairness and awareness are the basic tenets of a free society. But the truth is more uncomfortable. These ideals have calcified into norms of speech, behaviour, and alignment, both socially and politically. They no longer function as values but as doctrines. You either hold the correct consciousness, or you fall outside of it.

Having spent three weeks in blue-blood Boston, I was struck by how quickly I felt out of place. The city runs on a shared set of values and assumptions that are easy to miss until you say something that does not fit. People were polite and often friendly, but the pressure to speak a certain way and agree with the general mood never faded. It was not about being

forced into submission; rather, it was about knowing that if you said the wrong thing, even by accident, you would be marked as someone who did not get it. Someone who was part of the broader problem.

I found myself holding back parts of who I am, especially the more conservative views I grew up with. Not extreme ideas, just beliefs about tradition, personal responsibility, cultural preservation, or even caution around rapid change. These were not welcome in most conversations. I did not feel attacked, just quietly excluded. So I stayed quiet. It felt safer. Over time, that silence did not feel like a choice anymore. It felt like the only way to stay in the room.

I have always believed that difficult, honest, and sometimes raw conversation is what allows society to move forward. Growing up in India, issues like caste, religion, and inequality were part of daily life. Disagreement was common, but not always divisive. People argued, sometimes with aggression, but they did not always assume malice.

The shift in how “woke” is used reflects that change. The phrase “stay woke” once implied vigilance towards issues that plagued society. It was advisory. It encouraged self-education so that those who were marginalised could get the mainstream attention they required to break free from that very marginalisation. But that spirit of self-questioning has vanished. What remains is a posture. The phrase now polices rather than warns. It assumes truth is already settled, and disagreement is either ignorance or hostility. This has fueled a political culture with little room for interpretation or error.

Terms like ‘lived experience,’ ‘decolonise,’ ‘allyship,’ and ‘privilege’ were created to point out real problems of exclusion and inequality, problems we also see clearly in India. But now,

It assumes that the truth has already been settled and disagreement is either ignorance or hostility.

these terms are often used to decide who belongs within the moral fabric, and who does not. In modern, visible, urban, and pseudo-Western Indian settings, this language is often used without much understanding of its background. Phrases like “Savarna fragility” and “cis privilege” surface constantly, but they are rarely connected to India’s own history of struggle and resistance.

Take “cis privilege” for example. The term originated in Western conversations about gender, pointing to the advantages non-transgender people often have. But in India, gender roles are shaped by caste, religion, class, and region. The experiences of cisgender people here are not all the same. India also has a long history of gender diversity, like the hijra community, which do not fit neatly into Western terms. Still, “cis privilege” is applied as a fixed label, as if it means the same everywhere. It often becomes a quick way to judge someone instead of a way to understand them.

We are encouraged to use the correct words, but not to fully understand what they mean. These terms shut down questions. Instead of asking “*What do you mean?*”, I am forced to ask “*Do you believe the right thing?*” To prove that, one must say the right words in the right way.

Philosophically, this is dogmatism. Karl Popper warned of the paradox in open societies: that a society tolerant of everything may end up intolerant of dissent. But the current mode takes that paradox further. It creates a new intolerance, not in the name of bigotry, but in the name of solidarity. In doing so, it collapses the difference between honest error and harm. All deviations are treated as threats to the moral fabric of the group.

The historical irony is that many movements now rigid were

once flexible. The Civil rights movements, both in the United States and in India, were rooted in contestation and argument. Ambedkar’s writings, for instance, directly challenged Hindu orthodoxy. He did not ask for protected feelings. He demanded accountability. But today’s activism often avoids such direct confrontation at the grassroots. Instead, it centres on interpersonal conduct and emotional alignment. Justice becomes an aesthetic of behaviour. In such a setting, the line between personal failure and political transgression blurs. A poorly timed comment becomes ideological intolerance. A difficult article is labelled as dangerous. A sincere question is read as hostility. The result is defensive thinking, careful speech, and a faulty intellectual compass. People speak less, think less, and trust less. Conformity becomes the goal.

What is most frustrating is how disagreement is framed. It is no longer part of the learning process; it is seen as disloyalty. There is no space for the kind of “agonistic pluralism” Chantal Mouffe described, where conflict is managed through structures of respect. Instead, the model is binary: friend or enemy, ally or aggressor. This reduces our capacity for ambiguity, for patience, and for change.

In India, silence has long protected injustice. Yet, this new culture does not empower people to speak more. It trains them to speak “correctly.” The result is a nervous consensus. Radical thought becomes branding. This has already led to polarisation. It pushes people into corners, where they either pretend to agree or reject everything. Both paths are dangerous. They weaken our ability to talk, to learn, and to grow. If we want a better society, we cannot just focus on using the right phrasing. We must create space for hard conversations, for doubt, and for change.

“This is not a defence of prejudice. It is a defence of thought. The right to hesitate, to doubt, to ask and be wrong.” A society that punishes curiosity cannot be just. A community that fears misunderstanding more than misrepresentation cannot educate its own. If we want to think clearly and act meaningfully, we need the freedom to fail and to learn from that failure.

I am not claiming to be above this. I have self-censored. I have stayed quiet because the cost of speaking is not just social, but personal. It creates moral fatigue, a low-grade panic that you are always one sentence away from being misunderstood.

But this cannot go on. This wave of politicisation that demands purity will always eat itself. A culture that cannot distinguish between mistake and malice will eventually forget how to forgive. The only way forward is to relearn how to argue and to have mutually enriching conversations. We will need thicker skin, deeper thought, and the humility to admit that we do not have all the answers.

We have confused moral consensus for moral clarity. If we do not fix that, we will lose the argument while rewriting the rules of thinking until *two plus two really does equal five*.

Planning in the Dark

Rehhan Chadha analyses the adverse effect of growing global competition on a student's life.

Uncertainty is never welcome, especially in a crucial stage of a student's life, such as the one that my Batchmates and I entered at the start of this year. For us, this academic period was characterised by many things besides simply academics — wars, protest and unpredictably changing global policy that was inevitably going to impact our future. I remember seeing the news with my parents everyday and regularly wondering, “Why are things changing so quickly?”, and “Will I face the effects of these problems much earlier than I thought?” While these questions deserve to be explored in their own right, the impact of international turmoil on students in crucial stages of their educational journey is certainly something that I and many people my age can relate to; a subject that warrants concern.

These challenges also come at a time when the demands of higher education become progressively competitive — premier research internships disregard applicants with scores less than a 1580 on the SAT, top engineering schools in the

United States require near-perfect AP scores and one simply needs to be the finest IB student in terms of their aggregate score (on 45) to come into notice in the first place.

Many students are already familiar with these realities, but if you're lesser acquainted with this subject, this is only the academic aspect. There exist multitudes of layers to an application to international schools that encapsulate other fields such as passion projects, service, and co-curriculars. In times which are already uncertain and mutable, can we expect learners to operate resolutely at maximum efficiency when there's no legitimate portrait of what their educational life would look like in a year? Do enough educational systems, especially those that specialise in career counselling, focus enough on the psychological fold of college preparation, and how aligned with real-world scenarios is this focus? How does the extent of this problem vary with Indian students vis-à-vis students from other regions? These are some of the questions I hope to answer in the course of the article.



1. Context and nature of the impact

Evidently, international turmoil is not new to the world and neither is it novel to students. Wars and conflicts are ubiquitous in almost all periods of history, and in most cases, society has survived to see better days. During the Sino-Japanese war, educators were encouraged to teach through the medium of performance, a practice that uplifted the students' spirits and emphasised important content. Students and their aspirations emerged as stable even then. Why did education retain a sense of continuity then, and what has changed now?

Firstly, the nature of communication across the globe has revolutionised significantly. Due to the presence of social media platforms, such as Instagram and X, one receives not only live, but opinionated updates about the state of affairs in another corner of the world. This hyperconnectivity has gone far in inducing and magnifying anxiety in the minds of students. The stark realities of strife are not limited to remote warring locations halfway across the world, they find their way to your Instagram through a Gazan family requesting you to share their reel for the algorithm to promote it. This renders global issues more direct and increasingly more relevant for young audiences than they previously have been.

Subsequently, the role and voice of younger communities has also been amplified in the theatre of geopolitics. Youth unions have assumed a robust mantle in the national elections in various countries such as France and Australia and the quality of remaining politically sensitised is emphasised in many curricula worldwide, imparting in the learners a definite sense of global citizenship, missing in earlier systems of education. This opens gateways for students to become more involved, as they are becoming, in the realms of advocacy and protest, more associated with political causes. These ideas are consistent with how conflicts such as Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine still continue to polarise and harbour support from youth groups in particular, a phenomenon only exacerbated by either genuine concern, or simply because their favourite influencers encourage them to act on these issues.

2. Great expectations

For Indian students enrolled in international systems – IB, A-Levels, APs, and more – the impact of uncertainty is often even more disorienting. These students exist in a peculiar in-between: shaped by traditional expectations imposed by Indian systems, but evaluated by global metrics. On paper, they are part of progressive, inquiry-based systems that claim to reward curiosity, initiative, and individuality. In reality, they often find themselves navigating those systems with the weight of traditionally rigid Indian academic values on their backs – the unspoken rules that prioritise numerical perfection over intellectual risk, that treat anything less than a 7 or a 45-aggregate as failure, and that conflate admissions with identity.

Unlike many applicants abroad, whose schools may respond to instability with structural adjustments or open dialogue, many Indian students in international systems are conditioned to push through, optimise harder, and pretend they are unaffected. It's a quiet pressure – sophisticated in form, but just as unforgiving – that demands world-class outcomes without necessarily offering world-class support.

3. The Indian dynamic

Studies in psychology suggest that symptoms of burnout and declining interest in completing tasks stem directly from the uncertainty of the outcome of that task. This idea, framed in the perspective of college admissions, reveals something disconcerting. The sheer volume of instability in the world today is due to affect the application patterns and prospects of various students around the world.

As deliberated on earlier, the expectations that premium institutions hold from students are only amplifying, especially in India, since an application from South Asia is increasingly losing its value, in light of the policy transitions in the United States and elsewhere. South Asian students hence, are compelled to 'do more' in order to compensate for this devaluation.

A silent pandemic that emerges from these conditions is the challenge many applicants face in reconciling the unpredictability of their future with the untiring preparation in order to achieve a stable, more importantly, desirable future. A question that often springs to my mind at the end of almost every day is whether I'm doing enough or not, and what real-time repercussions my hard work produces?

What emerges from this discussion is the need for counselling service providers and even direct caregivers to students, to be mindful of the effects of acute application stress on students. With an emphasis on planning, it's imperative to teach students about replanning and therefore integrate into a changing ecosystem.

4. Final notes

If there's one thing this moment makes clear, it is that the world Indian students are preparing for no longer resembles the one they were told to expect. The systems they study within – whether local or international – still operate on the assumption that consistency leads to success, that effort guarantees outcome, and that the future is a matter of planning rather than adaptation. But increasingly, this formula is breaking down. The global volatility we now witness doesn't just distort timelines or test scores; it destabilises the internal architecture on which students build their ambitions. For Indian students, especially, the burden is doubled: they must compete globally, but often without the emotional infrastructure, institutional responsiveness, or cultural flexibility that such competition demands.

To remedy this, we need more than academic reform – we need a recalibration of how ambition itself is nurtured. Career counselling must move beyond college lists and deadline trackers to engage with uncertainty as a lived experience. Mental health support should be embedded not as an optional add-on but as a structural necessity – particularly for those navigating the high-stakes world of international admissions from within a system that rarely permits vulnerability. Above all, students must be encouraged to shift their definitions of success – to see adaptability not as a compromise, but as competence. The goal is not to teach students how to survive uncertainty, but how to move through it without losing sight of themselves. In the end, the strongest applicants will not be those who were the most perfect, but those who learned how to think, recalibrate, and persist – even when nothing went according to plan.

The Irony of Faith

Shiven Singh explores the complexities of religion and religious fundamentalism.

When my middle school teacher asked me what I understood religion to be, a young me, bombarded with the societal narrative that religion was the binding force between communities, replied, "Unity." I fail to understand why that confused young me said that. Maybe it was the constant reinforcement by society to practice faith, or perhaps it was seeing every single religious community, despite their economic and social differences, coming to a single standpoint to celebrate festivals and worship a certain God.

Most religions often point towards a shared ideal: all human beings are equal in the eyes of God and deserve love and respect. Yet, history has shown quite the contrary. It has united the followers of a religion, but divided humanity as a whole, and more often than not, fuelled conflict. A world that stood on the foundation of pluralism has historically been repeatedly attacked by the very religions it meant to bind together.

From the Crusades to the Inquisitions, from the conquest of the 'New World' to modern extremist movements, religion has repeatedly been wielded as a weapon rather than a way of life. In medieval Europe, holy wars were fought in the name of God, but their motives were steeped in power, control, and expansion. The Crusaders marched under the Holy Cross, but their swords often served kings more than Christ. The Inquisition sought to preserve the purity of faith but became an apparatus of fear, silencing dissent and enforcing conformity through persecution. The idea of divine purpose was manipulated to legitimise violence, and faith became a justification for empire-building and dominance rather than compassion or understanding.

Centuries later, religion continued to justify conquest and colonisation. Missionaries accompanied armies, and the rhetoric of salvation was intertwined with imperial ambition. Entire civilisations were subjugated under the pretext of bringing light to the 'heathen,' erasing cultures and beliefs that had thrived for millennia. The colonial powers often claimed to carry moral responsibility, using religion as both shield and sword – a means to cleanse their conquests of guilt

under the guise of divine authority. Faith, which was meant to elevate, was instead used to dominate. The message of universal love that lay at the heart of religious doctrine was conveniently forgotten in the pursuit of wealth and territory. And it is at this point that a paradox emerges, "Was it really religion that destroyed us?"

Even within nations and their people, religion has been manipulated to create divisions and hierarchies, dividing believers from unbelievers, and the 'pure' from the 'impure.' The idea that conforming to just one path leads to salvation while all the others are false has sown hate across continents. The same tenets that preached mercy and compassion were selectively quoted to justify evils like slavery, oppression, and even genocide. The European Witch Trials, which later influenced the Salem Trials, weaponised fear and religious superstition to persecute women, thus violating their autonomy and maintaining social control. More recently, religious extremism, be it emerging from political regimes, terrorist organisations, or nationalist movements, continues to exploit the holy language to legitimise hate.

The irony, then, is obvious. Religion, at its core, declares unity, equality, and love. But when it becomes intertwined with power and influence, it ceases to remain faith and morphs into an ideology. When belief becomes a means of control, religion is weaponised, not to

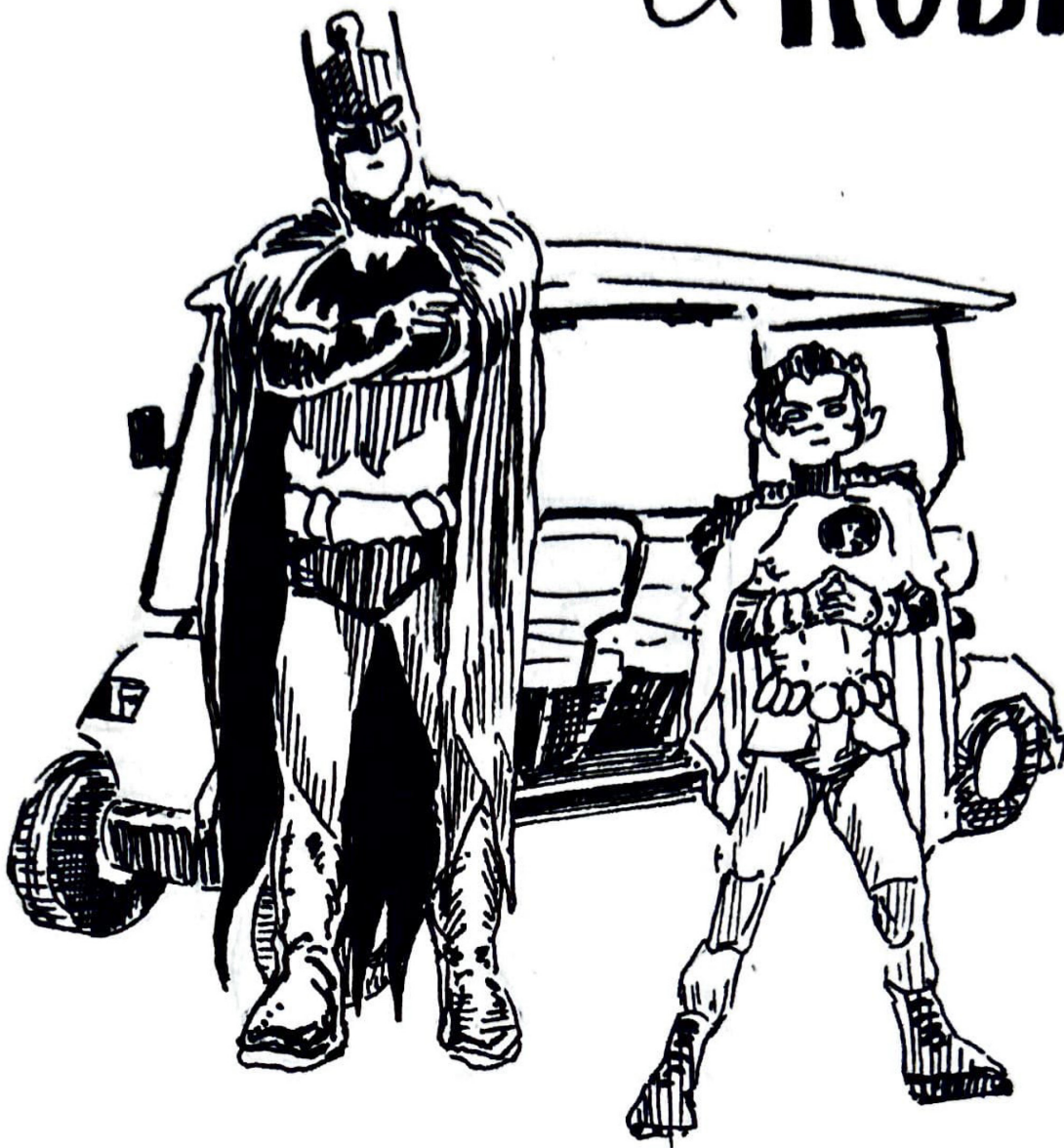
connect humanity with the divine, but to separate it. Each time faith aligns itself with political ambition, its spiritual essence degrades. Instead of guiding moral conscience, it becomes a tool of subjugation.

However, it would be unjust to deny that religion has also inspired profound compassion and reform. Faith-driven figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu, and Raja Ram Mohan Roy used religion to challenge injustice rather than strengthen it. Their interpretation of spirituality sought liberation and not oppression. This duality serves as the crux of religion; its potential to heal and to harm, as well as its ability to unify and divide, lie completely in the eyes of the beholder. It reminds us that religion itself was never made to be violent or oppressive; it was left up to human interpretation, and the institutions that wield it determine its impact.

The challenge, then, is not to disregard belief, but to return it to its ethical and spiritual roots, where humility replaces superiority, compassion replaces control, and fraternity replaces conflict. And, to restore this original purpose, it must be disentangled from political institutions and the societal desire for consolidating power. Until that separation takes place, the promise of unity that lies in the heart of all faiths will continue to be drowned out by war, division, and misinterpretation. God never plays favourites; only we do.



BATMAN & ROBIN



The Justice League has been a recurring trope in the *Weekly* for the past three years.

The Chamber

Pragyan Goel reflects on whether School is a true reflection of the broader world, having left School after his A Form.

To have this article find resonance within the beautiful pages of a publication I was once part of is nostalgic indeed. The nostalgia hits home so perfectly I can almost taste the air of the Rose Bowl, recall those rainy Sunday brunch mornings, and feel the occasional pat on the back from my Housemaster. I am no different now from the boy who once stepped through those metallic, dark-coloured gates as a young Dosco. If you have been part of the Doon family — as a Dosco, the unfortunate family member of a Dosco, or the even more unfortunate parent of one — my condolences. I am sure you are familiar with the dragged-out wailing of the Dosco's cryptic cries: "*Oh, how different it is within those four walls of Chandbagh.*"

Having legally 'busted bounds' after my A Form, and now striving to appear for the NEET (UG) examinations in 2026, I must confess, I was once the very Dosco with those cryptic cries. Cryptic, because I had rarely experienced a world without Doon. And yet, I somehow knew that this place was truly different indeed — though it took me a long while to understand how.

Strolling along the *bajri*-laden tracks, listening to the rustle of fallen leaves, walking with a sense of purpose — working as an organ for something larger — is Doon. But we fail to realise that it is not just the institution; it is the individuals themselves who steer this notion. We have the Doscos before us to thank and the ones after us to entrust this institution to. That requires an epiphany in the masses.

Our Community is not a reflection of society. And perhaps it doesn't need to be. Doon is a sanctuary of thought and a testament to brotherhood. It is more an association than an institution. The onus on our generation is to decipher the difference between two worlds: one glimpsed through the little gap in the red and white walls that bind us, and the other preserved safely within them.

When I chose to leave this Community post my A Form, I left behind much — a trunk full of memories, a rucksack of opportunities, and a literal rucksack I am still searching for. My experience is not that of regret. It is instead a constant anamnesis, a reflection that has brought me back to the pages of this magazine — out of admiration for School and a need to speak righteously through the columns of the Weekly.

Outside those walls, the world was special in its own right. My schedule, once sprawling across a plethora of extracurriculars and a pinch of sports, suddenly collapsed into long nights of scrubbing away at those typical CBSE books for NEET. This revealed a few truths. The rigour of academics and a newfound respect for knowledge. Having shed my "public school boy" skin, I quickly realised that society is not as forgiving as Doon. Running behind Seniors to 'scope' is no longer an option. Befriending Masters (as some do) doesn't yield results. Doon forgives; life does not. In society, results overshadow everything else.

Life is different. Not everyone radiates the brotherhood you once knew. The person beside you at the meal table is not your Formmate. Sometimes experiences are bitter,



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other times extravagantly sweet. But life requires finesse. And finesse, I believe, is what a Dosco begins to lack when he accepts Chandbagh as the truth, forgetting it is only a facsimile of what could be. Doon is a representation of the community's wonders, but it does not mirror the experiences that await us. That is the plight of a Dosco caught in mistaking Chandbagh's opportunities for destiny, trying to mold oneself into its design rather than striving for life beyond it.

Doon does not shape you; it provides the tools to chisel your own image from the mound of experiences ahead. You are not preparing for Doon; Doon is where you prepare yourself for life. For an institution like ours — that champions an Aristocracy of Service — the greatest disservice would be to limit our visions and aspirations to the very walls that were built only to test us.

To grow in a chamber where every toy bends to your will, where knowledge arrives dressed in delight, and where the world softens itself for your grasp, does one truly learn struggle, restraint and the unyielding nature of things? And when the door finally opens, when the chamber is gone, will he stand in wonder or collapse in confusion? What remains of him when the world no longer answers to his design?

Our Community is not a reflection of society...

Milestone Memories

Ms Stuti Kuthiala recounts memorable experiences from Founders celebrations gone by.

Circa 1985:

I was an Scat at Welham Girls, and the Doon School had graciously invited our Batch to several of the events being hosted in Chandbagh on the occasion of the School's Golden Jubilee. It was a rather special invite, since the Batch of 1986, on either side of *Suicide Alley*, had just had their Socials cancelled for the entire year – widely believed to have happened due to the shenanigans of the previous Batch, which led to the Heads of both schools to take that cataclysmic decision. It hurts to add that the decision was promptly reversed the very next year, and Socials have continued happily ever since. To heighten the irony, as 'Dean Pastoral,' I am now regularly arranging Socials for current Descos!

If memory serves me well, I recall a relaxed and festive atmosphere that autumn, with perfect weather, a very dapper Prime Minister in a sharp suit and aviators as Chief Guest, and refreshingly, minimal and unobtrusive security. At least that is how I remember it though other guests' remember interminably long queues, winding all the way down till the Bindal bridge, due to the enhanced security measures. Perhaps, since we were a School contingent in 'tadpoles', our entry at the Main Gate was seamless and easy.

There were well-dressed and well-spoken people everywhere, and the campus felt like a charming garden tea party, with the Headmaster, Mr Gulab Ramchandani and his elegant wife, Mrs Ratna Ramchandani, playing the warm hosts. The pace of events was leisurely, and there was great emphasis on Old Boys' sports matches and reunions. Of the Hindi drama production, *Andher Nagari*, *Chaupat Raja* and the English production, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, to attend which we had primarily been sent from our school, we ended up absorbing only snatches, since our attention was greatly diverted by 'people watching.' The *Pagal Gymkhana* had fewer food stalls but many more old *Gymkhana*-style games involving parents, Masters and other grown-ups, such as fancy dress, pillow fights, sack race, egg and spoon race, and the hilariously clumsy three-legged race.

A lasting memory is the taste of Kwality's



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chicken chowmein, eaten off a collapsing paper plate with a flimsy, white, plastic spoon.

Circa 2010:

I was now a Master at Doon, teaching English since 2001, and managing Martyn House as Housemaster from January 2009. It was the School's Platinum Jubilee year and there were great plans underway for the 75th Founder's in October. The previous year's Founder's had been a modest event due to the Swine flu outbreak, and for Dr McLaughlin, the then Headmaster, the 75th Founder's was to be his first 'real' one. Initial arrangements began sometime in September. Metal, bamboo, and wood structures materialised on the Main Field and the Skinners to stage the various events. I'm forgetting who, but an agency from Delhi was hired for this, and one of the strangest sights at that time was to see them cruising around on campus on their segways, their walkie-talkies crackling an alien, urgent language. All was progressing well - play and music practices were in full swing, the exhibitions were being ideated and prepared, the buildings and grounds were getting their annual makeover, and the October sun was shining brightly over all of this. An impressive line-up of Chief Guests for the many events had been put together, including the President of India, the King of Bhutan, life coach Sanjeev Chopra, eminent lawyer Kapil Sibal and a host of other Central and State-level dignitaries.

And so it began...the Hindi production *Andha Yug* and the exhibitions, street play, western band, dance troupe, moot court, *Pagal Gymkhana*, all had their moment in the sun (literally, and figuratively, as you will soon find out) and regaled the audiences on the first two days. But as the second day of Founder's was heading to the Rosebowl for a performance of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Dehradun was hit by an unseasonal cyclonic storm that ripped through campus, upending all the grand *shamianas* and arrangements, and more damagingly, wrought havoc on the hard work and efforts of the English drama troupe. But, true to the resilient Dosco spirit, the show went on... in its new, adaptive way. Venues were hastily shifted indoors, guests accommodated first, and the Masters and boys exercising the 'family holdback.' The English cast would forego one night out post the Founder's and give a brilliant performance to a packed audience, which would appreciate the actors all the more for the sacrifice made.

The next day dawned surprisingly clear, and the Chandbagh debates, Music presentation, speeches and *Bada Khana* went off without a hitch on the Main Field. One blip on that final day was the movie screening of *Dazed in Doon*, but that is a whole other story, for another time.

The lasting memory from this milestone for me is my son, Siddharth, conducting the School Choir on the main stage, alongside his friend

Shatrunjai, the conductor of the School Orchestra, in the final music production.

Circa 2025:

I am still a Master at Doon, teaching English since 2001, and bearing the responsibility as DEP since 2018. This year, the School is celebrating DS90 – "Excelling with Legacy, Leading with Purpose." As is expected, every member of the Dosco Community – on and off the campus – is eagerly anticipating an event on a grand scale. The planning includes a lot that traditionally happens every year, plus some more. I am also confident that everything will be enhanced this year. The rain gods this year have not been kind, overextending their stay in the state, delaying the campus development work going on to showcase an expanded and refurbished Rosebowl and a new Centre of Excellence building at the Founder's. But, I totally believe they will be completed in time, whatever herculean effort that may take. As I write this, the skies are finally showing signs of clearing, and the Administration is using every precious moment to get things done. The Boys and Masters are only waiting for Assessment Week to conclude before they go full steam ahead with their preparations. The Founder's feeling is in the air!

And, I eagerly wait to experience the lasting memory of this milestone Founder's.



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A family.

A history.



What's in a Ladoo?

Ayaan Mittal recounts his family's 'Indian Dream' within a post-Partition India.

Flashback:

My great-grandfather — *Baba Ji*, as my father called him — was one of the millions torn from the soil of Pakistan and replanted in post-colonial Punjab after the Partition. A man uprooted, carrying nothing but his hands. His pride buried under dust. He took work at the Cantonment Mess, serving food to officers who wore their uniforms like second skins. It was honest work, at least.

