

Established in 1936

# The Doon School WEEKLY

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

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## Hills to Climb...

With 'Mid-terms' approaching, my mind drifts to Mount Kilimanjaro, a towering titan at 19,341 ft, a mountain that tests, teases, and transforms. A dormant volcanic giant, Kilimanjaro wears snow on its summit while sun-scorched plains stretch out at its feet, standing as a test of endurance, patience, and spirit. It reveals as much about the climber as it does about the climb.

The School restarted its climbing journey with an expedition to the Everest Base Camp (17,598 ft) in May 2024, and this year, as part of DS90, it went higher, harder, and bolder, as Kilimanjaro beckoned once more — for the first time since May 2009, after a gap of seventeen years. This marked not just progression but renewal, a return to a deeply held tradition, and a reminder that the climbs are not only about the altitude but about reconnecting with a legacy that had paused, albeit briefly.

The following students went on this expedition: Aanay Goyal, Barun Borgoyari, Harkirat Singh, Siddharth Bawa, Abhishek Garg, Agasthya Jain, Saathvik Gupta, Aahaan Gupta, and Harsh Agarwal. They were accompanied by Mr Parvinder Kumar and myself.

There were no cosy lodges this time, no reassuring roofs — only tents with thin fabric, pitched against fierce winds and fragile shelter, holding out against a stubborn cold. The kind of setting that strips you down layer by layer until only grit remains. Tents offer no illusion of control:

the cold seeps in, the winds insist on being felt, the ground reminds you where you are, and discomfort is not hidden. The route was equally unsparing: raw, rugged, and relentless, with no shops, no shortcuts, and no soft options — just ranger posts, bare essentials, and the mountain watching. Barely commercialised, it offered no permanent structures and no convenient retreats.

The mountain and its people did not adapt to us; we had to adapt to them. And this clear difference from the expedition to the Everest Base Camp is something I have been recounting to everyone. It revealed a meaningful difference in approach: while tourism and trekking are still the key sources of livelihood in both places, the people at Kilimanjaro refuse to earn extra at the cost of their natural local setting. Not that the commercialisation of the EBC is a negative development; it too has its merits and justifications. It is just that these socio-cultural differences give nourishing food for thought, and it is a wonder that we can embark on journeys that reveal these to us.

And what a world it revealed! These were not just observations but experiences in themselves, rare sights that we were fortunate to witness, and ones that none of us knew about. At one point, a trekker tried to pluck a few flowers to make a bouquet, which seemed like a small act, but the local mountaineer accompanying the group intervened immediately, firm and clear: the flowers

### THE WEIGHT OF INFINITE CHOICE

An argument that freedom, unconstrained, is its own prison.

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### THE ULTIMATE TIC-TAC-TOE

A new addition to the *Weekly*, featuring nine games in one. Do you have what it takes to win? Enjoy!

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**Mr Manu Mehrotra** writes

*about his experiences trekking with Doscos and the hardships faced along the way.*

were not to be touched. That moment stood out, showing how strongly the locals protect their environment, with no hesitation or compromise: a simple but powerful lesson.

The climb was not just upwards; it was inwards too, unfolding not only as a physical journey, but as an internal one of reflection, restraint, and realisation. The lessons came sharp, sudden, and stubborn. There were lessons in balance, between ambition and awareness, between pushing limits and respecting them, and between individual endurance and collective responsibility.

And sometimes, you have to stop and let go of the summit, and that stopping stings, and it sits heavy, but it also teaches, because stopping is not surrender; it is sense, and it is strength in disguise. There is maturity in knowing when to stop, when to seek help, and when to offer it, because stopping is not failure, it is judgment. Some carry this maturity as an innate part of their character, while others learn it through experience, and what better time to find out and learn than now?

