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The Doon School
WEEKLY

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

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A Globe on Fire

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): **You discuss the importance of victimhood as a social and political language. Do you believe that this victimhood actually helps people articulate their suffering better, or does it lead to changes in perception of both the world and themselves?**

Mr Ankur Datta (AKD): When one thinks about violence, victimhood is usually understood as a category of experience or position within it. There is also the perpetrator and the witness, and the three are closely connected. They are often treated as separate positions, but in reality, the lines between them can blur. A person may be a victim, a perpetrator, and a witness at the same time. Even uninvolved people may become witnesses in some sense. Michael Rothberg, whose work I find very interesting, suggests that by watching the news, one is still a witness of some kind.

On one hand, to be a victim means to acknowledge a certain status. It means saying that something has happened to you, and that your experience matters. But once that experience is articulated as victimhood, it also becomes connected to identity. The question then is not only whether victimhood helps someone express suffering, but how that claim is understood by others.

That is where a more complex kind of politics begins. The way I represent my victimhood depends on language, terminology and history. It could matter whether I speak in English, Hindi, or another language, or whether I describe myself as a refugee displaced by war, or as someone victimised by corruption and bribery. Others may acknowledge that claim and try to respond to it. They may also dispute it, or counter it with their own experiences of suffering. This is something we often see in contemporary politics: competitive victimhood.

Rothberg also writes about Holocaust memory and argues that victimhood is often treated as a kind of zero-sum competition. Another problem arises when victimhood becomes a political resource used to justify a range of actions. Historically, different political entities have claimed that their actions in the present are justified because they have been victimised in the past, even when those actions lead to the further victimisation of others. This is a serious concern.

Having said that, victimhood is still useful as a category because there are actual victims in the world whose suffering needs to be identified and understood. The difficulty lies in thinking carefully about how such claims are made, interpreted and used politically.

DSW: **What is one thing you would like students to know about a world that is almost always in conflict?**

AKD: On one hand, it is true that if you look at human history over the last 200 to 300 years, conflict has always been present. What students need to understand is that one cannot simply wish conflict away. Conflict can exist in a range of forms. The most obvious examples are war and displacement, but conflict can also emerge in far more mundane ways. For instance, if someone is insulted on the basis of ethnic, racial, or caste identity, that is also connected to conflict.

There is a whole category in social science that looks at violence tied

(Continued on Page 3)

The *Weekly* *interviewed Indian sociologist and author,* **Mr Ankur Datta**, *during his visit to the School on April 23 for the Literature Fest. His work addresses themes of displacement and dislocation, place-making, history, memory and the politics of victimhood.*

READERS' CHECKLIST

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

Yug Singh: *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* by Ian Fleming

Ransher Mann: *Eragon* by Christopher Paolini

Nihal Bhathal: *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo

Aviraj Singhvi: *The Lost Symbol* by Dan Brown

Aarav Jain: *Black Sunday* by Thomas Harris

Adhyan Sharma: *The Trial* by Franz Kafka

LISTENERS' CHECKLIST

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

Naman Sood: *In The Water* by Pete McCredie

Chinmay Agarwal: *Chicago* by Michael Jackson

Rudra Saran: *GREECE* by DJ Khaled

Shreyas Agarwal: *Passionfruit* by Drake

This week offers us a fitting moment to pause and reflect on the quiet and steadfast service that holds this School together.

Chandbagh runs on the devotion of those who give more than is asked and expect less than is owed.

The Weekly, this May Day, extends its heartfelt thanks to every member of our staff and faculty for their commitment, care, and tireless service to the Community.

This Week in History

1810 CE: Ludwig van Beethoven writes his world-famous piano piece, Für Elise.

1897 CE: J.J. Thomson announces the discovery of the first subatomic particle, the electron.

1925 CE: Franz Kafka's famous surrealist novel, The Trial, is published posthumously.

1945 CE: The Dachau concentration camp is liberated by U.S. troops.

1986 CE: The Chernobyl nuclear disaster occurs at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in present-day Ukraine.

1993 CE: The World Wide Web enters the public domain for the first time.

1994 CE: South Africa holds its first multiracial elections, marking a decisive end to Apartheid.

Around the World in 80 Words

U.S. President Donald Trump met with his National Security team to discuss Iran's latest proposal to open the Hormuz Strait. Cole Tomas Allen attempted to assassinate Donald Trump at the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner. The BJP won all 15 municipal corporations in Gujarat's local body polls. The BJP accused the Trinamool Congress of tampering with voting machines in the Falta constituency. Extreme heatwaves in Dehradun caused schools and Anganwadi centres to shut down. PSG narrowly beat Bayern Munich 5–4.