Perhaps he might have lived out his days there, ladling curry onto plates, but pride is a strange thing, much like *chaashni* in a *motichoor ladoo*; it seeps back into every crack. Pride — the ember of the Indian middle class.

And one afternoon in 1961, that same ember caught fire.

A colonel summoned *Baba Ji*. The order was precise:

"Ek kilo gulab jamun

Aadha kilo barfi

Aadha kilo laddoo

Pau kilo soan papdi

Get it from Gyaneshwaram Sweet House."

Baba Ji went. The shop was shuttered. So he crossed the road, bought the same sweets from another *halwai*, and returned.

The Colonel opened the box. His face curdled. Then, in one motion, the box was flung across *Baba Ji*'s cheek. *Gulab Jamuns* rolled like black pearls in spilled *chaashni*, *barfi* broke like stone, *boondis* scattered as though from a broken *tasla*.

"Do you not understand orders?" the officer thundered. "I told you where to buy the sweets from."

A *ladoo* is fragile, one push and it crumbles, but its *boondis* never forget the *ghee* they were born in.

That night, *Baba Ji* returned home, his pride was bruised, but its embers as alive as ever. He told his family:

"We will open our own sweetshop. And one day, a General will cut its ribbon."

He left behind the job that fed six children, a wife, and two aging parents. He borrowed five hundred rupees, a sum that felt heavier than a *kadhai* of hot *ghee*, and set out to knead his own destiny.

This was 1961. India was raw; the wounds of Partition were crusting but had not yet healed. Out of that soil, he planted his shop. From humiliation, he forged pride. From the sweetness flung across his face, he built a legacy.

And so, a box of sweets became more than just sugar and flour. It became a story. Our story.

And how did this story come to be so 'lovely'?

Baba Ji had built the shop and christened it with the 'Green Sweet House' name. However, one thing remained: the ribbon. He wanted a General to cut it. He wouldn't renege on this promise, not that anyone else knew, for it was a vow he had made to himself. He asked again and again, only to



hear the same reply: no. Perhaps the General thought it was beneath him to inaugurate a sweet shop.

Finally, in a last-ditch effort, *Baba Ji* tried once more. This time, the General, recalling *Baba Ji*'s years of service, agreed, but on one condition: "Name the shop after my niece. Her name is Lovely. Do that, and I'll come."

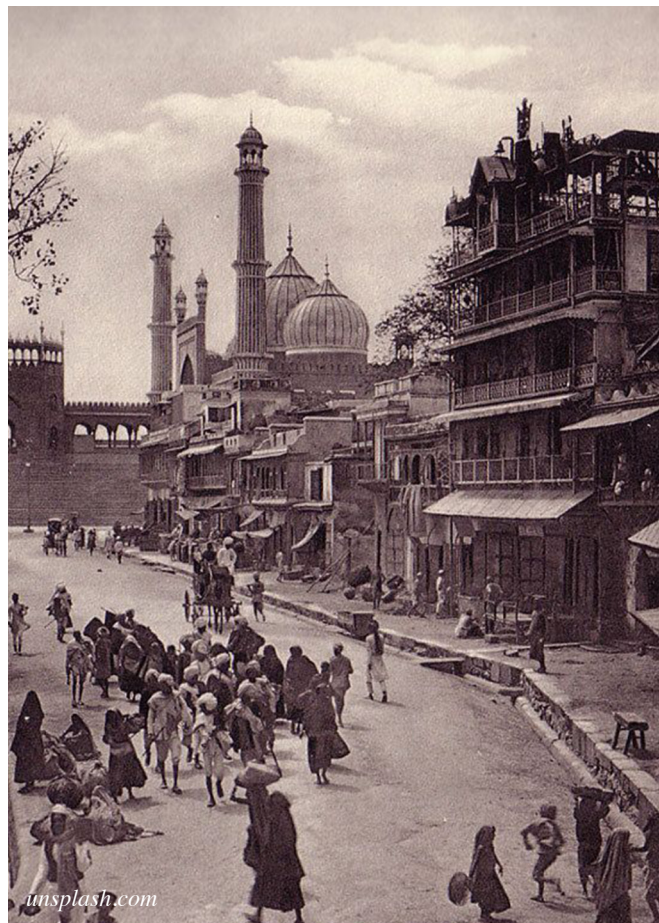
What is in a name, *Baba Ji* thought. A *laddoo* by any other name is still sweet. He agreed. And so, in 1961, under the Punjab sun, the General cut the ribbon to Lovely Sweet House.

In the crowd that day, at the back, stood the Colonel who had once flung sweets across *Baba Ji*'s face. His hand was raised in salute to his superior. And there was *Baba Ji*, no longer the canteen manager, but the owner of his own shop, standing on the steps beside the General, looking down at the man who had once humiliated him, a quiet smile playing on his lips.

Like *boondis* finding their *chaashni*, pride had found its binding at last.

And ours was not the only story. Across post-colonial India, there were thousands like *Baba Ji*. Men and women who had been uprooted by the Partition, their homes reduced to ash, their lives cleaved in two. They carried wounds across borders, and yet, out of that pain, they each built anew. Each cycle shop in Amritsar, each tailoring unit in Delhi, each *mithaiwala* in Jalandhar, and each printing press in Kanpur; these were not mere shops. They were testaments. Testaments to survival, yes, but also to imagination: the imagination that a family could start again, that a nation could start again.

In 1961, India itself was only fourteen years old, a teenager of a nation. The old order had crumbled, but the new one was



still raw, finding its shape. We forget this now, but those were not easy years. The green of Independence had faded into the grey of shortages, ration cards, and refugee camps. And yet, in the cracks of scarcity, seeds of enterprise were being planted. *Baba Ji*'s five hundred rupees were no different from the tiny investments made by countless others, men and women who had no business degrees, no venture capital, just grit and a refusal to be humiliated.

If you look closely, the history of India's economic rise is not only written in Nehru's Five-Year Plans or the speeches of Parliament. It is written in *laddoos*, in strips of cloth, and in the ink stains of small presses. Literature, too, bears this truth. Manto, in his Partition stories, spoke of broken men staggering across borders with nothing but memory. Amrita Pritam whispered of Radha searching for Krishna in a land soaked in blood. But between those silences, there was also the sound of new shops opening, shutters creaking upward, the first coins falling into a till. The country was making *laddoos* in its own way, binding together broken grains with the hot syrup of resilience.

And so, who I am and who we are begins with a *laddoo*. A sweet born of *ghee* and grain, but also of defiance and dream. A *laddoo* flung in rage became, for us, a new start. In that small act, a man standing tall beside a General, while a Colonel shrank into the crowd, lay the arc of something larger than life.

Lovely Sweet House was not just a name. It was a parable. That even in 1961, when India stumbled more than it strode, when it was poor but proud, it was still capable of sweetness. And that sweetness did not come from sugar alone. It came with the unshakable belief that tomorrow could taste better than yesterday.

And so, if you ask me today — what's in a *laddoo*? I would say: a nation. A family. A history. The idea that we can be broken into a thousand *boondis*, and yet, if the right *chaashni* binds us, we can hold.

प्रोफेसर हरीश त्रिवेदी दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय के अंग्रेजी विभाग में प्राध्यापक हैं। वह उपनिवेशोत्तर साहित्य और अनुवाद अध्ययन के प्रतिष्ठित विद्वान हैं। वे 1971 से 1975 तक यूनाइटेड किंगडम की यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ वेल्स, बैंगोर में कॉमनवेल्थ स्कॉलर रहे। वह 1985 से 1988 तक यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ बर्मिंघम, यू.के. में मानद शोध फेलो रहे। सन् 1997 में वे यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ जॉर्जिया, यू.एस.ए. में विज़िटिंग अंतरराष्ट्रीय विद्वान रहे। वे भारतीय कॉमनवेल्थ साहित्य और भाषा अध्ययन संघ के सचिव (1993-99) और उपाध्यक्ष (1999-2004) रहे हैं। वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय कॉमनवेल्थ साहित्य और भाषा अध्ययन संघ के उपाध्यक्ष (2002-2004) भी रहे हैं।

भाषाओं की साँसों में बहता साहित्य

प्रो. हरीश त्रिवेदी

द दून स्कूल लिटरेचर फेस्टिवल २०२५ के दौरान २३ अप्रैल को हरीश त्रिवेदी के साथ साक्षात्कार।

The Doon School Communications Department



द दून स्कूल वीकली: आपने अंग्रेजी, हिंदी एवं संस्कृत साहित्य में गहन अध्ययन किया है और साहित्य रचना में उत्कृष्ट योगदान दिया है। क्या आपको लगता है कि आज के युवा इन भाषाओं में समान रूप से रुचि रखते हैं, या किसी एक भाषा का प्रभाव अधिक हावी है? यदि ऐसा है तो इसका क्या कारण है?

हरीश त्रिवेदी: पहले तो बहुत ज्यादा रुचि थी, अब कम हो गई है। बल्कि, आजकल भाषाओं को सीखने के प्रति हमारा उत्साह थोड़ा कम हुआ है। उदाहरण के लिए, भारत में बहुत से लोग फ्रेंच सीख रहे हैं, बड़ी संख्या में। पर उसे लेकर मानसिकता अलग है। अपनी भाषाएँ सीखने में शायद रुचि थोड़ी कम हो गई है। हिंदी तो हमारी अपनी भाषा है। अगर उसमें भी आप नहीं पढ़ना चाहते, तो फिर आप धन्य हैं! अंग्रेजी तो सबको पढ़नी ही पढ़नी पड़ती है। मैंने तो साहित्य पढ़ाया है। कई लोग अंग्रेजी में साहित्यिक किताबें पढ़ते हैं, लेकिन उनका पेशा कुछ और होता है। वे मनोरंजन के लिए पढ़ते हैं, या किसी और कारण से। संस्कृत की बात अलग है। संस्कृत के प्रति हमारे मन में एक दीवार सी खड़ी हो गई है कि संस्कृत बहुत कठिन है, पुरानी भाषा है, और बहुत दकियानूसी है। यह बाधा हटानी पड़ेगी। धीरे-धीरे संस्कृत आए और कुछ सुन्दर श्लोक, सुभाषित लोगों को प्रेमपूर्वक रस लेकर सिखाए जाएँ, तो लोग जुड़ते हैं। पहले भाषाओं को सीखने-सिखाने में रुचि ज्यादा थी, अब कम है। पर मुझे लगता है कि यह कमी भी फिर से बढ़ सकती है। आजकल युवाओं में जिज्ञासा भी

बढ़ी है।

द दून स्कूल वीकली: अक्सर कहा जाता है कि हिंदी साहित्य को वैश्विक स्तर पर, और कई बार अपने ही देश में, वह पहचान नहीं मिलती जो अंग्रेजी साहित्य को मिलती है। आप इस अंतर को कैसे देखते हैं?

हरीश त्रिवेदी: यह बात दो तरह से देखी जा सकती है। वैश्विक स्तर पर किसी भी भाषा का सम्मान देखना हो, तो वैश्विक भाषा केवल एक है — अंग्रेजी। उसे ही सबसे ज्यादा जगह मिलती है। उसके जितने पाठक हैं, जितने प्रकाशक हैं, वे कितना पैसा लगाते हैं, यह सब अलग है। वहाँ केवल अंग्रेजी साहित्य ही नहीं, बल्कि अंग्रेजी में अनूदित साहित्य को भी जगह मिलती है। अंग्रेजी साहित्य बहुत छोटा है। उसमें अमेरिकन, लैटिन अमेरिकन, सबको जोड़कर एक बड़ा संसार बनता है। पहले सिर्फ वही भारतीय लेखक प्रसिद्ध होते थे जो अंग्रेजी में लिखते थे। अब भारतीय भाषाओं से भी बहुत अनुवाद आ रहे हैं। इसलिए यह कम-ज्यादा होना एक भावनात्मक बात है। बहुत से लोग चाहते हैं कि हिंदी को दुनिया में सबसे बड़ी भाषाओं में गिना जाए। जब साहित्य का इतिहास लिखा जाए, या विश्व-साहित्य का संग्रह बने, तब सभी भारतीय भाषाओं को मिलाकर भी कुल कितना प्रतिशत स्थान उन्हें मिलता है, यह देखना चाहिए। तो सवाल यह है कि हमें मिल-जुलकर प्रयास करना होगा कि हिंदी और अन्य भारतीय भाषाएँ भी दुनिया में अपनी जगह बना सकें।

साहित्य को किस दृष्टि से देखना और पढ़ना चाहिए ? साहित्य का आनंद लेना है तो उसमें डूबना और उसे भीतर तक महसूस करना बहुत ज़रूरी है।

दून् स्कूल वीकली: विद्यार्थी जीवन से लेकर अब तक किन लेखकों और रचनाओं का आप पर सबसे गहरा साहित्यिक प्रभाव रहा है? साथ ही यह भी बताएँ कि संस्कृत साहित्य ने आपके लेखन पर क्या प्रभाव डाला है?

हरीश त्रिवेदी: छोटी उम्र में हम पूरे-पूरे उपन्यास पढ़ जाते थे। पहले रचनाएँ प्रभाव डालती थीं, बाद में लेखक। मैं हिंदी माध्यम से पढ़ा हूँ। अंग्रेज़ी साहित्य मैंने बारहवीं कक्षा के बाद, विश्वविद्यालय में बी.ए. में जाकर गहराई से पढ़ना शुरू किया। उससे पहले हिंदी पढ़ने में अधिक सुविधा और आनंद था। प्रिय लेखकों का नाम अगर बताऊँ, तो यह समय के साथ बदलते रहे। बचपन में तुलसीदास बहुत अच्छे लगते थे, कबीर के दोहे भी। लेकिन उनसे भी ज़्यादा रसखान अच्छे लगते थे। रहीम बहुत मधुर लगते थे। रसखान का प्रेम और माधुर्य, दोनों ही बहुत प्रभावित करते थे। बाद में निराला, शमशेर बहादुर सिंह, निर्मल वर्मा — ये सब बहुत पसंद आए। निर्मल वर्मा की जितनी गहराई है, वैसी कहीं नहीं। अज्ञेय भी बहुत पसंद हैं। वे कवि, कहानीकार, उपन्यासकार, यात्रा-वृत्तांत लेखक, आलोचक — सब कुछ थे। उनके लेखन में जितनी मानसिक और मानवीय गहराई है, वह अद्वितीय है। अंग्रेज़ी में मुझे वर्जीनिया वूल्फ़ बहुत पसंद हैं। उनसे पहले हेनरी जेम्स। जो लेखक मन के भीतर गहरे उतरकर पात्रों को लिखते-रचते हैं, वही मुझे अधिक पसंद आते हैं। साहित्य हमें वही देता है जो समाजशास्त्र या इतिहास नहीं दे सकता। साहित्य का काम है मन के भीतर जाकर, हमें हमारे ही बारे में बताना। संस्कृत साहित्य का प्रभाव: संस्कृत का प्रभाव यह है कि अगर हमें अपनी जड़ों को जानना है, तो संस्कृत से ही शुरू करना पड़ेगा। जैसे, सभी सभ्यताओं में यह प्रश्न रहा है — सृष्टि की उत्पत्ति कैसे हुई? ऋग्वेद का 'नासदीय सूक्त' (सृष्टि की उत्पत्ति पर कविता) मुझे बहुत पसंद है। उसमें एक-एक कर

प्रश्न पूछते जाते हैं — पहले क्या था? जल था या थल? देवता थे या नहीं? शायद ऊपर कोई है जो जानता होगा... और शायद वह भी नहीं जानता। यह जो जिज्ञासा, मौलिकता, और कल्पना है — यह संस्कृत साहित्य से ही आई है। कालिदास, भास, भवभूति — इन सबका भी गहरा प्रभाव है। इसने हमें यह सिखाया कि हम मूलतः क्या थे और कैसे यहाँ तक पहुँचे।

दून् स्कूल वीकली: जब आप कोई किताब पढ़ते हैं, तो क्या आप एक आलोचक की दृष्टि से पढ़ते हैं, या एक पाठक की तरह उसमें खो जाते हैं?

हरीश त्रिवेदी: एक पाठक का खो जाना सही नहीं माना जाता। यह खो जाने की अवस्था कहलाती है। इस बारे में कई लोगों ने लिखा है कि "मुझे तो पता ही नहीं चला समय कैसे बीत गया, मैं तो पढ़ता ही चला गया।" यह अनुभव ठीक है, लेकिन इसे खो जाना नहीं, बल्कि डूब जाना कहा जाता है। किसी चीज़ में, किसी पुस्तक में, किसी कविता में, या किसी उपन्यास में डूब जाना बहुत ज़रूरी है। विशेषकर कविता तो जल्दी ही समाप्त हो जाती है, इसलिए उसमें पूरी तरह डूबकर पढ़ना चाहिए। इसका मतलब यह है कि आप उस रचना का पूरा स्वाद ले रहे हैं, उसका हर शब्द, हर भाव, हर अनुभूति गहराई से महसूस कर रहे हैं। जब आप किसी रचना में डूब जाते हैं, तो उसका आनंद स्वयं ही आपको मिल जाता है। फिर उसे दूसरों को बताना ज़रूरी नहीं होता। जिसे अच्छा लगे, उसे अच्छा ही लगेगा — चाहे आप बताएँ या नहीं। वास्तव में, पढ़ने का असली आनंद तभी मिलता है जब आप उसे दिल से महसूस करते हैं और पूरी तरह उसमें समा जाते हैं।

The Doon School Communications Department



भाषा: ज्ञान और संवाद का सेतु

माधव मेहरा द्वारा हिंदी और संस्कृत की वैश्विक प्रासंगिकता और उनके समृद्ध सांस्कृतिक योगदान पर विचार।

भाषा केवल संवाद का माध्यम नहीं, बल्कि मानव सभ्यता, संस्कृति और ज्ञान का प्रतीक है। संस्कृत और हिन्दी, भारतीय भाषाओं की प्रमुख स्तंभ मानी जाती है। यह न केवल भारत में बल्कि वैश्विक स्तर पर सांस्कृतिक और बौद्धिक समृद्धि का स्रोत मानी जाती है। यदि हम वैश्विक दृष्टिकोण से देखें, तो यह स्पष्ट होता है कि भाषाएँ केवल राष्ट्रीय सीमाओं तक सीमित नहीं हैं, वे वैश्विक संस्कृति और ज्ञान के अंतर-संबंध का महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा हैं।

संस्कृत, जिसे ज्ञान-विज्ञान की भाषा कहा जाता है, हजारों वर्षों से साहित्य, गणित, दर्शन और विज्ञान की नींव रही है। यूरोप में प्राचीन काल से ही संस्कृत का अध्ययन किया जाता रहा है, और इसके श्लोकों और ग्रंथों से पश्चिमी विचारकों ने धर्म, तर्कशास्त्र और साहित्य में प्रेरणा ली। हिंदी, जिसका आधार संस्कृत है, लिपि देवनागरी है, आज लाखों लोगों की मातृभाषा बन गई है और इस डिजिटल युग में इसकी पहुँच तेज़ी से बढ़ती जा रही है। हिंदी साहित्य और सिनेमा ने लोगों के समक्ष एक अनुठा दृष्टिकोण प्रस्तुत किया है, जो मानव अनुभवों की व्यापकता को दर्शाता है।

भारतीय भाषाओं के अलावा विश्व की अन्य भाषाओं

की भी ऐतिहासिक और सांस्कृतिक विरासत बेहद महत्वपूर्ण है। लैटिन, मैडरिन, अरबी, ग्रीक और फारसी जैसी भाषाओं ने अपने-अपने क्षेत्रों में विज्ञान, कला और दर्शन के क्षेत्र में अमूल्य योगदान दिया है। आज के वैश्विक संदर्भ में भाषाओं का यह संगम न केवल विविधता, बल्कि मानव सभ्यता के साझा ज्ञान का प्रतीक भी है। भाषा और संस्कृति हमें यह याद दिलाती है कि विश्व में ज्ञान का आदान-प्रदान और संवाद अनिवार्य है।

हिंदी और संस्कृत जैसे भाषाई रत्न न केवल हमारी सांस्कृतिक जड़ें मज़बूत करते हैं, बल्कि विश्व स्तर पर संवाद, समावेशिता और बौद्धिक आदान-प्रदान को भी सशक्त बनाते हैं। वैश्विक दृष्टिकोण से देखा जाए तो भाषाओं का यह संगम हमें यह सिखाता है कि चाहे कोई भाषा किसी भी क्षेत्र की हो, उसका महत्व सार्वभौमिक है। भाषाएँ केवल संवाद का माध्यम नहीं, बल्कि वह सेतु हैं जो मानवता को जोड़ती हैं, और यही उनकी सबसे बड़ी शक्ति है।



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दून स्कूल की शुरुआती यात्रा

प्रभाव मेहंदीरता की दून स्कूल में अपने शुरुआती दिनों के अनुभवों और आत्मविश्वास की यात्रा।

यह कहानी 4 अप्रैल से 10 अप्रैल 2025 की है। ये वे शुरुआती दिन थे जब मेरी जिंदगी ने एक बिल्कुल नया मोड़ लिया। 5 अप्रैल को मैंने दून स्कूल में प्रवेश किया। यह अवसर मेरे लिए बहुत महत्वपूर्ण था, क्योंकि मैं जानता था कि यहाँ से मेरी शिक्षा और व्यक्तित्व एक नई दिशा पाएंगे। परंतु परिवार से बिछड़ना मेरे लिए आसान नहीं था। जब मैंने अपने माता-पिता और भाई को अलविदा कहा, तो मेरे आँसू थमने का नाम नहीं ले रहे थे। उस दिन और कई रातों तक मैं सिर्फ उनके बारे में सोचता रहा।

नए वातावरण में ढलना मेरे लिए कठिन हो रहा था। चारों ओर नए चेहरे, नई दिनचर्या और अनजाना माहौल था। मित्र बनाने का अवसर तो मिला, लेकिन मैं अपने दुख में इतना उलझा हुआ था कि सही मायनों में उसका लाभ नहीं उठा पा रहा था। मेरे सहपाठी मुझे समझाते, पर मैं उनके साथ खुलकर घुल-मिल नहीं पा रहा था। भोजन के समय भी मेरा मन उदास रहता। ऐसी ही एक रात जब मैं खाना छोड़कर चुपचाप बैठा था, तब स्कूल के कप्तान ने मुझे देखा। उन्होंने मुझे बाहर बुलाकर बड़े स्नेह और धैर्य के साथ समझाया कि यह नया अनुभव मेरे लिए कितना ज़रूरी है। उनकी बातों ने मेरे दिल को गहराई से छू लिया और मुझे आत्मविश्वास दिया। धीरे-धीरे परिस्थितियाँ बदलने लगीं। अगले दिन मैंने

नए मित्रों के साथ समय बिताया। हम सबने साथ में टीवी देखा, बातें कीं और खेलों में हिस्सा लिया। हालाँकि उदासी पूरी तरह खत्म नहीं हुई थी, लेकिन अब मैं मुस्कुराने लगा था। इसके बाद रविवार को हमें एक यात्रा पर ले जाया गया। सुबह छह बजे हम निकले और दोपहर दो बजे गंतव्य पर पहुँचे। सफर थकाने वाला था, मगर वहाँ पहुँचकर हमने प्रकृति की सुंदरता का आनंद लिया। बच्चों ने मिलकर खेल खेले, गाने गाए और शाम को भोजन के बाद नृत्य भी किया। सब मज़े कर रहे थे। भले ही मैं कई बार अकेलापन महसूस करता रहा, पर इस यात्रा ने मेरे भीतर आत्मविश्वास की एक नई लौ जगा दी।

तीन-चार दिन बाद जब हम स्कूल लौटे, तो मुझे लगा कि अब मैं पहले जैसा उदास, निराश और कमज़ोर नहीं हूँ। मेरा मन मज़बूत और उत्साहित था। मैंने समझा कि जीवन हर कदम पर हमें अवसर देता है, बस हमें उन्हें पहचानकर अपनाना होता है। शुरु में मैंने अपने दुख के कारण कई मौकों का लाभ नहीं उठाया, लेकिन अब मैं यह तय कर चुका था कि आने वाले दिनों में हर अनुभव से सीखूँगा और खुद को बेहतर बनाऊँगा।

आज जब मैं उन शुरुआती दिनों को याद करता हूँ, तो महसूस करता हूँ कि वही संघर्ष मेरे लिए सबसे बड़ी सीख बन गया। दून स्कूल ने न केवल शिक्षा का एक मंच दिया, बल्कि मुझे मानसिक रूप से मज़बूत और

आत्मनिर्भर भी बनाया। यही अनुभव मेरे जीवन की नींव हैं, जिन्हें मैं हमेशा संजोकर रखूँगा।



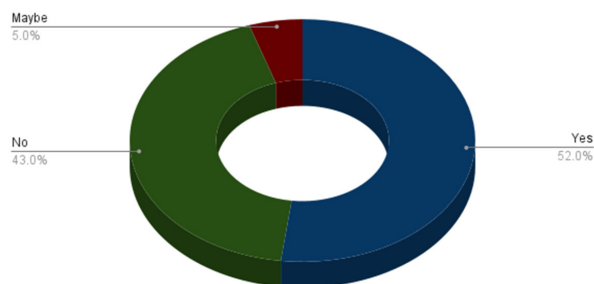
The Doon School
Communications Department



Vox Populi

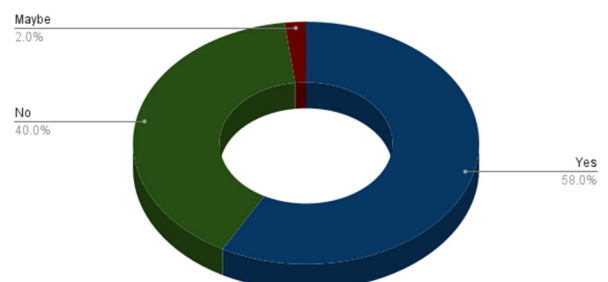
Do you think that making it compulsory for students to wear uniforms really contributes to a sense of community in School?

The debate around permitting casual clothing is one ongoing in many educational institutions across the country. Other boarding schools, such as Woodstock, do allow casual wear as part of the daily dress code, but schools such as Doon have always hailed their uniforms, among other aspects of their culture, as essential to carrying their school legacy forward. After all, casual clothing runs the risk of bringing a strange, hybrid culture to School – stark modernity in a space that continues to derive much of its customs from the past century – plain incongruity. But, this also goes to show that the School administration cannot continue to reduce the entire identity of School to a plain uniform, as has been reiterated many times in the recent past.



Do you think Senior-Junior relationships hold the same relevance in School as they used to?

The relationship between Seniors and Juniors, often regarded as one of the most important in School life, has experienced noticeable change over time. Originally founded on values of friendship, companionship, and mentorship, this bond has influenced experiences within the Community for generations. Old records show how Seniors guided Juniors in various ways, whereas today, that guidance sometimes takes different forms. With many students now focusing on areas such as college preparation and portfolio development, professional counsellors play a larger role than Seniors, who continue to support in various other aspects of School life. Some describe the relationship as having shifted compared to earlier years, while others emphasise its ongoing importance, even if expressed differently. What remains constant is its role as a defining feature of School life, adapting to the changing needs and priorities of each Batch.





fiction

[46]

Puppet in a Foreign Hand

Rafay Habibullah

However, when he pushed against it, it grew further; his body became a gun pointed at his own head, imprisoning him in his own mind.

He looked in the mirror, a multitude of splintered faces staring back at him. He didn't know who he was anymore, and wasn't sure if he even wanted to find out. His feet moved at an unfamiliar pace, no longer his own, and his actions felt stripped of all will. He sensed the strings tightening, tugging at him, each subtle pull reshaping his movements, pushing and dragging him to the whims of something unseen, until he became something he could no longer recognise. This feeling was amplified as he stared into the mirror, an overpowering sense of unfamiliarity creeping down his spine as he tried to process who he had become. The strings from above had made him unrecognisable, and he didn't know if the pairs of eyes peering into his own were his anymore.