Then come the other moments that matter — the ones that endure. I still cherish that boy who stayed awake beside me as I battled fever and cold, not out of obligation but out of instinct, a moment neither dramatic nor loud, yet deeply defining, because

*(Continued on Page 3)*

**READERS' CHECKLIST**

What members of the School Community have been reading this week:

**Druvan Mahanta:** *Atomic Habits* by James Clear.

**Vedang Shah:** *The Art of Spending Money* by Morgan Housel.

**Sagnik Biswas:** *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie.

**Smyannah Mandhanaa:** *Blood of Hercules* by Jasmine Mas.

**Rehhan Chadha:** *Collected Works of John Steinbeck* by John Steinbeck.

**Ayaan Mittal:** *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid.

**Rafay Habibullah:** *Economic Facts and Fallacies* by Thomas Sowell.

**LISTENERS' CHECKLIST**

What members of the School Community have been listening to this week:

**Arjun Deswal:** *With You* by AP Dhillon.

**Aryaman Lamba:** *Tere Liye* by Atif Aslam and Shreya Ghoshal.

**Yuvan Grover:** *Paranoid* by Black Sabbath.

**Srivathsa Narayana:** *Let the World Burn* by Chris Grey.

**Hridansh Nagpal:** *Texts Go Green* by Drake.

**UNQUOTABLE QUOTES**

*Ma'am, I woke up but I just slept again.*

**Vivaan Poddar**, I understand.

*I am prepared for the exam, but the exam is not prepared for me.*

**Yuveer Agarwal**, testing the exam.

*I am a coconut water and that is okay.*

**Anshuman Gupta**, decently smart.

*You are good, am I how?*

**Vedanshh Dewan**, courtesy at its peak.

*I'm not a defender. I'm an offender.*

**Osman Huq**, redefining football.

*Is Katy Perry in the syllabus?*

**Dhrubo Mishra**, lost at sea.

*You must walk in English.*

**SSW**, walking the talk.

*Baba, you have an academic.*

**ADN**, mindset management.

*MUN changes the world order.*

**Ayaan Mittal**, changing lives.

**THE RIDDLE?**

*Once a forum of speech and expression, now a temple, fundamentally silent. Bathed in red, I am a centre of refuge for the Juniors. What lies in me sits within four walls, but grants access to everything else. Depending on where you're going, you can find me in a nook of Doon, on your pathway to freedom.*

**Around the World in 80 Words**

Former Iranian Speaker-of-Parliament Ali Larijani was killed along with his son. Michael B. Jordan won the Oscar for Best Actor. Donald Trump's close aide Joe Kent quit citing ethical reasons. The DHS promised \$2,600 to Indian immigrants who would 'deport themselves' to India. Morocco successfully appealed the AFCON result in court, being awarded the cup several months after the original result had been declared. Chelsea lost to PSG by 8-2 in one of the worst defeats they have ever faced.

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Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?

**Marianne Williamson**, as quoted in *Coach Carter*.

Pi Day is celebrated on 14th March (3/14) each year, marking the mathematical constant  $\pi$  — the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, approximately 3.14159. First organised by physicist Larry Shaw in 1988 at the San Francisco Exploratorium, it was officially recognised by the US Congress in 2009. The date also coincides with Albert Einstein's birthday. Pi Day is a reminder that one of the universe's most elegant truths hides inside every circle.

On behalf of the *Infinity Society*, the *Weekly* wishes you a belated Pi Day!

**Dosco Doodle**

How far will you go?

Aarav Singla



*(Continued from Page 1)*

it is in such quiet acts that character reveals itself, both to oneself and to others.

And now, 'Mid-terms' loom, so ask yourself — and the question is not logistical, but philosophical: what are you choosing, comfort or challenge? Whatever you choose, do go, because 'Mid-terms' are extensions of the same philosophy as these expeditions,

set in a different setting but animated by the same spirit.

Ask any Old Boy — in at least two and a half decades of meeting past students, without exception, they all reminisce about their 'Mid-terms'. Sleepless nights in tents, improvised meals, resourcefulness in crisis, plans that failed, and spirits that did not — these are not inconveniences, but formative experiences remembered with

pride, shared struggles that do not simply pass, but persist, shaping memory, meaning, and identity. This is a lived legacy of School life here, one that cannot be taught, only experienced.