¿THE RIDDLE?

Echoing periodically through Chandbagh,
My strong demeanour has passed the test of time.
I'm a dutiful servant,
Guiding young Doscos from time to time,
One place to the other.
I lie at the heart of all scholarly pursuits,
Representing the cornerstone of the School's rich heritage,
What am I?

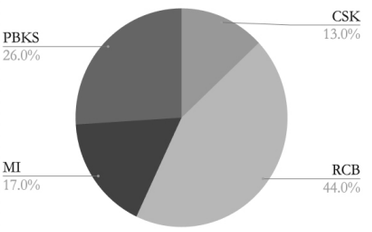
The answer to the previous Issue's riddle was the Padel Courts. The first person to solve the riddle was JRB Sir.

MURDER MYSTERY

The answer to the Murder Mystery published in last week's edition of the Weekly (Issue no. 2773) was the Junior. Siddhant Fatehpuria was the first and only person to get the correct answer.

VOX POPULI

Which team is going to win the IPL this year?

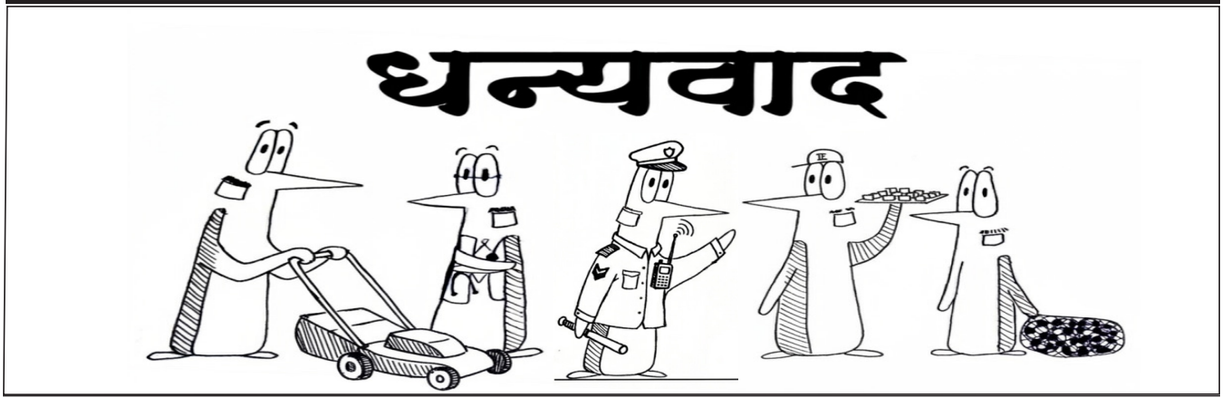


298 members of the School community were polled.

Dosco Doodle

Happy May Day!

Aarav Singla



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to inequalities in social, economic and political structures. In such cases, there may be no distinct villain, or clearly identifiable perpetrator. It may simply mean that poverty, inequality, or social exclusion marks a person's life in particular ways. So, I think students, along with others, should try to think about conflict in terms of historical context.

Firstly, nothing happens all of a sudden. There is always a historical context and a story behind each situation. Secondly, the story we understand will vary depending on perspective. Person A may have one account of an experience, and that is Person A's right. Person B may have another account of the same experience, and Person C and Person D may have their own accounts as well. These different histories and perspectives may not always fit neatly together.

So, one must understand historical context, but one must also recognise that there are many ways of looking at the same context. There are many voices and many histories. There is a very famous line by the Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali: "Your memory gets in the way of my history, and my memory gets in the way of your history." He is trying to understand the potential for misunderstanding and the experience of conflict.

Therefore, while historical context is important, there are also many ways of interpreting context. If I disagree with another voice, I need to ask myself whether I am shutting that person down simply because of a disagreement. I also need to ask what the impact of shutting that voice down might be. Am I causing further hurt because I am not listening to another voice? One can see this in politics, society and culture.

DSW: **What exactly throughout your journey has helped you understand what it means to be displaced? Is it simply a physical idea? Is it something moral or philosophical, or maybe just in terms of social aspects?**

AKD: I would understand the term 'displaced' in various ways. Physical displacement is the most obvious form, and one cannot deny its consequences. This is what I began working on as a PhD student, and it is something I remain fascinated by. I conducted research in a displaced persons' camp, and one of the things that became clear was that displaced people often do not know where their future lies. The present becomes separated from the past, and the future becomes uncertain.

