

THE
Rose Bowl

JANUARY 2021

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOON SCHOOL OLD BOYS' SOCIETY



THE OUTDOORS ISSUE

**Tiger Fences in Pilibhit | Islands in the Sun | North East Life & Culture
Gurdial Singh's Expeditions | Swachh Yogi | My Garden & Other Animals**



An Aristocracy of Service

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EDITORIAL BOARD

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CRICKET: DONNY SINGH (878 T, 1982), PUBLISHER: THE DOON SCHOOL OLD BOYS' SOCIETY, NEW DELHI

COVER & BACK COVER: SHIV KUNAL VERMA (182 H, 1976)

DSOBS Vision Statement

'To foster fraternity amongst Old Boys, support School and serve society'.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Dosco,

A year has passed under the oppressive yoke of a breathtaking virus. Since December 2019 when the first signs of this novel SARS virus hit the headlines, the speed and scale at which our global communities have adapted to, and embraced a new way of living, working and defending itself against an invisible marauder has been a testament to technology and the survival instinct of humans as a species. Apropos to widespread crises, it has also uncloseted those age old skeletons of privilege versus inequity, east versus west, science versus superstition and hearsay versus fact - giving us in equal measure a picture of cutting edge scientific proficiency in our time, as well as painfully medieval ignorance.

Tellingly, with the deployment of a multitude of vaccines (60 under development according to The Lancet), we're also finding that the virus is mutating regionally, giving us a run for our candidacy at the top of the evolutionary food chain. We have our eyes fixed firmly on the future, dropping more rovers on the red planet, fueling speculation on a new frontier of digital currencies, and ushering in an energy climate of swearing off the black stuff. Yet we also find ourselves deeply mired in predictably short-sighted differences. We are highly polarised as a nation, and more widely around the world, to either side of the political divide thanks to misinformation and the purposeful seeding of

differences through fake news, political or private interests, and echo chambers.

At a time of crisis such as the one we are facing, you might think we'd become more amenable to finding commonality over differences around the globe. Rather, social and news media seem driven to labeling us as snowflake lefty-liberals or ignorant right-wingers, boxing us off into myopic groupthink and pitting us against each other. If we can be duped and triggered into ignoring such colossal common enemies, with political misdirection and digital profiteering, you have to wonder whether we've lost sight of the wood for the trees. And in the battle for the planet, is it disease, catastrophe or ignorance that will ultimately send us the way of the dinosaur? I'm sure there's a Netflix special being planned on it, any minute now.

Since lockdown have been the flavour of the past year, we're bringing you a number of stories on the great outdoors, with some evocative mountaineering tales, beautiful wildlife photography and a return of Gautam Vohra's diaries from Papua New Guinea. And of course news from the DSOBS and community gatherings.

Enjoy the issue.

Govind Dhar
192 T, 1997

Letter to the Editor

Dear Govind,

Clearing my office of decades old files and papers, I came across this gem, being minutes of the DSOBS Executive Committee Meeting of September 6th, 1989. Those were the days! The DSOBS 'office' was a table and chair under the staircase at the office of Shri Ram Fibres Limited, manned by Colonel PC Khanna, the Executive Secretary. Still, we flew the flag high and soon enough planted it firmly at the IPSS!

See the Minutes on 'Greater interaction between the Board of Governors and the DSOBS Executive Committee'. Behind the scenes was the unbending attitude of the Chairman IPSS at the time...which

after dogged follow ups and a few 'he's a jolly good fellow' get-togethers, became flexible...and the rest is history!

Do also see item (b) on The Rose Bowl. The sponsorship came from companies we could call on at the time for funding: ITC (Sumajit Chaudhry); Dornier (me); Triveni Engineering (Dhruv Sawhney).

Keep up the great work and look forward to the next Rose Bowl.

Cheers!

Pushpindar Singh Chopra
74 T, 1959

MINUTES OF THE 35TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE DOON SCHOOL OLD BOYS SOCIETY HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1989 AT 6 P.M. AT THE OFFICE OF SHRI RAM FIBRES LIMITED.

The meeting was attended by the following:-

Mr. P.S.Chopra	President in the Chair
Mr. Sumanjit Chaudhry	Member
Mr. Sudhir Sahi	"
Mr. Vipin Malhotra	"
Mr. Jayant Hari Har Lal	"
Mr. Shiel Vohra	Hony Secretary
Mr. Preet Lal Malhotra	Class Rep
Mr. Harpyal Singh	"
Cdr.Harpreet Singh	"
Mr. Arjun Thakran	Chartered Accountant
Mr. Mahesh Sahai	Executive Secretary
Col.P.C.Khanna (Retd)	
<u>Absentees</u>	
Mr. Dhruv M Sawhney	Vice President
Mr. Michael G Dalvi	Member
Mr. Mohit Jayal	Member

Minutes of the 34th Executive Committee held on 7 June 1989 had been circulated to all concerned earlier and were confirmed. Progress on points of the 34th Executive Committee Meeting were circulated at the meeting and are attached.

The President reviewed progress on the various matters -

a) Greater interaction between the Board of Governors and the DSOBS Executive Committee.

The President informed the committee of his discussions on the matter with Mr.Lalit Thapar, the Chairman of the Board of Governors. The Chairman of the Board of Governors had informed him that inviting the President of the Old Boys Society on a regular basis "would be against the rules "; however, he assured that so long he was the Chairman, he would ensure that the President of the Old Boys Society is invited for Board meetings. Mr.Mahesh Sahai did not agree that the "rules" would be infringed by making the President of the Old Boys Society an ex-officio member of the Board of Governors and if necessary the constitution of the IPSS

could be suitably amended. The members of the Executive Committee felt very strongly on this matter and after detailed discussion, it was decided that the committee's views be sent to the Chairman of the Board of Governors, highlighting the following points:-

- a) A formal link needs to exist between the IPSS and the DSOBS so that the Society as an entity is formally apprised of major matters concerning the School.
- b) Lack of formal interface between the IPSS and the DSOBS has in the recent past, resulted in various rumours and half-truths being circulated which lead to unhealthy credibility gaps.
- c) It is felt that the Old Boys are only "used" when the need for fund raising arises.
- d) The President of the Society should be made an ex-officio Member of the Board of Governors so that the DSOBS and IPSS work for mutual support and tangible benefits for the Doon School. This would provide a vital communication link between the IPSS and the 3000 members of the OB's Society.
- e) The Old Boys would naturally take greater interest and support various development plans for the School if they are assured that their collective views are being considered at the policy-making forum.
- f) Interaction at the A.G.M. of IPSS is no substitute for this as the membership of the latter is restricted.

b) Sponsorship of the Rose Bowl

The President informed that for the Golden Jubilee issue of the "Rose Bowl" we had received sponsorship of Rupees Five thousand each from ITC Ltd, DORNIER and Triveni Engineering. The members of the Executive Committee wished to convey their commendation to the Editors of the "Rose Bowl" for the excellent work done by them.

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Mr.Sumanjit Chaudhry mentioned that during his recent visit to America and U.K. he had learnt that none of the Old Boys in these countries had received the "Rose Bowl" issue dated 17 June 89, as these had obviously been posted by Sea Mail. It was suggested that the 'Rose Bowl' in future be sent by 2nd class Air Mail (printed material Book Post) and the Old Boys residing abroad be requested to defray the additional postal charges.

c) Financial assistance to ex-Masters

Mr.Sudhir Sahi read out a letter received by him from Mrs.Ambika Menon (daughter of Mr.KNP Nair) mentioning that once in the past, some Old Boys wanted to collect some money and present it to her father but this had been "refused" as not quite appropriate. It was instead felt that a spontaneous gift in cash or kind may be accepted by him on a suitable occasion.

It was decided that the ex-masters of the School be invited to attend the Golden Jubilee of the Old Boys Society and travelling expenses of selected Masters be defrayed by the Old Boys Society.

d) Establishment of the Registered Office of the Society IN the main building at Chandbagh.

Mr. Sheel Vohra informed that suitable accommodation for the Registered Office would be available by the end of the current term when the Library would be shifted from its present location.

e) Investment of Funds

The Executive Secretary informed that the School has invested Rs.96,000/- in Bhadrachalam Paper Board and approximately an additional rupees one lakh would be invested when the Life Membership subscription of the class of 1989 is received.

f) Exemption of Income from Tax

A Sub-Committee consisting of Mr.Mahesh Sahai as Chairman and Mr.Lalit Nirula, Mr.Vipin Malhotra and Mr.Ajai Singh were requested to examine the draft of Memorandum of Association and the Rules & ...4

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Regulations of the Society and suggest changes if any by 8th Sept 89. (The Sub-Committee met on 7 Sep 89 and the amended draft has since been given to the Printer for printing.)

g) Sports meet with ACDBA

A Telex message has been received from the President of ACDBA suggesting dates in December/January for visit of the Old Boys Team. It was decided that the Games Sub Committee should decide whether either of the suggested dates were suitable or otherwise.

h) Fixing of rates of Life Subscription of Old Boys Society for Government Scholars

The Headmaster should be requested to intimate the progress in this matter as also to forward a list of Government Scholars who had passed out from the School in the past.

Thereafter the following Agenda points were taken up -

1. Examination and approval of draft of the revised Memorandum and the Articles of Association of the Old Boys Society.

A Sub-Committee was formed to examine the draft as mentioned in para (f) above.

2. Transfer of Income Tax file from Dehra Dun to Delhi

Actions taken to have the Income Tax files transferred to Delhi was approved.

3. Discussion of the detailed programme for celebration of the Golden Jubilee

The following programme was discussed and approved -

- a) Dinner-Dance from 8 P.M. on 20 October 1989, at the School tennis courts.
- b) Pagal Gymkhana and Fete on 22 October 1989, at the Skinner's estate.

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It was decided that a Circular letter giving the detailed programme be sent out to all Old Boys in India and a special invitation be sent to Old Boys who joined School in the first term of the School ex-Masters and Old Boys from Pakistan.

4. Plan for the firm foundation of the Doon School Old Boys Society into the future.

Owing to shortage of time, consideration of this point was deferred for the next meeting.

5. Consideration and approval of the Balance Sheet of the Old Boys Society for the period 1 Jul 88 to 31 March 89.

The Balance Sheet was unanimously approved. However, Mr.Mahesh Sahai suggested that the Executive Secretary should give the details of amounts recoverable from School and the balance in the Savings Accounts at Delhi during each meeting of the Executive Committee so that action can be taken to investment the available funds well in time rather than their lying in Savings Accounts.

6. Consideration of the application of Mr.Sherad Kumar (121-HB)

The request of Mr.Sherad Kumar (121-HB) for membership of the Old Boys Society was rejected as he had not completed the stipulated period in the School.

7. Change of Class Rep

The request of Mr.Ashish Bharat Ram for being relieved as a Class Rep of Class of 1986 would be accepted after he gives a name of a suitable relief.

8. Consideration of recommendation of Regional Rep of Madras for allowing Mr.Mahi Das to wear the Old Boys Tie.

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a) Mr.Sumanjit Chaudhry informed that Mr.Suresh P Advani, Regional Rep U.K. had arranged an Old Boys Dinner in September last year which was very well attended and he is proposing to have another one in December this year.

b) Mr.Bharat Sahgal, Regional Rep in U.S.A. wished to be relieved as he did not have the time and requested that Mr.R.K.Puri be appointed in his place. This change was approved. Mr.Sheel Vohra suggested that Mr.R.K.Sehti (854-JA) be appointed as the Junior Rep in the States. He was to forward his address.

c) Mr.Sumanjit Chaudhry also brought out that the "Supporters of the Doon School Trust Inc" has collected some funds in US Dollars but there is very little awareness of its utilisation and future objectives. This matter would be discussed with Dr. Gulab Ramchandani.

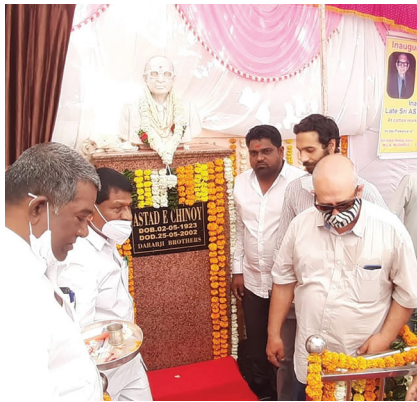
d) Mr.Sumanjit Chaudhry also felt that the Bursary Sub-Committee should monitor the progress of boys who are granted Bursary by the Old Boys Society and the Headmaster be requested to forward an yearly progress report on the concerned boys. The bursaries were granted on "need basis" and not on academic progress report on the boy from the Headmaster. It was decided that the President, Vice-President, Chartered Accountant and the Honorary Secretary would comprise the Bursary Sub-Committee.

e) The executive committee approved the holding of a Dinner-Dance jointly with the Old Girls of Welhams Girls School on 23rd Dec 1989. The profits would be shared.

The meeting then ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

OLD BOYS' NEWS

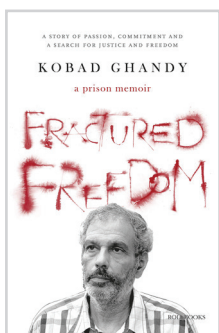
Astad E Chinoy (185 J, 1941), son of Nawab Erach Yar Jung, was honoured by the Merchant Association of Bhainsa, Telangana at the unveiling of his marble bust in the entrance to the Market Yard on February 23rd commemorating his selfless



service to the people of the city. This honour was given to him for his 48 year-long relationship with local merchants towards setting up

their businesses. MLA Vital Reddy, Municipal Vice Chairman Jabir, Chairman of the Market Committee Krishna, and former MP DB Patel, Minister of the Maharashtra government were among those present.

Brigadier HHM Sukhjit Singh (128 T, 1950), MVC of Kapurthala, aged 86 was honoured at Jalandhar after 50 years of service since the Indo-Pak war of 1971! Our most heartfelt congratulations to Mr Singh on his invaluable contribution to the security of the nation. Salute!



Kobad Gandhy (349 H, 1963) has published his memoirs with the Lotus Collection, an imprint of Roli Books entitled *My Fractured Freedom - A Story of Passion, Commitment and a Search for Justice and Freedom (2021)*. The book is part memoir

and part prison diary recounting Gandhi's racist treatment as a student in the UK of the '60s, through his activist gatherings in the '70s and '80s, his jailing in 2009, and his experiences with the Indian justice system over the past decade. Congratulations Kobad.

Prof Chekitan Dev (15 K, 1975) has been awarded the chair for Singapore Tourism Distinguished

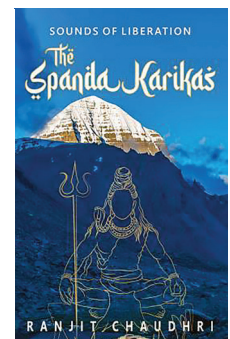


Professor in Asian Hospitality Management position for five years from July 1st, 2020. Mr Dev was informed of this award by the Dean and EM Statler Professor at the School of Hotel

Administration, Cornell SC Johnson School of Business, where he is a professor with indefinite tenure. A huge congratulations to Chekitan from all of us on this excellent news.

Ranjit Choudhary (176 K, 1984) just released his third book in a series of books on yoga and spirituality entitled *Sounds of Liberation, The Spanda Karikas*. The Spanda

Karikas was written by Sage Vasugupta in the late 8th to 9th century AD, containing a wealth of knowledge on how the world was created, what are the important elements within it, what causes our bondage, and the means to overcome that bondage. The book is available on Amazon and all leading bookstores. Well done Ranjit!



Viren Popli (433 K, 1986) will be taking over as interim CEO of Mahindra Automotive North America in a recent announcement from the

Indian carmaker. Viren currently serves as CEO of Mahindra's agriculture business in North America. An honour well-deserved. Congratulations Viren!

Saradhi Rajan (345 H, 1986) is a Reform UK candidate in West Central in the London Assembly elections (Constituencies). The election will take place on May 6. We wish Saradhi the best of luck.



Shivendra Singh Dungarpur's (500 H, 1987)

Film Heritage Foundation made headlines with the BBC for its efforts with brand ambassador Amitabh Bachchan to salvage, renew and restore the country's film heritage which is in dire need of funding and archiving. Read their latest report later in this issue. Subsequently, Mr Bachchan was honoured with the International Federation of



Amitabh Bachchan receiving the FIAF award

Film Archives (FIAF) award by filmmakers Martin Scorsese and Christopher Nolan via a virtual ceremony for services to the preservation and restoration of Indian cinema heritage. Congrats Shivendra and Big B!