Expeditions and 'Mid-terms' are not identical twins, yet they emerge from the same ethos: the same philosophy of growth, rooted in experience.

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## The Weight of Infinite Choice

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**Kahaan Patel-Vadodaria** *argues that freedom, unshackled from constraint, is the loneliest cage of all.*

*Note: This is a reflective piece.*

*Pause. Take a step back. Don't think. Don't formulate. Don't judge, don't evaluate. Just look back. Know this. No one is forcing us to live this way. And that's a problem.*

There's a silver lining in every cloud you see. A state of being subject to tough circumstance, for example, gives you purpose. An evil to undermine. A tyrant to resist. Even in defeat, even in failure, there is that evanescent instance of hope, of motivation, that spurs you on to certain purpose.

In freedom, there is captivity. Tangible, almost. Lurking in the shadows, just out of reach, but all around you at the same time. Self-contradictory as it may sound, only in freedom are we powerless. There is no evil figure to overthrow. No rulebook to set ablaze, no 'enemy' to blame. No totalitarian regime, no *Big Brother* dystopia, no spurring moment re-defining your 'outlook on life'; there's nothing to justify anything you do. Nothing to give purpose. Strain, flawed as it is in itself, gives direction. Gives meaning. Gives purpose. Freedom promises no such thing, just empty, gallant assurances. Freedom, paradoxical in a way we were never meant to see, formed the very bonds it ostensibly freed us from — drowned us in the very deep waters it liberated us from.

There is a very Pollyannaish and naïve projection of freedom that society propagates onto us: the same projection that we ourselves fall victim to and conform to. Subject to a regime that heralds a critique of slavery, we fail to see that the very ideologies that modern free society throws at us — 'own your mistakes', 'choose your values', 'make your own path' — are all echo chambers that set us up for failure.

When you look at it through a magnifying glass, you see that constraint is a physical burden, designed to restrict movement. Analogously, it's the pruning of a bonsai tree. Sure, constraint restricts movement, but the strategic evil of freedom is that, simply speaking, freedom overwhelms movement. Freedom is like fattening up said bonsai tree; you're making it grow

just to chop the whole thing off eventually.

When your choices, your options, are limited, there is a justification for failure. When options are literally unlimited, there are a million wrong choices you can make for every right one. Maybe not at first, but there is a point where it starts getting to you. Seeping through your defences and seeping through your brain like a poison until you're riddled with negative emotions. The modern individual does not ask "what am I allowed to do?", but "why haven't I done something extraordinary yet?", "am I average?", "am I not good enough?"

Freedom at the dawn of our existence wasn't much different. It seems that on either side of evolution, there was never really any room for freedom. On one side, bound by nature. On the other side, bound by ourselves. The shackles that once came from outside now come from within.

Previous generations were crushed by constraints. Our generation is crushed by possibility.

All of this is exactly why structure and routine feel so calming. There's some purpose, some eventual goal that you're working towards that's spurring you onwards. This is why people romanticise the 'good old days' — the past. Constraint, terrifying as it still may be, offers one thing to us — room for proper effort. Freedom gives us infinite space, infinite space that's void of the one thing that we need: direction.

Camus hypothesised Sisyphus happy. "One must imagine Sisyphus happy," to quote. He claimed that when Sisyphus acknowledges the futility of his task and the certainty of his fate, he is freed to realise the absurdity of his situation and to reach a state of contented acceptance.

But Sisyphus was punished. He suffered for his sins and rolling the rock up the hill was his punishment. Today, that very boulder is not imposed. It comes from within.

We choose to push that boulder. And no one told us to.