So, on one hand, physical displacement is important. But there is also the question of whether one feels displaced mentally or emotionally. Displacement is ultimately connected to what the scholar Steffen Jensen calls the "struggle for place." Where do I see myself in relation to other people? Where do I feel secure? Where do I feel that I am able to live a life with some sense of dignity?

This becomes important because people who are displaced may not always return to the homes from which they were displaced. They may settle elsewhere, and some may even rebuild their lives quite successfully. I knew families who had done so. In some cases, their children may have moved elsewhere anyway, because they might not have imagined a future in that original place. Yet, despite this, there can still be a sense of not feeling settled, or not feeling completely at home.

That sense of being out of place is common when dealing with displacement. There is an existential dilemma that emerges: Do I feel in place? This can be seen among forced migrant populations, but it can also be seen among people who are ostensibly voluntary migrants. Economic migrants may travel for work, build lives elsewhere, and still feel that home is somewhere else. What interests me, ultimately, is that existential dilemma: Am I in place, even if, on the surface, I am no longer displaced?

There is scholarship on displaced refugee populations after the civil war in former Yugoslavia. Some Bosnian refugees did manage to return home. One might think that this completes the refugee journey: I am displaced, I find my place, I go back home, and I return. Most refugees do not get that chance, but some of them do. Yet when they returned, the place itself had changed. They had left a multi-ethnic state, but when they came back, it was no longer Yugoslavia. It was Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Serbia. The economy had changed from a socialist economy to a capitalist one. Relationships had changed as well.

This creates a problem. These refugees came home, back to the place where they were born, but the system around them had changed. Friends from other communities may have left because everything had become fragmented. Home, after all, is not just a physical place. It is also the relationships and friendships that make up everyday life. It could be something as simple as the people who form part of your routine. For instance, when I went to my campus, there was a *rickshaw-wala* who would take me there and back. He became an important part of my routine. Such relationships matter.

So, displacement is not only physical. It is existential, cultural and social, and all of these dimensions work together.

Friend or Foe?

Ishwar Sandhu *reflects on the practicality of physically attending PTMs today.*

Let us begin with an analysis of the amount of work Doscos have had before the PTMs. A major reason for the heavy workload was the overlap of several Inter-House events. Handling around six or seven Inter-Houses at once is difficult; however, it seems that we have gotten used to doing this, in spite of the bad effect it has on our academics.

It is understandable that life has been hectic in the few weeks leading up to the PTMs. In fact, it would be surprising to find out if somebody had actually been able to focus in class or even interact with their Masters, especially the B and S Formers, with their new set of Masters. I remember one of my teachers telling our entire class to pay attention as we weren't focusing at all. That made me wonder, are we actually not focusing, or have we just not comfortably settled down in the atmosphere of classes amidst the chaos of these various Inter-Houses?

The challenge I am addressing is the inconvenient timings of PTMs, and how our schedule during April is, becomes the root cause of it. Let's start with the two PTMs conducted in April. The PTMs for the A, S, and Sc Forms took place exactly twelve days after their new academic term started. Of which, four days must have been spent without books and notebooks, also taking into account the Sunday on the 12th of April. Is one week enough for the Masters to give constructive feedback to the parents, when the S Form also had their Masters changed due to the new academic term? This applies to the D, C, and B Formers. Both the D and B Forms just got a new set of Masters due to the start of the academic year, with the D Formers still trying to adjust to School life and the B Formers participating in most of the Inter-Houses. Due to this, giving constructive feedback would naturally become a hard task for Masters, so we must wonder, can we really consider the current dates of the PTMs convenient?

As I mentioned earlier, Doscos have a lot of work during April, with the deadly combination of P.T. early in the morning and play practices till late at night. This causes a lack of sleep throughout the School Community, and especially when you combine that with the pressure of handling so many other Inter-Houses, everyday life becomes a burden. Such a situation causes us to be exhausted throughout the day, unfocused, and unable to properly interact with our Masters, and thus, during the PTMs, Masters may not have enough time to provide fully developed feedback for our parents. This is because our Masters have the tedious task of having to deal with us grumpy Doscos, along with the fact that they have to supervise Inter-Houses, day in and day out.

Adding to the inconvenience of PTMs at such a time is the high time investment required for parents who commute to School from far away. This acts as a deterrence to parents who travel from afar and hope for constructive feedback, spread over a longer meeting.