Salman Syed (444 K, 1993) published his first book entitled *Digital Marketing Made Easy* (Brown Fox Publishing 2020). The author has two decades of marketing expertise across continents with brands such as Xerox, Canon, Telus and others.

The book helps business owners understand the changed marketing landscape and leverage the exponential advantage newer tools provide, when compared to old school methods and notions of marketing. The book is an attempt to introduce digital marketing in an easy format. Contact him at salman_syed@hotmail.com or +1 778 855 2204. Well done Salman!



Samrath Bedi (471 T, 1993) was a finalist in the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year



India Award. Sam has been instrumental in scaling up Forest Essentials across India to more than a 100 stores across 26 cities, making it one of the leading players in the luxury Ayurveda space. Wishing Sam greater success!

Udayan Goyal (401 H, 1993), a co-founder and partner at Apis Partners, a PE fund focussed on fintech opportunities in emerging markets, led a round of investment in India based payment gateway startup Cashfree.



Manjit Singh Kalha (402 H, 1993) has recently participated in the sponsorship, formation,



operations and merger execution of Special Purpose Acquisition Companies (SPACs) in both Italy and the US. He was part of the advisory team to an Italian SPAC (VALU:IM), as the Board Director of the LGL Group (LGL:NYSE). He is part of the sponsor team of DFNU:NYSE that raised \$172.5 million, and he is the Executive VP of Finance of PMVC:NYSE that raised \$175 mn. Congratulations Manjit!

Chetan Kandhari (414 J, 1993) is now heading Digital and Innovation for Nationwide Insurance in the US. Nationwide is a Fortune 100 company, and has over \$40 billion in revenue across Insurance and Financial Services. Chetan's responsibilities include leading the company's digital vision and strategy across all of its businesses. All new products and services launched by Nationwide fall under the scope of his responsibilities. Side note: Chetan was head of Bank Squad in School, and was responsible for a few financial innovations there too, which has obviously held him in good stead. Congratulations!



Aditya Kumar (567 O, 1993) was promoted to Principal Technical Program Manager at Amazon. As part of the last mile logistics tech team, he delivers software solutions that run 2500+ delivery stations across 16 countries, successfully delivering five billion shipments to customers in 2020. Aditya is based in Gurgaon. Onwards and upwards Aditya!

Himmat Rana (464 J, 1993) took part in the Delhi Half Marathon on March 7th, and was placed 9th overall, with a career-best time of 1:24:01. Himmat claims to be fitter today than he was while in school, and is planning for the national record by the time the batch gets to its Golden Jubilee. Way to go Himmat!

Bhavdeep Sardana (400 T, 1993) brought to fruition the Sukhjit Mega Food Park in Phagwara, Punjab. Supported by the Government of India, it will provide affordable infrastructure for the food processing industry, besides facilitating direct procurement of crops. Bhavdeep has also been elected the President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)



Punjab for 2021-22. Way to go on the double-win Bhavdeep!

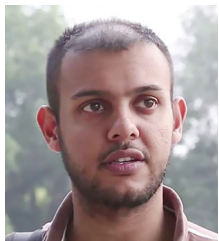
Rohitinder Singh (463 K, 1993) and Sheetal Bedi (1993, Welham Girls) are proud of their daughter, Chhaya Singh, who has been appointed School Captain of Welham Girls for the year 2021-22. It's great to see our batch kids carrying the torch. Here's wishing Chhaya the best in her stint as School Cap and a salute to Rohit and Sheetal as one of the three Dosco-Welham couples from the batch of 1993! Shabaash all.

Akash Puri (230 T, 1998) as Director, International Realty, Sotheby's continues to lead from the front as a luxury real estate expert having participated on a panel for NDTV's The Property Show on Sunday March, 21st, discussing top international destinations for real estate investment with other leading experts. Well done Akash!

Nirvana Chaudhary (473 J, 2000) has been selected by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader for 2021. Each year, the Forum of Young Global Leaders goes through a rigorous selection process to identify, select and commemorate remarkable leaders under 40 who come from different communities and industries worldwide. These young leaders exemplify what we need most today: hope, empathy, authenticity and the drive to develop solutions that can change the world for the better. Fantastic news Nirvana and well done!



Sohrab Hura (455 T, 2000) debuted his first exhibition as a curator at Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai, UAE in January this year. The exhibition entitled '*Growing Like A Tree*' runs till May 20th, 2021 and is the Magnum photographer, artist and filmmaker's first foray into mounting an exhibition of other artists' works. The show aims to map a



network of past and present collaborators with 14 artists and collectives from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Germany, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Singapore, seeking to

expand the framework of boundaries set out by the geographical context of South Asia. Well done Sohrab.

Abhishek Gupta (114 O, 2002) has recently relocated to Jakarta, Indonesia with his spouse.

After a long career in international development, public policy and working with start-ups, he is working on his own agritech start-up focused in SE Asia, and would be glad to connect with like-minded DoscOs. Reach out to Abhishek on abhishekg.a@gmail.com.

Harsahej Bakshi (354 K, 2005) aka Dualist Inquiry was the cover star for *Rolling Stone India* in December 2020. The electronic musician also had the joy of tying the knot with Anna da Costa in 2020. Congrats on a double win from all of us Sahej!

DSOBS NEWS

The DSOBS participated in the **Alumni Golf Tournament**, held in Jaipur on March 13-14. The alumni of five schools vied for top honours – Doon, Daly, Mayo, Sanawar and Scindia. Doon won 1.5 of its matches out of 6. A special mention goes out to Anubhav Agarwal (247 J, 2015) who was called upon at the last minute to help team Dosco avoid a walkover from one member being unable to play on day 2. Anubhav drove five hours to salvage Dosco pride and participated in the tournament the next day. Sadly he lost on the 16th hole, but won the admiration of all alums gathered. Well done Dosco!



Under the DoscoTalks initiative of inviting Old Boys who are experts in their field to shed some light on their work and subjects at large, **Prof (Dr) Rakesh Sinha (444 T, 1987)**

who is Associate Medical Director (Emergency Services) with South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust, UK, was invited to speak on the search for a vaccine for the Covid-19 virus

on 21st January. Dr Sinha's hospital has been at the forefront of providing emergency services towards the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK. Yash Gandhi (586 T, 2007) was the moderator for the event.

The DSOBS continued its webinar series under the DOSCOTalks banner about Silicon Valley on April 4th. The speaker was **Bharat Gupte (309 K, 1973)** who is a Silicon Valley-based venture capitalist, tech executive and angel investor.



Currently on the board of Pyramid Cyber, Aigo & InnovEAT, Bharat remains a technologist at heart, with deep expertise in semiconductor, solar, artificial intelligence, medical imaging and software industries. He is a guest lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, the Wharton School and Santa Clara University. The talk was moderated by Shubho Ghosh (472 O, 1993), a managing director with hedge fund Opti Capital Management in New York who also happens to be the regional representative of the DSOBS in the Big Apple.

New Sheriff in Town

The Dehradun chapter of Old Boys welcomed Dr Jagpreet Singh, Headmaster, The Doon School, on Saturday, 6th March at Hotel Madhuban, Rajpur Road, Dehradun. The event was well-attended with over 100 Doscos turning up to wish the new HM and his family well. For he's a jolly good fellow...!



Dr Jagpreet Singh, HM





Well done boys!

A Dosco Motorcycle Reunion

Ride of 18 riders departed from Dehradun to Karnal and a brunch was hosted by Bonny Mann (307 K, 1985) for all the gents who rode out. Start your engines!



Marking co-ordinates at the start



Easy rider



That was fun!

The 22nd DSOBS Inter-House Golf Tournament was held on Saturday, April 3rd, at Jaypee Greens Golf & Spa Resort, Greater Noida. Over 85 enthusiastic golfer participated in the event maintaining Covid safety protocols. Jaipur House took the trophy, followed by runners-up Tata. Well done all!



Farewell Narayanan

Ashutosh Goyal
392 K, 1986

Mr AP Narayanan retired from The DSOBS at the end of December 2020, after almost 29 long years of dedicated service to the Society! What an innings!

He joined the Society as assistant to Late (Col) PC Khanna (38 T, 1944) in June 1992. In those times the Society's Secretariat was housed within the offices of M/s SRF Ltd, New Delhi, courtesy Arun Bharat Ram (36 K, 1958).

While in office, he saw the Society purchase its own premises at Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi. Subsequently, as the Society's activities increased, the space of the office premises fell short and the office was put up for rent. The Society moved to a more spacious office in Defence Colony.

Mr Narayanan worked under 16 Presidents of the DSOBS. Ironically, he was given the appointment by Dhruv Sawhney (37 K, 1959) and he retired in the tenure of his son and the current DSOBS president, Tarun Sawhney (234 K, 1991). He worked under six secretaries of the DSOBS and in his tenure, The Rose Bowl has seen four editors.

He saw it all and yet many didn't even notice his quiet presence at all the major functions held by the Society – diligently collecting and upgrading data at Founder's Day; following-up on events on

a very busy calendar year comprising of sporting events, regional and batch get-togethers, charity events and talks by specialists; getting internships, summer jobs and mentorships for senior boys in School etc., among other responsibilities. A true all-rounder in the truest sense of the phrase. He was also witness to the growth of the Society with its corpus multiplying around two hundred times from a mere INR 6 lakhs.



Farewell protocol

In gratitude for his services, The DSOBS presented him with a cheque and wished him a well-earned, happy and healthy retirement. Thank you Narayanan. We shall miss your perennial can-do attitude and loyal service to the Doon School Old Boys' Society and its community!

The DSOBS and British Airways have announced a partnership for promotional ticket prices for all DoscOs. All Old Boys need to do is visit www.dsobs.net for the offer and terms and conditions.

Write to Rajeev Kumar at priority.mail@ba.com, call +91 1244 120 777 or visit www.ba.com/dsobsoffer for a 10% discount on airfares. Safe travels Dosco!

MARRIAGES

Sahil Vohra (56 J, 2002), married Megha Verma on February 22nd in New Delhi. A good bunch of DoscOs were on hand to see the happy couple tie the knot. Sahil has spent the better part of his career as a lawyer, but is also a crack photographer in his spare time. Congrats guys!

Asheesh Kapur (407 H, 1999) son of Ruuddi and Ashwaani Kapur married Niharika Bajaj on February 28th amidst great fanfare. The Lucknow-born actor was joined by several DoscOs who added to the fun with their usual enthusiasm. Shabaash Macduff!



BIRTHS

Anshu Dhar Jayal (407 T, 1993) and Niji became proud parents to a boy for the second time on March 9th, 2021. Big brother Neil is thrilled, and we hope to see another young Dosco enrolled at Doon in the years to come. Congratulations Neil, Niji and Anshu, as well as to proud grandfather, Lt Col Bishwa Dhar Jayal (14 T, 1961).

Bharat Kapoor (431 K, 1993) and Anne welcomed baby Andrea on August 29th, 2020. Congratulations to the Banque couple and welcome to the world Andrea!

OBITUARIES

Mrinal Guharoy (401 T, 1999) passed away suddenly in Jakarta, Indonesia on Tuesday, March



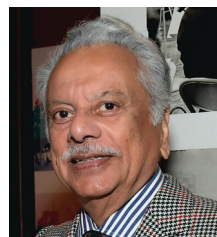
16th. The news of his passing has shocked and saddened the Dosco community immensely. Mrinal was quick-witted with one-liners, a fine sportsman and cricketer, and a bon vivant

of the highest order. He will be greatly missed. Rest in peace Guha. Gone too soon. Our heartfelt condolences to his father Somnath Guharoy and to all members of his family and batch.

With deep regret we inform you of the sad demise of **Kanish (Chewie) Bhargava (224 J, 1991)**, son of Col. SN Bhargava (182 H, 1958) and nephew to Flt Lt VN Bhargava (207 H, 1937), MN (Chut) Bhargava (187 H, 1948) and RN Bhargava (189 H, 1953). He was a popular figure at the squash courts of Delhi. He is mourned by Manish Bhargava (639 J, 1988), Agastya Bhargava (260 J, 2019), the 1991 batch, friends and family. Rest in peace.



Vijaya Bhaskar Menon (111 H, 1949), the famed music industry executive associated with EMI and



Capitol records, George Harrison and the Beatles, Ravi Shankar, Grand Funk Railroad, Steve Miller, Pink Floyd, Queen, Linda Rondstadt and many others, passed away on March 4th at

his home in Beverly Hills, California. Our deepest condolences go out to his wife Sumitra, and sons Vishnu and Siddhartha on this great loss.

With great sadness, we inform you of the passing away of **Brig (Retd) Vijay Narayan Channa, AVSM,**

VSM (Bar) (174 T, 1951), father of Vibhuti N Channa (350 T, 1985) and Varun N Channa (569 T, 1988) on Sunday, December 20th. Our heartfelt condolences to Vibhuti, Varun and all members of the family.

With deep regret and profound grief, we inform you of the passing away of **Ranjit Sethi (297 K, 1955)** on Wednesday, February 24th. Our heartfelt condolences to his wife Indu and all members of the family.

With deep regret, we inform you of the passing away of **Avinash Singh Grewal (333 J, 1960)**, son of Ranjit



Singh Grewal (142 J, 1938), father of Gajpat Singh Grewal (213 J, 1991) and Pratap Singh Grewal (157 J, 1997), brother of Harinder Singh Grewal (331 J, 1961) and brother-in-law of Bhai Manjit

Singh (157 J, 1964) on Tuesday, 6th April, 2021. Our heartfelt condolences to the family.

With deep regret and profound grief, we inform you of the passing away of **Ratindra Krishan Puri (334 K, 1962)**, father of Karam Krishan Puri (655 K, 1995) and Viraj Krishan Puri (334 K, 1999) on Wednesday, December 23rd. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his sons Karam and Viraj, his brothers Satinder Puri (49 K, 1952) and Rajiv Krishan Puri (331 K, 1967) and all members of the family.

It is our misfortune to inform you of the passing away of **Rangam Kumar Mitra (351 K, 1964)** on Tuesday, March 16th. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all members of the family.



With profound grief, we inform you of the passing away of **Raman Mehta (169 T, 1964)**, on Monday, January 11th. Our heartfelt condolences to all members of the family.

With deep regret, we inform you of the passing away of **Abhay Shankar Singh (134 T, 1966)**, father of Amarjeet Shankar Singh (66 T, 1989) and Abhijit Shankar Singh (651 O, 1996) on Wednesday, February 3rd. Our heartfelt condolences to the family.

Alok Vira (256 J, 1966), brother of Ravi Vira Gupta (289 J, 1953) left us on Sunday, March 7th. We are saddened at this news and wish his wife Reeta, his brother Ravi and all members of the family strength at this difficult time.

With great sadness, we inform you of the passing away of **Kr Charanjit Singh Sodhi (289 H, 1974)**, father of Amarinder Singh Sodhi (289 H, 2010) on Sunday, December 6th, 2020. 'Popsurd', as he was popularly called, was a most gentle, affectionate, warm, generous and helpful human being. Our deepest condolences to the family.



With deep regret and profound grief, we inform you of the passing away of **Rakesh Mishra 'Baba Batuknath' (313 K, 1985)**, on Monday, March 22nd. Our heartfelt condolences to his brother Rajesh Misra (195 K, 1990) and all members of Baba's family.



We are aggrieved to we inform you of the passing away of Krishna Sahai, wife of Late (Col) Surendra Sahai (35 H, 1942), mother of Anil Sahai (36 H, 1964) and Jayant Sahai (36 H, 1970) and grandmother of Pranav Sahai (239 H, 1998) on Tuesday, January 12th.

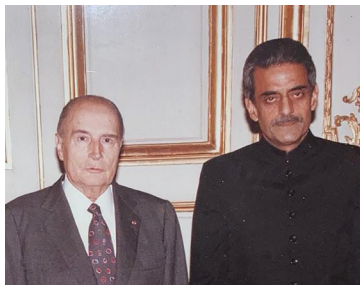
It is with a heavy heart that we inform you of the passing away of Mrs Santosh Munjal, mother of Sunil Kant Munjal (180 K, 1973), Chairman of the Board of Governors, IPSS, on Friday, April 2nd. Our deepest condolences go out to the Munjal family.

OBITUARY

Sethi's Linguistic and Strategising Skills were Legendary

Harsh V Shringla
 Foreign Secretary of India

I was deeply saddened and pained to learn of the death of ambassador Ranjit Sethi (297 K, 1955). Ambassador Sethi was by far considered one of our most excellent ambassadors. His linguistic skills and the power to strategise successfully in coping with complex issues were legendary.