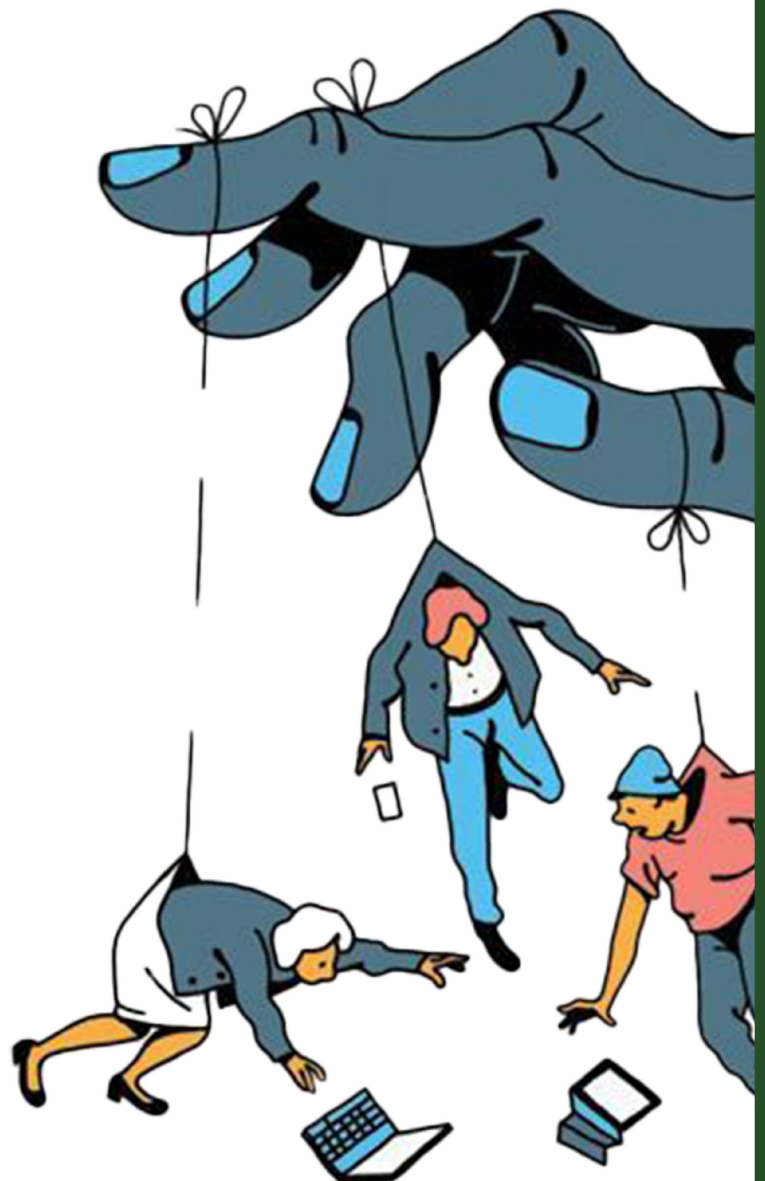
He had hopes and dreams, and he continuously tried to achieve them. But whenever he felt he was making true progress, he would wake up the next morning and realise that nothing had changed. It felt like any time he was close to accomplish anything, another face in the mirror would take over. At first, it was just the slow stagnation of his desires and the killing of his dreams. He was yet to know the true horror of the strings and the masks that came with them. Whenever he felt himself drift away, he felt something else growing inside him, masking his emotions and thoughts; something alien to his body. However, when he pushed against it, it grew further; his body became a gun pointed at his own head, imprisoning him in his own mind.

By the time he came to this realisation, it was too late. There were too many masks, too many faces, and too many strings. What had started as minor alterations to his daily routine and confusion about who he was had led him to forget himself completely; his true self hidden away in a dusty and distant corner of his mind, destined to remain unvisited. The more he was pushed to the sidelines, the more the masks became the mainstays in his body, to the point where they were no longer masks. They were faces. Faces of himself.

Each face smiled sweetly when he looked through his eyes, but he knew that every one of them would twist when he wasn't looking. The strings could barely be felt in his daily actions, but a web was being woven around him. He could feel it as the strings wove a tighter and tighter web; he was further and further isolated from his own self. He wasn't even sure if it was his original self locked deep inside him or another face, another identity, hiding in him instead. He had truly lost all semblance of identity, yet he was still alive.

But now he couldn't turn back; the strings had led him

on and had shaped his life. He could cut them off but he would be nothing without them. After living so long as a puppet, he couldn't live life even if he had the chance to cut those strings. The string-woven cage was now smothering him, and breaking free from the ones simply constraining him would make no difference. The masks were more like him than he ever was and all he could do was fade into the forgotten corner of his consciousness where he was, and remained, trapped indefinitely.

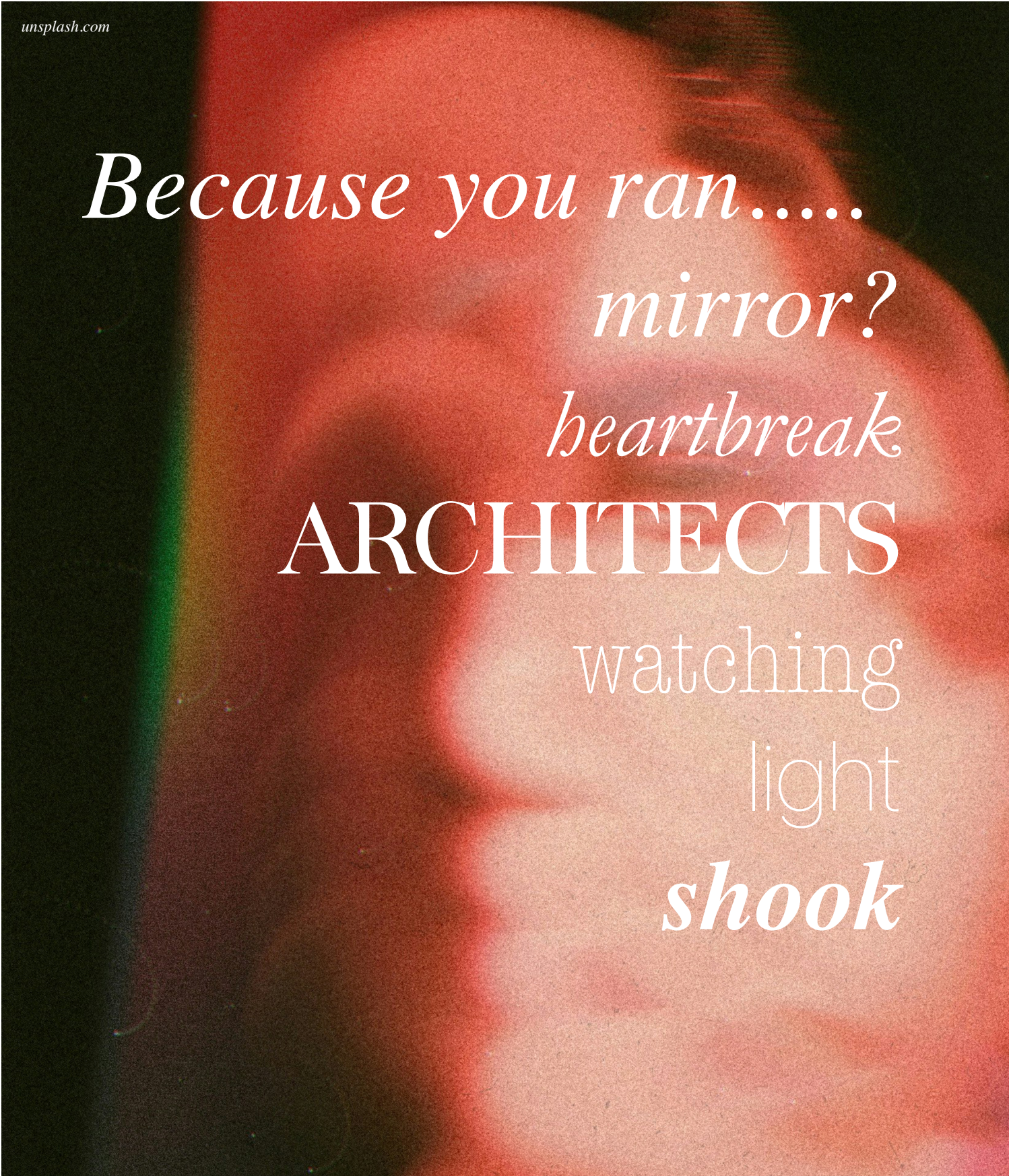


Crossroads

Jodhbir Singh Bajwa

They have the power to twist the space-time continuum. They wanted to see what would happen if they rebuilt someone... differently.

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Because you ran.....
mirror?
heartbreak
ARCHITECTS
watching
light
shook



It all changed around 2 a.m. on that fateful Tuesday morning. As Jack looked out his window, he saw a light repeatedly flashing from the supermarket across the road. Curious, he decided to check what was wrong. To him, it almost looked like a dielectric mirror.

Adrenaline coursing through his veins, Jack rushed out of his house. Entering the supermarket through a hidden passage, he found only a plain shard of mirror reflecting the moonlight. Disappointed, he turned to leave. He felt a sudden chill. His teeth began to chatter. He checked the thermostat; it was switched off. Suddenly, a sharp pain struck the back of his head, and everything went black. When Jack awoke, he was in the store room of the supermarket. He couldn't remember what had happened, except for the sensation of something cold and hard slamming into his skull. Reaching back, he felt a lump on his scalp. A bead of cold sweat trickled down his spine. And then he saw it: an apparition. A ghost from his past. He rubbed his eyes twice before he believed it. It was Alex.

Jack and Alex had been inseparable; friends since kindergarten, who later attended the same college. But one night had destroyed everything. Years ago, Jack had found Alex cornered by Dave and Hussey, the neighbourhood thugs, on the roof of a crumbling building. They hated Alex for standing up to them time and again. Jack, however, had always shrunk back. That night, fate handed him a choice: stand up for his best friend and risk his life, or run away. He chose to run.

That decision haunted him every single day. He remembered Alex's face most of all, the resignation in the eyes of the bravest person he had ever known.

Now, staring at Alex again, Jack was struck by the lines on his face and the streaks of grey in his hair. The years had worn him down. Jack's voice shook:

"A-Alex? You? H-how did you survive?"

Alex stared at him for a long moment, as if weighing the question, or weighing him. The silence stretched, heavy, in the still air. Finally, Alex spoke, his voice low and gravelly:

"I didn't."

Jack blinked. "What do you mean?"

"I didn't survive, Jack. Not the way you think."

He stepped forward. Jack instinctively backed away.

"That night," Alex said bitterly, "Dave and Hussey threw me off the roof. I should have died. But someone found me. Someone... not from around here."

"Who?" Jack asked.

"They call themselves the Architects. They exist outside the world we know. They picked me up and patched me together, not out of mercy, but curiosity. They can twist the space-time

continuum. They wanted to see what would happen if they rebuilt someone differently."

Jack noticed a faint silvery glow in Alex's eyes; something mechanical, not quite human.

"You're saying... they changed you?"

"I am the change," Alex whispered. "A living experiment. And now, they want you."

Jack felt the blood drain from his face. "Me? Why me?"

"Because you ran," Alex said sharply. "You've been running ever since, from guilt, from fear, from your past. But they saw something else in you. Potential. That mirror wasn't just reflecting light. It was reflecting you. A version of you that didn't run. A version they can bring to life."

Jack shook his head. "No. I'm not a part of this. I didn't ask for any of this."

"You never had a choice," Alex said, smiling faintly. "Just like I didn't. The mirror was the invitation. And now, it's already begun."

The ground trembled. The mirror at the front of the store pulsed softly, like a heartbeat of light. The shadows thickened and coiled like smoke, cold to the touch.

Alex leaned closer, whispering: "They're watching, Jack. And they want to see if you'll make the same choice again."

The air cracked like shattering glass, silent, yet absolute. The world folded inward, peeling away like paper.

Jack screamed as he was pulled into the mirror. Into himself.

When he opened his eyes, he was back on that rooftop. Dave and Hussey stood nearby. Alex, bruised but defiant, was cornered at the ledge.

But this time, Jack remembered.

This time, he didn't run.

He stepped forward, fists clenched.

Because this time, he would **fight**.

Divine Parallel Parking

Sumer Gill

You become someone who finishes books they hate, just in case the author is watching.



It is 8:47 a.m. You are late — not fashionably late, not forgivably late, but existentially late.

You are chewing your last piece of confidence gum: the kind that makes your brain feel like it just filed taxes, and the kind that gets you parking spots.

You are about to parallel park. You have visualised this, manifested it. You once prayed to the Holy Trinity: Brake, Reverse and Hope.

And there, in your spot, is Him. God.

You know it is God because the car is hovering half an inch above the asphalt and smells vaguely of birthday presents and justice. The air hums in A-minor. Three crows circle the vehicle anticlockwise, crooning the *Interstellar* theme in a jazz arrangement.

The number plate reads: I WAS HERE FIRST.

You stop. The engine makes a noise like a guilty typewriter. You step out.

And then you feel it. The Stare.

Not a regular human stare, a multi-soul, multi-angle, interdimensional review. Your knees buckle. Your credit score collapses into infinity. Somewhere in Yemen, a child names their goldfish after you. The goldfish does not survive the week.

God sits in the driver's seat wearing a silk wedding dress with 'OMNIPOTENT' bedazzled across the back. He sips nothing. He listens to all music at once; his head bobbing slightly to Gregorian death metal.

There are AirPods in His ears, but they are also in your ears. Somehow. You hear His playlist: a layered loop of three hundred sermons, Mongolian throat singing, and a slowed-down version of *Barbie Girl*.

The windshield fogs and reveals the word: BEHOLD.

You wave. Because what else does one do in this situation? "Excuse me," you say, like a fool. "I usually park here."

God blinks. The traffic light two streets away turns blue. Your watch begins to count backwards. The shadows of

nearby trees applaud. You can't tell if it is a standing ovation or sarcasm.

You try again. "I can come back later?"

The air vibrates. Somewhere, your email inbox marks everything as read. A bush nearby catches fire, but only slightly. It apologises. A parking ticket appears on your windshield and bursts into butterflies. A duck waddles past, quacking in Morse code. You think it says 'witness'.

The clouds above form a passive-aggressive thumbs up. Your shoelaces disassemble themselves out of fear. The left one ties itself into a question mark.

God does not speak. He never does. He sends you a knowing. You see the beginning and end of your life in five seconds. You briefly taste a sandwich you will eat on February 28, 2047. Unfortunately, it will be mediocre.

You also see:

- Your childhood hamster wearing a crown.
- A receipt from a store that does not exist but owes you change.
- The word 'SORRY' spelt in flaming onions.
- The smell of your dad's cologne whispering, "Don't forget the spare key."
- A flash of your unborn child telling a joke you don't understand but laugh at anyway.
- A complete list of things you were supposed to do last Tuesday, including 'apologising to Kevin' and 'rotating your soul.'
- The last page of a book you haven't written yet. It ends with a question mark and a soup stain.

You attempt diplomacy.

"Guess even divine beings forget to check the weather," you joke.

The sideview mirror flashes: WEATHER? LOL, IT IS NOT THAT DEEP.

The car honks, sounding like an orchestra sighing. A pigeon lands on the hood, whispers "Run!", and rockets into the troposphere. Your phone battery jumps by twelve per cent, but it now glows orange and hums when no one is looking. You say thank you. To the car. Or the pigeon. Or both. Your feet briefly lose interest in gravity.

Then God nods. Not approval, not disapproval, just awareness.

You back away slowly, searching for another spot; one less sacred. You park beside a bin leaking unpaid taxes and a suspicious burger.

You sit in your car and try not to think about how your steering wheel now feels aggressively judgmental. The rearview mirror reflects an older version of you, who looks slightly disappointed and mildly French.

Later, when a coworker asks why you parked so far away, you say, "Oh, someone was there." You do not elaborate. You do not mention the humming. You do not speak of how your mirrors only reflect your clothes. You do not mention that Spotify now only plays harpsichord covers of Billie Eilish, or that your GPS gives directions in riddles.

The next morning, the spot is empty. Technically, it is available. Emotionally, it is haunted. You choose the bin again. Because now you know. Sometimes, He does not appear in fire or war. Sometimes, He just takes your parking. And somehow, that is worse.

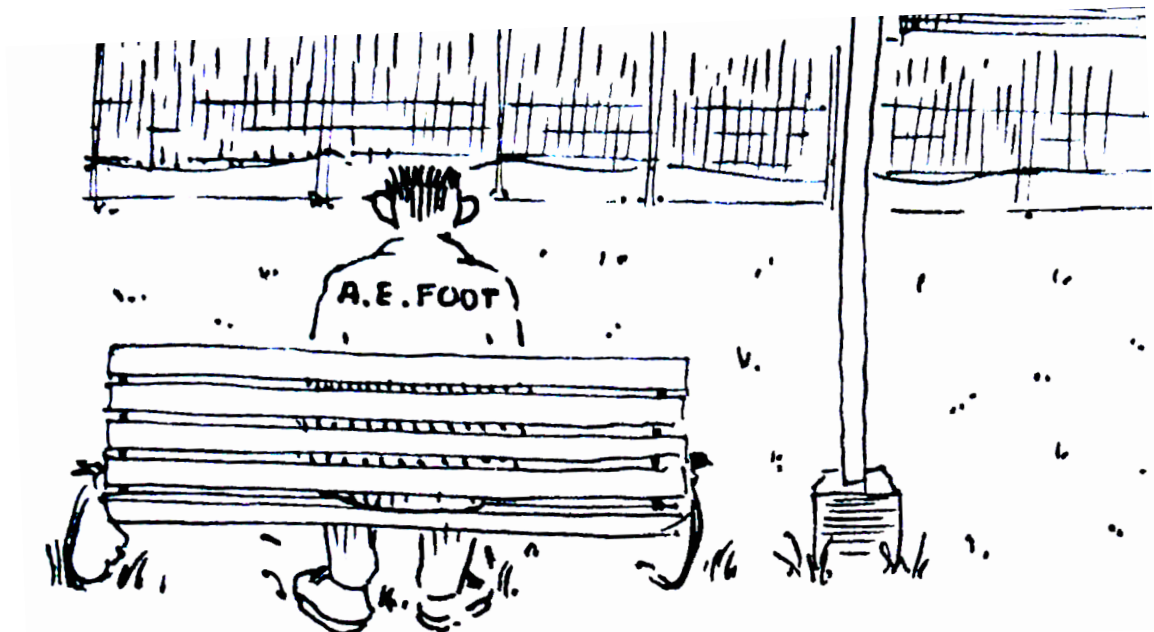
You continue, quietly, obediently. The bin becomes your new sacred haven. It smells of spilt Pepsi and U.S. visa documents. The pigeons no longer make eye contact. Weeks pass. You never see God again. But you see things: a squirrel carrying a soggy baguette, an ice cream cone that bleeds blueberries, a parking meter that shows the date of your death. You insert a coin. Thankfully, it says delayed. You nod. Accept it.

You carry two pens now. Just in case He asks for one. You stop honking at bad drivers. You stop correcting people about punctuation. You finish books you hate, just in case the author is watching.

And you never park in that spot again. You let it sit like an altar, a warning. A perfectly reasonable act of divine interference that you are completely not bitter about. But it is okay. You are okay. The bin is not that bad. It leaks in a way you have learned to respect.

Someone tried to park there last Tuesday. The pigeons laughed. The bush reignited. Your phone reset to factory settings. You did not argue. You just nodded and chewed your gum.

Just in case...



Return of the Founder

Agastya Mehrotra

The Founder sees a boy trying to strike up a genuine conversation with a *maali bhaiya*; finally, he sees a smile that does reach the eyes.

He arrives without any escorts. Stepping off the train onto the platform, Foot shudders. The coat he is wearing is too thin for autumn. He departs the station as if no time has passed, though nearly a century has. The school he had founded is celebrating its ninetieth year. But he is not here to celebrate. He is here to observe. To walk through the red brick corridors of the Main Building – once hopeful and childlike, now polished with legacy. To hear the Orchestra from the back of the Rose Bowl. To sit on a bench beside the Main Field and ponder. This isn't just a reunion. It's an encounter with the past.

Doon was never meant to be ordinary – not in its purpose, not in its problems. Right from the start, it was to be a school the nation would follow. Foot had always envisioned a school that would shape minds and kindle the imagination and, overall, be a space that prioritised distinctive individuals over redundant, plastic clones of each other. But as he walks through the manicured Main Field and has

a peek into the Auditorium to see the Play practices, one wonders: would he recognise the tree he once planted – a tree that, over nine decades, has grown and been carefully pruned in the process, resulting in its tall, sophisticated form today?

To truly understand what Foot would think today, we must rewind to the very beginning. Foot wasn't your typical colonial Headmaster. Unlike others, he saw education as a tool to help build a better future. Doon was never meant to be a factory pumping out standardised models of the privileged; it was meant to be an institution, led by Indians, that held intellectual courage and individuality close to its heart. Foot's approach was quietly radical. He despised elitism and preferred scepticism to obedience. He once wrote, "We are not interested in turning out a special type of citizen, but rather a special quality of mind."

Our School was a school built less on form and ceremony and more on formation, the path to shaping character, independence,



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and self-thought. Boys were encouraged to speak freely and stumble honestly to explore their own minds, rather than to perform for approval. Foot's sapling never prioritised polished trophies; rather, it preferred nurturing thinking young men capable of questioning the world they inherited.

He begins with Assembly. The proceedings are much smoother now, the piano louder, and the Santoor echoing across the modern Auditorium walls. Foot notices the Boys sit up straighter when the camera blinks red. Doscors hurriedly fix their hair and wake up their sleeping counterparts. While the sound of the Choir makes the rest of the School sway, Foot is lost deep in thought. He wonders, is this for documentation or for the outward portrayal of School's love for perfectionism? The question lingers, unanswered, even as the applause rises to fill the hall.

On the Main Field, Foot finds athleticism but struggles just a little to find play. Packed training schedules, Games' Blazers, Sports Colours, performance statistics — excellence that has been sharpened to a spectacle. The Boys look stronger now, faster, and more muscular. But Foot is slightly disappointed. Where is the roughness of invention? The long, aimless afternoons that inspired many a Boy to think, to innovate?

Smart boards don the classroom walls. He sees articulate, knowledgeable, and razor-focused students. But he notices fewer questions, fewer contradictions. The curriculum has broadened, and the competition has skyrocketed, but so has, perhaps, the fear of saying the wrong thing. There is ambition, without a doubt. But there is also a definite sense of anxiety, tucked tightly between measured answers. Boys are busy rushing between rehearsals and submitting projects on time; deadlines are tighter now. A full life. A curated one. He asks a boy how he is doing. "Busy," he replies, with a smile that doesn't quite reach the eyes. And yet, some moments stop him.

As he passes by the Art School, he sees a boy struggling to make a canvas obey. Foot smiles — the freedom to make something messy still survives. He sees a Senior repeatedly rehearsing his solo, not for applause, but for the honour of performing. He sees a clustered Weekly meeting near the CDH, with boys hurriedly trying to plan out the next week's Issue. The Founder sees a boy trying to strike up a genuine conversation with a *maali bhaiya*; finally, he sees a smile that does reach the eyes.

On a visit to the Library, he comes across thousands of books, some in Hindi, Marathi, and Bengali, ideas flowing out in the form of languages, something his generation never gave much thought to. He comes across a couple of boys arguing about a Gandhi quote. This is where he finds his deepest hope, in the courage to think independently, and the freedom to voice out thoughts, however bizarre they may seem at the time, because after all, this leads to innovation.

Perhaps the Batches have changed, but the fire flickers bright as ever.

As the sun sets behind Tata House, Foot lingers on behind the newly renovated Rose Bowl. No one has recognised him. He's just another old man watching Boys perform for a celebration whose meaning he never quite intended to define indefinitely.

He hears the Choir sing perfectly, without missing a note. Applause follows on cue. The brass buttons glint under the Rose Bowl floodlights, the Lamp engraved on them glowing as it has for generations — steady, ceremonial and untouched by doubt. The speeches are precise, and the stage is flawless. The School is proud. Deservedly so.

As Foot walks out of the School gates one last time, he pauses. Much has changed — the accents, the pace, the polish — but change, he always knew, was essential. What mattered was whether the spirit endured. And in the laughter echoing from the Houses, in the courage to question, and in quiet moments of kindness, he sees it flicker still. His eyes sting, not with regret, but with recognition. The School isn't what it was. But it is still becoming what it was meant to be.

Voices Bound in Bronze

Mr Soham Roy (SMY)

The model shimmered, and from within its heart a faint gleam appeared – the ephemeral lamp, long hidden, now flaring into being. Its light grew, blinding and pure, until it engulfed the twins themselves.

On the 106th Founder's evening, I rang out once more across Chandbagh. My voice, cast in bronze, has tolled for Assemblies, for Farewells, and for countless pauses between lessons. Tonight, as Boys gathered on the Main Field under floodlights and fireworks, I felt the familiar tremor of excitement that returns every October. Banners fluttered, speeches rolled, and the air shimmered with memory. From my perch in the belfry of the Main Building, I have watched generations pass beneath me – each leaving reverberations as distinct as the vibrations that hum through my own metal.

The great gathering was in full swing. The lamps lit the driveways, the banners waved as though they themselves remembered every Founder's Day before this one. The Prefects moved with that peculiar mixture of pride and nervous energy that *Founders* summons in even the most stoic of Seniors. Brass bands rehearsed, muffled behind the Music School. Boys polished their shoes in hurried swipes on trouser legs, though the mud had already left its mark. The alumni in their tweeds exchanged long handshakes, their words half about the School and half about each other's thinning hair. From the Orchestra drifted a hymn, that eternal counterpoint to the noise of a thousand footsteps.

Yet every year, as I toll, I am reminded not only of the present but of stories that linger like resonance in my chamber. For *Founders* is not only about speeches and spectacles, but also about what lies between them – the whispered moments, the forgotten gestures, the sudden acts of service that outlast all program notes.

But let me tell you a story. In 2025, in Chandbagh, there was a pair of twins in B Form – Harman Zende and Tarnam Zende. In those days, people didn't yet come down to the alphanumeric names, so the twins were always called 'HanZ-N-TranZ.' They came from the verdant valley beyond the Western Ghats, close to Karjat. I see them as plainly today as the first time, they were planning on waking me up before the last School ended, hanging on to my coat-tails in the Main Building, stealing furtive glances from the guard around. They played the piano and the violin with equal ease. They could go on an exposition about the efficacy of less time within the classrooms and more on the games' field at the drop of a hat – a long-winded one at that, if only they could find a curious listener. I remember a particularly wet monsoon, when School was called off by my deep voice after breakfast. As the Boys were drifting along to their boarding house, hopping from one dry patch of pebbles to another, OrgoLab streamed in from the Weekly Editor's board, saying out loud that he had seen the spirit of a Dosco – the flicker of the eternal Lamp: an aristocracy of Service from two B formers just then. Both of them braved the unending downpour to lay down lines of bricks to help

whoever, if they so desired, to reach the Science Block. What difference did it make to them or for them, I could not venture to state. Yet, the coruscating in their eyes, as heard from OrgoLab, was evidence enough that these two boys, the most unexpected pair; HanZ-N-TranZ, had been earmarked by all among us as the ones to take the legacy of Chandbagh ahead.

So began the tale of OrgoLab, guardian of bonds and custodian of Chandbagh's memory. On that ninetieth Founder's night, he appeared to HanZ-N-TranZ, who had strayed into the Chemistry Lab. His *kurta* was streaked with chalk, his spectacles fogged, his temper as dry and sharp as sodium meeting water. He seemed to emerge from the residue of decades worth of experiments – the ghost of equations scribbled hastily on blackboards. The odour of old reagents lingering in cupboards. The faint sparkle of forgotten crystals in beakers pushed to the back of shelves.

"There is a test tonight," he told them. His voice was measured, like one accustomed to dictating equations rather than telling tales. "Not of marks, not of medals. The School hides its resonance structure. If you find it, you will know why ninety years have annealed this place instead of ageing it."

The twins looked at him, nonplussed yet intrigued. OrgoLab leaned closer. A flame flickered on the lab table, and in its smoke rose shapes of two shadows, one looking out while the other fidgets with something like a long, woven rope. Each dissolved into the next, like molecules shifting bonds. "And so it begins," OrgoLab said.

HanZ-N-TranZ, who were known more for their mischievous stunts than for embarking on sacred quests, looked at each other, bewildered. Yet something in OrgoLab's visage – a confluence of weariness and expectation, like a Master who has waited too long for his apprentices – impelled them forward. Almost at once, their ears caught the toll of the belfry, its bronze voice calling them upward into the night. They knew where they needed to be.

Their first steps carried them upward, toward me. The belfry of the Main Building is not often visited at night, but that evening the twins climbed the narrow stairs, each creak of wood like a heartbeat amplified. My bronze sides quivered faintly as they approached, for I, too, was part of the trial. At the door, just beneath a crack of ancient stone, they found a slip of paper.