As a solution to this highly overlooked problem, we need a period of time that is convenient for all: a time within which the Masters are able to engage with students, and hence will be able to give feedback to the parents who end up travelling long distances.

I believe such a time exists after the May assessments. By then, the Forms entering School or a new academic year with new Masters would be relatively settled in their new classes and would know what to focus on based on the results of the May assessments.

Since the C, A, and Sc Forms do not have their streams changed, the time during May before the assessments would be suitable for them, as they can reflect on their results from the March Trials with the Masters they've had previously. Either way, the way the system works right now demands some introspection and a new path needs to be charted forward.

How Productive Were Your PTMs?

"Over the last three years in School, I've increasingly started to realise the unproductivity and impracticality of PTMs. For my parents, taking long flights to reach Dehradun and paying for hotels, it is hard to imagine that five minute slots can do justice to a whole academic term. However, changing the time of PTMs as well as allowing earlier outings could potentially improve outcomes."

-Virang Kothari

"There need to be conclusive steps taken in the right direction. It's important that we stay ahead of the curve."

-Aryaman Lamba

'Would you rather live in a good dictatorship or a bad democracy?

Affirmative vs Negative: Geo-Political Outlook

Devansh Gupta

Most people defend democracy by pointing to fairness. Everyone gets a say. But fairness only tells you that people felt included, not what kind of decisions came out of it. In a bad democracy, decisions pass through many people, and each person can slow things down. The version of law that survives is the one that creates the least pushback, which is not necessarily the strongest version.

This has a predictable effect. A bad democracy can pass a law without creating any real acceptance of that law. People may vote for it, tolerate it, or stay quiet because opposing it is costly or pointless. So, the law enters the Constitution before it enters the culture. Only on paper does everyone agree.

A good dictatorship includes two concepts. Firstly, the laws that are created are widely accepted for social and economic benefits of the state. Secondly, the law-making process involves very few people, which might sound risky, but it creates something the bad democracy cannot: accountability.

This insight is probably the only thing that helps in making good laws. When the same person who makes a decision also has to stand by the result, the question changes. It becomes "Will this work in practice?" Because if it doesn't, there is no one else to point to. There is no one to distribute the blame for it to be masqueraded as representation.

But how is this accountability mechanism actually executed? Well, power is conditional: the person at the top stays only as long as the results of their decisions hold up. This idea isn't democratic because there is no representation in the entire process. Take a look at the erstwhile government of Gaddafi in Libya. He had the authority to make decisions without the approval of the people of the state. In retrospect, there might have been less bureaucracy and less policy deadlocks, however, it's then important to consider the second path: it takes the form of a bad democracy where councils are susceptible to veto, and struggle to bring democratic change. They can speak, but they cannot decide. Participation exists, but it does not change outcomes. A bad democracy produces decisions that are easy to agree on but weak in practice. Simply put, at the end of the day, good dictator produces decisions that might be unpopular but possess accountability and good effects.

Aryaman Shilswal

A dysfunctional democracy will always be better than any autocracy, as citizens would feel a part of, and not spectators to, the system. An inherent desire for participation in the political and decision-making process exists within almost every individual. In a democracy, leaders represent the wishes of the people; however, in an autocracy, one must assume every decision taken by the autocrat is for the betterment of the people, and even if it isn't, the most they can do is criticise the decision, not reverse it.

In an autocracy, no matter how benevolent the leader, any issue can at best be vented out in public forums. This can take the form of publications and councils and the worst case is being silenced or censored. There exists no mechanism to actually fulfill the desires of the masses. A democracy brings with it numerous other privileges like free speech, freedom of religion, the right to life and liberty, and the right to organise and protest. Some rights are also present in autocratic forms of government but can be revoked at any time. There exists a tendency among some to favour autocracies, looking for a shortcut to tough and decisive action.

However, tough choices need deliberation and discussion. Take India and Russia as examples. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both faced crises. India had lost the market of socialistic economies it used to engage with and was forced to develop capitalistic policies, while Russian oil facilities were underutilised, and the exit from the U.S.S.R. was messy for the state machinery. Due to India's democratic nature, then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh presented a comprehensive reform package with liberalisation and globalisation at its core. Once it was passed, India saw unprecedented economic growth. Russia, under Boris Yeltsin, took a dramatically different path. They pushed through 'shock therapy' reforms, which are neoliberal policies of rapid privatisation, price liberalisation, and withdrawal of state support in former socialist countries. Oligarchs and insiders captured state assets; the removal of price controls brought hyperinflation up to 2500% on essential goods, and the Russian oligarchy got rich from former state assets. This is why Russians today reminisce about Soviet-style governance, while oligarchs rule today.