Ambassador Ranjit Sethi with former French President Francois Mitterrand in Paris

I had the privilege of serving under ambassador Sethi in Paris from 1993 to 1995. As special assistant to the ambassador, this was a unique opportunity to serve under a senior

ambassador of extraordinary and unmatched calibre. I not only observed him engage in the best practices of diplomacy but also took inspiration from his handling of the complex issues that came before us. Ambassador Sethi was mentor, tutor and guide to me in the process of developing the skills that went into the making of a diplomat.

An area in which ambassador Sethi excelled was languages, one of the most important attributes of a diplomat. He was a linguist par excellence. His French was impeccable and it was not surprising that the then PM, Mrs Indira Gandhi, used him as an interpreter for her meetings with French-speaking dignitaries. Some of our French notables remarked that the ambassador spoke higher

French than them! Considering that ambassador Sethi's formally allocated overseas language was Mandarin, during which he was reputed to be even better than French, this was indeed remarkable.

Most important of all, ambassador Sethi possessed fine human qualities, which all of us who served with him recall with great affection and poignancy. Kind and generous to younger officers of the Mission, I recall the many exceptional occasions spent socially with him and his family outside strenuous working hours.

I maintained contact with ambassador Sethi until very recently. He was pleased to learn of my postings as ambassador and more recently as foreign secretary. I recall reading with fascination the compilation of essays he wrote of his experiences in different parts of the world after he retired. I realised that I shared a few of the places he had been posted to, and still recall his evocative description of the Red river that flows past Hanoi.

I've conveyed, on behalf of the ministry of external affairs, sincere and heartfelt condolences to Mrs Indu Sethi, Vivan and Diya. Ambassador Sethi will probably be greatly missed as a senior colleague and member of the Indian Foreign Service. For me the loss is personal and profound.

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Appointments

Surgeon Vice Admiral Naveen Chawla new DG Medical Services (Navy)



Surgeon Vice Admiral Naveen Chawla, VSM

Surgeon Vice Admiral Naveen Chawla, VSM (632 K, 1979) has assumed appointment of Director General Medical Services (Navy) on 28 January, 2021. Prior to assuming the present appointment, the Flag Officer held the coveted appointment of Director General Hospital Services (AF) in the office of DGAFMS.

An alumnus of Armed Forces Medical College, Pune he was commissioned on 17 Dec 1983 in the Armed Forces Medical Services. During his 37 years of service, the Flag Officer has held numerous important administrative and staff appointments

like Director General Hospital Services (Armed Forces), Command Medical Officer, HQWNC and Executive Officer, INHS Asvini. He has the unique distinction of Commanding two out of three largest Indian Naval Hospitals, namely INHS Asvini and INHS Sanjivani.

The Flag Officer has served on several afloat platforms including Fleet Medical Officer of the Eastern Fleet. He is a renowned teacher and in addition to being the Professor of Pathology is also an MD examiner at Maharashtra University of Health Sciences. For his dedication and devotion to the service, the Flag Officer was awarded VSM in 2015.

www.indiannavy.nic.in

Lt Gen Ravin Khosla takes over command of Gajraj Corps



Lt Gen Ravin Khosla

The command of Indian Army's Frontier Gajraj Corps changed hands from Lt Gen Shantanu Dayal, to Lt Gen Ravin Khosla.

Lt Gen Ravin Khosla (661 H, 1981) brings with him immense operational experience and has

served in important command and staff appointment both in Jammu and Kashmir and the North East.

He comes to Gajraj Corps from Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Army), New Delhi where he was holding the appointment of Director General (Manpower Planning & Personnel Services). The General Officer has served in Sri Lanka during Operation PAWAN. For his illustrative service,

he has been awarded the Ati Vishist Sewa Medal, Sena Medal and the Vishisht Seva Medal.

The Gajraj Corps currently consists of:

- 71 Mountain Division, headquartered at Missamari, Assam
- 5th Mountain Division (Ball of Fire Division), headquartered at Bomdila. It is posted to the west of 2 Mountain Division in Arunachal Pradesh.
- 21st Mountain Division (Red Horn Division, headquartered at Rangia. It includes 77 Mountain Brigade, and, as of January 2010, the 315 Field Regiment of the Regiment of Artillery, based at Udalguri, Assam

<http://newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=408666>

OBITUARY

The Class of 1974 Remembers

I had not written for The Rose Bowl for about a decade but the sudden departure of a beloved batchmate, Charanjit 'Popsurd' Singh Sodhi and the earlier passing of another dear batchmate, Roop Kumar Gogoi soon after our 45th year celebrations in School, stirred a lot of memories and a heartfelt desire to pen a few lines in their memory.

(Preface by Kishore K Lahiri, 30 K, 1974)

'Gone from our sight, but never from our hearts'

Roop Kumar Gogoi, 34 J, 1974 (08.12.1958 – 29.10.2019)

Roop was nicknamed 'Gogs'. He and I were in Foot House when we joined School in 1970. We saw less of each other from 1971 when he went off to Jaipur House and I to Kashmir. We had the Assam connection. We were the only two who spoke Assamese in Foot House so it gave us a unique sense of power to have a code language between us. He was from Jorhat and I from Guwahati. Hence, at least four times a year we travelled together from Assam to Calcutta and then with the Cal party to Dehradun and back. I remember his brother Dev, three years our senior, from these journeys.

What do I remember of Gogs? The first thing which always struck me was that he was a very proper sort of chap, a true gentleman, even in his childhood. He went on to become a planter and a gentleman.

I would bump into him intermittently during our college days between 1975 and 1978 since he was in nearby Hans Raj College. Thereafter, we did not meet again till our batch's Silver Jubilee in 1999 and again during our 45th year reunion in 2019, first in Delhi and then, of course, in Dehradun. However, it was not that Roop lost touch with the batch.

WhatsApp gave the batch a platform to remain connected and the Class of 1974 group was and is a very active one. Nanda is the king of PJs while Gogoi was famous for his limericks. He called them 'limericks.' Most of them were hilarious. We miss Roop's 'limericks' immensely.



Not having met up with the batch for the two decades between 1999 and 2019, it was almost as if Roop had come to say hi and goodbye at our 45th. Even post-Founder's, he travelled with his Jaipur House buddy Vijay 'Pechu' Dutt, Soumi Sen,

Indushekhar and his wife Raj, to Mussoorie and Rishikesh. He returned to Jorhat via Kolkata where he had since retired and settled in a lovely house.

Soon after his return to Jorhat, a sudden heart-attack took him away on October 29, 2019. Amongst others who remember him in the obituaries which follow are his bestie Arjun (Senny) Sengupta, Jaipur

house buddy, Arjun Mahey, Vidhu Nevatia, School Captain Rajiv Sarin and Varun Khanna.

Au revoir my friend. It is not goodbye but till we meet again. For Kavita, Avantika and Apeksha, our heartfelt condolences. May God grant you all the strength to bear Roop's loss with courage and fortitude.

Kr. Charanjit Singh Sodhi

289 H, 1974

(21.04.1958 – 06.12.2020)

Just over a year had gone by since Roop's passing when on the afternoon of Sunday, December 06, 2020, we received the shocking news from Ranjit Nanda that our beloved 'Popsurd' – Charanjit Singh Sodhi was no more. He had been cruelly snatched away from us by a sudden and massive heart-attack.

'Popsurd' was universally loved. A warm, loving, gentle and generous soul, he remained in touch with the entire batch and participated not only during landmark celebrations but also in batch get-togethers in Khimsar, Manali, Ooty, etc. He also made it a point to attend batchmates' children's weddings whether they were in Phuket or Mumbai. Like Roop, he was there for our 45th year reunion celebrations.

Charanjit was a true son of the soil. A gentleman farmer with an eye for produce preservation – he built a state-of-the-art cold storage unit with the latest German technology. He was also a connoisseur of the finer things in life. He loved good food and good cars. He was the only person I know who would stand outside an auto showroom display window and drool, as you or I would, before a display window of cakes and pastries.

Pastries remind me of his passion for pineapple pastries which in School days, came from Standard

Bakeries. I always wondered how he could afford a huge box full of them, twice a week, in the limited pocket money we had. Long after School, he confessed to me that he had an account with Standard's which supplied pastries and other food items to our Tuck Shop. Therefore, the separate box of pastries delivered twice a week for Charanjit was added to his account and he did not have to spend from his meagre, monthly allowance at School.



Pop Surd was passionate about his cars

With Popsurd's passing, we have lost our eighth batchmate and a dear, dear friend.

Adieu my friend but only till we meet again in that great beyond. For Meeta, Bandana, Harpriya and Amrinder, I can only offer our deepest condolences. I know the void Charanjit leaves behind can never be filled but take solace in the fact that he is with the Almighty in a much happier and peaceful place. May his soul find everlasting peace and rest.

So Roop and Charanjit – let me end with a few lines from Anne Bronte's famous poem:-

*"Farewell to thee! but not farewell
To all my fondest thoughts of thee:
Within my heart they still shall dwell;
And they shall cheer and comfort me."*

Sanjiv Swarup 298 H, 1974

It is truly heart-wrenching to write in the past tense about a friend who joined School with me, 50 years ago, in 1970 first term, and a lifelong friend.

Charanjit came from an illustrious family of undivided Punjab's Kartarpur in District Jalandhar. Born to Guru Amarjit Singh, a direct descendent of Guru Arjan Devji, the 5th Guru of the Sikhs under whose direct supervision, Bhai Gurdas wrote the Sri 'Adi Granth' also known as the 'Kartaarpur Bir'. It bears the signature of Guru Arjan Devji with a date which corresponds to 1604.

Charanjit or 'Pop Surd' as he was fondly called, was placed in Chestnut House, the holding house for Tata and Hyderabad house boys. We were, in fact, the last set of boys who enjoyed the great food at the H House Dining Hall – thanks to the legendary Mrs Dhawal, an icon for all H-house boys for at least 40 years of her service to School.

There are a lot of wonderful memories from our past half century about Charanjit. He had a golden heart, a great sense of humour and an amazing zest for life. We became friends in Chestnuts and till we left School, I always helped him do his 'pooni', to tie his turban.

Pop loved good food. The story of his love affair with pastries is legendary. On Tuesdays and Fridays, Charanjit would always receive a white box full of Standard pastries. After having his share, he divided the rest amongst his friends.

Charanjit was extremely religious. Every evening before Toye time, he would read his Gutka, a concise copy of verses from the Granth Sahib. A god-fearing Surd, he was extremely well liked by one and all, be they juniors or seniors. The other love of his life was Tennis ball Cricket, played in the Hyderabad House Fore Court, often with the likes of Ram Guha and Bawa Rajinder Singh aka Garbar.

Academically, Charanjit did well and passed with 10 points in ISC. Both of us joined Sriram College of Commerce, Delhi University and our friendship continued through our college days too. After college, Charanjit went back to Kartarpur to assist his father, Guru Sahib, in his various businesses.

Charanjit married Meeta, the love of his life, in the early 1980s. They were blessed with three wonderful children, two girls, Bandana and Harpriya and a son, Amrinder who attended Doon and got his father's School number. He was 289 H, Batch of 2010.

During the last few years, Charanjit worked extremely hard to set up a Cold Storage for food preservation with the latest European technology, probably the best facility in the entire State of Punjab. He was ahead of his time. A great believer in green energy, he installed a two

megawatt Solar Power Plant to ensure clean power for his businesses.

It still seems unreal that Charanjit is no more. He left us way too soon and I will miss him dearly. I offer my deepest condolences on behalf of the Class of 1974 to his wife, Meeta Bhabhi, his daughters, Harpriya and Bandana and his son, Amrinder.

Mahesh I Mansukhani

175 T, 1974

Pops was in H house and I in Tata. The truth is I never knew Pops in School – had seen him in ‘bits and pieces’ and may have spoken five words to him in five years.

Our Class started getting connected subsequent to our passing out in 1974. Thanks to Gajju (Gajendra Singh 89-JA House Cap, Class of 74) our Class visited Khimsar on a number of occasions, and that’s when I started to get to know Pops and Meeta. Apart from Khimsar, the Class of ‘74 made trips to Goa, Manali, Ooty and had a number of get-togethers in Delhi. Pops and Meeta were there in every Class of ‘74 outing. They would drive down from Kartarpur for every Delhi outing – attended every outing outside Delhi. Being in H and if I recall correctly, Pops and Meeta attended most of the HB guys kids’ weddings. Am privileged that in most, if not all of these outings, I too was present—and got to meet Pops on all these occasions and our friendship developed. The DS 74 WhatsApp group of the Class, email and telephonic conversations enhanced our getting to know each other better.

The close proximity with Pops and Meeta was building all the time we met and communicated – but it was our trips to Manali that got me closer to Pops. The last trip to Manali was in April 2019. Drove with him from Chandigarh to Manali and

back – our rooms were adjacent to each other in Manali and we would have our morning tea together and as the saying goes, we spent quality time together. Pops and Meeta were in Dehradun in School in October 2019 for Founders, the 45th year of the Class of ‘74 passing out. That’s when I met him last.

Had some work in Punjab, Went to Pops and Meeta’s home half a dozen times during the latter part of 2019 and stayed with him. Pops helped me with my work as if it was his own work—he put his office infrastructure, his knowledge, his contacts to work to ensure that my work got done.

Getting to know someone better at a later stage in life is something else. Am so glad I got to know Pops at a mature age. Pops had a heart of gold, a sense of humor, sensibility, very clued on to his work and above all, sensitivity.

Rajiv Sarin

44 H, 1974

Strong roots help build foundations. In turn, foundations help build pillars. Roop and Charanjit, hamare alvidaa dost, also brought bonhomie and laughter to the Batch of 1974.

Gajendra Singh

89 J, 1974

Popsurd – A lovable soul ! Fairly quiet and kind-hearted. We spent many holidays together with Meeta and Popsurd in Khimsar and Manali. He was always sporting; ready for any adventure. Meeta and Popsurd complimented each other to perfection. You can well imagine how good it is to have two good souls put together! We will miss him immensely. Nobody can fill the vacuum created by him! May his soul rest in peace!



Arjun Mahey

477 J, 1974

The years we were at Doon, a lad
From our own batch (and in H House) –
Much slighter than the new iPad
And not as tall as Mickey Mouse

Had eyes unmoored from tiny sockets
(Half of each outside his head)
Like a science fiction rocket
A sphere about to surge ahead.

With the schoolboy bent for quick
New nicknames with the fewest words.
Some lad dreamt up a name to stick
Upon the pop-eyed boy: Pop Surd.

**

Decades after those Lang Synes
We met, surprised by middle age.
He saw a bald bulb soaked in wine;
And I, a gentle, towering sage.

We kept in touch & dreamed a plan
To visit his historic grounds
Next year in March, or Feb, or Jan,
A sacred break from noise & towns.

But then, scythed off before he could
Unfold his gentler self through time
He vanished, even though he should
Have lived past his autumnal prime.

Randhir Brar

280 T, 1974

Pop Surd was a thorough gentleman and great friend – always willing to help and correctly advise as and when required. We kept in touch and interacted over the phone. He also used to discuss travel options with me as he had traveled through our company on a couple of holidays. The later ones being to Shimla and Mussoorie with his family.



Couldn't keep him away from good food

He was always very prompt and courteous. One day, I met him by chance at the trade fair grounds in Delhi and he immediately informed me that he would give me all the information that I required for the cold storage business and guide me on the best business practices to set up a unit in order to save me years of research due

to his in-depth knowledge on the subject. He invited me and a former colleague to come and stay with him to learn the business. We spent some great times at Khimsar and also in Thailand when we attended the destination wedding of the Goyal family. He was really genuine in his approach to life and a gem of a person.

His love for cars and prawns was no secret and his willingness to extend a helping hand and go out of his way to help was common knowledge. May God be with him always.

Arjun Khosla

239 H, 1974

For me, Pop Surd was the epitome of peace, perfection and purity.

Arjun Sengupta

93 J, 1974



Our memories begin from the year 1971, when we met for the first time in Foot Hose as freshers in School. Roop Gogoi was from Assam, and he had moved from one boarding school to another which gave him that edge over some of us who were first-timers as boarders. He was popularly referred to as 'Gogs' or

'Naga Chief' (probably because of him being a proud Ahom and his mother and grandmother being in politics in Assam) throughout his school days and also well into his college days. We moved from Foot House to Jaipur House and were in the same dorms throughout. He used to be a quiet guy but had a streak of stubbornness in him. However, he would be upto mischief with all of us and would never miss out on any pranks that we had planned.