*Bronze throat tolls the years,
time anneals what bonds cannot –
steps descend to stone.*

TranZ read it, his voice low and reverent despite himself. HanZ leaned against the wall, contemplating. They both knew



what it meant, though they did not speak it aloud. From my perch, I had watched countless boys grow from fumbles to certainties, from tears to laughter. Time had not dissolved Doon — it had precipitated something unsullied, like crystals forming under heat. The twins nodded as though hearing my unspoken affirmation, and descended the stairs.

Their next steps took them down the slope toward the Rose Bowl. The amphitheatre, in its darkness, was imbued not by ghosts but by reverberations — of cheers, of speeches, of songs that had risen from its stone seats over generations. On the third row, beneath a bench smoothed by decades of restless hands, another slip of paper fluttered in the breeze.

*Pressure carves the song,
voices bloom from hollow rock—
books wait in still air.*

The rain-dampened stones seemed to nod in agreement. HanZ traced the words with his finger, recalling matches when the odds were against them and yet the team had coalesced into something greater than the sum of its parts. TranZ chuckled, muttering about the time he had dropped an easy catch only to find redemption two overs later. The line spoke to them not only as players but as DoscOs — boys bound to one another by the idiosyncratic alchemy of pressure and support. They tarried a while, breathing in the scent of wet grass and stone, before setting off again.

At last their steps carried them to the Library. The grand doors creaked open, releasing a draught that smelt faintly of old polish. Inside, silence pressed upon them like a sealed flask. They moved between the aisles, fingers brushing spines of books that had waited generations for hands eager enough to open them. On the reading desk lay the final note, illuminated by a shaft of moonlight from the high windows.

*Silent shelves conceal,
a lamp glows where hands converge—
light binds all to one.*

Both twins glanced at each other with the kind of recognition that requires no words. Their eyes wandered across the stillness of the Library until they fell upon the miniature model of Chandbagh, standing quietly beneath its glass cover, a small universe of bricks, paths, and fields in repose. Almost instinctively, HanZ placed his left palm on one edge of the model while TranZ pressed his right on the opposite side.

For a heartbeat, nothing stirred. Then a low hum, like the vibration of a tuning fork, spread through the room. The model shimmered, and from within its heart a faint gleam appeared — the ephemeral Lamp, long hidden, now flaring into being. Its light grew, blinding and pure, until it engulfed the twins themselves.

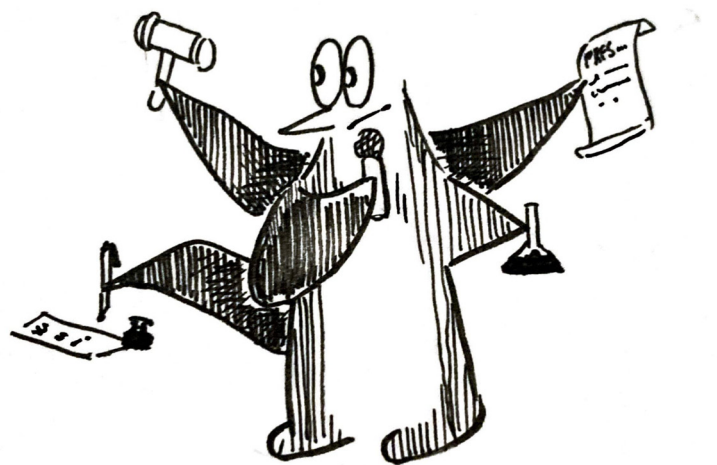
They did not retreat. They held fast, palms firm, until the brilliance wrapped them whole. For a moment, they seemed dissolved into the Lamp's glow — transfigured, annealed into its flame — before the radiance ebbed back into silence. The Library remained, the model stood intact, but something had shifted. They now carried within them the truth that books alone could never explain: it was the human bonds, the invisible links between Boys and Masters, between Seniors and Juniors, that held Chandbagh together. The ephemeral Lamp was not merely seen; it was borne, alive now in them.

And there, OrgoLab reappeared, chalk-dusted and lambent like heat above a flame.

My young Sirs, it was a match. OrgoLab knew that he was not only the spirit of the Science Block but the enduring legacy and mouthpiece of all the bricks, stones, bells and whistles that make up Chandbagh. And they needed someone to be their custodian when new younglings stepped foot, for the first time, on the pebble-strewn path from the Main Gate to the Main Building. OrgoLab watched over the twins as they solved the last clue and completed the quest soon after. The twins knew that they would not be their usual exuberant best. For they knew, what transpired on this night may well go down in the annals as an adventure fantastique with daresay many a believer. But, as you know, this was what OrgoLab and Chandbagh needed. The twins did look content and an aura of insouciance was pervasive in their gait as they made their way to the last call of *Paagal Gymkhana* in the Upper Skinners. And there was an ethereal joy of achievement emanating from the twins, whoever was there would have vouched the same. However, not many of them would ever know what satisfaction it meant to really belong to this tapestry shaped by the rich legacy of ninety years. Exactly, ten years later to the day, the twins were back, with young DoscOs leading them to their designated seats as the final evening performance on the last day of the Centennial Founders was about to begin.

So You Want to Be A...

Old Boys, each with successful careers in their respective fields, comment on the lessons learnt within the spheres of their profession, and the lessons that they carried with them from their time at Doon.



So you want to be a Scientist?

Why?

I had a friend in School, Yashwardhan Pokhriyal, 394-J, Batch of 2012. He took his life a couple of years after he left School, post A Form. We were given the news while in class. We didn't believe it. All our combined memories of him didn't suggest that this would be a possibility. A few of my Formmates and I huddled around a phone as one of us rang up his family's hotel and gracelessly asked the lady at the reception whether there was any veracity to the claims. She confirmed what we dreaded.

Throughout my life, I periodically wonder about Pokhriyal and life. The question, that I suppose all of us had, was why? Why would he do something so drastic? With time and experience, potential answers to this question have appeared. I want to discuss these answers openly.

At a very coarse level, one can live life either actively or passively. In School, I was extremely passive. I didn't apply myself to anything. It is much easier to scoff at others' accomplishments if you can convince yourself that even earnestly attempting is beneath you. The consequence, however, is that you are smug while being carried to unknown destinations by the flow of time. The destinations, and even the journey, can be treacherous enough to merit the contemplation of the question: why? Why bother with everything when there has never been a point to anything?

The other option is to live life actively. This portends greener pastures. After the structure of School vanished from my life, I was forced to come to the realisation that unless I participated in life, I was going to be miserable. My smugness about try-hards (or 'scopats') was replaced gradually with admiration. An active life, however, is still beset with turmoil. By definition, an active life necessitates goals. Goals that you may not achieve. These may be as specific as missing out on your dream university or as generic as being a good person. These inevitable failures, especially when compounded, offer another reason for the contemplation of 'why.' When failure seems to be a certain byproduct of trying, why even bother trying?

I don't know what the case was with Pokhriyal. When we were walking from Martyn House to the Music School, discussing how cool the *Constantine* film was, while avoiding athletics practice and favours from Seniors, it seemed like we were both living the passive life. But he left School, and reports suggest that he might have shifted to a more active life. It would be insensitive to ask his family, and to a degree, it is insensitive to so openly discuss him and his passing. But I don't want his memory to be washed away so easily. Nor do I want serious investigations into life being met with casual dismissal.

So, as Camus (2013) so cleanly stated, 'Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question,' his answer was to revel in the absurdity your life has to offer, where, despite knowing that all you have is futile effort towards an impossible task, you still meet it with a smile. Frankl (1985) asks you to imbue your life with meaning to withstand the inevitable suffering; a lesson he forged in the furnace of the Nazi concentration camps. Buddhist scriptures, on the other hand, recommend that you forsake desire to overcome your suffering through their proposed

eightfold path. For the theologically inclined, Kierkegaard (2013) details the internal state of Abraham on a trek to sacrifice his son, passionately arguing that you take a leap of faith and believe in a God closer to home. The four yogas (selfless service, *bhakti*, knowledge-seeking, and meditation) offer paths that can be taken individually or in tandem to spiritual fulfilment. Ask your local philosophy doctorates for other serious thinkers who offer solutions that may suit your philosophical temperament.

I can't pretend to have solutions of remotely the same calibre, but I do have a framework that might be helpful. If you take a phenomenological stance to life, then the things that happen in your mind (or structures of consciousness) are inseparable from life. Your consciousness, as Kahneman (2011) elaborates, takes two forms: instinctual, when you are in the moment such as when you are effortlessly doomscrolling, talking with friends, timing a tackle, or performing on stage; and deliberate, when you have moments of pause or logical reasoning. McGilchrist (2019) argues, with the full force of neuroscientific literature, that this duality in thinking may be linked to the hemispheric structure of your brain, thus shaping our perceptions of the world. Knowing this, an easy heuristic in life is to utilise your deliberate, slow thinking, to put yourself in situations where your instinctual or experiential self can express itself in a manner that is fulfilling.

It is important to understand, from your experiences, how your traits dictate your perception of a situation (Ziegler et al., 2019). This should allow you to hone in on situations where you would like to place yourself, while considering the obvious criteria of being 'good' for you, your family, your community, and the world. Leverage a bunch of competent yet understandable philosophers, economists, historians, and other social scientists, to continually refine your definition and pursuit of 'good.' Consequently, you can inform the nature of your career, relationships, and hobbies to ensure you come out living a 'fulfilled life.'

The evidence seems to convergently suggest that the adoption of a 'healthy' lifestyle (exercise, nutrition, sleep, and vice control) yields a reduction in all-cause mortality (Loef & Walach, 2012) and reduction in mental disorders (Firth et al., 2020). Assuming that one can follow a generally healthy lifestyle, for most of you reading this, there are multiple decades to experience. The stresses put on an individual at any single moment, as a consequence of either passively ending up at an undesirable place, or actively failing at a pivotal juncture, need to be framed in this holistic view of life. You can change the course and put yourself in situations which might be more suitable as you continually make the choice to smile in the face of your struggles.

In my periodic reminiscing about Pokhriyal, I often wonder whether any of this would have been helpful. He usually had the upper hand in arguments, and so I can't be too sure that I would have a rebuttal to his 'why.' But I hope that I do one day.

-Ashvath Singh

So you want to be a Civil Servant?

A career in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) has given me the opportunity to serve the nation by leading and influencing positive change in our governance systems via direct action on the lives of the people.

From my very first posting as a Block Development Officer in a small town in Himachal Pradesh to my current assignment in the Finance Ministry, I have been fortunate to lead sizeable teams. This role has enabled me to sharpen my leadership skills in real time. Faced with a constant stream of public policy challenges, I have been tested on my ability to listen, analyse, prioritise, and ultimately implement sustainable solutions. Without doubt, it was Doon where I got my first sense of social consciousness. It didn't happen all at once; it happened slowly, subtly, without me even realising it. Interacting with villagers during the Midterms, teaching specially-abled students during SUPWs, or simply sharing living space with boys who came from varying socio-economic backgrounds; these all contributed to my outlook and helped me realise that opportunities don't come equally for everyone. This experience instilled in me a sense of empathy, justice, and a strong desire to impact people's lives positively. In addition, qualities of punctuality I imbibed at Doon developed in me a 'bias for action,' pushing me to become more decisive and goal-oriented at work.

-Rohan Chand Thakur

So you want to be a Journalist?

Great! God knows we need people who actually want to pursue journalism. If news is the path you are considering, congratulations! Doon is an amazing sparring ring before you get to real battles. It's simple: news is conflict, which, if you love, will make news and journalism your calling. Your aggression will be channelised in a productive direction that could, if you do it right and are lucky, have profound outcomes.

Running a news enterprise in most parts of the world, in this century, is a high risk proposition. To do it well and not become a PR machine is another challenge in itself. It's about not getting intimidated, bullied or compromised because of pressures that override journalism for public interest. All boarding schools, especially Doon, teach us some very valuable lessons in this department. Any environment that is all-boys will have its share of combativeness, the occasional rough encounter, and the bombastic show boaters. You will meet bullies who will try to intimidate you. You will also meet well-meaning friends who are conflict averse and will try and make you comply with the herd. There could be temptations to give in to peer pressure and do something unfair, like raid a Junior's tuck.

There will often be rational and practical reasons to compromise your integrity. You have or will face all this in School. Through being exposed to such scenarios in your adolescence, you will be able to examine your motivations, actions and proclivity. You will have the time to reflect on your decisions. Within that, correct or accept your nature. If it truly is the Dosco credo of an 'Aristocracy of Service' that motivates you, you have chosen well. You have been trained for the world of news. Welcome to combat. It's tough, and it's amazing.

-Abhinandan Sekhri

So you want to be a Lawyer?

Doon turned me into a lawyer without ever handing me a law book. At School, everything was a debate — who whacked the last meatball, which House was the best, or why Morning PT clearly was a human rights violation! By the time I reached S Form, I had already mastered cross-examination... mostly thanks to my peers.

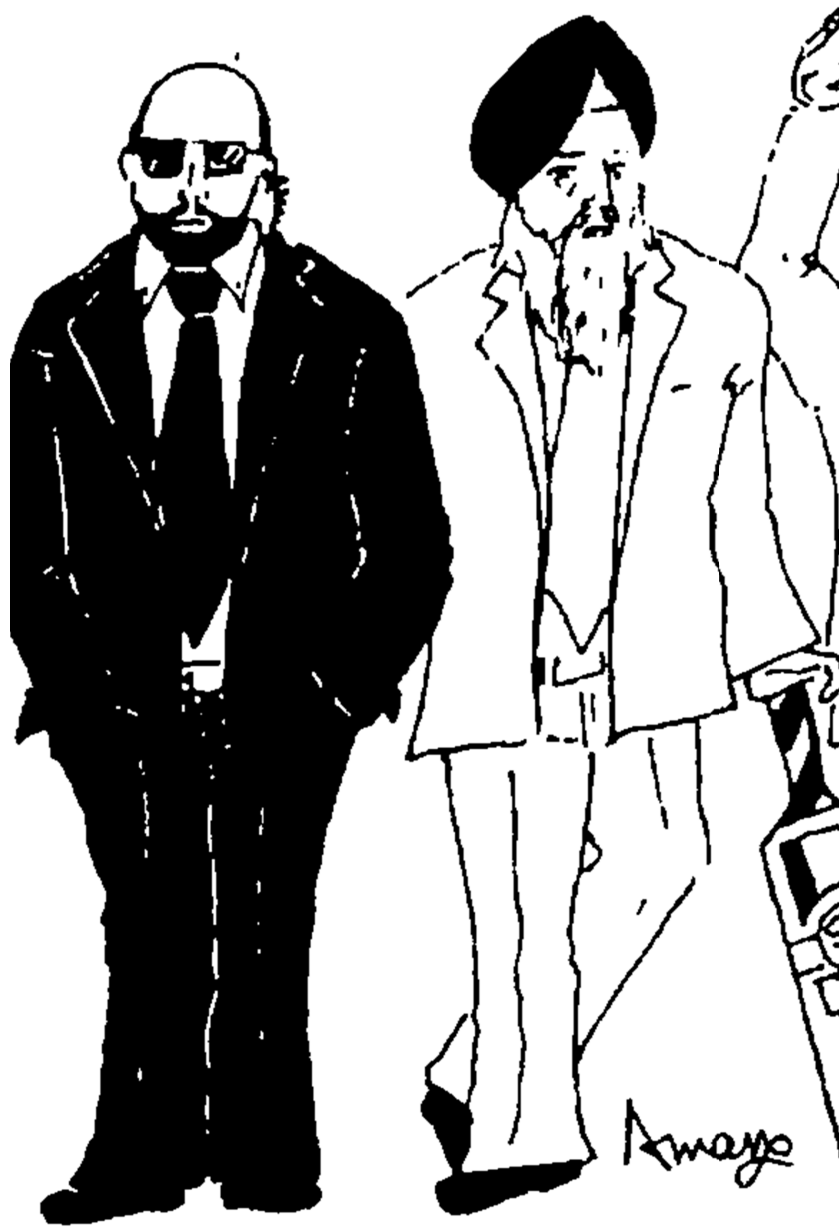
Boarding life was its own trial by fire. Convincing a Housemaster that your study was "perfectly tidy" while three socks and a Maggi peeked out from under the bed? Early lessons in advocacy. Losing matches, debates, and bad marks taught resilience — the kind you need when a Judge raises an eyebrow mid-argument.

Athletics was a key part of my journey. When you are running long distances, you tell yourself two things: keep running, and keep breathing! It taught me and my peers patience and built endurance not just physically, but mentally too. This has been a crucial facet to the profession as well.

However, most importantly, Doon taught me perspective. One day you're tearing your peers apart in an argument, the next you're handing them the baton in a relay to save your House Team. That balance — fight hard, then shake hands — is characteristic of a lawyer.

So yes, Doon shaped me as a lawyer. It taught me to argue passionately, recover quickly, and — most importantly — keep my resolve intact. If you can survive the favours and Morning PTs, the legal profession feels almost easy.

-Shiv Sapra

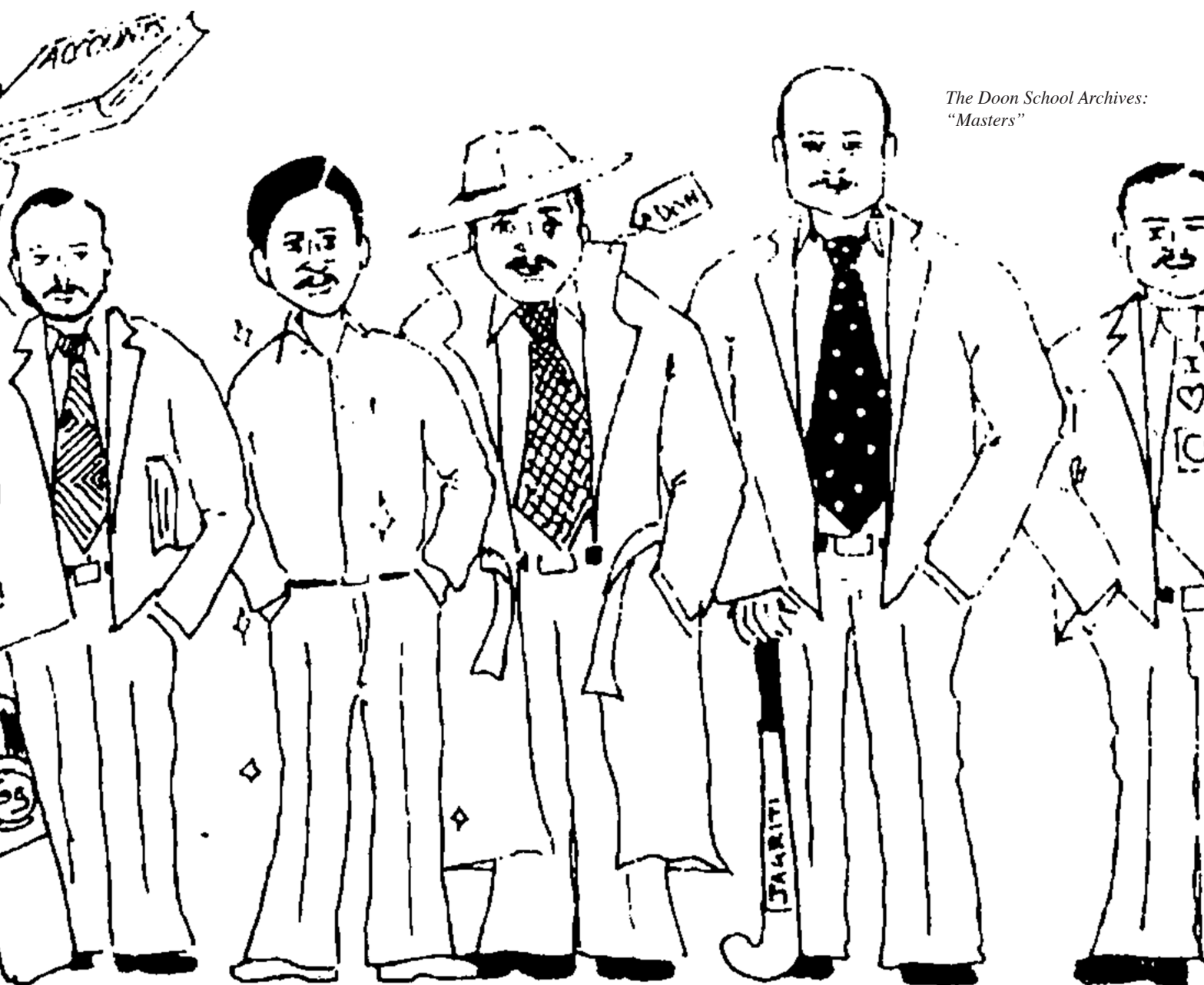


-**Ashvath Singh (338-J, 2012)** is a postdoctoral researcher specialising in Water and Environmental Engineering at Aalto University. He has completed his PhD on canopy interception of rainfall and its impact on ecosystems.

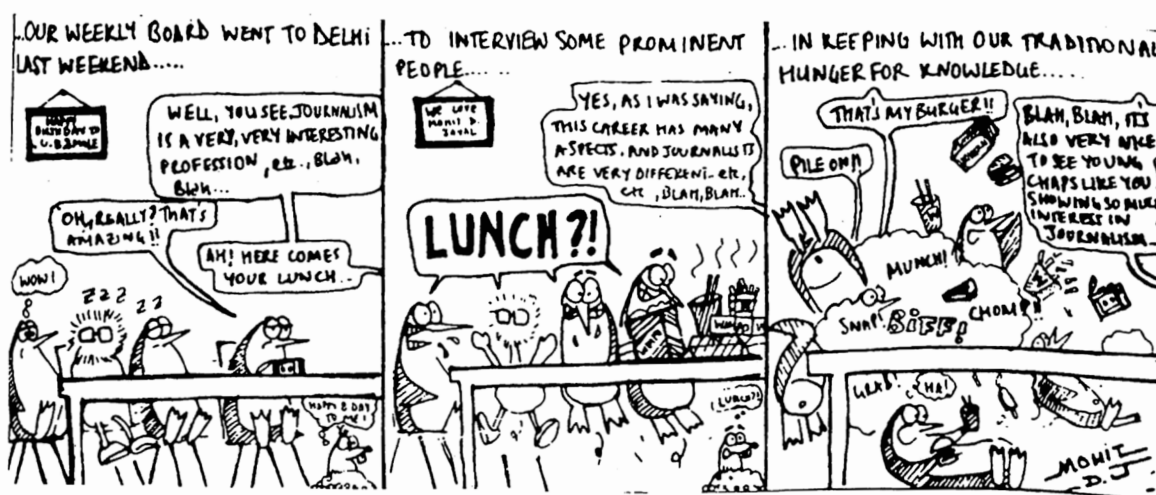
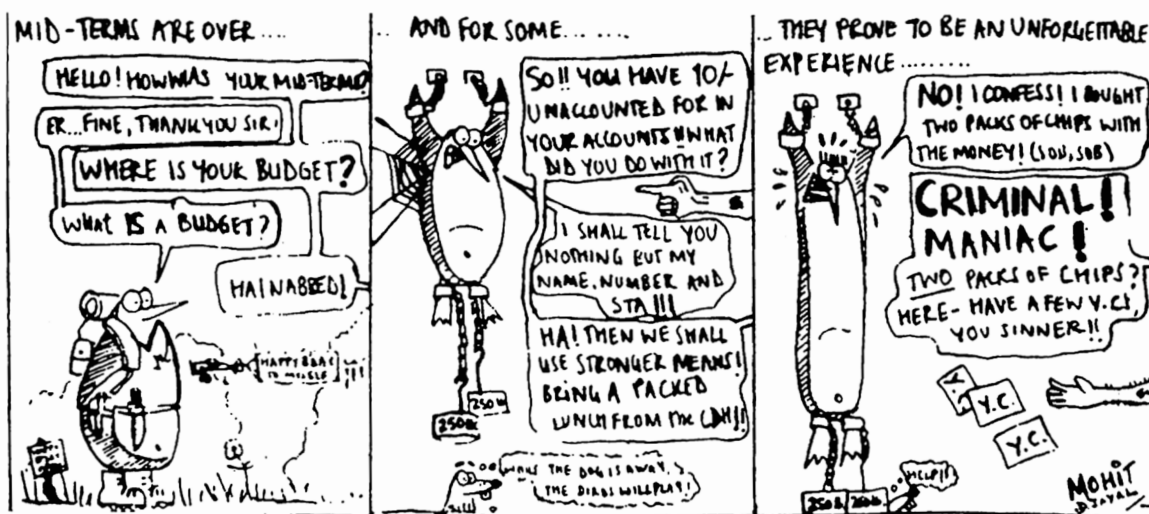
-**Rohan Chand Thakur (563-O, 2001)** is an officer of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) of the 2009 batch of Himachal Pradesh Cadre. He is presently serving in the Finance Ministry of India.

-**Abhinandan Sekhri (362-OB, 1992)** is a journalist, media entrepreneur, and co-founder of Newslaundry, a media critique and news analysis platform. At present, he serves as CEO of Newslaundry, where he pushes independent journalism and media ethics.

-**Shiv Sapra (408-JB, 1999)** is a litigation lawyer and Partner at Kochhar & Co., New Delhi, with over seventeen years of practicing commercial law. He specializes in arbitration, insolvency, and high-stakes corporate litigation.



*The Doon School Archives:
“Masters”*



archives

[62]

TO BE AN SC

A reprint of an article written by 'An Sc Former' published on April 15, 1995, in Issue No. 1761.

Every year a Batch of Doscós leave and their successors become the most influential group of people in School. This year the same happened to me. After six years of patient exploration and inferiority, I have achieved the ultimate goal in School life. I stand tall amongst the rest of the School, I am questionable to no one but myself and so I am designated as a "Senior Citizen," an Sc Former.

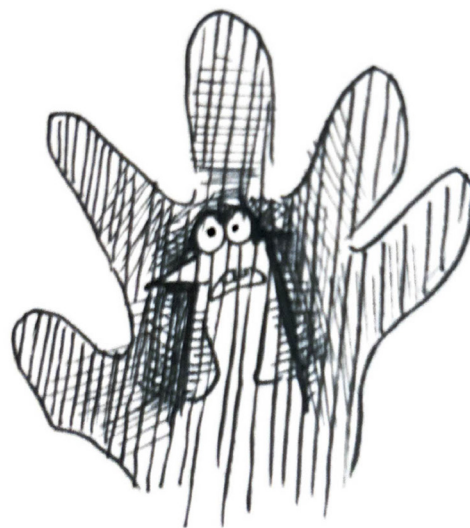
Having become the senior-most in School, I must grow my hair, it is imperative whether it does well for me or not — it is a crucial part of my image. I am considered "cool" if I antagonise the head of the School, "shattered" if I wear wrong socks and just "enjoying School life" if I come late for dinner. PT cramps my style and so I should come late or not attend at all. Somehow I get the feeling that our system is concordant with the attitude of our Sc Formers. Is my last year at School meant to be frittered away, as though I ought to sit around and cloud my underachievement by exhibitionism, to try and be "popular rather than just?"

Setting an example may come easily to me, but it is very difficult not to stray from what I preach myself. Often I am caught in a situation where I contradict myself and set a bad example. Thus it is important that I practice what I preach. Many Sc's may find this difficult to comprehend, but the fact is that once I train others by setting examples, I myself am disciplined in the process. Very often, in the process of being "cool" I pollute the minds of those around me who are younger.

However, I am an Sc and I am oblivious to all this and much more. In fact almost everything is in the peripheries of my interest. If any problem bears my concern, I rectify it. If I am to blame, I pass the blame onto others. How do I care if the Junior behind me gets his ice cream or the one in front of me is held up for doing something illegal, at his cost and for my sake? So it seems that a scapegoat is my best ally, he can jump the wall for me and keep my money in his locker. Punishments come easy to him, but he bears the brunt of everything, just to keep me impressed. I feel free to exploit him anytime — after all he is an ally. The thought of violating someone's freedom and denying him the opportunity to grow is by far the last thought that enters my mind.

It's Saturday night. I am sitting near the stage. It has taken me six years to graduate from the last row to the first. All the while, I have seen several Sc's chase and catch each other, throw things around and create a scene. It is my time now. I am wearing a jersey which bears an inscription that can be read from a mile off. I throw my chair around, I arm wrestle, take off my shirt and dance on the stage. Meanwhile the Juniors behind me snicker and laugh and dream... about being an Sc Former?