The Week Gone By

Rehhan Chadha

This week began with a clash and a bang (of the *Gong*). Much to the joy and relief of the many Penguins who had been practising relentlessly for the past two weeks, the Inter-House P.T. Competition came to a glorious end. As for the many unfortunate souls who were bumped off the Squad at the last minute after having to wake up at 5:30 A.M., a time too many — sorry, but your tan and drop in chubbiness came to absolutely no avail. This also makes me realise that we really underappreciate the privilege of sleeping till ~~7:30~~ 10 A.M.

From what I understand, sleep is a theoretical concept in School now. Between the rehearsals, the run-throughs, the line-ups, and the "occasional" academic lessons, we seem to be fuelled by coffee, the fragments of shut-eye time that we're able to catch somehow exclusively during class hours, and of course, *josh*.

All sports in School appear to be in full swing, as the Hockey Team beat multiple local teams and reached the qualifier stage at the Kandhari Hockey Tournament, where they suffered a close loss to Mayo Boys'. But on the bright side, the Basketball Team put on a show at the Afzal Khan basketball tournament final, claiming a dominant victory and of course, the much needed day-off.

On behalf of the *Weekly*, I would like to congratulate the S Form and the ScLs on their incredible performance in the Board Examinations.

That being said, academics are pushing to make a comeback. It seems hilarious that we're already approaching the next cycle of assessments when it seems like we just got over with the last one. Not too much space between when we last pretended to study in "IB late night study grinds" and now. Soon enough, we'll see the coffee machines placed in corners and night cafés making their rounds around the Houses.

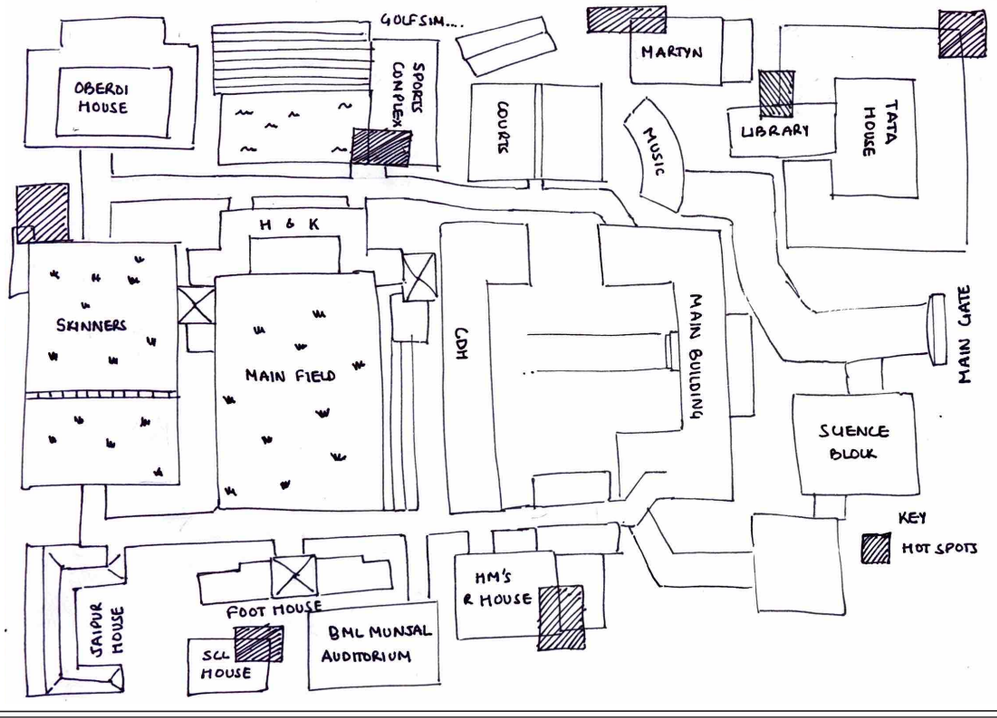
The next three weeks are set to be absolutely packed, with one event following another, and many often overlapping. So, let us plunge into the chaos of activity and give our best in everything we do.

On a special note to the Scs, ensure that you don't take undue advantage of the system anytime soon. Beware, 'Big Brother' is always watching…

Dosco Doodle

Project: Bunk Class

Rian Gupta



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