He joined Hansraj College, Delhi University after finishing school and graduated in Economics. It was in college that he underwent a change and he was no longer the quiet boy we knew in his school days. He was always the center of attraction in a group and with his loud and booming voice would ensure that

he was always heard. His zest for life blossomed in college and carried on till his last breath.

After graduating, he came down to Kolkata, for job interviews with the Tea Companies. His choice for the Tea Industry was probably due to his Uncle being a Tea Planter and also the state he was from. He joined Magors Group and was posted in one of their Tea Estates in Assam. During his stint with Magors, he was posted as a manager in a number of the company's estates. He was admired and respected as a Tea Planter and would never mince words nor back away from any trouble during his worklife. He also had a stint as Chairman, Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association (ABITA).

Gogs, married Kavita and they have two lovely daughters, Avantika, who is a teacher in Delhi and Apeksha, who is working in the travel industry.

We really don't know whether it was a premonition or what, as after so many long years, Gogs decided in 2019 to meet his old and best buddies. He packed his bags and set forth for the journey which took him to Delhi, Dehradun, Mussoorie and Kolkata. In between, he and his daughter visited Gurdial Singh in Chandigarh. He came to Kolkata and stayed with me. I took him to my colleague's house whom he knew, to celebrate Diwali and they were meeting each other after years. We had a great evening and Gogs as usual entertained the gathering with his limericks, oops sorry, lamericks as he used to call them.

Alas, who would have thought that in a couple of days we would get the shocking news that Gogs was no more.

We pray and hope that wherever he is, don't know about the afterlife, that he is still full of zest and entertaining whoever with his lamericks.

May his soul rest in peace.

Vidhu Nevatia

292 H, 1974

Many of us met dear Gogs for the first time since 1974 at our 45th reunion during Founders 2019, but sadly within a couple of weeks we heard he was no more. It was gut-wrenching. How we miss his gentle wit and the daily self titled "lamericks" he created for every event we shared on our lively chat. Undoubtedly, he is now entertaining the almighty with daily moments of mirth.

Varun Khanna

417 H, 1974

For both Gogoi and Popsurd – others have already voiced my feelings far more eloquently than I probably could have. I absolutely cherished the opportunity to meet with both Roop and Popsie at

School last year. Will always cherish those four days. In losing these two fine souls, '74 has lost some of its finest individuals. I will always treasure their memories and spirit.

With deepest condolences to their families.

Bahram N Vakil

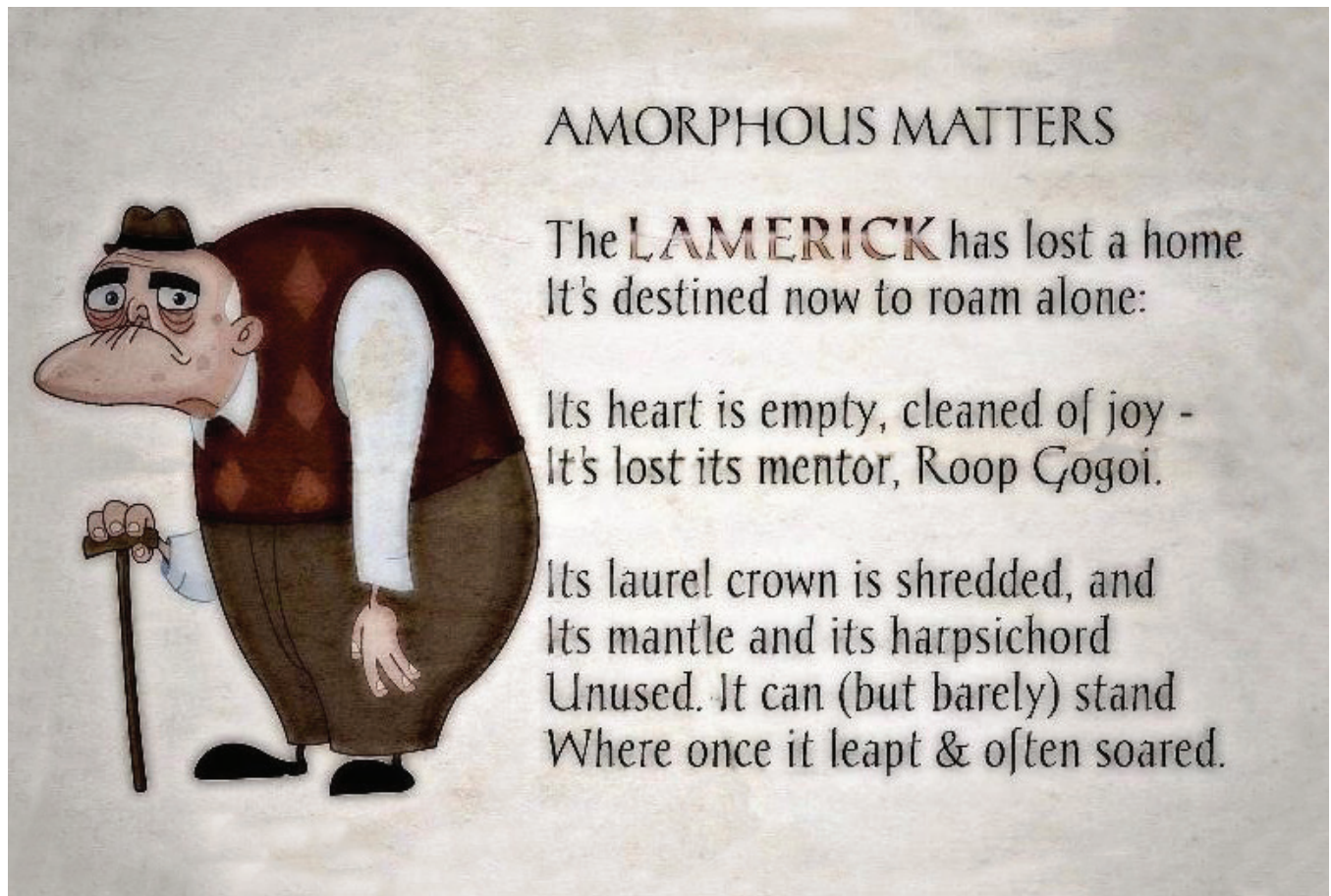
372 J, 1974

Sadly, God has once again shown that he takes from us the ones he loves the most. We lost two of our best from East and West and no question, that both their souls are in eternal and peaceful rest.

Arjun Mahey

477 J, 1974

Amorphous Matters (below)



Tiger Fences

Why a fence is not the answer to Pilibhit's chronic human-tiger conflict

Pranav Chanchani

62 K, 2002

The odds of tigers and humans running into one another at close quarters are probably higher in Pilibhit than just about any other place across the tigers' range.

On 25 July, a tigress emerged from the grasslands on the edge of the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh and lunged at a man, injuring his legs.

Almost immediately, an armed crowd gathered and bludgeoned the tigress with sticks and spears. She fought back and injured eight men. One of them subsequently died in a hospital. When police and forest department officers arrived, they ordered the crowd to retreat.



A tiger scans his territory in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve

The police filed FIRs against 43 people after the tigress died later that night and onlookers circulated videos of the crowd's brutal assault. Since then, officials and others have revived proposals for fences to be built around the tiger reserve's perimeter.

This dramatic incident raises three questions. First, why do such events occur in Pilibhit as often as they do? Second, why did this crowd respond as it

did, and what are the broader implications of such acts for tiger populations? Third, are constructing fences to confine carnivores within national parks the best solution to mitigate human-animal conflict in Pilibhit and beyond?

The odds of tigers and humans running into one another at close quarters are probably higher in Pilibhit than just about any other place across the tigers' range. Deforestation has reduced the Pilibhit forests to a very narrow strip. Consequently, tigers show up in moderately high densities (about four per 100 sq km). As adjacent sugarcane, wheat and rice fields happen to provide dispersal routes, serve as breeding territories, and are themselves stocked with livestock and occasionally deer and boars, tigers regularly venture out into the fields. Humans also enter tiger reserves to gather fodder and fuelwood.

Attacks on such tigers are driven by irrational fear as much as they are by the age-old custom of punishing animals for harming humans or their livestock. The Pilibhit tigress was beaten in a plantation at the forest's edge. She may have already been injured or in poor health and unable to quickly flee the spot. Frenzied social media messaging and an opportunity to watch and participate in what promised to be a spectacle likely mobilised the mob. What ultimately unfolded was an act of cowardice that led to injury and death.

In recent years, tigers have repeatedly entered Pilibhit's farmlands and homesteads and have

then been captured by authorities. The key determinant of the outcome of such crises is whether teams of forest department officials and police officers arrive quickly enough to take control of the situation. As these departments are chronically understaffed, have meagre resources, and are often ill-prepared to tackle such cases, it is reasonable to expect they will not always get to the animals before angry, armed locals take the law into their own hands.

Recognising the magnitude of the problem, the Global Tiger Forum, the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department and WWF-India recently decided to overhaul conflict-response mechanisms in the Pilibhit region. Their key initiatives will include the establishment of mobile response teams, embedding bagh-rakshaks within communities who might act as first respondents and prevent crowds from gathering. The initiatives also include improved monitoring of farmland wildlife, strengthened inter-agency coordination, and awareness campaigns that emphasise human safety.



Machans have been strategically built in the Reserve

For several reasons, it's not a good idea to erect fences around tiger reserves. Studies from Africa and North America indicate they have adverse impacts, including blocking the paths of traditional migratory birds and dispersal pathways of other species, restricting evolutionary potential of migratory populations, decreasing foraging

opportunities for wild herbivores (that carnivores prey on) and elevating wildlife mortality when animals get caught in the fence or when the fences are vandalised and turned into wire-snares.



Keeping the 'conflict' within - visitors on a PTR jungle safari

In fact, fencing Pilibhit Tiger Reserve off might not be ecologically viable as the fence could disrupt key corridors, impacting the biology and behaviour of tigers and other species that have large area requirements and need to disperse from their natal territories. Moreover, long fences will likely be porous, such as along waterways. Tigers will find a way out and may become trapped in farmlands. This will only exacerbate human-animal conflicts. Third, fences could keep humans from accessing crucial forest resources that sustain many rural households. This will likely aggravate park-people relationships and potentially make communities more hostile towards wildlife.

Finally, building and maintaining a 12 to 15-ft high chain-link fence over hundreds of kilometres will be very expensive. Building a comprehensive suite of conflict mitigation responses that will bring stakeholders together and support both people and wildlife will be a better use of such funds.

This article was carried by TheWire.in on September 3rd 2019. All rights remain with the publisher. Pranav Chanchani is the lead of the Tiger Conservation Programme at WWF-India.

CHHOTA INTERVIEW

NAME: CHETAN KUMAR | **NUMBER:** 226 | **HOUSE:** J | **BATCH:** 1997

1. What is your number, house and batch?

226 J, 1997

2. What is your current job title?

I lead strategic partnerships and business development for WhatsApp in India. This is a growth and strategy role. On some days, this means talking about the product, how it can solve a problem or improve upon a solution, on others it can be negotiating multi-faceted strategic deals. Interacting with a lot of different teams within the company is also a key part of getting successful outcomes.

3. What has been your career path so far?

I began my career in financial services and consulting which gave me a set of core skills in strategic thinking, working with data, working with very smart and geographically and functionally diverse teams, amongst others. I was always drawn to consumer tech and I moved into start-ups like Flipkart, Saavn and ultimately WhatsApp. At Doon, I spent many afternoons in the computer lab and I was part of Electronics STA, where I developed an early interest in technology. The teachers too were an inspiration, with their passionate teaching methods and involvement beyond class.

4. What's your view on India's technology sector?

In my humble opinion, we're amongst the top technology innovators globally. Technology aims to and democratizes access, lowering entry-barriers and Indian companies are compounding the



CHETAN KUMAR

ecosystem advantages of a growing pool of talent especially in cities like Bangalore. If we need improvement, it is in infrastructure, laws and incentives to boost this sector.

5. Within the tech space we see that Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp have all created unique spaces for themselves. Do you see more niche apps being created or

is there space for one app that provides all-in-one services?

In my view, people interact differently with different mediums and accordingly each platform offers a set of unique user experiences. They are also different in who you wish to interact with e.g. publically, privately or one on one and therefore co-exist based on the need and purpose. Network externalities also cause stickiness by age, country or interest groups. There is an overlap of some aspects which lends itself to productivity and user preference but in my personal view, they each serve a large enough niche.

6. Would you say that e-commerce in India is Amazon v Flipkart?

After a point, when technology is table stakes, its business over everything else. One of the reasons, as an example, could be that e-commerce is a margin driven business and scale is a huge competitive advantage towards long-term profitability. Demand and supply of a two-sided marketplace is not an easy balance.

7. How would you comment on the start-up business culture in India?

It really depends on the goal and the founders. I'd like to believe, most founders start with good intentions to solve a problem which is non-trivial and has a large enough demand that makes it worth solving; be it measured by social or commercial goals. India has a lot of problems which startups are trying to solve and technology is a key enabler but getting product market fit takes multiple factors to achieve. I also believe a segmented and focussed approach versus a very broad 'one-size fits all' approach helps focus and zero-in on data-driven insights.

8. How is Whatsapp prepared for the post-COVID era?

Covid has accelerated the need to leverage digital platforms for more industries than ever before. Education is one example where a lot of innovative use cases are leveraging WhatsApp for student interaction, solving doubts, etc. Other industries leveraging WhatsApp are financial services, social welfare and retail. Part of my role is to help drive

more user utility and value from their interactions with businesses.

9. What advice would you give to Doscocs wanting to get into this field?

The industry is filled with diverse backgrounds, skillsets and paths with a common love for technology. In the early years, just involving oneself in projects, internships and hands-on experiences is a good start. While traditional paths like engineering are one way, there are a lot of other ways to express your skills and strengths in this field; business, creative, strategy, research, design and more. I've landed here as a business guy, with an MBA, who loves to apply those skills to technology products and services.

10. What is one of your favourite memories from School?

Performing at the Rose Bowl was always something magical and memorable as part of the school choir, and on other occasions.

A Picture of Hope

Jahaan Sahgal
247 J, 2022

The advent of the coronavirus pandemic has adversely affected our lives - socially, economically, politically, and personally - at a magnitude that we are yet to completely understand. So far it has already impacted upwards of 113 million people worldwide and resulted in millions of deaths. In an unprecedented time such as this, I feel it becomes imperative for civic society to rise up and act on our collective responsibilities toward community, especially for those who continue to be disproportionately impacted. As we spent time locked away in our homes, I, along with many others, racked my brain for how I could contribute meaningfully towards easing the crisis for those around me.

In December 2019, I founded OrDER - Organ Donation, Education, and Registration - a social initiative that seeks to raise awareness about organ donation among the youth of India. Part of our work addresses the severe shortage of organ donors, through early intervention and education. I also document real-life stories of both donors and recipients to further the conversation around organ donation while also preserving these records of humanitarian acts in our archives for others to access, and gain inspiration from.

For this initiative to be purposeful and effective, OrDER partnered with Organ India, a national NGO.

In the past, we had conducted workshops in high schools around the country, dispelling common myths around organ donation, and encouraging more students to pledge themselves as organ donors through targeted outreach and the provision of educational resources like comprehensive factsheets. While OrDER addressed a social and medical need, I felt the need to alter the way we approached community service by creatively reimagining our scope for contribution. I wanted to employ my creative skill set to expand the fields in which I could create a positive impact, without limiting my efforts to solely the healthcare sector.



Jahaan hands a cheque of INR 1.5L to Avinash Alag of Gyanoday

In August 2020, I organized an online photography exhibition on my website and auctioned some of my photographs. A total of 110 sales were made, through which I raised INR 2.7 lakhs, of which INR 1.2 lakhs was donated to Organ India. While searching for other avenues for community outreach, I took the liberty of contacting the president of the DSOBS who immediately put me in touch with Mr Avinash Alag (160 H, 1984) of Gyanoday. Once I had read and researched Gyanoday, I was also completely taken and inspired by the work that was being done by them - a Doon School alumni led initiative that works for the upliftment of underserved communities in the country, toward the holistic development of children, ensuring that their access to good education remains unhampered. The past year had

been deeply challenging for us as students even with the privileges and resources we possessed. I couldn't imagine the plight of those who did not have access to basic resources and were thus, disproportionately disadvantaged.