# The Week Gone By

Ayaan Mittal

Exam fever has swept the School clean off its feet, transforming innocent, happily waddling penguins into irritable, sleep-deprived creatures drifting about in coffee-stained coats and existential despair. Reports suggest that School's electricity bill has risen alarmingly over the past week, largely because the great tradition of procrastination has finally given way to desperate, last-minute all-nighters. Meanwhile, the culture of "borrowing" has reached new heights. Juniors across campus report that they have not seen their own 'night caf' in days, while we Seniors continue to uphold the timeless principle

that sharing is caring. And worry not about your marks... in Hrishi's immortal words, 'I condemn brain rot strongly, so in protest, I will not be getting any 6s or 7s in these Finals; abhh the sacrifices I make.' Stay delusional, boys. As this misery-soaked fortnight crawls towards its conclusion, and only three days remain, keep rowing, my friends — the end is near.

That same exhaustion carried itself rather visibly into Wednesday's *Yearbook* pictures. The slicked-back hair and polished coats usually reserved for posterity were largely absent, replaced instead by half-awake DoscOs who simply did not care enough to pretend they had slept. If anything, the photographs may finally capture the true academic spirit of March: hollow eyes, rushed ties, and surrender. Still, sympathies must be extended to the *Yearbook* 'kids,' who nobly

sacrificed precious study time in service of their *beloved publication*.

And while one set of boys stood reluctantly before cameras, another quietly began stepping beyond them. As if exams, farewells, and photographic suffering were not enough, the weather gods too have chosen chaos. Mornings now arrive with no guarantee of what lies beyond the curtains. At this point, I would like to use this *Week Gone By* to formally open the floor to odds — if anyone is taking them — on what Doon's weather intends to be each morning.

Much like having the confidence to serve sticky rice and still offer refills, a lot can still be redeemed by putting in the work now. Until next time... stay tough and pull through!

## Ultimate Tic-Tac-Toe

### Objective:

Win three mini-boards in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally) to win the game. This is a two-player game.

### How to play:

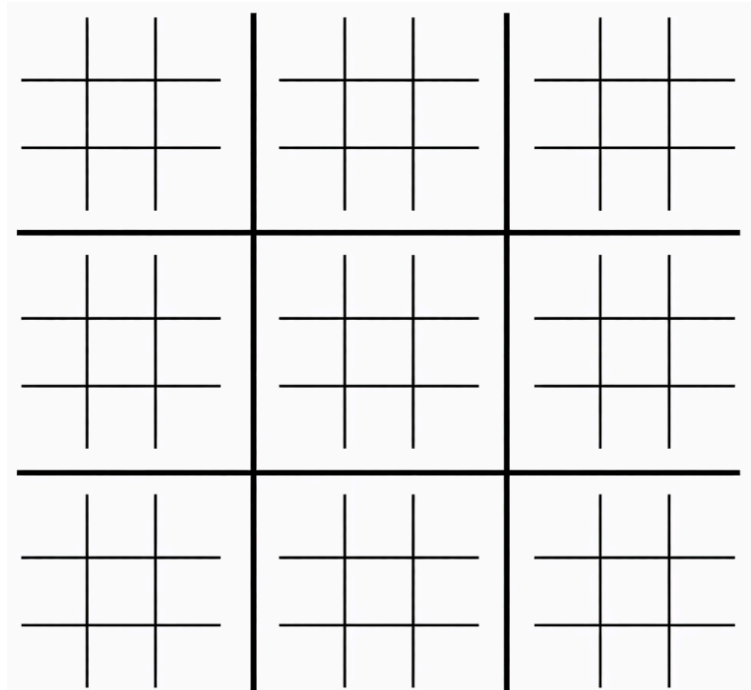
**The Start:** The first player places their mark in any of the 81 small squares on the board.

**The Link:** The specific square you choose determines which mini-board your opponent must play in next.

(Example: If you play in the top-right square of a mini-board, your opponent must make their move anywhere in the top-right mini-board.)

**Winning a Mini-Board:** Once you get three-in-a-row within a mini-board, you claim that entire section.

**The "Open Field" Rule:** If you are sent to a mini-board that is already won or full, you may play in any available square on the entire board.



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