Why is it that I changed so much in my final year? Am I so immature that I cannot handle the responsibilities given to me? What comes with being the Senior-most in School? Surely I have not been dormant all this while, waiting to become an Sc Former. Maybe I ought to take a rest and give it a thought. Is this new status a catalyst which ignites my inner frustrations? Maybe I ought to take stock of what is going on around me. Maybe I ought to redefine my own status. Maybe you should give it a thought too, after all, you could be me...



THE **ORIGINS** OF THE **DOSCO** **PENGUIN**

Mohit Dhar Jayal (527-TA, 1987)

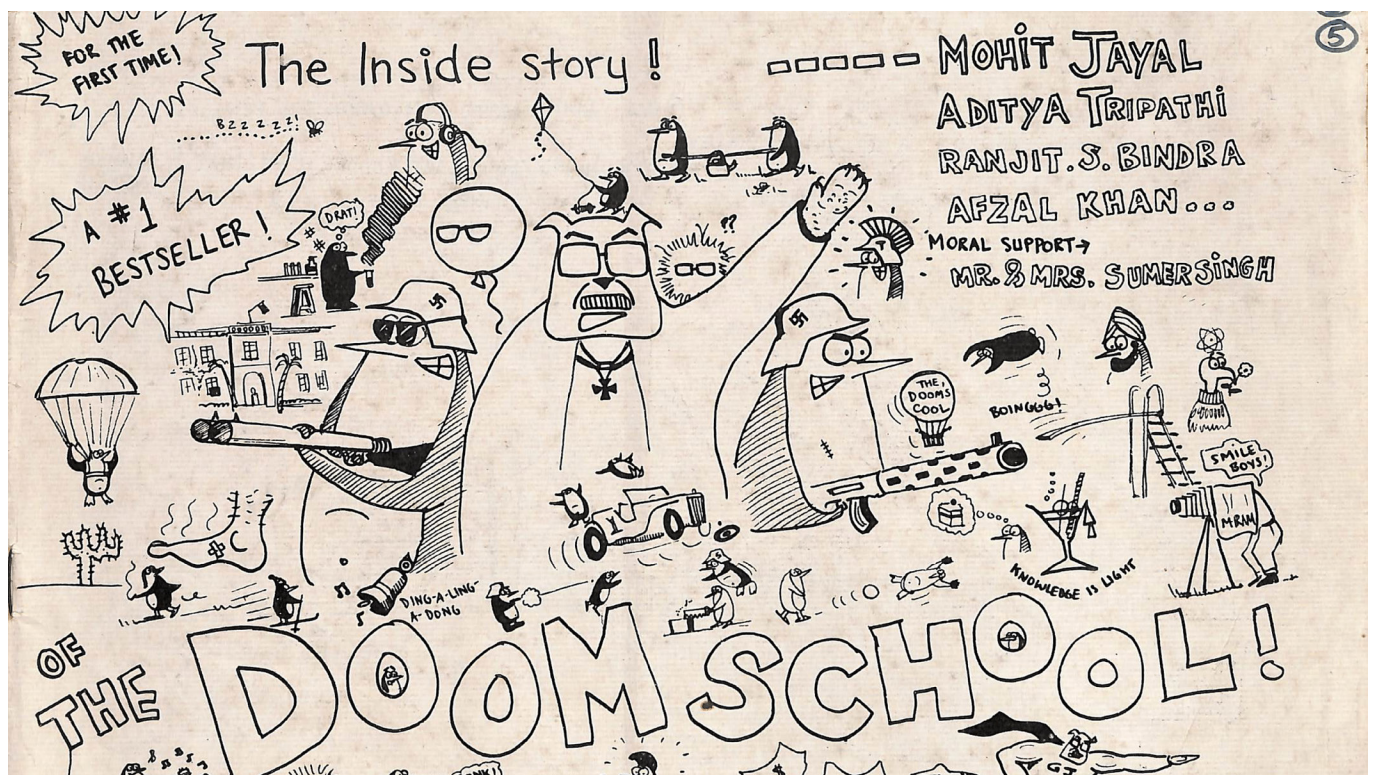
There has been a long-ish tradition of cartoons in the Editorial history of *The Doon School Weekly*, and the Penguin comic strip is very much part of that legacy. This is a brief historical footnote about how the Penguin came to become the Dosco mascot – and more importantly, how the cartoon strip represented some of the best aspects of Dosco culture. I started cartooning in School because my elder brother (who also drew cartoons for the *Weekly* during his time) suggested I do something productive instead of hanging around Tata House feeling homesick. I submitted my first comic strip in 1983-ish to *The Circle*, a high-brow fortnightly journal run by Mr Arun Kapur and his brainy team of Editors. They were crazy enough to accept it. Inspired by several satirical comic artists from all over the world, I set out to make profound artistic statements via a cast of random characters (including penguins). Instead, the first few strips were a visual and narrative mess of ink blots and half-baked jokes.

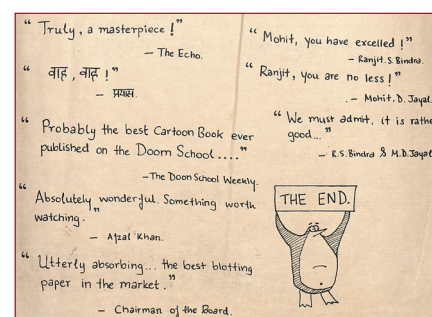
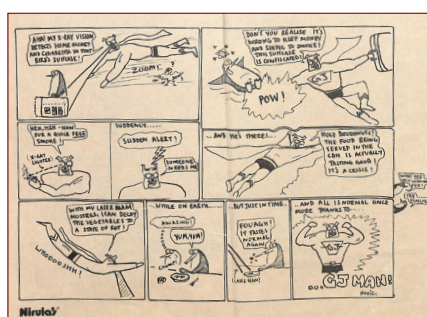
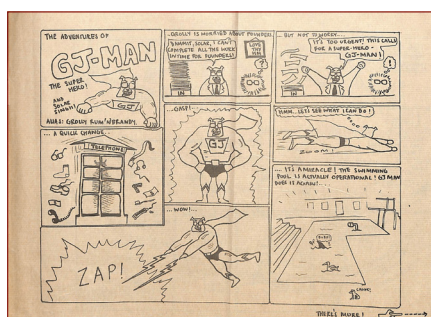
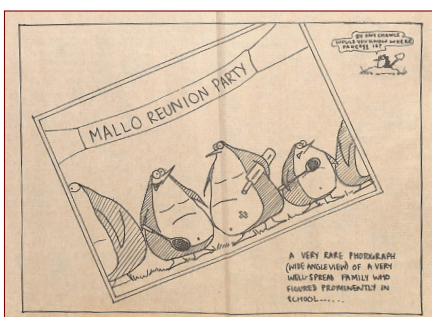
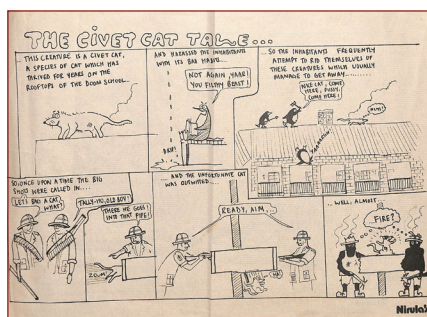
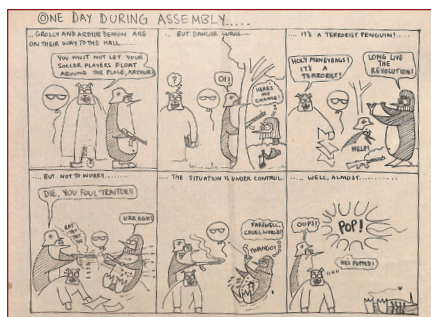
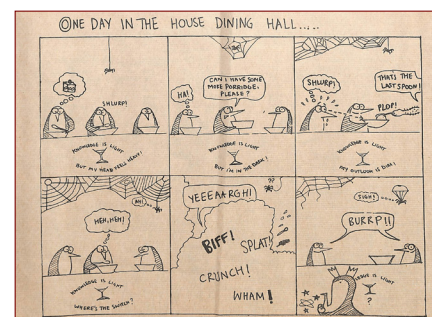
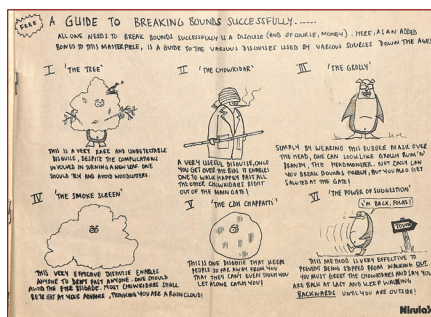
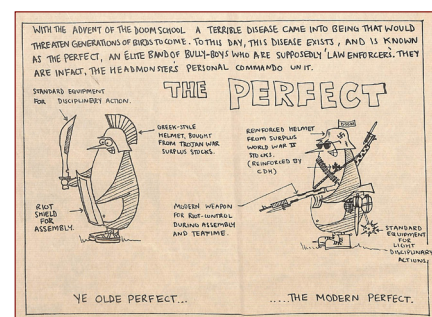
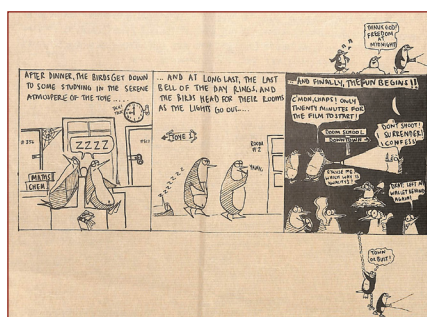
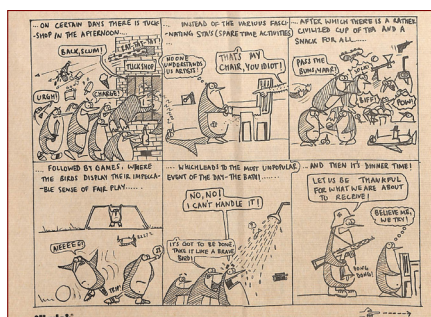
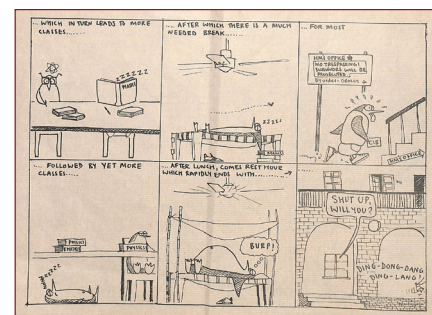
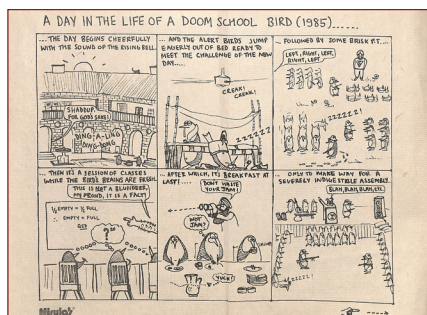
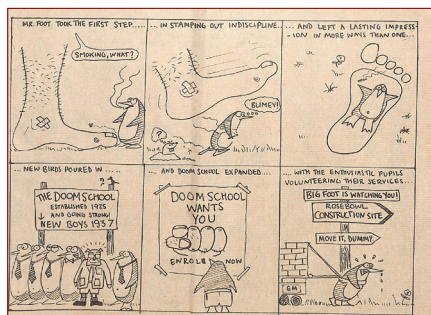
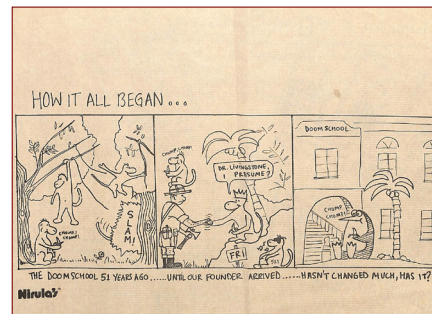
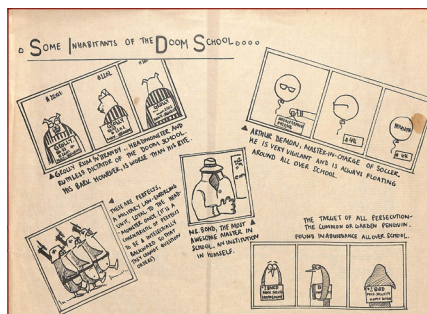
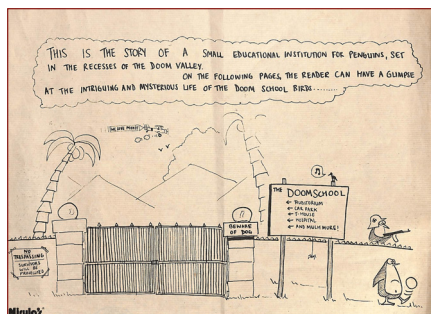
As I started sharpening up the art and wit, *The Doon School Weekly* carried out a hostile media takeover and poached the comic strip from *The Circle*. I suddenly found myself working for Mr Sumer B Singh and the dynamic Editorial team of the *Weekly*, with a massive readership of five hundred Doscos that expected to be informed, enlightened, and entertained by the *Weekly* every Saturday morning. By 1985, the strip and its cast of Penguins had become popular enough to warrant a special Golden Jubilee comic book, sponsored by Nirula's! By the time I left School in 1987, the Penguin was a well-established character and would go on to be brilliantly drawn by many Dosco cartoonists, even ending up on School apparel and memorabilia.

The Penguins benefited from a huge amount of love and support from the Dosco Community. When the late Pushpinder Singh Chopra (who constantly encouraged me to draw aviation and School-themed cartoons) introduced me to Vikram Seth

This is a story of a small academic institute for penguins set in the recess of The Doom Valley. On the following pages, the Reader can have the glimpse at the intriguing and mysterious life of the Doom School birds...

The Doon School Archives

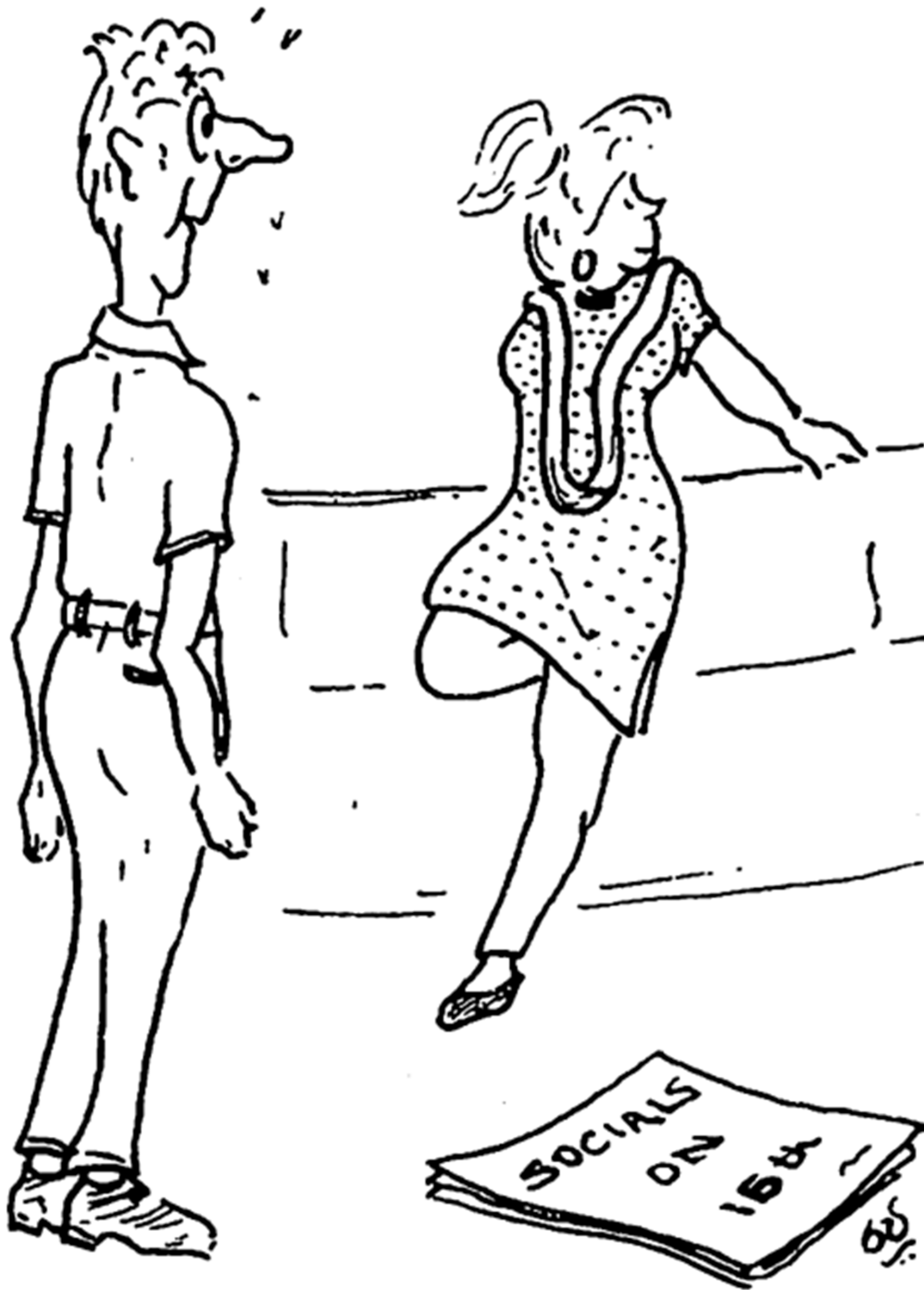




at an ex-Dosco dinner, the celebrated author gave the Penguins their most serious literary endorsement ever: 'Those penguin cartoons?! Delightfully irreverent – but never irrelevant!' As is evident from the above, the Penguin origin story isn't particularly riveting – but it does say a lot about the ethos of the Doon School. The Penguin comic strips were bitingly satirical and extremely anti-establishment. They portrayed the Headmaster, various senior Masters, and all House Captains and Prefects as evil autocrats (ref. included images from the 1985 comic book). No subject was off-limits – from the bulletproof CDH *chapatis* to the unforgiving Prefects. And yet, freedom of expression ensured that comic strips were very rarely blocked or amended by the Weekly Editorial Board. The jokes crossed a few lines now and then (I also had my School Colours taken away, but that's a longer story, haha) – but every single time, individuals like Mr and Ms Sumer Singh, Mr Arjun Mahey, and the plucky Editorial team members would stand up for me and ensure creative independence. The Penguins only survived because democracy thrived in the Doon School.

The Penguin story is also a story of collective spirit. Long before 'collaboration' became a business buzzword, the Penguin comic strip was a model of co-creation. I drew the strip, but the insights and punchlines came from anyone and everyone.





"... and I won the Games Blazer in C Form"

The Doon School Archives

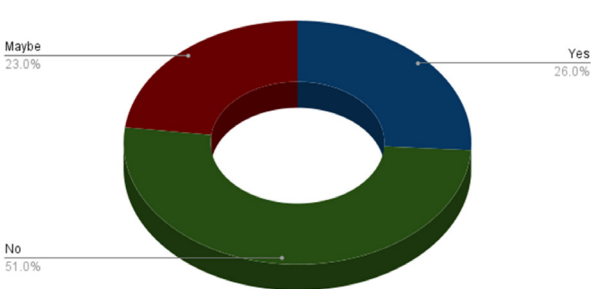
Every strip was the outcome of ideas and banter with pals, Editorial Board members, and even the Masters. There was also a common mindset that fostered this kind of thinking. Most of us shared a tendency to challenge authority, to not take ourselves too seriously, and to puncture any air of pomposity. This culture of collaboration was a very special aspect of School life, and it's almost certainly why I still work so closely with fellow Doscocs in my professional life — whether it's selling iconic motorcycles to the world or regenerating the 'Walled City' of Jodhpur.

That's the story of the Penguin and how it came to be included in the illustrious pages of *The Doon School Weekly*. A story of irreverence — but not irrelevance...

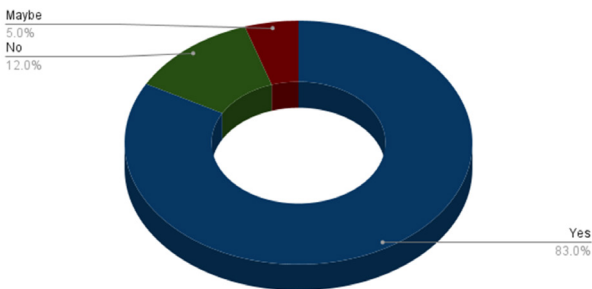
SCHOOL UNDER THE SCANNER

2012

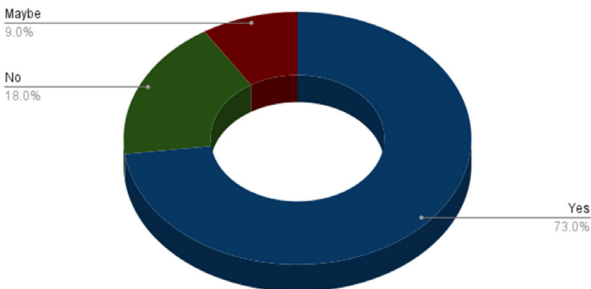
433 MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY WERE POLLED



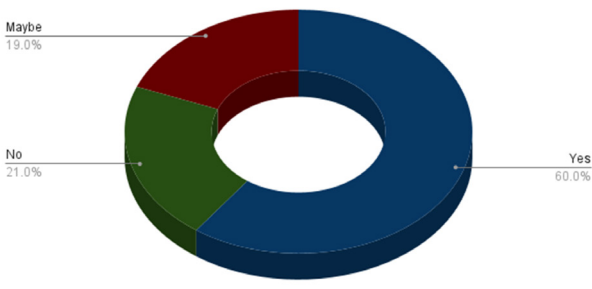
Has a residential school like Doon lost its relevance in society?



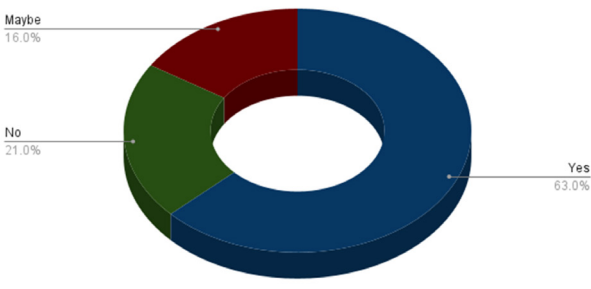
Do you think the School provides an all-round education?



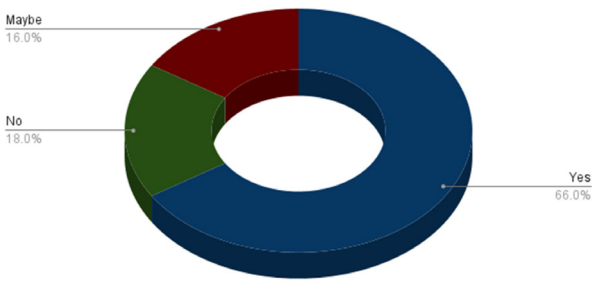
Do you believe in both House and School spirit?



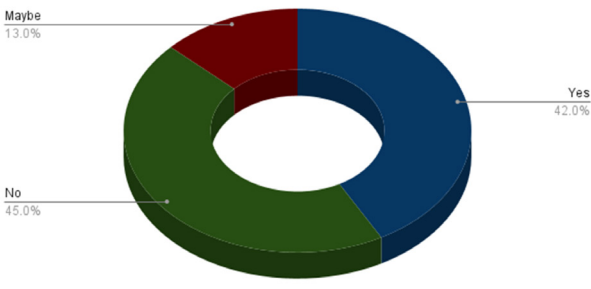
Do you think that School produces jacks of all trades and masters of none?



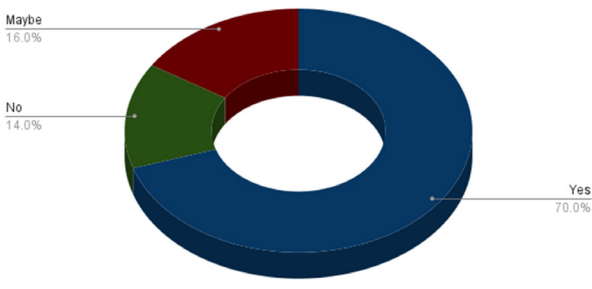
Do you think School spirit should hold precedence over House spirit?



Do you believe that infrastructure plays an integral role in the quality of education that a school delivers?



Do we have adequate sports infrastructure in School?

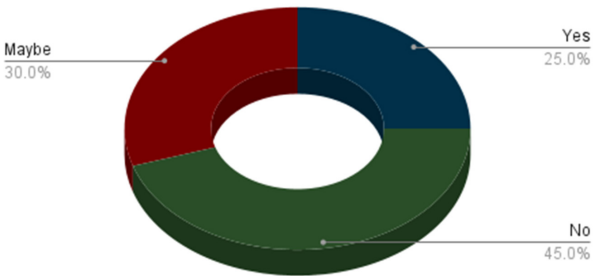


Should constructive criticism of School be encouraged?

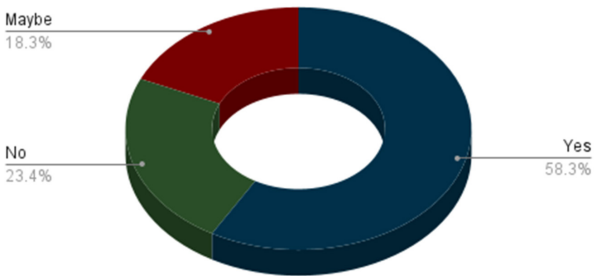
A series of polls conducted by the Weekly in 2012 and now, in 2025. This comparison aims to trace key shifts in how the Community views pertinent subjects regarding School.

2025

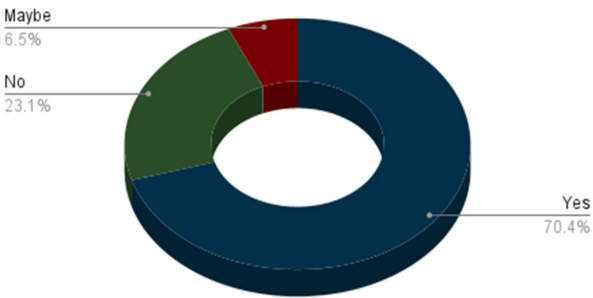
327 MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY WERE POLLED



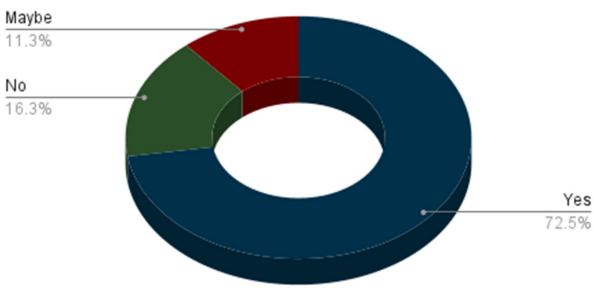
Has a residential school like Doon lost its relevance in society?



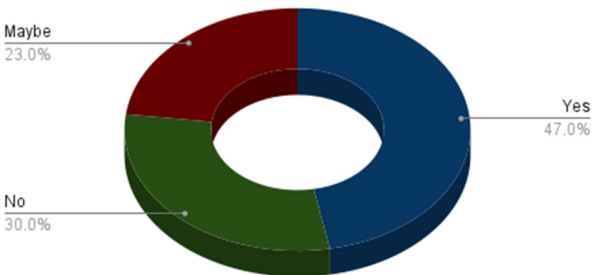
Do you think the school provides an all-round education?