So in February 2021, contributing more than half of the funds I'd raised (INR 1.5 lakhs) to Gyanoday's work, became an obvious choice. They are using these funds toward digitizing their resources, allocating a part of it to pandemic relief, and ensuring that their children receive the best education through novel methods, extracurricular activities and programs focused on integrated personal development. As part of my work for OrDER, and in consultation with Organ India, I also designed a children's book called The Gift of Life. The book is centred around a story that highlights the necessity of organ donation in the country and focuses on issues that stand as barriers to the process. It is written in both Hindi and English and employs language and a tone suited to children enrolled in middle school. Since Gyanoday's exceptional service makes a necessary intervention in the lives of school-going children, we believe that these children would benefit from reading The Gift of Life. In light of this, I donated 200 copies of the book to the initiative.

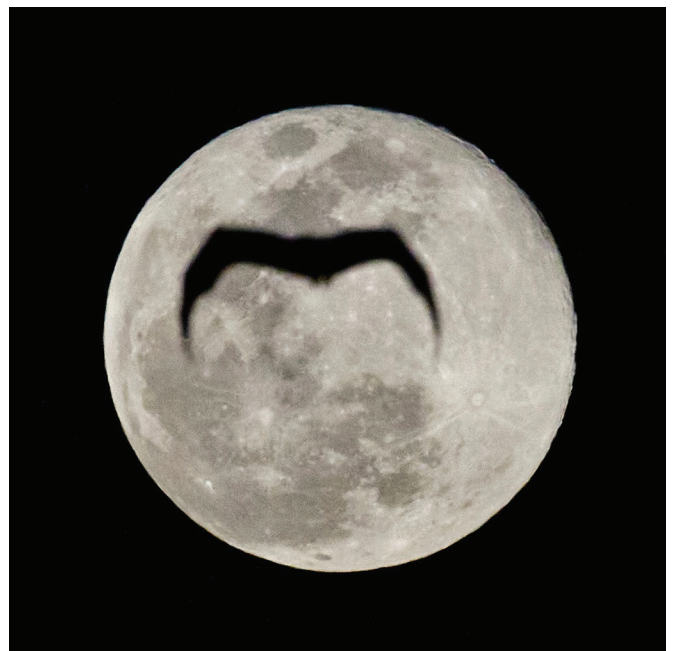
It makes me extremely proud to be a part of important social outreach started by the alumni of our school, and I am grateful to the DSOBS, Gyanoday and Mr Alag, for providing me with an opportunity to use my resources to create meaningful and significant improvements in the lives of our country's children. I hope that in some way it inspires others in the Dosco community to take up the mantle of our motto of An Aristocracy of Service too, as it was an absolute pleasure to be a part of their process and to understand how directed and constructive impact can assist society. It is evident to me now that together we are more than the sum of our parts!

Bat Moon v Super Moon

Shiv Singh Mann
65 T, 2001

I took some pictures of a super moon in 2020 with the idea of capturing a fruit bat flying in front of it. With a stroke of luck I managed to get it on the day of the super moon which actually coincided with the timing of the bats

flying from the moon rise direction. So timing was key, as bats wake up and fly for feeding for around half an hour and the moon rise timing and rise direction change by a few degrees and minutes everyday.



My Garden and Other Animals

Shiv Kunal Verma

182 H, 1976

The spur of the hill in Bandrol where I live drops down to the Beas River where Muneer Suri (490 K 1987) has a delightful riverside resort called Neeralya. Sitting in the gazebo with a cup of tea, looking down, it takes the slaty-headed parakeets probably all of 15 to 20 seconds to fly like guided missiles from my place to his. As the seasons change, the vegetation all around us goes through its own seasonal cycle, the flowers attracting a host of different birds and insects. Every morning as the Kullu Valley is awash with sunlight, it makes a lot of sense to keep the camera handy.

Quite often one knows what one is shooting, but when it comes to insects, especially butterflies, half the fun is to sit and identify them later and then share them with my batchmates in particular. One can almost hear Guru's voice – 'Well don't just sit there you silly fellow, go and see what it is!' The world of sunlight and shadows then, always has so much more meaning.



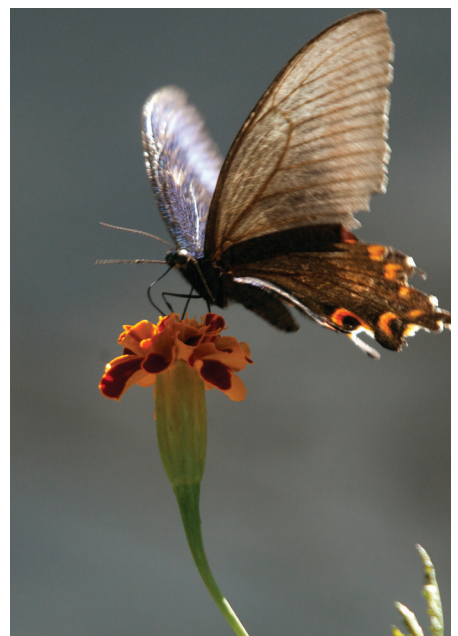
White-Eye on Plum Blossoms



Mountain Spider



Dragon Fly



Krishna Peacock Backlit



Great Mormon



Cana



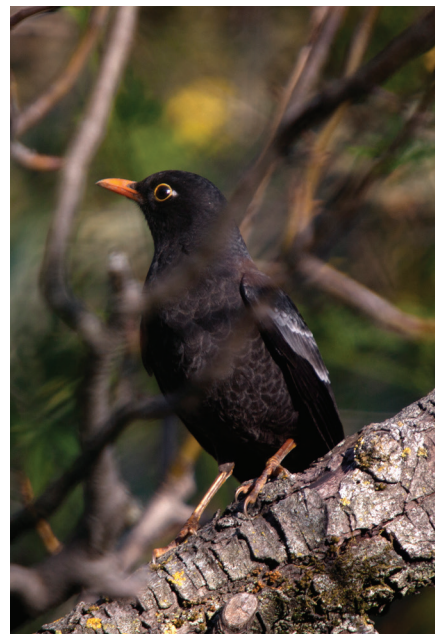
Grey-Hooded Warbler



Paradise Flycatcher



Crimson Sunbird



Gray-winged Blackbird



Rufous Sibia



Crimson Sunbird Female



White Daisies



Himalayan Black Bulbuls



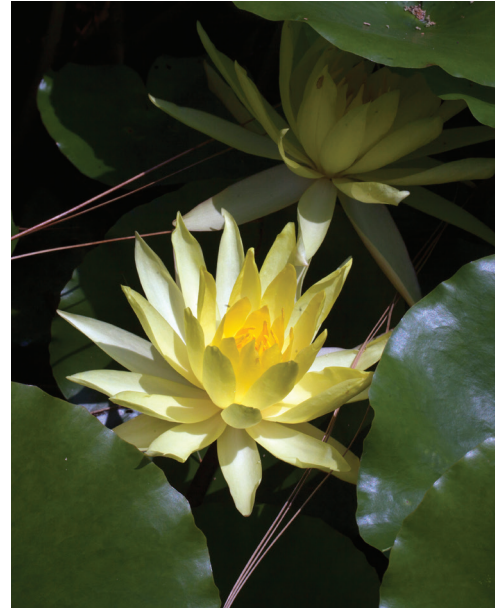
Slaty-headed Parakeet



Yellow-billed Blue Magpie



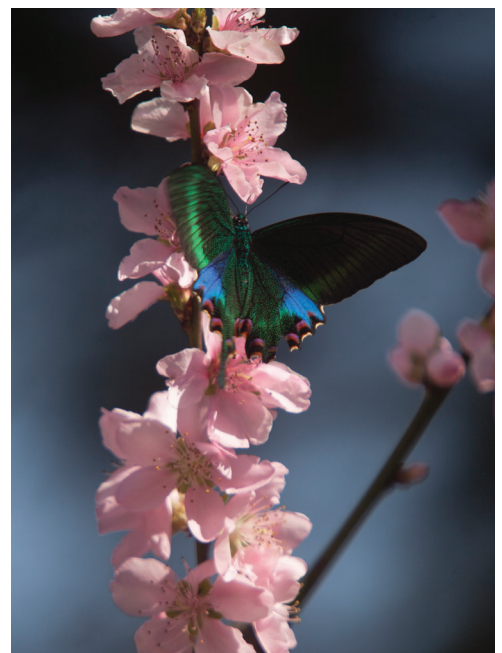
Ultramarine Flycatcher



Water Lillies



Spider Lillies



Common Peacock on Peach Blossoms

Rose Bowl Appoints Assistant Editor

Armaan Verma 465 K, 2019 has been appointed as an assistant editor to the editorial board of The Rose Bowl. He is presently in his final year as an undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh, studying English Literature, and has already helped edit a few past editions of *The Rose Bowl*. Armaan is an award-winning author of short stories and has been published in *Himal* the magazine, among others.

A special mention also goes out to Vansh Gupta (87 H, 2020) who helped edit the Founder's issue of the newsletter, while awaiting passage to start his undergraduate degree in the US, last year.

Well done and thank you both, gents.

New Manager of Finance & Administration at The DSOBS

Rachana Singh has joined the Secretariat as Manager of Finance & Administration.
Welcome to the DSOBS Rachana!

Rachana is a post graduate and has an MBA degree. She boasts around 9 years experience in accounts and taxation. She is married to Rakesh Singh, a network engineer, and they have an 11-year-old son.

She replaces AP Narayanan, who has retired after 28 years of service to Society.

We wish Rachana a long and fruitful career at the DSOBS. She can be contacted for all account related matters. Her email ID is office@dsobs.net.

Call Out for Board Members

The Rose Bowl is appointing more assistant editors, interviewers, photographers and cartoonists to help commission, write and edit articles for the Doon School Old Boys' Society's official newsletter on a voluntary basis. So far, the strength of the editorial board has been one active member - Abhimanyu Singhi (229 H, 2003).

If you were on editorial boards at School or enjoy writing stories or poetry, and would like to join in, in any capacity to help put the newsletter together, please write to me at therosebowleditor@gmail.com. Thanks!

Islands in the Sun

Gautam Vohra

154 H, 1963

When we could still travel abroad freely, Gautam Vohra was busy scouring the far-flung corners of the globe. He has unwittingly provided us with much succour during these Covid days. Collected in his latest published work, Gautam's adventures to the Arctic, Galapagos and Amazon may be found in Seeking New Horizons from Blue Rose publishers. Here is another excerpt from his travel diaries to Papua New Guinea.

June 9, 2019

Bora Bora, Easter Islands, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, Tahiti, Cooks..... South Pacific was where we were headed to. Not Tahiti where Gauguin painted his masterpieces. Or Samoa where the anthropologist Margaret Mead conducted her studies.

We chose Papua New Guinea. It was the largest of the islands in the Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia group; we would not be confined to the beaches, coral reefs, snorkeling. We wanted to go to the indigenous groups with the rainforest, the vegetation, the natural wonders as well.

Singapore Airlines it was. The first stop was Singapore. Where I got my foot-massage ensconced in a machine. The click of a button did it. At first I found the grip my foot was suddenly held in, a bit rough. So I pressed the button for another feel. That was much better: a vibration, not a squeeze. It did not last. For there was a queue. Others too wanted in on the squeeze.

The flight to Cairns from Singapore was 7 hours long. Another round of Singapore Slings on Silk

Air, a sister airline? Why not. For the red fruity drink went down smoothly. I learnt by Googling that the Singapore Sling was a famous cocktail created in 1913 by Ngiam Tong Boon, the bartender at the famed Raffles Hotel. The original recipe includes gin, Benedictine, cherry brandy, and fresh pineapple juice. There are many variations of the recipe. Here is the official one :

Primary alcohol	3 cl gin
Cherry brandy	1.5 cl
Benedictine	0.75 cl
Cointreau	0.75 cl
Grenadine	1 cl

Can add Maraschino cherry, wedge of pineapple. Served straight without ice. Shake well.

Many cocktails are linked with writers. Singapore Sling features in Hunter S Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. And is a speciality of Raffles Hotel frequented by Rudyard Kipling, who in his 1889 book, *From Sea To Sea*, describes the hotel as "a place called Raffles Hotel, where the food is excellent and the rooms are bad." He was said to enjoy a few "stiffeners" at the venue's Writer's Bar. Pretty Polly, Guy Green's rendition of the short story, *Pretty Polly Barlow* by Noël Coward, was shot at Raffles.

Other famous drinks associated with authors:

1. Champagne Cocktail - *The Big Sleep*, Raymond Chandler
2. Jack Rose - *The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemingway
3. Daiquiri - *Our Man in Havana*, Graham Greene
4. Moloko Plus - *A Clockwork Orange*, Anthony Burgess

5. Smoking Bishop - *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens
6. Mint Julep - *The Great Gatsby*, F Scott Fitzgerald
7. Vesper Martini - *Casino Royale*, Ian Fleming
8. White Angel - *Breakfast at Tiffany*, Truman Capote

June 10

From the tropical North Queensland picture book: officially founded in 1876 and named after the state governor of the day, Sir William Wellington Cairns, it was not until 1903 that Cairns was formally declared a town with a registered population of 3,500. The early white settlement in the region in the 1860s was driven by beche de mer (sea cucumber) fishing. However, it was the discovery of gold to the north in the Palmer River region and in the Hodgkinson River area of Atherton Tableland, that saw the population begin to climb.

As we drive from the airport to downtown Cairns, it does not seem that the population has increased. Not that much anyway. One sees the occasional pedestrian. Cars are not rushing past either. It is a sleepy, laid back town. Rather surprised, Priya who was here in 1994, said it seemed the same rather empty town.

At Coles there is a buzz. For people throng the department store; I linger at the fruit and veg section and notice the diversity of the population. Some indigenous ones, but a lot of the Far East variety: Koreans, Philipinos, Thais, Japanese, Chinese and Malay.

The sun is hot and high. We walk down the sparse broad streets to the waterfront. We spend time with the egrets, the Great Egret. They are bunched together, in one corner of the sandy loam – the mud flats I'm told – while a guitarist starts twanging his instrument, his sad voice drifting over the water. Saw a whole bunch of sea

birds: Royal spoonbills, oystercatchers, plovers, herons, pelicans, terns, seagulls, egrets, other migratory birds.

The singer is talking of nirvana, rani sundar, Hari bole, Kama Sutra, all form a part of his lyrics. I notice that the egrets have perked up. The guitarist is having an effect.

We walk along the beachfront. Revives memories. No not quite Marine Drive. The buildings behind are modern, stylish, glass-fronted. The number of men with tattoos on their arms, necks, shoulders, legs are many. Not an aesthetic sight.

A boat is coming in slowly across the water, with a forested hill in the background reminding me of my plan to traverse it. But there is no time.

The sea breeze has lowered the temperature. It almost feels pleasant to be in the sun.

We go for dinner to the Marina. The boat where we wanted to dine was full up. So we moved to the restaurant next to it. The fare was delectable. We ordered a seafood platter: mussels, pipis, giant prawns, squid, crayfish, bugs... Priya lamented that there were no oysters.

On our walk back to the hotel, it began to drizzle. We came across a plover eating his dinner, shifting from one part of the pavement to another. I tried to talk to her, came close but she danced away.

June 11

Sausages and bacon, cheddar cheese and ham. Overdid it at breakfast. But digested it when we were dumped at the domestic terminal by George the baldy.

Despite having reminded him that we were headed for Port Moresby, which meant an international flight...He left us for the Brisbane one. So we had to

walk 700 metres, follow the green line, all the way to the international terminal.

The breakfast was well and truly digested. Well, almost.

We found we had arrived early. No one at the Qantas counter to check us in. So settled down with the latest Pulitzer winner, *Celestial Bodies*. Found Abdullah getting a bit philosophical for this time of the morning. Transferred to a good ole whodunnit: Stuart McBride's *The Blood Road*.

As we took off on the small QantasLink plane, the coral reefs, part of the Great Barrier Reef, came into view: islands of mud brown, sky blue and green, ringed with white surf, stretching out in a line. All different sizes but exotic and alluring. I wanted to go live on them.

Priya reminded me, in time, that perhaps I could do it on another occasion. We still had to do the rounds of Papua New Guinea.

Embedded in the Pacific Ocean, 900 islands of different sizes, went on their colourful journey for 2300km, attracting tourists from the world at large. Including me.

At the Airways hotel, with its opulent Pacific Islands vegetation, my eye fell on the flyer lying on the reception counter proclaiming '3 out of 4 women in Papua New Guinea have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence at least once in their life.' It recalled the warnings the Internet and friends had been issuing. 'Don't go to Papua New Guinea, it is not safe.'

Whenever we headed to countries in Africa and the Far East we were informed of the dangers. Locations where strife had broken out. We were told to abandon our trip to Timbuktu as in war-torn Mali, the northern part was not safe. Johannesburg

was not safe; the Amazon forest...We had not been expressly forbidden to visit Papua New Guinea. So here we were. Now Mark the guide and John our driver were taking us around Port Moresby. I mentioned to John about the internet warning on the unsafe capital. He brushed aside my comment suggesting that journalists were creating an unnecessary scare.