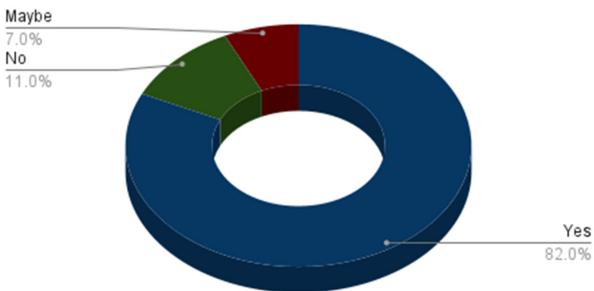
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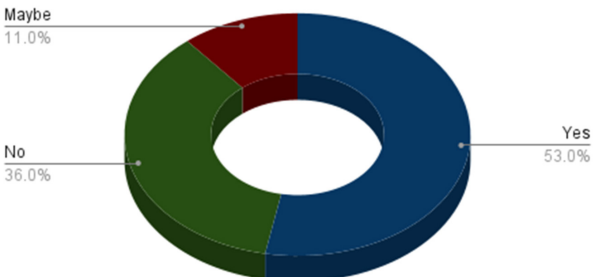
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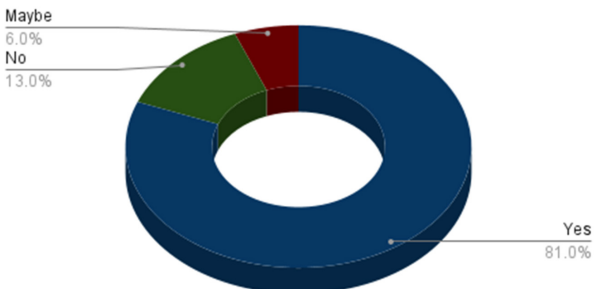
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Do you believe that infrastructure plays an integral role in the quality of education that a school delivers?



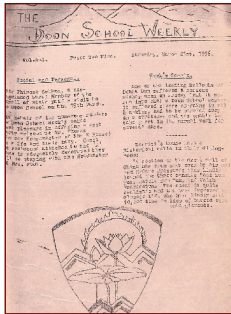
Do we have adequate sports infrastructure in School?



Should constructive criticism of School be encouraged?



1935: The first pupils arrive on September 10.



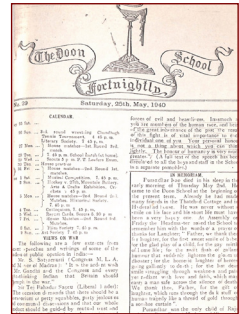
1936: The Weekly is founded by Arthur Foot.



1937: The first four Main Houses are fully completed and opened to Boys.



1939: The Doon School Old Boys Society (DSOBS) is founded.



1940: The Doon School Fortnightly is established to contribute funds for the war effort.



1978: Hari Dang, a Doon School Master, is awarded the Padma Shri for his contributions to education.



1984: A temporary Auditorium is built on the Main Field for the Inter-House Dramatics competition.



1985: School celebrates its Diamond Jubilee, with Rajiv Gandhi as the Chief Guest.



1987: Construction commences on Oberoi House and the new Multi-Purpose Hall.



1989: The first edition of *The Rose Bowl* is published.



2001: The new Music School is built beside the Rose Bowl.



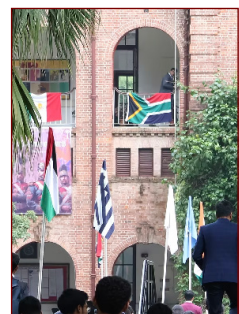
2002: The School Choir raises Rs Twenty lakhs for victims of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake by organising a charity concert.



2005: Construction of new Martyn and Foot Houses.



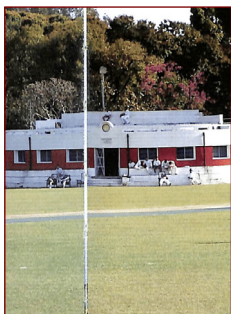
2006: School introduces the International Baccalaureate program.



2007: The Doon School Model United Nations (DSMUN) Conference takes place for the first time.



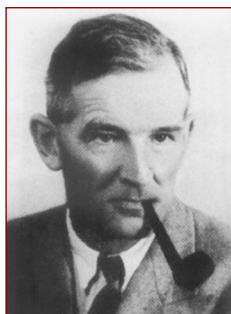
1941: Jawaharlal Nehru visits the School.



1946: The Pavilion is donated by Surender Lal Mehta.



1960: The first Auditorium is built, just in time for the School's Silver Jubilee celebrations.



1963: The legendary R.L. Holdsworth leaves School.



1971: Houses are split into 'A' and 'B' divisions.



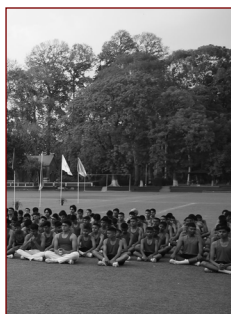
1990: The Vittal Mallya Multi-Purpose Hall is completed.



1991: Oberoi House begins accepting students.



1995: The Boys contribute to the construction of the new Science Block.



1997: PT is cancelled for a term due to 'general dissent.'



1999: In response to the Chamoli earthquakes, Chhota Hazri and extra Midterm funds are donated towards emergency funds.



2008: Abhinav Bindra, an Old Boy, wins Gold at the Olympics.



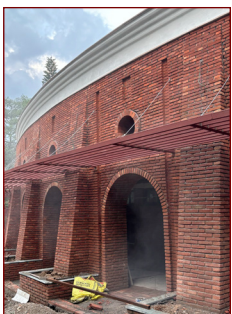
2010: The School celebrates its Platinum Jubilee with the inauguration of the Art and Media Centre.



2016: The School's Main Building receives an "Honourable Mention" under the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.



2020: School shuts down due to the Coronavirus pandemic.



2025: The Rose Bowl undergoes major renovations.

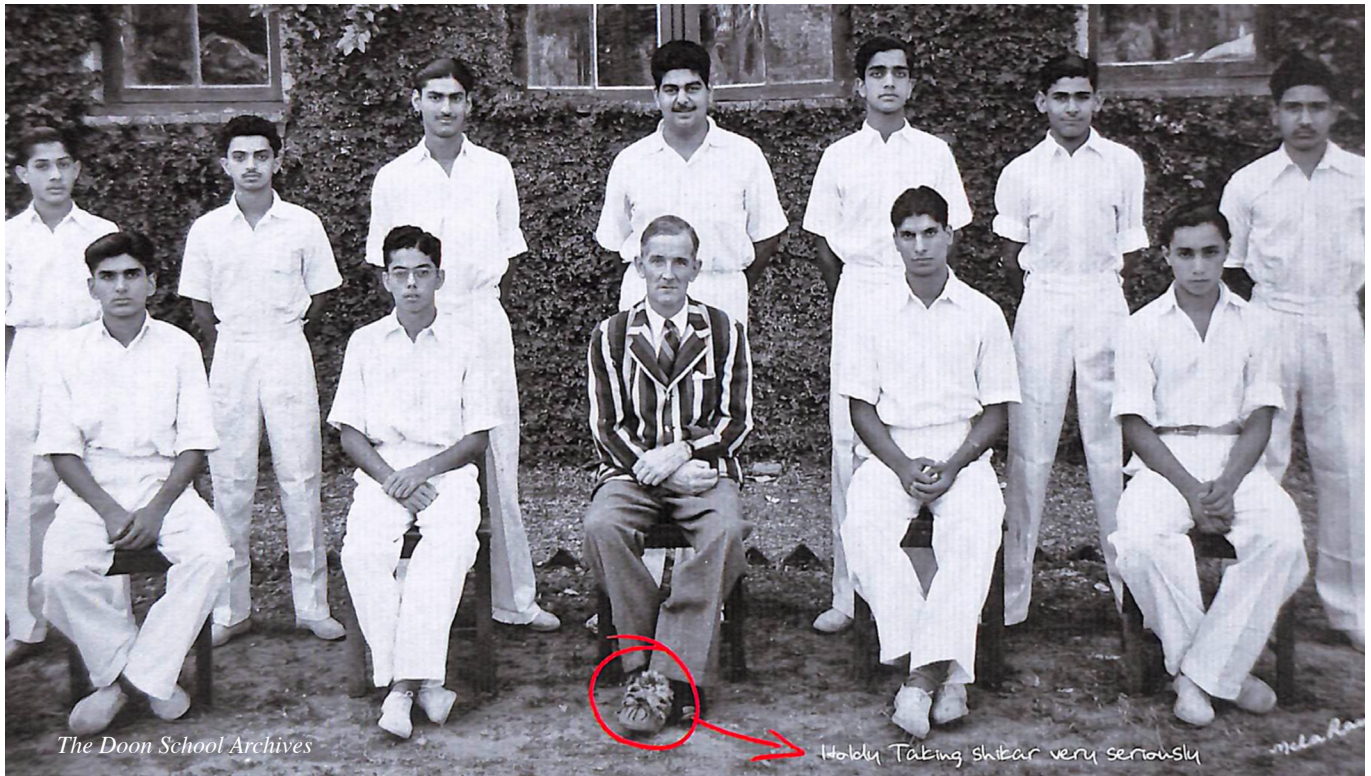


The Doon School Archives

Legacy [70] and Lore

Lessons Beyond The Field

Jai Jadhav (171-K, 1959)



A recent and poignant farewell letter written by 'Holdie' on May 3, 1963, on his voyage home to Somerset County, U.K. — his final retirement destination — was shared in our Batch WhatsApp group. It brought back a flood of memories. I hope the Readership indulges me as I share a few of my personal interactions with *Holdie*.

We all knew that beneath his gruff exterior was a sensitive and perceptive teacher, with a dry sense of humour betrayed only by the twinkle in his eyes.

As our cricket coach, *Holdie* was a hard taskmaster. He drilled us in the fundamentals of the game and its etiquette, with teamwork being a key component. His fielding practices were legendary. All members of the School XI would form a semicircle along the Main Field boundary while *Holdie* hit sixes to each of us from the pitch. If anyone dropped a catch, the entire round was repeated until every ball was caught.

Another memorable moment was walking off the pitch after scoring a seventy-five not out against our older rivals, the IMA. Their team included a borderline Indian national spinner, named Sengupta. As I entered the Pavilion, feeling proud and rather full

of myself, I expected a pat on the back from *Holdie*. Instead, he simply said, "Jaisingh, you were lucky today to be dropped at five in slips." It felt harsh at the time, but the lesson was clear: stay humble and remember you are just one of eleven. Teamwork formed one of *Holdie's* driving principles and it's moments like this through which he let us know to not fly above the team, irrespective of performance.

My final memorable interaction with *Holdie* was during the football season. I had twisted my right ankle during morning PT and didn't have time to inform our captain, Siddharth Singh, before the School XI was announced at Assembly. When Siddharth asked to replace me, *Holdie* gave a firm "No." He was a stickler for not changing an announced team. I wasn't about to argue. I taped my ankle, squeezed it into my boot, and switched from my usual centre-half position to right-back, which required less running. I think we were playing against the RIMC or St Joseph's that afternoon. Fortunately, the soccer gods smiled on me as I managed to block the opposing left-wing and clear the ball with my left foot, which was luckily just as good as my

right. We won the game, and I breathed a sigh of relief. This was something that goes against today's 'hero-worship' culture in sports, where each moment is taken as a chance for one to be striving for recognition.

The next day, *Holdie's* bearer handed me a note from him. It simply read:

"Jaisingh, you were as cool as a cucumber, despite your handicap. Well done."

I have never forgotten those words. They taught me to dig deep during times of adversity — a lesson that has served me well throughout life. Compliments from *Holdie* were rare pearls, and I will forever cherish that one.

Every interaction with *Holdie* left me with a life lesson. Who can forget his punishment lines: "If you chew each mouthful thirty-two times, you will live till you are ninety-six" — to be written ninety-six times!

Chewing versus gobbling is a lesson I have passed on — even to my grandchildren.

Holdie was a true gem. Truly, a one-of-a-kind teacher and human being.

May his soul rest in peace.

My Years in School (1956-61)

Wajahat Habibullah (266-H, 1961)

Days of youth — for The Doon School and for me — and indeed for our India, were about finding its footing not only amongst the comity of nations prostrated by the most violent war ever, but also learning to live with itself amidst a diversity so unparalleled as to make India unique. For these were the '50s, the first flush of freedom, which we as midnight's children ourselves did not recognise then to be so, but see in clear focus in hindsight.

My earliest memories of friends such as Siddarth Charat Ram (later Sri Ram) and his cousin Vivek Bharat Ram, Rajiv Gandhi and his brother Sanjay, Malvinder Singh (*Molly*) of Patiala, Bharat (*Chadda*) and Dileep Singh (also called *Khacchar*, but never by me) of Kota, are from The Doon School in Dehradun, capital of the state of Uttarakhand, which is home to a host of leading schools in India. But we had all first met, like so many others of my time, at Welham's, a then preparatory school for Doon, located in Dalanwala on the banks of the River Tons, and at the time still run by its founder and Headmistress since 1937, the formidable Englishwoman Ms Hersilia Susie Oliphant. My time there had been brief but gave me the grounding to stand in an institution modelled on an English public school, which Doon was, as I transited from The Lawrence School Sanawar, my first boarding school, which, in contrast, had been designed for English *tommies* in exile.

I joined Doon in 1956 with the number 266-H. The Houses were named after states and one business because they had been established with the founding of this School in 1935, with endowments by the respective rulers of princely states or companies. The School's founder was Satish Ranjan Das, a Bengali aristocrat and wealthy Calcuttan lawyer, and his grandson Ranjan Das — *Tubby* to all of us — was in my class and among my closest friends. *Tubby's* older brother Shomie, who will be recalled, would be HM when my sons Amar and Saif were in School.

Das established the School in what had been the Imperial Forest Institute and College, when that institution moved to its new premises which is today India's Forest Research Institute (FRI), modelling it on a British public

school, but diligently adhering to a nationalist Indian *métier*, with a decidedly Bengali character personified by the arts teacher in my time, the then ascensive Rathin Mitra, who himself had succeeded the legendary Sudhir Khastgir, a pupil of Abanindranath Tagore, an arts teacher in School since its founding. Khastgir's frescoes and sculptures continue to drape the walls of Chandbagh, the estate in which School is located. The cultural ambience of School was still centred on Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore of Shantiniketan, home to the Vishwa Bharati University he had founded, and adherent of the Brahmo Samaj.

Because of its forerunner, School campus abounded in trees and plants of every hue, many exotic, and still retained over three hundred species of tree, shrub, woody climber, bamboo, palm, and screw pine scattered about its grounds and crevices. These are the legacy of renowned foresters and botanists such as J.S. Gamble, FRS; Sir William Schlich, FRS, who had been British India's Inspector General of Forests; and Prof. R.S. Trump — no relation of the U.S. President — all of whom went on to be Professors of Forestry at Oxford University.

At the time of my schooling, Englishman John Martyn was Headmaster, the second since it's founding after Arthur Foot, with their colleague Jack (short for John) Gibson going on to head Ajmer's Mayo College, moulding that too into an English-type public school. The faculty included some teachers who were English, but mostly Indians from across the country. And although the boys were from diverse sections of India's upper middle class, there was no class or community consciousness amongst them beyond that assigned in School. Relations were all on a first-name or even a number basis; even close friends were often hard put to remembering surnames. I, for example, never thought of myself as being any different. Amongst my closest friends was Sixty, by which name he was known to all, although his own name was the perfectly pronounceable Jain. And it was only amongst his closer friends that he was addressed as Sixty Jain!

I, for one, could not recognise fellow

Muslims by name and only became conscious of other boys being Muslim from the time that we gathered at the residence of Mr Nizami, Private Secretary to the HM, who escorted us to Eid prayers — not always attended by all Muslim boys — and hosted us for a sumptuous *Avadhi* spread at his home thereafter; and when he conducted Urdu classes to which attendance, not being compulsory, was perfunctory. I was, besides, a shy child who did not mix readily, with a distaste for team sports and a preference for Shakespeare and Tolstoy. I had finished *War and Peace* by the end of my term in D Form.

Only much afterwards did I understand that this was a legacy of my brutal introduction to boarding school at The Lawrence School, Sanawar, located in what was then the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (P.E.P.S.U.), a state of India uniting eight princely states between 1948 and 1956. Admitted there at the age of five in 1950, three short years after India's bloody Partition, amidst boys, many of whom were from families that were direct victims of the violence that had engulfed the most bloodied state of India in consequence of the misconceived division. I became a target because I was a Muslim and a timid child, quite oblivious of any consciousness of my being distinct because of my religious denomination. My sister Nazli, my elder by four years, a student in the girls' section of the same School, outgoing and sociable, suffered no such bullying. Coming to know of my plight, quite by chance because I never told her of it, she complained to my father, then Commandant of the National Defence Academy (NDA), located at that time in Dehradun. That is how I came to be transferred to Welham's Preparatory. But the deep psychological injury inflicted by Sanawar subsisted subconsciously, leading me to fear other children and harbour a sense of guilt like that seen in child rape victims, which had kept me from complaining even to my own sister in Sanawar, a nervousness exacerbated by Sanawar Prep Department's strapping Housemistress, Ms Grollet, labelling me a '*booby*,' incapable of standing up like a man — an Englishman? This had led me to keep to myself with my books in Doon, which earned me the reputation



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of being a 'snob.'

With my military upbringing, I started as part of my House Swimming team, but after hearing rumours of excrement found floating in the pool at that time, without the sophisticated filtration system that it now boasts, I opted out of swimming in pools altogether. Sprinting then was my only sport. But I was a master of English, winning both Bakhles, on the list of which my name stands emblazoned on both Boards in the Main Building, the Gombar Speech Trophy, the Best Debater's Cup, first as Junior and then as Senior, and the Best Actor's Cup twice, in the female leads of Sophocles' *Antigone* and James Bridie's *Mister Gillie*, both directed by S P Sahi, consummate teacher of English, but with a most un-English accent. Because my voice was a boy's unbroken soprano, which my father likened to his own contemporary, Ernest Lough, until my late teens, I always got the female lead in the School plays, as did Naveen Patnaik, who had a similar childish treble. He usually played the supporting lead, like Ismene to my *Antigone* in the School play of 1959, or Gwendolen Fairfax to my Lady Bracknell in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Naveen, my Junior and a bullied child from Kashmir House, whom I saw as vulnerable and needing my protection

in School, unbeknownst to me, resented the fact that I always got the lead whilst he was assigned the supporting role, but never said so. I learnt this decades later (by which time a self-assured Patnaik had become what was to be the longest-serving Chief Minister of Odisha) when I, serving as a minister in the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C., called on his sister, the famous writer Gita Mehta, in her apartment in Manhattan, who told me as much to my complete surprise.

But because I won nothing in sports, I was not considered for appointment as even House Monitor, the third highest rank after House Captain and Prefect, whose sole activity it seemed was to ensure lights out at 10 PM, until Mr Shanti Swarup was appointed Housemaster and protested that I had won more awards for the House on my own than any other individual. So my last term in School had dignified me to that rank!

There was a romantic interlude. Indira and Feroze Gandhi visited the School in the summer of 1960. I have mentioned that their boys were friends in School then. Indira and Feroze Gandhi's marriage has been the subject of many a story, including the Hindi film *Aandhi* (1975), with the lead role played by the inimitable Suchitra Sen.

After 1952, when Feroze left Teen Murti Bhavan, their relations were known to have soured, with Feroze being a stout opponent of the government despite being in the ruling party. I can still remember seeing them strolling on the vast Main and Skinner's Fields of School and on the adjoining avenue walkways, with or without their boys, sheltered by the shimmer of silver oak and droop of weeping willow, the fiery scarlet of the flame of the forest (*Butea monosperma*), the yellow of the iron tree (*Xylia xylocarpia*) and the glow of the golden rain shower (*Koelreuteria paniculata lax*), their paths punctuated by hibiscus in flower, red, orange and purple, in the waft of scented magnolia, he always immaculate in white *kurta pyjama* and she always draped in a *sari* of colourful weave, with her stylish but unostentatious bobbed hair. Theirs had reputedly been a difficult marriage. The most succinct summary of this relationship is in the oft-quoted words of Indira's biographer Anand Mohan: 'Indira didn't like Feroze, but she loved him.' Sadly, this reconciliation, if that indeed was what we at School were witness to, was to prove ephemeral. After spending June of that year with his family in Kashmir, Feroze died of a heart attack at the age of forty-eight in September of that very year.

The Chandbagh Diaries

Karan Thapar (238-JA, 1971)

Did I like Doon? Today, the answer would be an unequivocal yes. But when you reminisce, you tend to filter out the dark and dismal moments. Yet they were very much there and were a critical part of growing up.

When I first arrived at School in July, 1966, and was still getting to know the place, I hated returning after the holidays. I would spend my time on the School train from Delhi composing letters to my parents explaining why I wanted to leave Doon. "It's my life, and I don't want to spend it in a boarding school," is how the letter would inevitably begin. "I want to be with you," I would add, hoping an appeal to their emotions would win the argument.

On the train, I'd promised myself that the first thing I would do upon reaching School was write the letter. By the time the train pulled into Dehradun, I virtually knew the letter by heart. Every paragraph, every convincing argument, was printed in my mind. All that was left was to put pen to paper.

That never happened. Settling into my new room, catching up with old friends, sharing anecdotes from the holidays, and preparing for classes the next day drove everything else out of my mind. The first two or three days shot past in a blitz of unplanned frenetic activity. And by the time I wrote my first letter home, the one I had so assiduously planned had faded from memory. What remained of it no longer felt like me. It was no longer what I wanted to tell Mummy and Daddy.

"I'll write it next term," I would tell myself as I postponed the idea. It was still something I intended to do, but only sometime in the future. But that future never came. And as I progressed from E to D to C to B Forms, I realised that I was never going to write it. By the time I returned to Doon for the start of S Form, I was actually looking forward to going back. I guess in my last year, I had become a happy Dosco. School is funny: it moves so fast that you do not even have time to cherish the happy moments.

Now, after half a century, even the moments I hated make me chortle and smile, like Changes-in-Break. The dash from the Main Building to Jaipur House was exhausting. But it was just the start. You have to run back and back again and back once more. And all of this had

to be done in fifteen minutes. At the time, it was torture. Today I think of it as a hoot. In fact, I'm proud I managed to get back to class before the end of break every single time.

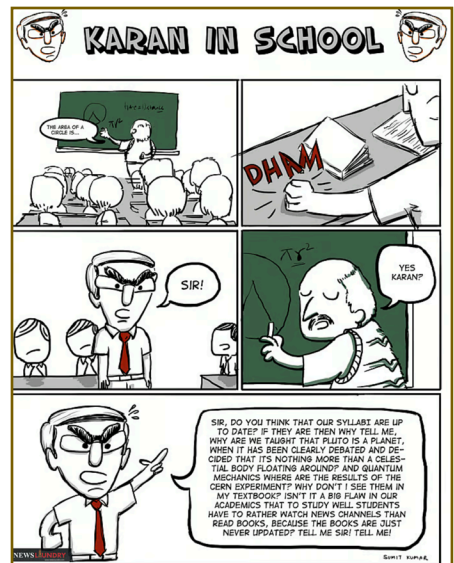
I wasn't a sportsman, so I have no memories from either the Main Field or Skinners. But I do remember dropping a sitting catch in cricket. It was the only time I made it to Juniors 3! And I convinced Dr Goyal that I should be excused from Cross-Country. After the first year or maybe two, I kept time instead!

My talents, such as they were, took me elsewhere. I would spend afternoons correcting proofs of *The Doon School Weekly*, immersed in the little details of spelling and pagination. The first time the *Weekly* published something I had written, I carefully planted copies at strategic points in Jaipur House so everyone would read it. And when Mr Pande chose me to be the Chief Editor in my A Form, I felt superior to the School Football Captain.

My other joy was acting. Late-night rehearsals of the School play – in the Rose Bowl or the old Auditorium – were a delightful escape from the rigours of daily routine. The camaraderie that developed amongst the cast created friendships across Houses but also across ages. When the rehearsals were over and we would creep back to our dormitories, long after Lights-Out, I'd feel adult and mature. All because it was a late night! And winning the Best Actor's Cup meant a lot. However, it meant very little to anyone else. I wonder if that's changed?

The two things that did surprise me are perhaps the two I'm most proud of. I am not sure why Guru made me House Captain, and frankly, neither was anyone else in Jaipur House. Perhaps it was his way of showing that there's more to School than sports.

The second was being awarded the first Scholar's Blazer and the opportunity to determine what colour it would be. When Col. Simeon announced its introduction in his Founder's Day speech of 1971, Mummy, who was visiting, turned to me and said, "Wouldn't a *Scholar's Gown* be more appropriate?" Possibly. But that overlooks the fact that we were all completely in awe of the Games' Blazer. Now, nerds like me have one of our own.



Newslaundry, Sumit Kumar
2012

Start of the Millennium

Praman Narain (141-T, 2008)

I joined School in 2003 and passed out in 2009, and my entire time there intersected perfectly with that of the brilliant Kanti Prasad Bajpai, or KPB, as we called him. The Headmaster sets the tone for School's soul, and in our case, the tone was scholarly and sharply tailored.

It was an interesting time to be a Dosco. The winds of change were blowing through Chandbagh. The agenda: modernise and internationalise. And at the helm stood a Headmaster who was not only an Old Boy himself, but knew exactly which strings to pull.

We witnessed the construction of new Holding Houses, each boasting modern bathrooms and, yes, even bidets. This led to whispered predictions that future Doscos would be too pampered. The era of leather *peshawaris* gave way to floaters. Whistling was banned to protect god-knows-who. Chewing gum was banned, too. The food improved. *Rotis* upgraded from 'bulletproof' to 'tasting like rubber slippers,' though protein remained elusive. Maggi was unceremoniously removed from the CDH menu, sparking fierce lobbying from students. Democracy thrived at Doon, but died in the Mess Committee.

Then, more buildings were revamped. The MPH fell. The Art School followed. Jaipur House was next. The Eagles were exiled, some to Foot, others to Martyn; dangerously close to their rivals in Tata. New residences were built for the Masters. School entered what can only be described as a hyper-fundraising frenzy. Donor boards were installed in the Main Building, gleaming plaques dividing benefactors into bronze, silver, and gold tiers (which may or may not have made us cringe).

In C Form, they even organised *Socials* for our Batch with actual girls from Hopetown. It may have been an anthropological experiment to see if prepubescent Doscos could evolve social skills. The results were mixed. There were nervous chuckles, elbows in ribcages, and at least one of us shed a tear as his newfound love danced away with another. Shakespeare might've called it a comedy. We called it Tuesday afternoon.

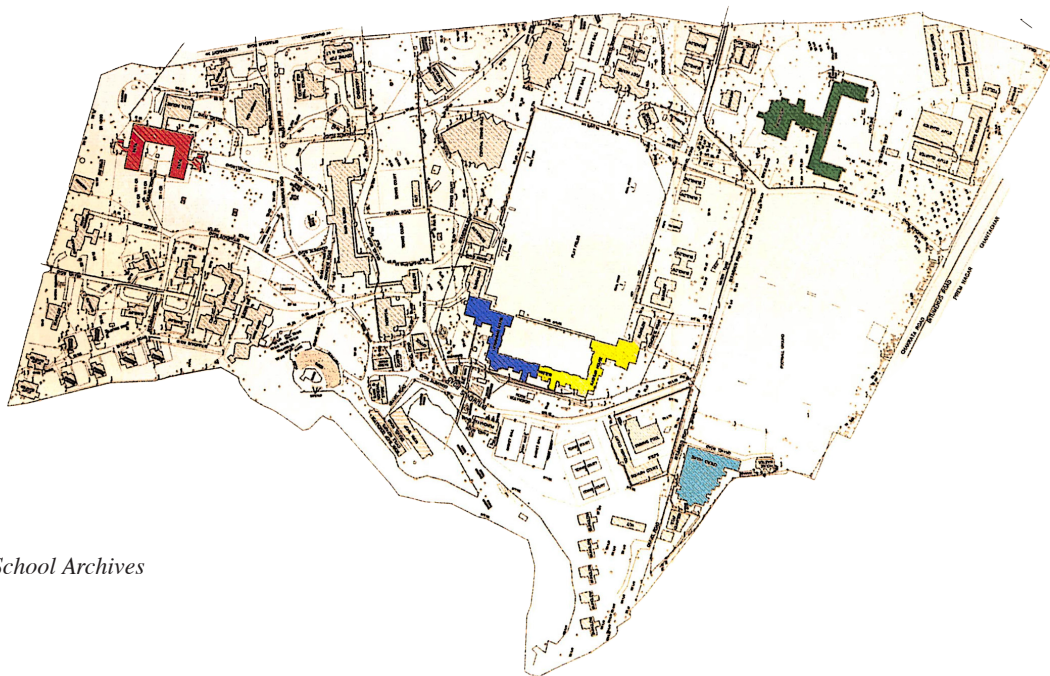
Academics and soft skills saw a resurgence. Public speaking, previously the domain of *lends*, became a route to captaincies. The Model United Nations was introduced. Newspapers became compulsory. The School embraced technology. Facebook and Gmail were now accessible in the Resource Centres. And no matter how hard the admin tried to firewall certain websites, Doscos always found a way. We even became the first optional IB Batch, which meant that our senior years came with our Batch split beyond the ISC streams.

The Seniors before us wore Livestrong bands, sagged their shorts, and gelled their hair into spikes. Some wrote letters to Welham and were treated like minor celebrities. Then came the visiting Old Boys of yesteryear, stopping to tell us unsolicited tales of a lawless past where rules were lax and punishments negotiable. But we weren't buying it. We were a new breed: ambitious, driven, and measuring our worth against our achievements.

I remember one moment in particular: our Batch was in the middle of a protest — loud, defiant, and not entirely thought through. Then KPB, visibly disappointed, stood before us and said something that I've carried with me ever since. He said many of us were rebelling for the sake of rebellion. Directionless, ideology-less, all noise and no tune. It was his way of saying: if you're going to cause trouble, make sure you know why.

Meanwhile, the world outside was shifting. Dehradun, now the capital of Uttarakhand, was growing more crowded and more polluted. Cross-country runs and private Midterms were scaled back for safety. One day-scholar was even kidnapped, if memory serves. Barbed wire on School walls and patrolling guards became common, and hungry Doscos learned that busting bounds became a lot harder.

Looking back, it was a strange, beautiful, and transformative time to be in School. In hindsight, a lot of what didn't make sense then — the rules, the reforms, and the sermons — seem to have fallen into place.



The Doon School Archives

School in the '80s

Mahmood Farooqui (146-KA, 1990)

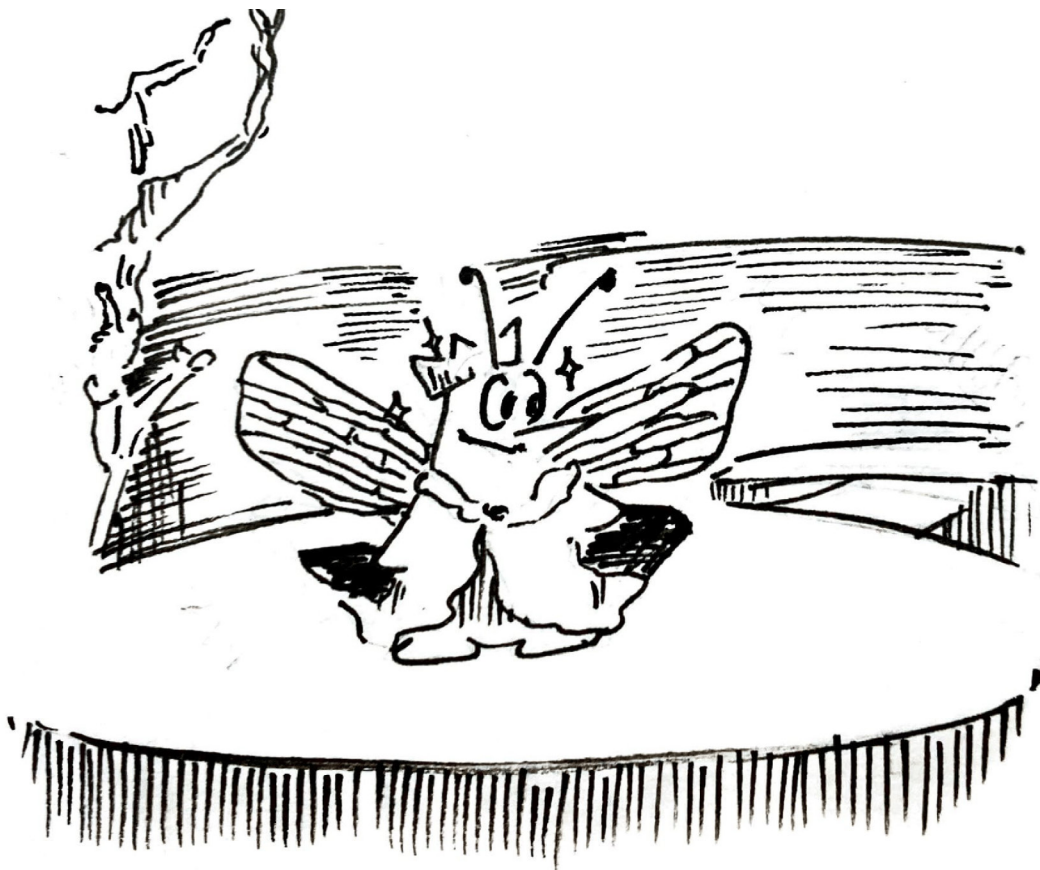
The first play I saw in School, or rather the first proper play in my life, was Naseeruddin Shah and Benjamin Gilani's *Waiting for Godot* in my D Form in 1984, at the Rose Bowl. I didn't understand anything about it then, but it ignited an irrepressible desire to get on the stage. The same year I also saw Vijay Prashad from Tata House, now a famous activist author, in *The Crucible* nicknamed 'Maggie' after a character he had played. I had come to School from a small town, without much knowledge on how to read or write English, but these plays were powerful influences. The cultural life of the School in the subsequent year was entirely given over to the Golden Jubilee preparations of 1985 which involved a spate of activities. Of them, I well remember *The Pageant* (was it also called *Doscomania*?) put together by Naseer's wife Ratna Pathak Shah which had dances by the great Astad Deboo. The songs rang true for us for many years of our School life and I still remember the refrain of two of them, 'HM we want to go home' and 'Mussoorie, Mussoorie Here We Come!'

I don't much remember other parts of *The Pageant* but I do remember the months of preparation and the mesmerising effect it had on all of us. I also remember, quite well, the experimental production of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, under Arjun Mahey, arguably the best English teacher our School has ever had. I remember Ashwin Bulchandani in it from my House, playing Shylock, and Mohit Jayal, the cartoonist who casted the Penguin as the Doscov's symbol, riding a bike with sunglasses. It was staged first in the sidewalk to where the old tennis courts lay, in front of the store, and then when Rajiv Gandhi came as Chief Guest, at the Hyderabad House front lawns. Or perhaps the play was staged later, I don't remember clearly but I do definitely remember the Hindi play *Andher Nagri Chaupat Raja* and remember being gutted at not getting a part in it.

Mr Shah continued to visit School and it was always a delight to see him. I vividly remember a long tennis match he played against Ashwin Ranganathan from my House. Life came full circle for me when he performed *Dastangoi* with me, and acted in our film. There were other visiting artists. I saw the legendary Calcutta-based Shakespeare director Kamal Bhagat's *Taming of the Shrew*, which we found a little scandalous; but only from the actions, since the words largely escaped us. Except the cuss ones, of course.

Mamta Shankar, the legendary Uday Shankar's daughter, came with her dance troupe. We also went to the IMA to hear the great Pandit Ravi Shankar perform and heard Ustad Amjad Ali Khan on the Sarod in the School. We saw M.F. Husain create his magic live in front of us. These visits provided wonderful exposure. Even if we didn't fully appreciate it, subconsciously, maybe even forcibly, we imbibed something vital about our traditions. The name of the old art teacher Dastagir Saheb was whispered with awe sometimes. At the Music School, Ashok Roy was rumoured to be a famous Sarod player. Later in School, under the influence of an Anita Desai short story called *'The Accompanist'*, I tried to learn the seemingly interesting instrument but could not last more than a week.

At that time there were annual productions of plays, alternately in Hindi and English. There were no skits or One-Act Play competitions, nor were there any stand-up acts. I do remember the odd music band though, and Dhruv Srikent's drumming



of 'Hotel California' is vividly etched in my mind. It is wonderful that he has returned to music late in life. There was little cultural activity in the House itself. There were no Inter-House Dramatics Competitions. Debating was robust, led by two highly dedicated teachers – U.C. Pande and A.N. Dar. It was highly structured as well. Every Thursday night, the Junior English Debating society met and it was compulsory for the D Form to attend. We groaned then, but it provided unique training.

After my A Form, I became more active in School Dramatics and Debating. We did Sharad Joshi's wonderful satire, *Ek Tha Gadha Urf Aladad Khan*, and my Batchmate Ashwin Mushran floored us with his powerful performance of an invalid in 'Whose Life is it Anyway', a co-production with Welham Girls'. He used to have us in splits with his rendition of *the Bare Necessities*. In S Form, we were really blessed to have Mohan Maharishi, a former director of the National School of Drama, spend a few months in School and produce for us *Oedipus Rex*, the great Greek tragedy by Sophocles. He constructed the kidney shaped pit that now forms the main stage at the Rose Bowl. I became his stage manager, and he remains the only theatre director I ever worked with. I consider my performance as the oracle Tiresias in the play to be my zenith as an actor, much like the British Prime Minister William Gladstone, who regarded his Prefectship at Eton as being a higher achievement than his four terms as British Prime Minister.

Those were also the years when Delhi had a youth festival called *Youth Quake*. We came with a big party of debaters, singers, quizzers and I remember being humbled by the nous shown by students of St Columbus School, who put up a farcical Greek tragedy. I remember a visit to the famous Machan at Taj Mansingh Hotel, the first time I ever visited a five-star hotel where we had been given a budget of thirty rupees per head. But we excelled in debating and the next year I put up a skit about, predictably, a poet who goes mad after society mocks him. The team bet a golden card that year on my debating, which I won, and we were overall runners-up that year, which brought us much credit. This is the time I began to inflict dense Urdu poetry from the stage.

In our Sc Form, we had a visit from Aitchison College, Lahore, which was a significant cultural moment for all of us. Those boys were different from us, as many of them were older, and came from genuinely aristocratic families. I remember exchanging (well, begging,

really) a hockey stick (they had fibre ones, genuine Gray's!) from their Hockey captain Aurangzeb Khan Khichhi who derived his name from the cluster of 86 or so villages of which he was the *zamindar*. Their School Captain was one Mahmood Khan, but all similarity with me ended there for he was also a *zamindar*, a horse rider, a tennis and squash player, and a genuine stud. We beat them in hockey against all expectations and, according to some accounts, I excelled as the left half. I suspect we won because they were used to playing on turf and not on our parched hard ground. To entertain them, my friend Arjun Mehta put up a splendid riff on *Sholay*, I recited some poetry and we had plenty of *bhangra* fun. But *shayari*, and my recitation of it, came to acquire some credit in School towards the end of our School life.

By then certain significant changes were afoot. Our Common Rooms only ever played English pop music. But following our school visit to Aitchison in the previous year, led by the former Sc's, Hasan Jahangir and his *hawa hawa* had become a blockbuster in School. Following that, Pankaj Udhas and his albums could be more frequently heard, especially in the Kashmir B Common Room where Samir Dhawan had his way. I was elated when my Senior, known as the toad Vikram Agarwal, with whom I had no love lost at the time, suddenly discovered Kishore Kumar, and I finally began to feel at home in that Common Room. Then my Afghan friend Mustafa Raza, a self-made man by all standards, rediscovered his love for Hindi film music, which he preferred playing while working out or while boxing. For months, we shared a tape of Razia Sultan and Umrao Jaan; not ideal music for bodybuilding!

On Saturday movie nights, we generally watched old Hollywood hits such as *Top Gun* or *Police Academy* or *An Officer and a Gentleman*. Horror films like *Friday the 13th* and *Omen* were shown sometimes at the Rose Bowl and we screamed our lungs out. But somehow the Hindi films we were shown were moralising art films. We loved *Jane Bhi Do Yaaron*, *Katha*, and *Ardhasatya* but felt iffy about *Shradhanjali*, *Sunny* and *Sparsh*. However, when I became Boy-in-Charge of Hindi Entertainment in my Sc Form, I decided to go full commercial. I managed to get a print of *Sholay*, which was a roaring success. My dealings with the local exhibitor make a story of their own. He cycled down to School, chewed *paan*, had a slightly sleazy smile but was able to get prints for three to four thousand. I learnt

that our choice was constrained by our budgets. I also learnt that this was how one could hire prints for exhibition, which in retrospect seems like an invaluable experience of cinematic history. We all watched movies on our Sunday outings. Of course, often more than one. Some hardout ones managed three movies because the show timings in the city were adjusted for students. I remember *Shahenshah* was such a rage that we were buying tickets in black and I was briefly a black marketeers' agent. Salman Khan's *Maine Pyar Kiya* was a big hit and many of us bust bounds, more than once, to catch late night shows.

In my S and Sc Form, I was exceedingly fortunate to have had Shomie Das as our Headmaster. He was deeply interested in theatre and well informed about it. In my translation of the great theatre director Habib Tanvir's memoirs, and in my tribute to Shomie, I have written about our landmark visit to Delhi as students to witness Tanvir's Agra Bazar. It had been revived especially for the first international theatre festival of the National School of Drama in 1989. This remarkable play has remained in performance since 1954 when it was first staged. We watched the play and fell in love with Habib Tanvir, which later led to a documentary on him and to my Hyderabad House friend Himanshu Tyagi joining his group as an actor. Himanshu later partnered with me when I was reviving *Dastangoi*. It was also thanks to Shomie's intervention that I succeeded in directing a play as mammoth as *Tughlaq* in my Sc Form, with only five thousand rupees as my budget. It helped set off my journey as a Director.

For the Weekly, I began to write poems, free and blank verses in Urdu, sometimes free of meaning and sense too! But it established me as the angsty artist, which is what I was and wanted to be, and have remained. Ashwin Mushran and I shared honours for Best Actors in our final years and we sometimes discussed our future. He wanted to be a professional actor but he was half German and had no Hindi and therefore despaired of his prospects in India. It is therefore doubly heartening to witness his success as an actor, voice-over artist, and theatre practitioner in Bombay. Himanshu Tyagi, Ashwin Kumar and Satyadeep Mishra from a batch below me are also successful writers, actors and directors in Bollywood. I both craved and disdained success, a paradox that has rightly left me on the fringes, where I can worship my own cult!

The Travelling Headmaster

Pratik Basu (442-T, 1993)

SRD's a 'propah' man, your regular Brown Sahib –
His interests range from Keats, right through to Mirza Ghalib.
He's the champion of forgotten causes, a sane man's despair;
For come the weekend in D. Dun, Shomie's not there.

SRD, oh SRD! There's no one like SRD;
He's travelled more miles than Mercury.
He was made Swiss Air's "Passenger of the Year,"
But come some work in Doon School, Shomie's not here!
You bet he spends less time on the ground than he does in the air,
For, come the holiday season and Shomie's not there.

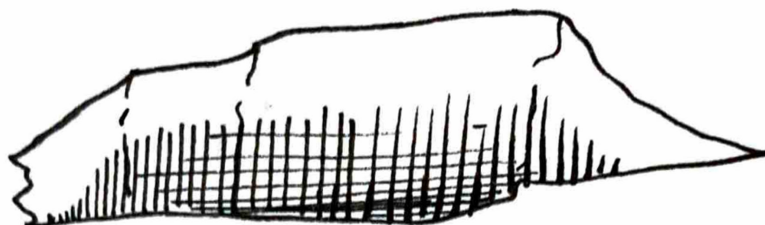
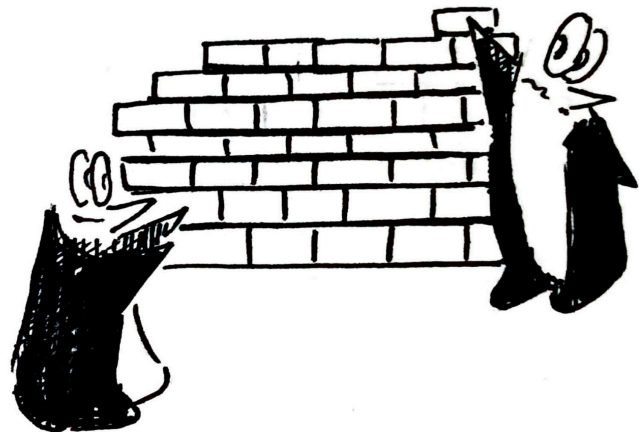
Shomie's half-bald, not very tall or thin,
He says his favourite drink's water, but the smart money's on gin.
He's been in every war, alongside the best he has fought.
Some poor dog bugged him, ergo it was shot.

SRD, oh SRD! There's no one like SRD,
Whenever you see him he's hiking up the fee.
"Oh he's not in right now, he's gone to the World Travel Fair"
So says his brilliant secretary, whenever Shomie's not there.

He's a man of character, never been known to lie,
Some say, however, that he's been with the FBI,
The CIA, the RAW, the KGB and Gestapo too;
Some even say he fought with Nelson, right there in Waterloo.
He 'busted' once as a Dosco, but only on a dare,
And come some prior engagement, Shomie's not there.

And when you find your marks rocket to the sky,
But do so badly on the field (you drop a 'pop fly').
Whenever you walk into his office, into the lion's lair,
Just sit back and relax, for Shomie's never there.
He's back home in Switzerland, or maybe in Sri Lanka,
Or, like Humphrey Bogart, he might be in Casablanca.
All the masters look for him, he's never found –
He's probably in Brazil, having coffee freshly ground.

SRD, oh SRD! There's no one like SRD –
He's as wily as Rommel, as fast as Bruce Lee.
He's a classic Headmaster, a gentleman to the bone,
He has a spotless record, not even an unpaid loan.
You can count on him in any emergency or strife,
Or simply be charmed by his marvellous wife.
You can't be sure of many things, and life's never fair,
But you can be sure of one thing, Shomie's never there.



We had all heard about Mr Shomie Das (165 H, 1951, SRD, HM) coming to School well in advance of his dramatic arrival. After all, he was the Founder's grandson! His dramatic arrival did not disappoint. With his patrician bearing, the beret on his head, his robe flowing behind him, the intimidating eloquence, somewhat brusque manner, and a well-trained dog seemingly always at his heel... he was the platonic ideal of the "Headmaster."

He may have come from age-old tradition, but he was no traditionalist. He shook things up, changed the calendar, removed the ISC subject restrictions, introduced the concept of the Sc Leavers, and expanded our horizons to the wide world beyond the walls of Chandbagh. He called a few of us in to do a presentation on the fall of the Berlin Wall, which, he patiently explained to us, had changed the world around us. I was puzzled, it was a wall, it fell, bad contractors caused that in India all the time, what's the big deal? Shomie looked over his glasses, and said "One day, when you've finally grown up, you'll understand." But I detected an impish smile, and I would come to know that beneath that tough exterior lay a quietly devastating sense of humour. He gave as good as he got.

I also slowly came to understand that he let the boys be boys. He was more interested in sharpening our minds, not shackling us down with excessive disciplinary action. As was my won't, I started to take that yard once the inch was given. I mischievously asked him for a comic book when he was travelling to England for the Round Square Conference. I had forgotten about this cheeky request by the time he returned, and was suitably nervous when my name was amongst those called to the Headmaster's Office after Assembly. He let me sweat for a minute as I stood there stammering, trying to talk myself out of whatever it was I was in trouble for. Finally, with a flourish, he produced a comic book. He dismissed me with a casual wave: "You may go now." I couldn't believe it; the Headmaster had gone out of his way during an international trip to bring a comic book back to some Junior kid! Who does that?!

When I became an Sc Leaver myself, I had to give up my duties at The *Doon School Weekly*. As a final act, I decided to write an impudent, satirical poem on the HM based on T.S. Eliot's *Macavity: The Mystery Cat*. It was timed to release the day before we left School (I was nothing if not cowardly). I submitted the poem, finished up the dreaded ISC exams (I'm still haunted by them in anxiety dreams), and waited to ride off into the sunset. At lunch, however, I was informed by my successor at the *Weekly*, Akbar 'Aki' Hussain (590 O, 1994) and the newly-minted School Captain, Kapil Bansal (504 J, 1994), that, after much discussion, they had decided not to publish the poem. They thought it was too much.

I was floored (how could they treat the ex-Editor like that?! And I had handpicked both of them to join the *Weekly* - oh the betrayal!). So, I decided to take matters into my own hands. I grabbed the *Weekly Squad*, marched off to the Computer Lab, printed out copies of the poem, had the Squad insert the poem into each *Weekly*, and handed the whole thing out as normal.

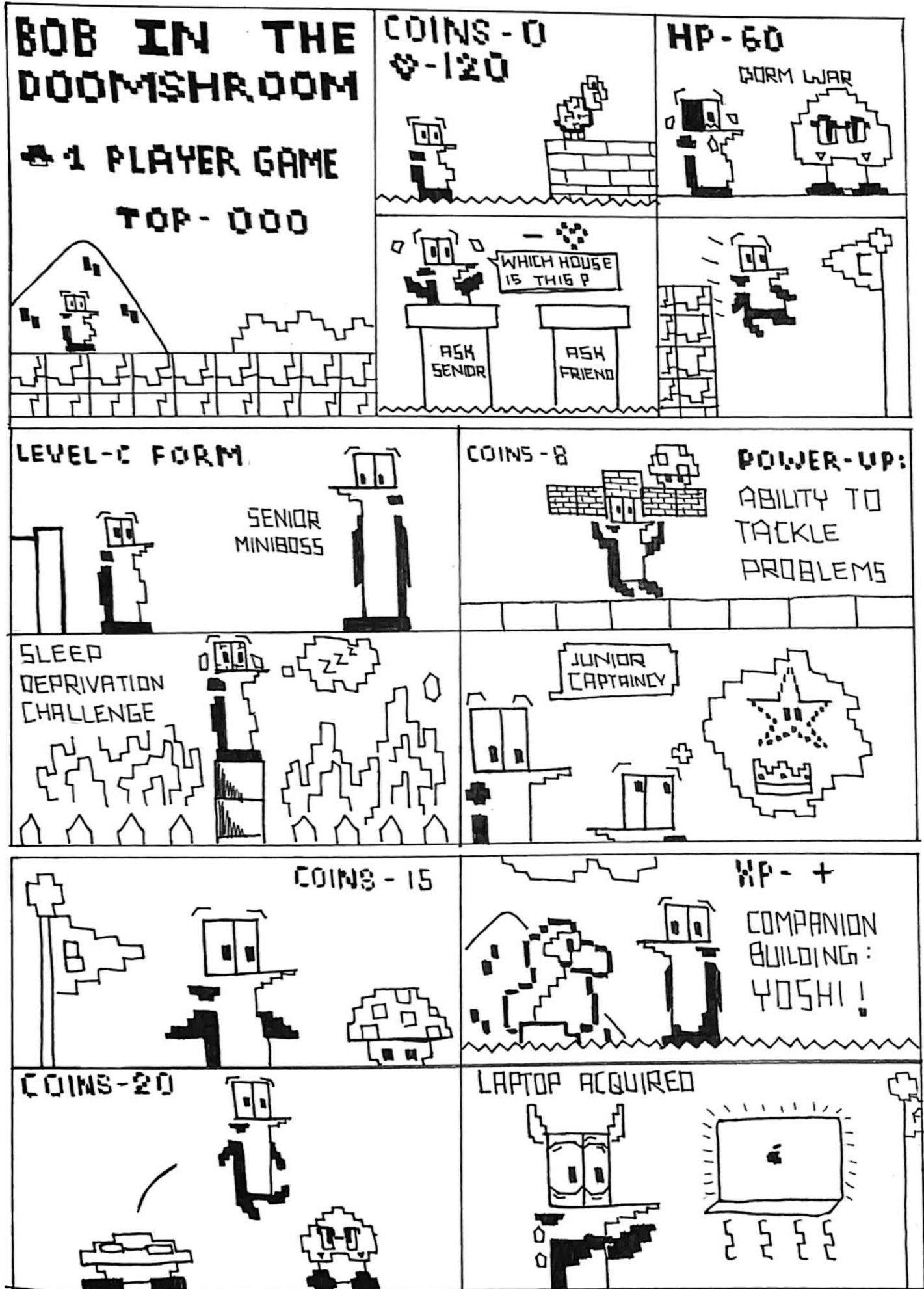
Once the adrenaline had worn off, though, I began to question myself - Basu, what have you done?!

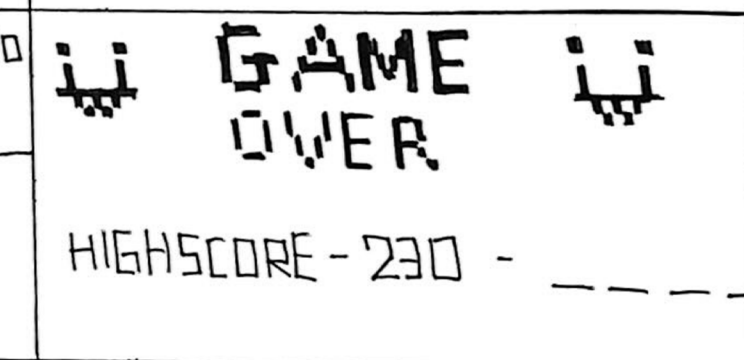
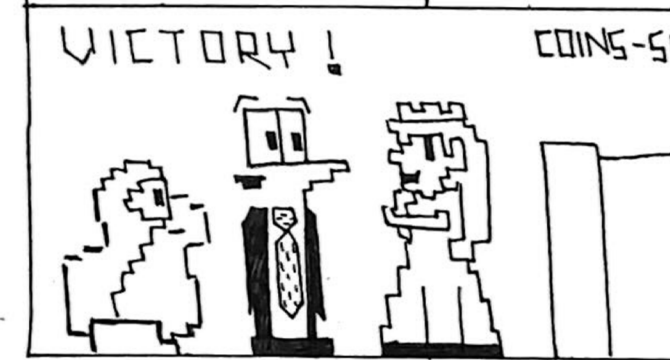
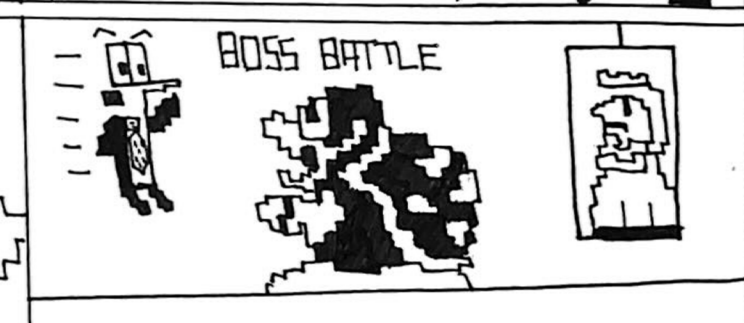
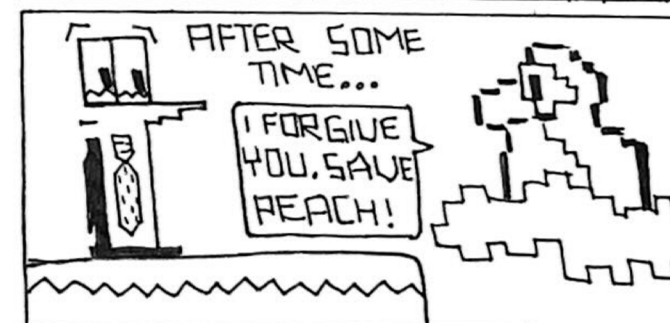
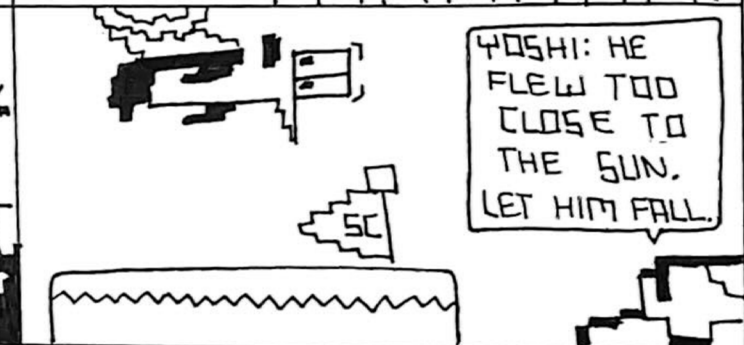
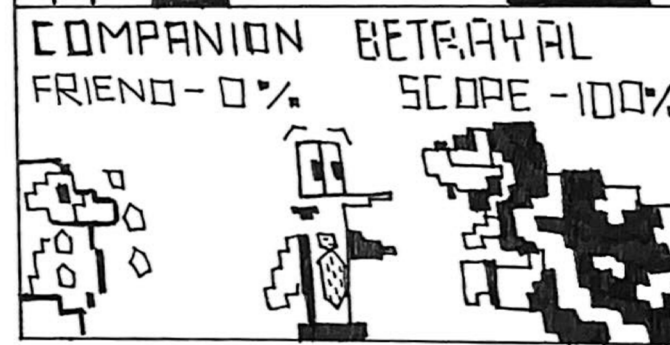
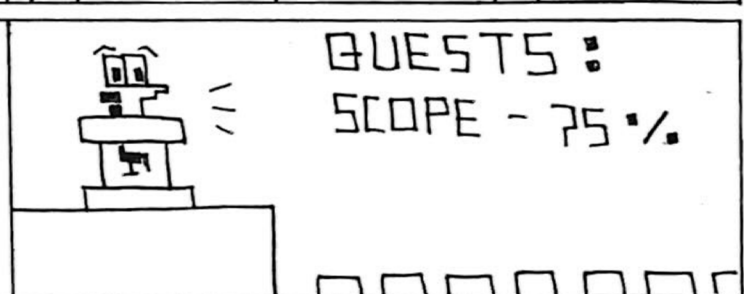
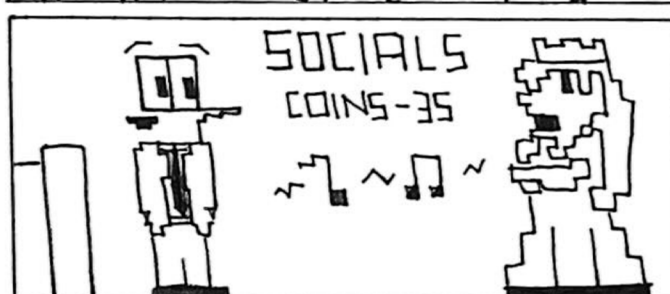
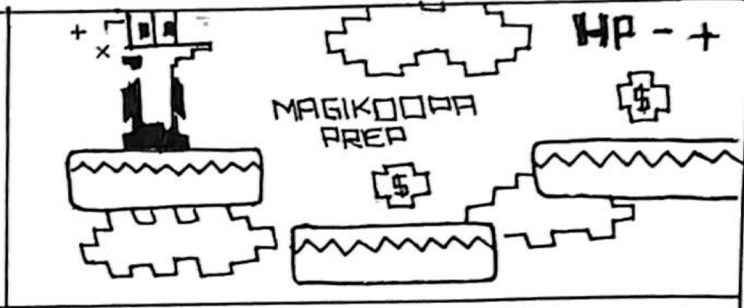
Once again, I was suitably nervous when I approached the Headmaster's Residence on my round of goodbyes the night my batch was leaving. Shomie looked at me sternly. I stammered out my goodbyes. We had both conspicuously avoided the matter at hand. Maybe there was a chance he hadn't read the dreaded poem. "A word of advice Mr Basu as you leave School..." "Yes, sir?" "I don't think poetry is in your future." It was then that I noticed the poem on his desk, and the droll smile on his lips. He gave as good as he got.