The Parliament building was imposing. Eileen who showed us around was full of praise for the New Zealand architect who had designed it and for the local talent who had created the totem poles. The 115 odd seats and the arrangements of the hall into opposition, the government, the location of the Speaker...all spoke of our similar colonial heritage: even their roads were lined, like ours, with neem and mango trees.

Whereas the Australian presence in Papua New Guinea was predominant, we were not surprised to learn that China had now replaced it. All the roads, broad, black and bland had been built by China. The convention centre had been designed and constructed by it. Indeed it had "China Aid" engraved on the board of the convention centre. Mark said that the new prime minister had announced he would take up this issue. Such announcements would be removed: we have paid them for it; so why announce that they were behind the project. I sensed a certain resentment against their great neighbour.

However, the major new development projects, the natural gas projects and the petroleum extraction setup had Australian collaboration. And American. Both John and Mark made the observation with some relish.

As we drove around Port Moresby, we became aware that it was a series of suburbs, sparsely populated, linked together: Mark mentioned Coki suburb, then Balavi and then we had moved on to

Irurana. The Papua New Guinea accent, I'm sure, is responsible for me getting names wrong. But who's complaining.

He pointed to the power station and I immediately piped up with our power failures. "Well when we have one, we do not get electricity for three-four days together."

I could not get the significance of the city being divided into miles. We travel from mile 2 to 3 to 4 and 5. Our hotel was on mile 6. The city went up to mile 17. At mile 5 we saw the stilt housing, the stilts submerged in the sea. This was the poorer section of the town: equivalent to our slums. There, people refused to allow the police to enter the area. They found the police to be brutal. Mark agreed that they were so and the stilt housing residents had organised themselves so that the police were kept at bay.

The yellow and orange cabs made a bright splash on the bare roads. The only place where the town came alive was around the port with ships gleaming in the blue-green waters of the Pacific and the buildings packed close to each other on the gentle hills rising from the Port.

Mark pointed to the tallest building as we drove past it. How many floors? "Twenty-two," he said. I counted only 11 and told Priya so. "You were never good at counting," she said. We left it at that.

Girls in purple and boys in yellow uniform were suddenly thronging the streets. It was 3 pm. "School is over," said Mark. I was reminded that not a week ago I was out with our team looking for uniforms for the children of Atrouli school being set up by Mobius Foundation in western UP.

At one point we came across a whole lot of new vehicles parked in an open space. "All cars bought for the APEC conference, the Economic Forum of Asia-Pacific countries. Now not in use". Just as the

convention centre, built solely for the grand event, lay empty, neglected.

"These shops are all owned by Indians", said our guide pointing to them. They have taken over from the Chinese; lots of Indians here", he said and added "The Chinese have moved to the construction industry."

We moved on to sites of tanks and planes that had been destroyed and left as mementos of WWII with the Aussies and Americans helping Papua New Guinea against the Japanese.

When we arrived at our hotel, I was drawn to the rows of photographs. It appeared that nearly every head of state had stayed at the Airways Hotel. There was one of President Pranab Mukerjee with the staff, President Clinton smiling, British PMs and Australian ones. Several Pacific Islands heads... Priya and I were in good company.

June 12

Air Niugini flight to Mount Hagen. The Fokker 70 took off on time. Soon thereafter I was identifying islands around Papua New Guinea: New Ireland, New Britain. And beautiful atoll coral reefs.

The voice of the captain came across the intercom: there is a technical problem. We have to return to Port Moresby. The Fokker 70 turned around.

This was a first for me. We returned to the domestic terminal and watched passengers board flights for Alotau, Buka, Moru....

What would be our fate? Priya munched an apple. I studied the passengers, Papua New Guinea residents with an African cast. We would probably have to change planes, the air hostess informed us. Would another aircraft be available? The technical fault was set right. We were back in the same plane within an hour.

The one hour flight was over before I could say Jack Robbins, to use the local terminology, didgeridoo.

Tony and Webster were waiting for us with the hotel van and as we drove through the Western Highlands I realized why we had chosen to spend the best part of the Papua New Guinea trip in this part of the Pacific Island: snorkeling, deep sea diving, not for me. Take me to the rain forest I had said. And here I was driving through lush vegetation with splashes of all shades, brightening the dark green.

We left the township of Hagen nestled in a valley, and continued to climb. Our hotel Rondon Ridge was at a height of 7,100 feet, four thousand feet higher than Hagen. Our apartment with a sitting room, verandah, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom on three levels was part of a landscaped universe with orange, purple and yellow flowers springing up all around us.

The lunch of spaghetti with ribbons of ham and fresh vegetables culminated with strawberries and cream. In the wilderness, this elegant hotel with all the trappings of a sophisticated life... I had not quite bargained for that.

Neither did I wish it. But here I was again in a fancy hotel where Mick Jagger had stayed. There he was on the wall with the staff. And then there were the Prime Ministers and Presidents. This was getting a bit much. I was the only one who was not one!

So I bought myself the local beer SP and from the comfort of the verandah watched the rain pour down on the lush vegetation making it lush still. We had to cut short our evening adventure discovering the wilderness around Rondon Ridge. Among the rack of books left by visitors, I placed DRAG's latest publication, DRAG and Women Empowerment, for future generations and other

tourists to the hotel to mull over. I contended myself with taking another gulp of SP even as I looked out on the darkness that had begun to take over the world around us. The rain continued to kiss the flowers, envelope the trees and pattern our world for the moment.

June 13

Painted women, painted with ashes. And black and red. With feathers in their hair. They are crying and ululating.

"The women are welcoming you to Kost Kotla," said our guide. This is the village we are visiting in the Wahgi region (so named after the river).

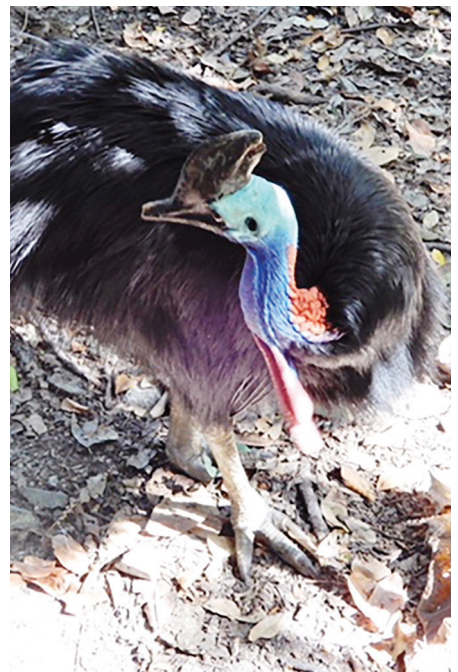
The villagers are all decked up in their traditional costumes, their faces painted. And suddenly we are on stage and the stage is part of us. From the side of a grass-thatched hut emerges a wounded man. He is calling out to his wife in obvious pain. He is injured; his mouth is bleeding.

The hunter has been attacked by an evil spirit. He has managed to return home. His wife emerges from the hut with her young son and baby on her hip, consternation writ large on her face.

The hunter collapses at her feet. She rushes to fetch the witch doctor, while the six year-old takes the father's head on his lap.

The witch doctor does what witch doctors do. Feeds him some herbs, probes the chest, the neck, the stomach. Pours some liquid (medicinal potion clearly) into his mouth.

The man gets up coughing. The boy stops weeping. His mother smiles. The hunter has recovered. All is well with the world. I am a trifle embarrassed. All this show just for us. They deserved a larger audience. Australian and American, European tourists come in busloads.



They would have done justice to the performance, been an adequate force to admire and applaud the theatre enacted.

“No, no, no”, says Andrew. Sometimes only a couple of people come.

There is a moment of amusement. The witch doctor is paid for his effort. His wife gives him a baby pig. The witch doctor pulls the string tied to his neck. The baby pig refuses to budge. The villagers giggle. The woman bursts into a peal of laughter.

We visit the artefacts that have been laid out on the ground made by the villagers. Axes, wooden objects but mostly necklaces. Priya purchases a beautiful grass, beads and shell necklace. And we are off to the next village, Tolsi.

Kost Kotla, the village we have left, is populated by the Sekaka tribe. In total they number 4,000 or so, settled in villages around Kost Kotla.

Tolsi village is inhabited by the Sekang Epri tribe, each speaking their own language. There are more than 800 languages in Papua New Guinea, which has a population of 8 million and is the largest of the South Pacific islands including the Solomon, New Caledonia, Tahiti, Fiji, Vanuatu islands and smaller ones like Samoa and Tonga. The last is ruled by a king.

At Tolsi village, the ceremony performed to welcome us is not so elaborate. I am relieved.

Two young boys covered in traditional paint and headgear are sharpening the stone for their axe in the river. They grin when they see us, very unlike the five boys in similar gear, but armed with bows and arrows, who had greeted us at Kost Kotla. The masks they wore hid their expression. When they pointed their arrow at us, their masks menacing, my foot had faltered. The village elder

told me to follow the five little arse-wrigglers and bow and arrow dancers.

Priya's face had paled. My bonhomie had vanished.

The Tolsi boys were not wearing masks. I could tell they were delighted to see us. And we had boldly moved into the village where I had met their older sister, an attractive woman called Jane.

They kept summoning me to view the traditional artefacts museum: drums, spears, axes, masks that Michael had collected. I kept delaying.

Priya asked me what I was discussing with Jane that I could not tear myself away. Well, we were into the causes of global warming. Then examined the ISI and the spread of terrorism. And finally the UN's peacekeeping efforts which Jane and I felt were far from adequate.

Priya did not believe me. My village host merely smiled even as I examined the drums, the axes, the spears and tried to make valid observations. Michael collected these items as a hobby. Sometimes he made a sale to a tourist who visited the village. No he did not have a job. That was a major problem in Papua New Guinea. All along the towns and villages we had passed, we had noticed people just lounging around, with nothing to do.

John, our driver, gave us some statistics: 70 percent of the population was unemployed. True he was not quoting from the handbook brought out by the Bureau of Statistics. But one got the point. And he added that 70 percent of the population was Catholic. The rest are Lutherans, Seventh Day Adventists, Anglicans, Pentecostal and others.

The problem with the economy was the lack of down-stream employment. The country was rich in national resources; it had natural gas, petroleum, timber, fishery and nickel deposits. All controlled

by foreign corporations. And they had not bothered to develop the processing industries that would generate employment.

That is why the previous government had lost power, having held it over seven years. The two main political parties were the People's National Congress (PNC) and the PANGU (Papua New Guinea United Party).

James Morape, the new prime minister had promised to secure better deals from the mining companies owned by China, US, Britain, South Africa.

The land owned by the local people where these finds had been made were bought for a pittance by these foreign cartels, explained Andrew as our vehicle bounced off the pot-holed roads. Now Marape had offered to change this unequal equation. Let us see what he delivers, he said.

John drew our attention to Hagen Club, a club only for the white man, to which only a few select locals were admitted. "Forty-two years after Independence, we are still socially and economically under the thumbs of the whites," lamented John.

Papua New Guinea remained essentially an agricultural country in that the majority of the population eked out a living through subsistence agriculture. There was no animal husbandry to speak of, no dairy or poultry. But the farmers kept pigs. Anyone who owned 10 to 12 pigs was considered a rich man. And these were hefty specimens. Twice the size of their cousins in India.

We sped through tea and coffee plantations, the other source of farm income. As we neared our village, Andrew said that the tea plantations and the processing company was owned by an Indian. "They are a handsome people", he said.

Not often have I heard my countrymen and women described as handsome. Needless to say, I happened to agree with the observation.

As we came across the bend in the Wahgi river, we saw a man washing his car which he had taken down to the river bed. Next to him, a farmer was giving his pig a bath.

"That's the car wash," said John. "And the pig wash," added Andrew.

June 14

I keep trying to recall the view. From our hotel room in Borneo, from Greenland, from the boat on the Amazon.

There were forests around, that's for sure. Dense, dark and forbidding. But in the early morning, the view enhanced one's desire to live.

I feel the same now that I peer through the four glass panes that protect our room from the outside world. Down below is Mount Hagen, the third largest city in Papua New Guinea. It spreads across the valley and gradually ascends to the point where our hotel is located.

Directly below our window are fields on which vegetables are being grown. Two ladies, one in red, the other in blue, are working the fields. I did not know they were women, but they have just ascended the incline and have come near the verandah where I am seated. They are in a hurry with the job in hand. The one in red finds my eyes boring into her back. She turns around, smiles, says hi and is gone.

So now I know that each morning when I woke up, she was the one tending the sweet potato crop below my window. I shall see her tomorrow morning too as I gaze out to the trees beyond, the city farther up and the hills.

It is a tranquil sight, at times a moving one and I am haunted by the question whether I have stared out at such loveliness from windows of other places we have been discovering. How could such a memory vanish; how can it not persist?

At the breakfast table I zero in on the sugar fruit, if only because I have never had it before. The black seeds embedded in white pulp taste sweet. It floats down the gullet smoothly. When I picked it up I thought it was passion fruit.

Even as I contemplate the differences, Andrew walks over to the breakfast table to tell us the van has arrived and we'd better make a move.

As usual, as we descend to the highway, people wave at us. John and Andrew wave back. After a while Priya and I join in. We raise a wave to every passerby.

Every day we follow the same ritual. And if on the highway we slow down, the people look in and welcome us. The "hi" and "welcome" are repeated. They are a friendly people; a simple people.

As usual we find rows of women sitting at the corners of the roads, selling coffee beans. The day before we had passed through tea and coffee plantations and I had peered at the bunches of red berries poking out of the coffee plants growing five and six feet high.

The price of coffee has collapsed over the last few years and the farmers are not getting adequately compensated. Andrew again makes the case for processing units for primary products: coffee factories for the beans, furniture and sports goods manufacturing units for the timber, tinned food processing for the fish, kerosene and other products units for petroleum.

He is still on this case and resentful of the ruling political elite for failing in this duty as we arrive at

Nem village where we are to be exposed to another cultural experience. By then I had understood that the organizers intended to show us a play enacted by the villagers that demonstrates some traditional local practice which they have now discarded.

I learn that Nem village is inhabited by the Nokupa tribe. And here too we are welcomed by a painted man – white and black and red – wearing necklaces and vegetation and feathers, with a bow and arrow. The only difference is that unlike the other village where youngsters were pointing the arrows at us, here it was only one man, the metal point of the arrow aimed directly at our hearts.

We are exposed in Nem to the courtship culture. In a low-roofed, thatched hut the man edges up to a woman and begins to sing to her. The woman listens impassively. The man begins to sway, leaning into the lady. She has begun to melt. He offers her a sweet, continues to sing and sway.

We move to a dugout covered by grass and shrubs in which we find a child aged 10, hidden. That was when the locals were fighting the outsiders (colonial powers) and children had to be tucked away so that they were not harmed in the struggle for freedom.

We are taken to yet another scene depicting a time when life was at its most primitive. Fire had to be made from stone striking stone; there were no cooking utensils and hollow bamboo tubes were used as drinking vessels. The lady cooked sweet potatoes on a fire made of twigs and she and her children ate on leaves taken from nearby trees and drank water from the bamboo hollow.

Further "cultural" activities were planned in other villages to demonstrate the traditional practices of the tribes. When we arrived there we found that the message of our arrival had not reached them. So they were not prepared. And so too in the next village.

We felt relieved. I sensed that the villagers were not particularly enthusiastic about performing practices that they had discarded. Few were willing to put on a show for visitors; this was clearly a dying art.

But Andrew and John were perturbed that the head office had so bungled. While they argued over whose fault it was, I waved out to the woman selling bags of red coffee beans, whose return smile buoyed the heart.

June 15

"If that is a pigeon, I am a tiger," was my reaction. We had got off at Vincent's house to view orchids. We saw quite a few, some flowering others not.; the Crucifix orchid and the Dendrobium varieties. But the surprise was the pigeons kept in a big wire cage.

Their girth was considerable, bigger than a duck, almost like a peacock, they moved agitatedly when we went to meet them. And the plumes on their grey neck were like shimmering blue lace. Their stately presence, the tints of colours on their feathers and proud bearing set them apart – they matched their name, Victoria Crowned Pigeon.

In contrast, the Bird of Paradise – there are over 30 varieties in Papua New Guinea – the Reggiana paled in comparison. She fluttered from one end of her cage to the other, refusing to settle down so that we could not get to know her. I spied a grasshopper, a blue butterfly and a large spider and was spending time with them when our guide Michael drew attention to the varieties of wild ginger : they presented indeed a dramatic viewing – every shape and size, triangular, cone shaped, round and long – all had pulpy exteriors and gleamed in the afternoon sun.