Something tells me Shomie would have chuckled to have this "banned" poem printed in the *Weekly* after all these years.



Shomie not particularly impressed by whatever small award it is he's handing off to me





Jasmine in the Winter: Mortality and Memory

Rahul Kohli (81-JA, 1975)



The familiar *Bajri* crunch and the fragrance of the *Francisia* hanging in the crisp winter air smell as sweet. It's been fifty years since we meandered off, separate souls, on our separate journeys, carrying your fragrance within us... A few key notes and infinite tones... Our past is now a foreign country... The world smelled so different there... I cast my mind back, and the past comes tumbling through: excited little boys, fragrance and photographs triggering memory, stories jostling to be told... Did God give us a memory to have yesterday's tomorrow, jasmine in the winter, or to linger in the sheer delight of a time when we had dreams and were young?

We see the onion of our lives peeled, its pearls close... We have shed the foreverness of youth; memory and mortality curl about us like cats in heat.

So, you ask, what was this space we shared like half a century ago? I look at myself and say it is a foreign country; we did things differently there. Perhaps, it is easier to define that time and say it was a kinder time. The School boundaries were porous, and high walls and concertina wire lived in the realm of comic books and WW2 concentration camps. If, perchance, one oozed through the boundaries, it was unlikely word of your shenanigans would cross over to the Housemaster. Floating up from across the road and over your

wall comes the fragrance of happier times. In my mind's eye, A, C, J, I, R, K, B, and I silently sneak out of J House with a blanket under my arm. We creep past the Dhobhi Ghat, through the hedge, down the slope, dashing across Chakrata road into the *dhabha* on the other side... Stop, take a deep breath, the fragrance! Buttered buns, steaming hot omelettes, a memory exchanged for a blanket, that one meal that links generations of Doscors.

For those ugly knobs on all the bannisters, gentlemen, you can thank Bonne Sood's raging hormones, his broken collarbone, and H's short skirts. With no internet, nothing digital, hormones raged differently, as urgent but gentler and less immediate; you had to read that stuff and play out the image in your mind.

I watch with some regret the apprenticeship requests that come to the DSOBS, the overwhelming skew towards commerce. Looking back, learning then was not linear; it did not seem to go from School, to college, to a job. I remember it being more organic, leaning into our preferences. We were nudged to look at our inclinations, our more intuitive abilities. STEM related to plants, and at no point did we study towards employment. We were encouraged equally towards the arts, humanities, or the sciences, and "M and Associates" in Kashmir House developed a rather innovative take on "Trials Preparation." However, there was a constant nurturing of creativity and individualism; sport was not a dirty word and was never considered a hindrance to growth. There was that special relationship with Welham Girls' School, a relationship of the heart, yes, but more importantly, of the mind and ears and their physical possession of our stadium at the District Sports. Doscors that haven't heard Welham girls scream encouragements to their athletes have not lived; those that have are hearing impaired.

What, I wonder, has changed? Could we be missing the traditional Doon Masters: teachers that were much

more than information vehicles; men and women for whom teaching was their element and their calling? Our Masters inspired us. As I stand looking at where our beloved art school had stood, I close my eyes, and I'm back fifty years, with palette knife, oil paint, and turpentine, and in my heart I return to her silent, peaceful space... I know, had Rathin Mitra still been in School, these philistines would never have been able to dismember and replace her with a pair of ugly cuboid lumps... I console myself that the brick and mortar was only the body, and this new space will be an Avtaar. Rathin Mitra awoke art in me the way only a Master, for whom it is his element, can blow it into you. An unspoken transfer of creative thinking – by just being there and being himself, everything around him resonated. In the cool, silent, peaceful, high-ceilinged studio, I could dream about the magical green of fresh April leaves as they lit up in the morning sun. I, once completely captivated by the colours of a sunset, waxed eloquent on the sublime...blah blah to another teacher as we looked out on a truly glorious sunset, on cycling mid-term... Halfway through my rather purple description, I caught him looking at me like I was a worm in his lychee. I learned very quickly that not everyone was Rathin Mitra, and few people "got it." Pitre listened to me talk and then, oh so kindly, taught me to hear myself speak, and as way leads on to way, to think and not be content with that, but to think deeply, and then placed in me that seed that somewhere physics, art, and God

came together.

KK and his lampooning rag "Fag! hell of a..." switched on my sense of the ridiculous; all my heckling, irreverent, "non-hierarchical" DSOBS correspondence is to be laid squarely at his doorstep: "mujhe credit nahi chahiye." My next English teacher, patient, tolerant Henry, put up with two years of my twisting any essay topic he could think up into a tirade against God or on the absence of a kind god... Something as simple as "How did you spend your summer hols?"... would begin with "I saw a man beating a dog, and ... it's a shitty, cruel world, and basically it's all God's fault ..."

Everywhere I cast my mind, I see that thread of benevolent tolerance running through this rambling narrative; it resonated gently through the School. From the high point of our social calendar, "The Socials," where Mrs Johar, the WGHS Dragon lady, our Darling lady, extended our evenings of delight each time, to the cancelled private mid-terms of Messrs SA and VRS, who strode out of the bat-winged doors of the Majestic Bar, bang into RP. They, instead of being sent home, went cycling with Bond. We, the uncaught few, got a bottle of gin and went cycling around the Doon! An indelible memory is of seven little boys, as we wait for the ferry to do a few *chukkers*, sitting on rocks with our feet in the river, sipping 'gin and lime cordial' chilled with the waters of the Jumna. Frozen in time, our bicycles on the riverbank, Jethro Tull played *Aqualung*, the river tumbled swiftly by Ponta Sahib,

God was in his heaven, and all was well in the world.

Closing my eyes, my mind drifts to the little boy, "with eager eye and willing ear," who walked on our common Bajri. For that little boy, I offer to those who nurture children and endeavour to lead our School the words of WB Yeats:

I, being young,

*"have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."*

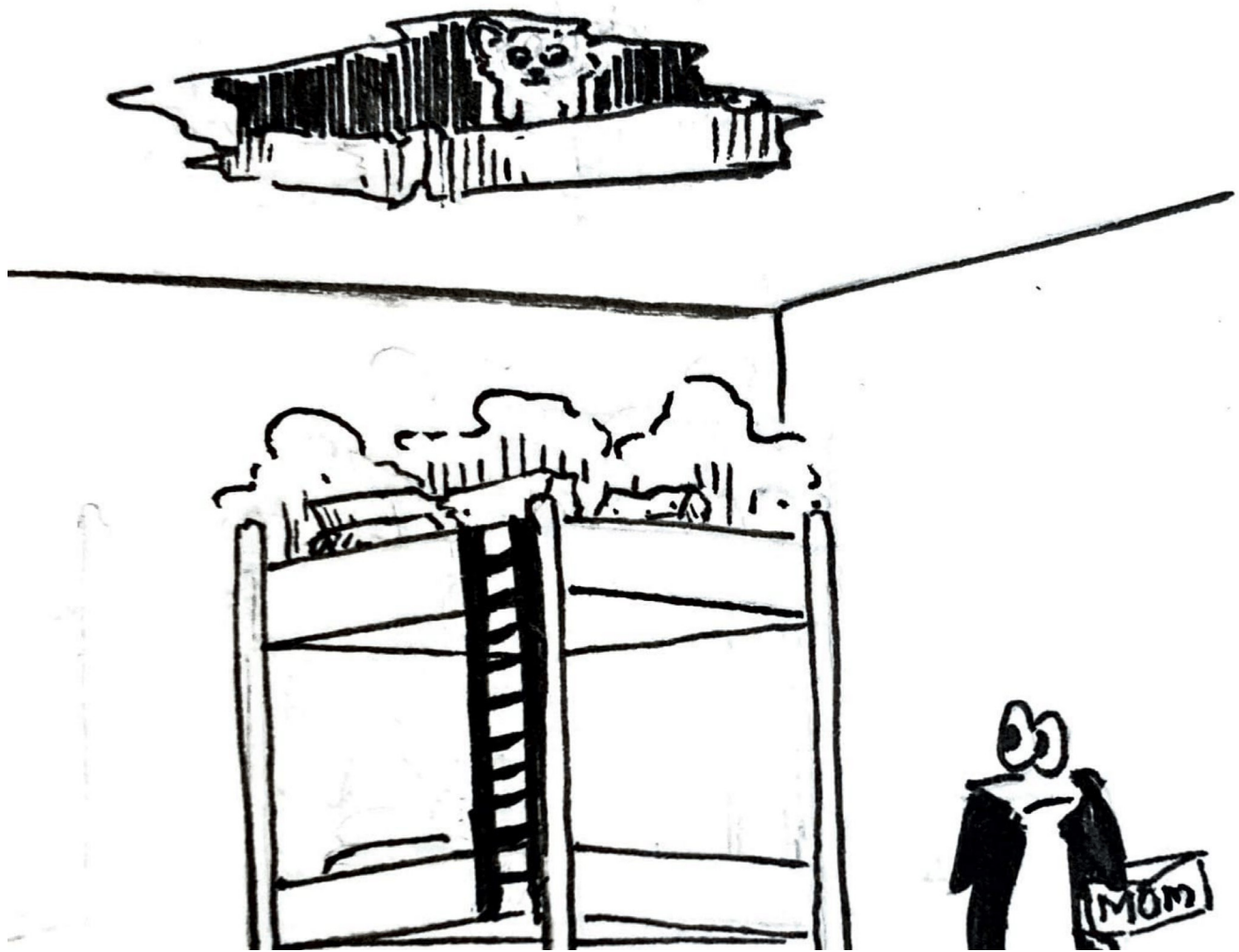
After all, life – what is it but a dream?



The Doon School Communications Department

Word to the Wise

Amitabh Dubey (99-HB, 1989)



I was in Doon for only three years – I entered in C Form and exited after A Form to go to the United World College – a network of international schools to which Doon used to encourage its students to apply. But they were three transformative years. The fact that I entered Doon as an unmotivated, middling student and exited after getting a competitive international scholarship says something.

Consider my early academic performance. Having completed a good chunk of my eighth standard before I joined Doon, I assumed with great confidence that I should be double promoted to B Form after my first term. I had the good fortune to view my file at Founder's Day in 2019, and I discovered that my Masters voted 7-1 to keep me in C Form. These included observations, mostly by my maths and science Masters, such as "far below many other boys," "not a very bright boy," "just an average pupil" and "a weak pupil." The icing on the cake was the solitary vote for promotion by my philosophical Hindi Master: "He is not one of the best in class, but can be promoted as there are equally weak boys in B Form also."

And yet, the nourishing intellectual environment at Doon – these are words not often written – opened my mind and expanded my horizons in unexpected ways. We are constantly reminded that DoscOs have done well in every field. This is, of course, a function of both the fact that Doon has been around since 1935 and that it comprises a self-

selected group of elites who are anyway primed to succeed. But there is something to the fact that teachers, including Housemasters and Tutors, pay a lot more attention to each boy than what he would have received in a day school.

I found myself arranging chairs in the Auditorium, plucking grass from the badminton court, supervising the House bulletin board and taking part in House and School Council meetings. I was an Editor of *The Circle* and *The Doon School Weekly*. While I was no sportsman (having ascended to the heights of League III Hockey reserve goalkeeper), the culture of service, responsibility and outdoor activity had a profound impact on my life.

Through my years in School, the Library became a haven for me, even if my reading consisted mostly of casual genres, where I greatly enjoyed authors like P.G. Wodehouse and Gerald Durrell. More academic schoolmates tended to gravitate to the highbrow shelves, with the School producing fantastic thinkers and novelists like Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh at the time.

This doesn't mean everything was fine and dandy. Some boys felt oppressed by hypermasculinity and heteronormativity, and even faced class discrimination. But Doon was an intellectually stimulating environment for me. A stark example was my rapid improvement in chemistry, a subject I had zero interest in and have had nothing to do with after I left, all because I had a superb chemistry teacher

thanks to whom I can still rattle off the formulas for various organic compounds.

No boarding school is complete without periodic homage to the Duke of Wellington's assertion that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. And Doon's first Headmaster Arthur E. Foot was from Eton. In that spirit, here are some of the valuable lessons I learned in Doon that, in retrospect, served me well in the academic and corporate worlds, especially in my current work with a political party.

Carefully pin blame. While in C Form, I returned to my Hyderabad House room after dinner one March evening and found a chunk of the wooden ceiling lying on my bed, right around where my head would have been resting a couple of hours later. I was told that a civet cat had been prowling and had crashed through. It was convenient that civet cats cannot reply to angry letters from parents or respond to legal notices.

Anyone can win. My student self-appraisal from my first term in C Form contained this nugget: "I, along with 98, had won the House Carrom Doubles, but only because everyone else was struck off from the list." Apparently, I was being prepared for service with the current Election Commission three decades ahead of time. Unfortunately, I am working with an Opposition party so it isn't working exactly as planned.

Fight injustice but compromise when necessary. This was straight from the annals of Satyagraha (B Form): "I have 'broken' tuck rules at the beginning of this term because I felt they were irrelevant considering the quantity of tuck involved, although in principle I shouldn't have."

Emotion beats logic. After a year of moving chairs in the Chair Squad, I felt I was ready for a cushier gig and applied to *Genny Squad*, which ran the generator for the weekly Rose Bowl movie. Naturally, they had interviews. When asked why I wanted to join, I came up with a well-prepared answer involving the joys and challenges of mastering the internal combustion engine. My classmate was next and when asked the same question he snapped to attention and roared: "Because Genny Squad is the Best Squad!" He got the job. In fact he later became School Captain. Say no more.

Gaslight when appropriate (i.e. always). Clearly Doon deeply understands young boys because the self-appraisal form included an entire field called 'Loss of Property,' which I dutifully filled to the brim every year. In B Form, I complained: "I have just lost a geometry box with all my writing material in it. I recovered NOTHING (as usual) through the Lost Property Office." In A Form, I played the victim card: "I have lost two geometry boxes and associated equipment this term. I also lost a lot of blood when I was injured by a hockey stick. I recovered nothing through the LPO."

Fix the problem before sharing any bad news. That last bit probably needs some explaining, and there is nothing better than this extract from my Housemaster's letter to my mother, shortly after I entered A Form: "On April 15th Amitabh was stung by bees while he was coming to the CDH for tea. He was stung quite a lot, mostly on the head. Now he is perfectly fit, and there is no need for anxiety. Also on April 13th he got hit accidentally on the forehead while playing hockey, and had to have five stitches. The stitches have been removed today and he is fine. So there is no need to worry on account of this also."

Another way to think about this is that I killed 32 bees by ripping off their stings with my skin.

I suppose I should thank my stars that I survived Doon. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. And I am glad my ex-Dosco father forced me to abandon a co-ed school and the comforts of home for a faraway-seeming boys' School where we had to take communal showers and some people clearly had difficulties comprehending how a flush should be used. It was all training for the real world. And I am glad I did it.



The Doon School Communications Department

poetry

[86]



The Cold Road

Zorawar Singhal

Look how the nobles have laid a path for us.
The road is still cold, the path is still withered.
We rise from this soil, and into it we must one day return,
Many are born, but many remain undead.

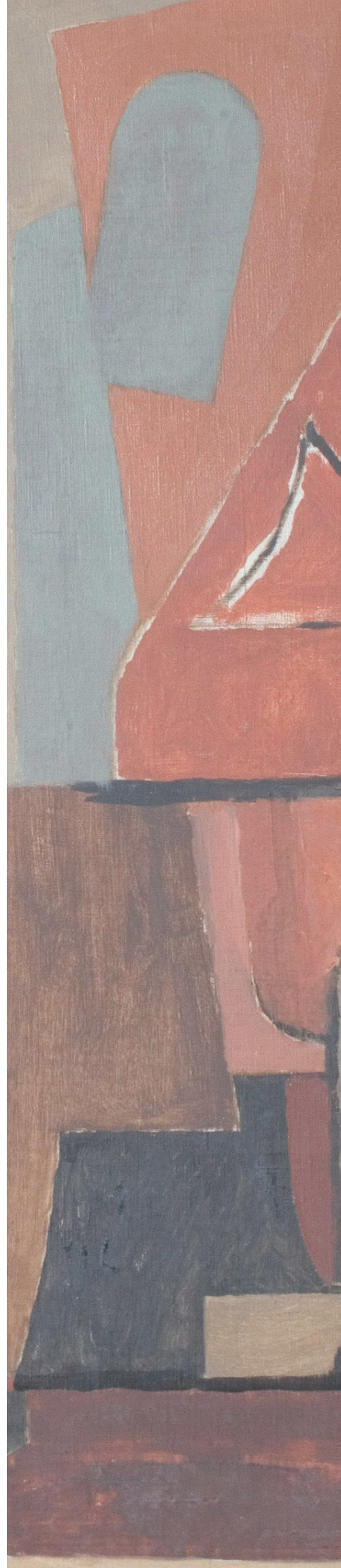
With hopes they come, dreams they carry,
Voices grow shrill, and words become unheard of,
Messages remain undelivered, and names long forgotten,
The only thing left are their memories.

Memories that are in distress, showcasing our regretful
past,
Our actions lead to more paths that could have been
taken.
One word spoiled his life, one decision changed his career,
Yes, I am to blame; I have sinned, I confess to it.

If only he could have gotten one more opportunity,
He would have flourished in a world where he deserved
to be,
With a heart full of will and eyes drenched with fire,
He could have conquered the world.

I crushed his dreams, his dreams were beyond me,
I took the opportunities he longed for,
And he took himself away from his wretched father.
Now that he's not here, I understand him and cry about
the past.

Silence has become the loudest,
Darkness is the only light,
Look how the clouds rain with grief,
The road remains cold, that path is still withered.
I walk on the path alone.



Please Don't Be ME

Manit Jain

My Form stood in a file, stiff as a board,
A daunting Senior paces along the horde
keeps his finger primed, ready to choose his next pick,
The lucky Junior who would wake him up at six
my palms became waterfalls, my knees became weak
Please don't be me I whispered, meek

A sip of Iced Tea on a hot day
makes Descos swoon in the oddest way
I dashed to the counter, a sliver of faith still in my eyes
But the containers slyly vanish in disguise
One quarter, two quarter, three quarters and then gone with
the wind. My hair stood up, My heart took flight
"Why is it always me?" I sighed, with all my might

Algebraic Functions, Chemical reactions, Newton's
Applications To me, they all look the same
My teacher scans the class to look for someone to shame
and when the question landed on me, I was made a clown
for everyone to see
"Why did it have to be me?" I feel

Then came the time, for my Housemaster to appoint his
ghost. I may not have been ambitious, but I did desire the
post. Our Master searched high and low, every nook and
cranny, defaulters, delinquents and dissenters he found.
Surprisingly, I was still safe and sound. As he looked at me, I
said
"Please for once, let it be me."

दून स्कूल के बच्चे

गुरु लिखित

दून स्कूल के बच्चे हैं हम,
सुबह उठते ही भागते हैं हम।

जहाँ भी देखो सीनियर प्यारे,
जहाँ भी देखो मास्टर्स न्यारे,
जहाँ भी देखो पेड़ खड़े हैं,
जिस ओर नज़र, उस ओर नज़ारे।

स्कूल के बाद जब खेलने जाएँ,
जमकर हम सब शोर मचाएँ।
खेल-खेल में लड़ भी जाएँ,
पर मिलकर एक-दूजे को मनाएँ।

तब भी अगर कोई न माने,
तो टक से उसको ललचायें।
रात को सबका एक ही ठिकाना,
टॉय से निकल कर दोस्तों को
सताना।

वापस आकर भी न हो बदमाशी
कम,
क्योंकि हमारा नारा है —
'डॉस्को हैं हम'।

चाँदबाग में गूँजती हिन्दी

एकराज मक्कर और हृदय कनोडिया

जन-जन की प्यारी भाषा हिंदी,
भारत की सच्ची आशा हिंदी।
जिसने सब दिलों को जोड़ा,
वह मज़बूत धागा हिंदी।

धरती की महक, हवाओं की मिठास,
नदियों की गूँज, पर्वतों की सांस।
हर मन की गहराई में बसी,
अपनी अनमोल पहचान हिंदी।

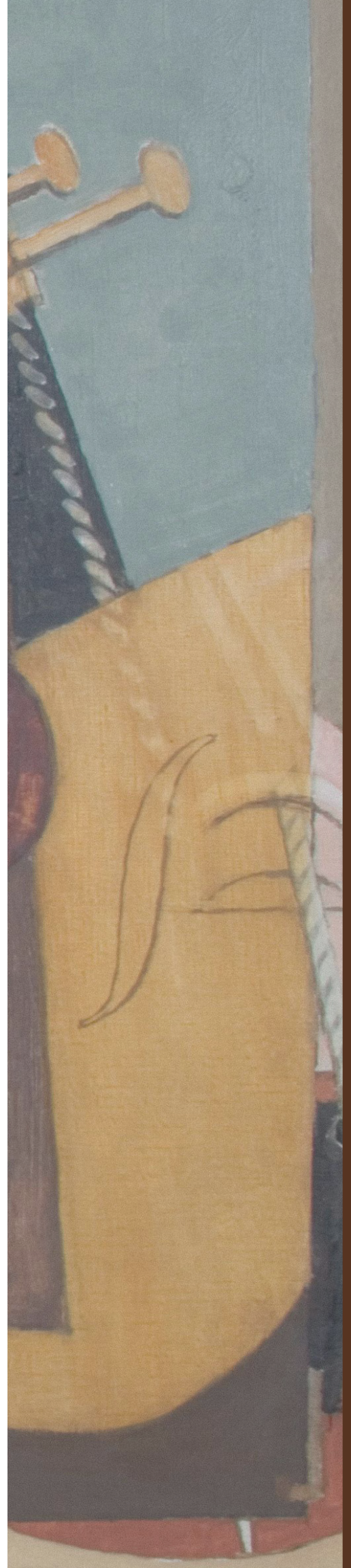
संस्कृति की धारा है हिंदी,
ममता का प्यारा इशारा हिंदी।
गंगा जैसी पावन लगती,
रग-रग में बसती हिंदी।

हर अक्षर में झलके इतिहास,
ऋषियों की अमूल्य परंपरा खास।
भारत का अनुपम संगम यही,
सबसे बड़ी धरोहर हिंदी।

नयी उमंग, नयी प्रेरणा,
हर पीढ़ी को देती सहारा।
जब विश्व मंच पर गूँज उठे,
तो गर्व से चमके हिंदी का सितारा।

हिंदी हमारी पहचान है,
ज्ञान और सम्मान है।
शब्द-शब्द में मिठास है,
अक्षर-अक्षर में उजास है।
हिंदी भाषा की यही पुकार,
राष्ट्र का सच्चा अभिमान है।

यह केवल भाषा नहीं,
भारत की आत्मा का गान है।
चाँदबाग की बगिया में खिलती,
छात्रों की वाणी में चमकती।
दून स्कूल के आँगन में,
हिंदी की गूँज सदा दमकती।



BEST OF UNQUOTABLE QUOTES

A curation of some of the finest *Unquotable Quotes* over the last year.

THE REGULARS

Does he have a humour sense?

Rehhan Chadha, sixth sense.

Are you a germophobia?

Yohaana Marda, must stay open-minded.

Myself winning Best Delegate.

Arish Talwar, Lok Sabha delegate confirmed.

That is some really black humour.

Jansher Grewal, open-mindedness is key.

I am not a Chupacabra.

Aarav Agarwal, identity crisis..

How did you wrote your English exam.

Shaurya Agarwal, better than you.

I'll spat on you.

Hrishikesh Aiyer, if you're into that.

I am a Prime Minister who is not in his Prime.

Aditya Koradia, evidently so.

I'm not ignoring you, I'm just on airplane mode.

Viraj Rastogi, inner peace.

Stop abusing substances.

Hridaan Kumar, in a 12-step program.

My sarcasm has citations.

Adhyan Sharma, does it now?

I slept back.

Ganadhipati Aryan, as usual.

THE BEST AMONG US

I am not late, I am tardy.

Aarit Singhania, rephrasing.

I don't want cooling effect, I want botting effect.

Zorawar Singhal, messing with the thermostat.

I wasn't lost, I was just somewhere else.

Anant Gupta, sure buddy.

Is Led Zeppelin an American brand?

Shaurya Jalan, and the Beatles are insects?

Are the pants also full-sleeve?

Amarnath Sahu, Gucci is on the phone.

NGOs are government owned.

Ayan Dhandhanian, economic expert.

I cannot ring bells.

Atiksh Kasana, no-bell laureate.

If tomatoes are a fruit, ketchup is just a smoothie.

Aryaman Sood, agree to disagree.

I am standing on my hands.

Nishant Bagga, world's finest acrobat.

MASTERS

You don't have good Unquotes anymore, man!

ARJ, wait and watch.

The shark is not killed, she is dead.

ARM, the Reaper's left hand.

Humans work in a world that is very human.

MIA, self-explanatory.

I will shoot you with a knife.

NAS, embracing IB.

I got literally headache.

SSR, us too.

I do not leave any rooms for doubt.

AKM, the Da Vinci code.

Take an example of a bread of loaf.

RSL, baked to perfection.

We birth Australia every year.

DKM, head of the UNPD.

Why can't you remove your legs?

ACJ, first day on the job.

How does gravity look like?

ADN, 9.8 m/s.

I am not in the unrest, I create my own.

ANC, well-rested.

He's a sumb thucking guy.

RDG, honest judgement.

How can you do rizz without any aura?

NLB, (Gen) Alpha.

Boys are the biggest gossip girls.

PRC, creating gender norms.

This issue meets School compliance, protocol and guidelines.

KLA, finally.

FACTUAL ACCURACIES

White is the most colourful colour.

Siddhant Fatehpuria, dark humour.

Today is the deadline, and tomorrow is the submission.

Atharv Jajodia, punctual.

The American Civil War happened in Avengers.

Aryaman Lamba, contemporary historian.

Caesar died today in my class.

Shiven Singh, Beware the Ides of March.

The heavier tabla is the lighter one.

Reyansh Sekhani, maestro.

My botness reduced the temperature.

Vir Sandhu, makes a lot of sense.

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