Vincent had many types of flowers too in his tropical paradise: poinsettia, amaryllis lilies, patience, dahlias, cosmos and a range of birds of paradise flowers.

But the ginger plants kept getting our attention. The display of flowers was no doubt splendid; the ginger varieties were the scene-stealers.

I wondered why Michael, our guide, had said that our first stop would be at an orchid garden. The delight for us all was the ginger plants of vast range and appeal and texture.

The three Koreans even said so. Our tour group comprised them along with Priya and yours truly. One of the Koreans was so enamoured that he got Michael to dig up some ginger roots so he could plant them in his garden back home.

In the next village we witnessed the dance of the Huli Wigmen. Their faces were coloured in striking yellow, white and red. The yellow and white paint is obtained from clay, the red from fruit (and now they have begun to use paint).

The wig is made from the hair of the dancers; the hair is collected over the years. On top of the wig, ringed with possum fur, the dancers wear a head-dress which has feathers from the Bird of Paradise, the Cassowary and the Ribbon Tail. The skirts are made of grass/vegetation, and they have a tail made of leaves sticking out like that of a bird.

On the skirt hang pig's tails; as pigs denote wealth, the more the tails, the more wealth the dancer possesses. The Cassowary's bone forms the dagger, the Hornbill's beak, part of the adornments.

And the Huli Wigmen dance the dance of the Bird of Paradise, the male one when he is attempting to woo the female.

The Wigmen begin their training early. A boy of 14 is sent to the wig school where he is trained intensely for 18 months, yes to learn to make wigs, as well as to dance.

During the August and September festivals the Huli men's wig dance lasts for four hours at a stretch. For us, they stopped dancing after a couple of minutes. And the steps were not that intricate. A few jumps to the left, a swing of the legs and that was about it. I wondered what the 18-month course taught the neophytes.

When our guide said the dancers would welcome questions, I kept my doubts to myself and enquired whether their facial make-up was reflected on the Papua New Guinea web page.

It was, I was informed, with a broad smile.

The Mud Men in Pogla village, to which the South Koreans – “not the Korea that has the bomb” – and us were taken next, gave all of us a bit of a scare. For we were intent on watching two large topless women (the Facebook advice we got when Priya put up their photos as part of the Mud Men Saga, was that their policy forbade displaying such images to the public) work at bunching together leaves to light a fire, we heard clicking sounds and suddenly men smeared in white mud wearing huge scary masks descended on us; their long nails – made from bamboo sharpened to a fine point – pointing at us.

Their dance was not one of celebration, exhibiting joy, but one that demonstrated aggression. The topless women working on lighting the fire began to wail. And then ran away. I wanted to follow them, but controlled myself as I saw that while the Koreans were scared they held their ground. Priya was busy taking photographs.

As suddenly as they had descended on us the Mud Men stopped their antics, took off their masks and smiled shyly at us.

I thought I would try on the masks they had shed. I tried to pick one up. I should have been

able to do so; after all it was made of clay. It proved too heavy.

One of them put a Cassowary bone in his mouth, began to blow into it. It began to vibrate and a haunting tune emerged. I began to enjoy the music he was making and for the first time I felt that finally I was beginning to get a real feel of the South Pacific.

The story goes that a small tribe was living on rich lands. A bigger and more powerful group coveted these lands and waged war, chasing them away. The mud men wanted their land back; after cogitating they came up with a solution. They painted their bodies white, made clay masks and one night hid in the graveyard. At night while the women were preparing a fire, they came out, all ghostly wearing their masks, and frightened the women and the villagers into fleeing. They then reclaimed their land.

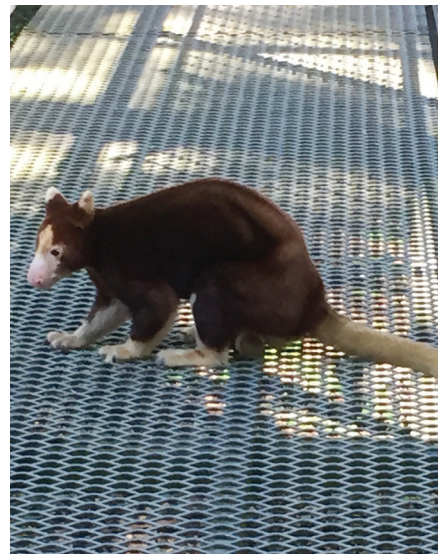
June 16

The visit to the Nature Park was a strong indictment of the traditional way of life pursued by the tribes. The plumes they put on their headdress, the feathers, are obtained from killing birds. And each tribe has its own speciality.

The Birds of Paradise are the most prized. And the Cassowary next. Hence they are slaughtered in large numbers, to the extent that some varieties are on the endangered list.

The Papua New Guinea Environment Department states this in so many words. Recognizing that it cannot fight tradition, it has announcements in the Nature Park as to how the feathers can be preserved to serve as a headdress for a longer period so that fewer birds are killed.

The notice board states: the Bilas headdress typically lasts 20 years and so 10 to 12 birds living



in the wild will be killed for it. And the maximum as noted are the three varieties of Birds of Paradise of which 24 may be required to provide the wherewithal for one single headdress. And it details the methods of how the feathers can be preserved so that fewer birds are destroyed.

The Nature Park was a delight for we not only met the birds but the animals of the wayward way-out island, admittedly the largest of the South Pacific islands but also the least well-documented, of which we could, prior to our visit, obtain the least information even less than the countries in West Africa that we visited.

Let me begin with the most striking of their birds, the Cassowary, of which there are three: the Northern Cassowary has a yellow neck and two orange wattles hanging like sausages from its neck; the rest of its body is dark. The Southern Cassowary has an orange neck and one orange wattle, while the Dwarf Cassowary has a blue neck and no wattles at all.

The female of the species is the dominant player. She can move from one male to another. And when she lays eggs, the male has to look after them, hatch them, take care of the chicks while the female wanders off to make eggs with other males of her choosing.

The Cassowary chicks are striped until they are 6-9 months old. By age three they change to a black colour.

Cassowaries belong to the family of flightless birds and are the third tallest in the world after the Ostrich (Africa) and Emu (Australia). They can run at a speed of 50 kilometers an hour.

As in the case of the Cassowary, the Bird of Paradise is also of three types: the Magnificent Bird of Paradise (which is the least magnificent);

the Lesser Bird of Paradise, the most attractive, is medium sized maroon-brown with a yellow crown and a brown-yellow upper back and the Raggiana, a third variety, which was made the national emblem of Papua New Guinea in 1972 and figures on the national flag.

Another striking Papua New Guinea bird is the Crowned Victoria Pigeon (of which I've given a description in an account of Vincent's garden). Its smaller cousin is the Southern Crowned Pigeon. A fairly sociable species, it eats the leaves and debris on the forest floor, and also small crabs.

Then there is the Trumpet Manucode (note the similarity with our Code of Manu), so named after its powerful and loud trumpeting calls.

The white parrots are of two varieties, the brown-eyed cockatoos and the blue-eyed ones. A terribly noisy species, they were fluttering all over the wire mesh. The white cockatoos are unsurprisingly the loudest of all parrots. Apparently the loud voices are a means of adaptation for living in the thick dark forests and enables them to communicate over long distances when cockatoos cannot see each other.

There is the Papuan King Parrot, with a magnificent large red beak and Lorikeets of various types and hues. Goldies's Lorikeet, yes the Papuan Lorikeet and then Sephanie's Astrapia. Surely you've heard of Stephanie's Astrapia?

Now I simply must introduce you to some Papua New Guinea animals.

The saltwater crocodile, despite the commotion of young visitors lies inert. Lost in his own world. Ditto for the possum. He refuses to stir, huddled up in his corner, not even raising his neck to glance at me despite my urgent calls to him. They are shy, the possum, and not often seen because they sleep in

the trees during the day. The males may bark, and tend to get into fights with other males.

Another species living in the trees is the Tree Kangaroo. He looked down at me, peering at him, as if to say, 'Go on, write about me Vohra. See if I care.' There are 17 species and subspecies of the Tree Kangaroo found in New Guinea and Australia. The Donn's Tree Kangaroo is the heaviest tree-dwelling marsupial in the world, weighing up to 20kg.

Then there is the Wallaby. He turned out to be the friendliest and came across on the gangplank to say hello. The warden feeding them issued a word of caution: 'Keep away from Henry (so had he been named) as he gets cantankerous at times.' Mark, our guide, informs us that the agile wallaby lives in social groups. The Huon Tree Kangaroo lives in thick mountain forests. It is medium-sized with sandy brown fur.

Then it was time to visit the National Park, which turned out to be not a patch on the Nature Park in the heart of Port Moresby, as far as wildlife is concerned. It is an hour's drive away, on a mountain such as Table Top mountain we had visited in South Africa. The air gets cooler; it is even more so when we enter the canopied world which brings darkness at noon.

The trees tower all over us at the Varirata National Park. The visitor is told "Leave nothing but footprints behind. Take nothing but photographs."

We reach the main look-outs after an hour's drive through winding roads: The Conservation and Environment Protection Authority says that we are 8,333 metres above sea level.

The rainforest here has had some re-planting done. So we have varieties of pine and eucalyptus; raintrees that have the widest canopy I have come across and the Pandanus trees, also known as the

Walking Tree, which moves towards the river in search of water.

We see no wildlife as noted, but a lot of local kids full of mischief, and one refuses to move when he spots a bird and says "I wanna see her egg." The father explains, no can do. He repeats "I wanna see her egg."

The only police I see in Papua New Guinea are the Water Police, roaming around casually in their jeep as we head back to Port Moresby.

June 17

For a change we did not have to rush, and a leisurely morning lay ahead of us.

The flight to Brisbane, another city on the Pacific coast, was not till the afternoon.

So we had a leisurely breakfast of ham and cheese omelette with slices of bacon and salami on the side, topped with pineapple, papaya, passion fruit, followed by black coffee, even as I took pulls of apple juice.

I picked up the local paper, the Post Courier. The headlines read:

- 1) "Fight against corruption a priority (says Marape-led government).
 - 2) Capacity building vital Steven (Minister for Justice and Attorney General)
 - 3) Government to ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption), protection of whistle-blowers.
 - 4) Papua New Guinea opens e-visas to 20 more APEC economies
 - 5) Law and Justice to run workshop on family and sexual violence.
- Swap Papua New Guinea for India and India for Papua New Guinea!
- 6) Primary teacher positions "sold on the streets".

So what's new?

On the flight I switched on the new movies even as I sipped red wine. In *Cold Pursuit*, Liam Neeson, an exemplary citizen in a small community, turns into a cold-blooded killer. For his son has been murdered by the drug mafia. The police are in league with it. So he takes the law into his own hands.

The other movie, *Celeste*, dealt with an opera star based in Queensland, the province we were flying to. She gives up her career as a singer when she falls in love. Ten years later, she is preparing to resume her career.

We faced a slight crisis at Australia's third-largest city. Our pick up man was not at the Brisbane airport, so we thought. For when our plane landed an hour late, we emerged out of the airport to find no one waiting for us.

After a couple of rounds outside, on retracing our steps we found our man. Was he trying to evade us? That was certainly our impression.

It was dark at 5 pm. Southern hemisphere, winter time, that was it. We drove through a far from animated city. All offices had closed down, so had shops.

When we emerged a couple of hours later for a walk downtown, we found some life. But it would take the next day for us to discover the city. We returned to the 8th floor of the Novotel, the second time we were staying in this hotel chain; the earlier stay had been in Sao Paulo, the transit point to our Amazon trip.

Unlike Cairns, our room window did not look on to a spread of the city below us. Here we gazed at other high rises, grey somber presences. From another window in the opposite building, I saw a man looking in on us. I closed the curtain and switched on the TV.

June 18

We never thought, as we took the ferry to the South Bank, we would meet an Ibis, a Brush Turkey (for a moment I thought it was a Cassowary) and seagulls who would come to talk to us. I was crossing over to see art galleries, sit in the denoted picnic spots and sip beer in one of the restaurants along the esplanade.

We crossed the university bumping into students as we walked along the Brisbane river. "Yo". Yo yelled a cyclist as I accidentally crossed into a bicycle path adjoining the pedestrian one. He narrowly missed me. As did a buxom blonde dashing down her exercise path.

This walk along the river was turning out to be a bit of an adventure. After a couple of miles we settled down on a bench, liberally sprinkled on the riverfront, and watched the highrises of Brisbane, even as cyclists and skate boards whizzed past, and runners huffed away.

It was then that the brush turkey crossed over and kept me company. We were companionably staring into the river when a black and white mynah joined us. She was relatively fidgety pecking away at speeding ants, but kept close by us. I got the feeling she enjoyed our company.

Priya was getting agitated and so I bid adieu to my new found friends and headed for the Maritime Museum on crossing which we made it to Kangaroo Point cliff where some rock climbers were trying to scale the cliffs which seemed pretty steep. I had done a bit of rock climbing during my St Stephen's and King's College days, but in my maddest moments I would not have attempted what these guys were trying. And with a lot of yelling: "Belay now, take the left hold Pete, slightly to your right..."

We come to the volcanic rock, a sheer cliff. And the notice proclaimed 'Rock climbing strictly prohibited.'

We had walked the city along the river for two hours now, beyond the South Bank. And Priya was dead set on taking the City Hopper – the ferry – back to the South Bank.

At the River Quay Fish restaurant, I ordered a White Rabbit (dark ale from Victoria) and Priya a 2017 Credaro 5 Tales, a Chardonnay (from Margaret River, Western Australia). And a bucket of fresh prawns to go with our drinks. The river was fronted by a green patch on which sat a few women playing with the seagulls, a couple of crows and a dove.

A little boy toddled over to the seagull, who stared calmly back at him while he tried to touch the bird's beak. The boy waited, moved forward and stretched out his hand. The seagull stepped back. The boy waited, moved forward and again stretched out his little hand. The seagull again stepped back.

The mother came and swept the boy away. I took a big sip of the dark ale and watched Australians, some tourists and some desis stroll by. Life was good, the ale better.

June 19

We are going home.

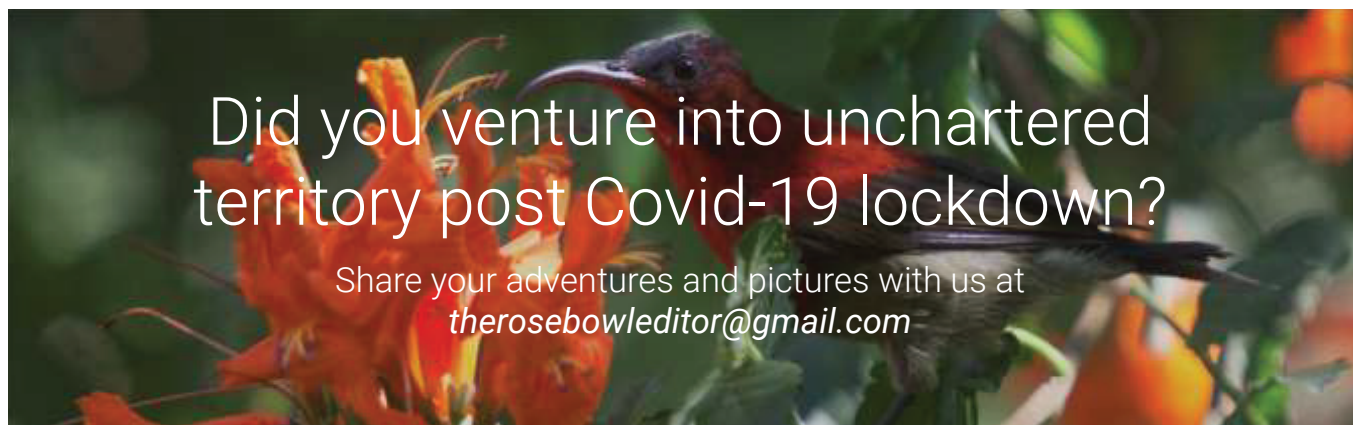
Our pick-up has arrived before the appointed time, early in the morning. The lady driver turns out to be well informed. No, the migrants you see on

Brisbane's streets are not Vietnamese as I had presumed, but of Chinese origin. Every other face I noticed while wandering along the riverfront was Chinese. Here at the airport, I look up from my scribbling, I see more Chinese.

"I don't know why, they give you one entire pizza to eat, you can't finish one", complains Melinda driving us to the airport. It needs more than two, even four to finish it, she says. "Why can't they give slices in restaurants; street food is good that way, you get slices."

The link road to the airport is all underground. I remark that the Brisbane City Council must be rich to afford such infrastructure. She tells us that there are two more such underground links, one going under the river, and yet another one is on the anvil. "All forward thinking. Every week Brisbane's population increases by 15,000. It attracts people. We are already 3 million; luckily our city planners had a vision, gave us good infrastructure. That is why Brisbane is such an attractive destination," says Melinda.

We will shortly be leaving this world behind. My mind is already on things India and Indian. Already a young 8-year-old Indian boy is pushing against me. His parents come and put their handbags on the seat next to me. They have been airport shopping and are on the same flight as us. Indians everywhere, even in Australia.



Celluloid Almirahs - An Update

Shivendra Singh Dungarpur
500 H, 1987

The director of the Film Heritage Foundation shares an update on another year of salvaging and restoring India's priceless cinematic heritage.

2020 will be a year the world will never forget. For the Film Heritage Foundation, it was a disorienting, surreal and difficult year when our existence came to a momentary standstill overnight. Despite the severe financial constraints, the archive being in a freeze-frame for almost three months (and two cyclones in Mumbai) we picked up the threads of our lives and soldiered on, determined to thrive. Surprisingly, we ended up having quite a productive year.

Surviving the Pandemic

The coronavirus upturned our lives. The Indian government declared a complete lockdown overnight with just four hours of warning on March 23rd, 2020 for three weeks.

At the start, we were not supposed to step out of our homes except for groceries and medicines and the city downed all shutters, closed all gates and became a ghost town – a sight we never thought we would see in one of the most vibrant, congested cities in India. This was a nightmare as we could not access our archive and even though our archivists were able to work modestly from home, nobody imagined that the lockdowns would be indefinite.

We had the additional problem of maintaining temperature and humidity control at the archive



Sooni - Little Zizou



FHF Archive

during the sweltering heat of the Mumbai summer with the mains switched off! Finally, after about four weeks on April 30th, 2020, worried about the condition of the material in the archive, I decided to break with lockdown protocols and started going to the archive every day alone so I could at least run the air-conditioning and dehumidification systems for a few hours. After about a week of

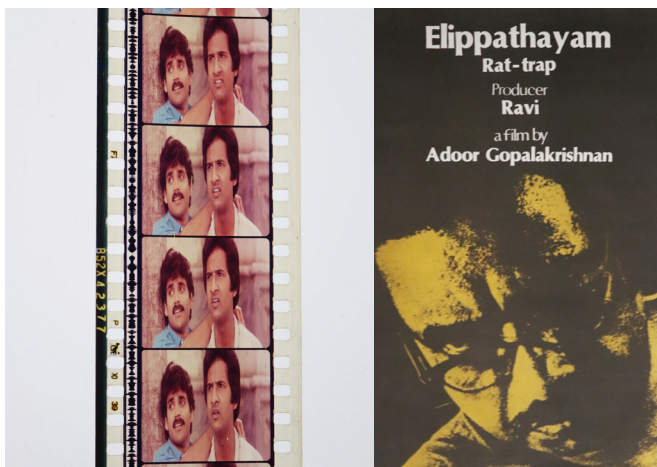
daily access, the temperature and humidity began to return to pre-lockdown levels. As the lockdown gradually eased, a few of our archivists managed to come in for a few days a week, but it was only in July that we were back to work at full strength with precautions in place.

New Additions

The year began auspiciously with our cause ambassador Amitabh Bachchan depositing a collection of films on 35mm belonging to his production company, Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited (ABCL) with us for preservation. The collection included well-known films like Tere Mere Sapne (1996), Mrityudata (1997), Major Saab (1998) and their first Marathi film Vihir (2009).



ABCL



Annapurna

Adoor



BBC coverage



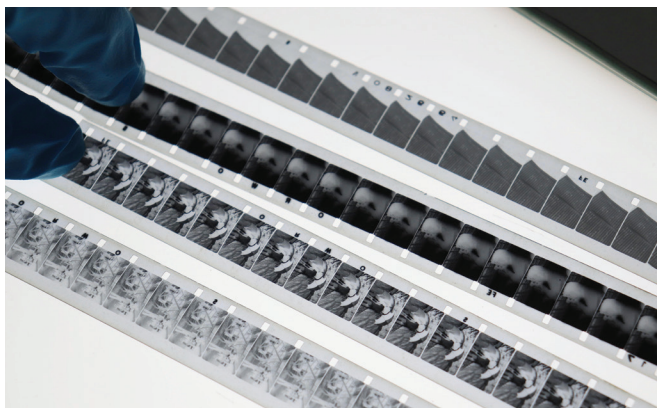
Harinam Singh

We were delighted to add two Telugu films on 35mm from Annapurna Studios in Hyderabad to our collection - Velugu Needalu (1961) starring the legendary Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR) and Savitri and the blockbuster Shiva (1989) starring the screen idol Akkineni Nagarjuna and Amala. We must thank Ashim Ahluwalia, filmmaker and connoisseur of C, D and Z Grade films and filmmaker Harinam Singh for depositing prints of some gems from this dying genre with us for preservation. Harinam Singh, often described as the Ed Wood of India, turned up at our doorstep with reels of his iconic films Khooni Dracula (1992), Jeb Katri (1997) and Gumnam Qatil (2001) to be saved. It was a daunting task as the acetate reels, stored at his home for years, were in poor condition and reeking of vinegar. Our conservators took on the challenge and after chemical treatment procedures, we are pleased to report that two films have been brought back from the brink.

A trip to Kolkata and a meeting with Satyajit Ray's son, Sandip Ray, resulted in our acquiring two precious 16mm reels with footage of Satyajit Ray and Frank Capra. The end of the year saw celebrated screenwriter and filmmaker Sooni Taraporewala famed for writing the screenplays of acclaimed films like Mira Nair's Salaam Bombay (1988) and The Namesake (2006) donate a 35mm print of her



Ray Personal Negs 1



Ray Personal Negs 2

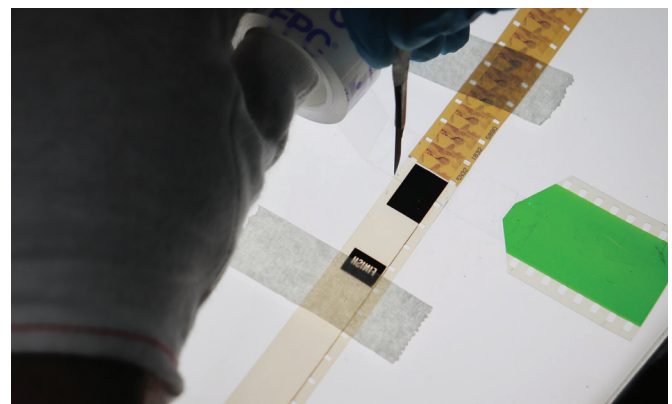
directorial debut, the National Award-winning film Little Zizou (2008) to Film Heritage Foundation.

Our collection of film-related memorabilia has continued its steady growth too. New acquisitions include shooting stills and personal photographs of Amitabh Bachchan; posters and publicity material of Adoor Gopalakrishnan's films like Elippathyam (1981), Mathilukal (1990), Kathapurushan (1995), Naalu Pennangal (2007); film stills and shooting stills of Sohrab Modi from films like Pukar (1939), Sikander (1941) and Sheesh Mahal (1950) donated by his son Mehelli Modi; a never before seen addition from the beginnings of Indian cinema — a trove of tent or travelling cinema tickets, including a few which bear the title Raja Harishchandra, the first feature film of Indian cinema released in 1913. Deposits of non-film material were also received from my personal collection, Narayan Mulani and Anand Vyas.

Rehousing, storage and digitization of negatives

The weeks of closure of our archive due to the pandemic had done its damage. When we opened the compactors, we discovered that some of our precious nitrate photograph negatives had crumbled to dust and the negatives had a strong smell of vinegar.

We had the privilege of Dr Nora Kennedy, Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge of the Department of Photograph Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York teaching the module on photograph conservation at our workshop in Hyderabad in 2019. Based on their learning at the workshop, our conservators had planned on working on the rehousing of the still negatives in our collection. This plan was interrupted due to the sudden lockdown and unfortunately some of the negatives deteriorated beyond repair. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, we reached out to Nora Kennedy to help us with an immediate action plan for the rehousing and storage of the material. She in turn introduced us to Toddy and Doug Munson, formerly of The Chicago Albumen Works. Several email exchanges and Zoom calls later, a detailed plan was worked to rehouse, photograph and wrap each negative in acid free paper and label each with a unique identifier before following the Critical Moisture Indicating (CMI) packing method and shifting them to a cooler storage environment. The project is still underway.



Repair still

Two-Day Workshop for the Preservation of Audio and Videotapes

Blissfully unaware of the looming lockdown, in keeping with our plan to hold smaller workshops through the year, Film Heritage Foundation in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut & Max



Andreas Weisser holds a workshop



Hands-on



The details

Mueller Bhavan Mumbai hosted a two-day training workshop on February 28th and 29th, 2020 conducted by the German conservation expert

Andreas Weisser. Registration was free, but there were a limited number of seats available. We had an excellent response and the workshop had twenty participants.

A significant part of our audio-visual heritage is stored on magnetic tapes like U-matic, Beta, Digi-Beta tapes, video and audio cassettes whether it's our wedding videos, television serials, radio broadcasts, corporate films, or artist works to name just a few. These tapes contain important audio-visual material whether personal, historical or socio-cultural that need to be preserved, digitized or restored if they are to survive and the workshop gave participants an opportunity to learn the intricacies of preserving and digitizing magnetic tapes from Andreas Weisser, an expert in the field.

The workshop covered the history of audio and video technology (analogue and digital), degradation mechanisms, risk assessment, caretaking of equipment, storage requirements and optimization of storage facilities, conservation/restoration treatment methodologies and preparation for in-house or external digitization projects.

Workshop India 2020 goes online!

The pandemic put paid to our plans to hold the 6th iteration of the annual Film Preservation & Restoration Workshop India 2020 in Kerala, but with so many enquiries asking for help, we decided that even though we couldn't conduct a physical hands-on training workshop this year, we would pioneer the new normal of online training in film preservation with the support of FIAF and a few of our wonderful faculty and experts from around the world. The workshop was open to applicants from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan and other countries. Registration was free and we had an overwhelming response with over 200 participants across the sessions.

The workshop comprised nine, one-hour online sessions conducted on Zoom between September 2nd and 19th, 2020 with a special focus on the impact of the pandemic and how to survive it. As usual, we introduced a new topic on the conservation of 3-D objects in film collections that was taught by Sophie Hunter and Renee Kiefer of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles.



The workshop

The other sessions included 'Film Digitisation for any Purpose' by David Walsh; Digital Preservation during a Global Emergency by Reto Kromer; Welcome to the New Normal by Mick Newnham; Finding a Place for Film Restoration in India and the Subcontinent by Davide Pozzi; Introduction to Moving Image Cataloguing by Natasha Fairbairn; Shout Out Loud by Mick Newnham; Film Repair by Marianna de Sanctis; and The Effects of the Pandemic on India's Film Heritage by myself.

Mani Ratnam Digitization Project

Film Heritage Foundation is very excited about overseeing the first-of-its-kind 8K digitization project of 26 films of acclaimed director Mani Ratnam that have been preserved at our archive. The list of films includes landmark films like Thalapathy (1991), Roja (1992), Thiruda Thiruda (1993), Bombay (1995), and Yuva



Mani Ratnam Digitisation

(2004). The digitization will be carried out by Prasad Corporation Pvt. Ltd. in Chennai. Our film conservators cleaned and repaired the film elements, both negatives and prints, in preparation for scanning before the reels were sent in an air-conditioned vehicle by road from Mumbai to Chennai. I will be personally overseeing the selection of the best elements for digitization of these films as well as the quality check on the output. A digital preservation plan has been worked out to preserve the scanned material on hard drives as well as on LTO 8.

Manipur State Film Archive

We are very proud to share that a workshop alumnus, Johnson Rajkumar, reached out to us on behalf of the state government of Manipur for help in preserving Manipuri films by setting up



Working still

an archive in Imphal. They have already identified the space and even though they have very limited funds they are determined to launch their archive in April this year. Film Heritage Foundation will act as consultants to advise them on storage and preservation practices for their film reels. Manipuri cinema, even though an important part of our heritage, has been terribly neglected and we look forward to building a new community of film archivists in a far corner of the country.



Night Club



Sonam Ahuja thank you post

Sonam Kapoor Ahuja, the National Award-winning actress, fashionista and daughter of the evergreen actor Anil Kapoor, joint hands with us to lend her voice on social media for the cause of film preservation and saving India's endangered film heritage. We hope that our message to save our films will reach her 31 million followers.

Fundraising and Future Plans

2020 was supposed to be the year when we began our Phase 1 expansion plan and a major fundraising push. Unfortunately, we had to put these plans on hold and go into survival mode. We spent the lockdown fruitfully, creating a vision document and a detailed phase-wise fundraising plan. We reached out to luminaries of the film industry to endorse our work and support our vision. We were very fortunate that Amitabh Bachchan, Shyam Benegal, Martin Scorsese and Christopher Nolan were kind enough to write letters of support.



We have presented a proposal to the Maharashtra State Government to set up India's first-ever Centre of the Moving Image dedicated to the art and culture of film. We hope that 2021 will bring a positive response from the government and that we will see renewed support for the Film Heritage Foundation from our well-wishers, supporters, sponsors and friends.

Film Heritage Foundation looks forward to another year of saving film, training future archivists and sharing the glorious heritage of Indian cinema with the world. If you are involved in the film industry or moviemaking, and would like to support the Film Heritage Foundation, or work on our archival projects, please contact me on shivendra@filmheritagefoundation.co.in. Check out our work and projects at filmheritagefoundation.co.in and follow us on Facebook

Book Review: Life and Culture in the North East

Jagatbir Singh

272 K, 1976

During an official visit to Mizoram in 2017, I stayed with the Assam Rifles in Aizawl when I encountered two books on the Northeast by the husband-wife team of Dipti Bhalla and Shiv Kunal 'Fauji' Verma (182 H, 1976). After a fascinating day in the Lushai Hills, I settled into my room and my gaze fell on their wonderful books on the Assam Rifles and another on the Dimapur based 3 Corps titled *The Northeast Palette*. Expecting to find the usual run-of-the-mill stuff that make up coffee

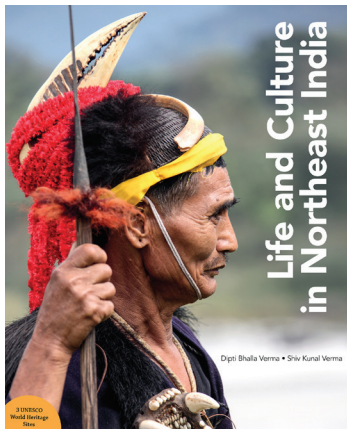


table books, I was surprisingly riveted from the first page. In a complete break from convention, the two books covered both the region and the people intermixed with the Armed Forces, in a fascinating manner.

Their latest offering published by Mapin in India and Abbeville Press in the United States, raises the bar even further.

Despite being familiar with Dipti and Fauji's skills with both movie and still cameras, when I picked up *Life and Culture in the North East* I was quite simply stunned by the quality of each photograph that has captured the region in a manner seldom seen. Even in this day and age where we are bombarded by a plethora of high quality images, every photograph in the book is in a class of its own, telling a visual story that literally teleports us into distant lands, some of which even today are



Kanchenjunga Himal, the third-highest mountain in the world

relatively inaccessible. I also realized, with a sense of shock, that despite having served and lived in the Northeast, there was so little that one knew about the region and its people.

Most of us have a tendency to mentally associate anything lying to the east of the Siliguri corridor in West Bengal, as the 'Northeast' which is also known by the sobriquet of the Seven Sisters. This shortcoming is not just restricted to those outside the region, but is a malady within the Northeast as well where regional identities apart, people know little about each other.

The Northeast is unique in many ways. Politically it is a landlocked region, and yet geographically it is where the gap between the sea and the mountains is the shortest, as a result of which it is blessed with a biodiversity that is packed to the gills with a variety of flora and fauna. This narrow gap has also affected the cultural diversity as people who inhabit this region come together from different ethnicities. The mix is further enriched by the fact that over 90 percent of the geographical boundaries are

with neighbouring countries that include Nepal, China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The Assam Himalayas extend from Kanchenjunga on the Nepalese border in the West to the Lohit that enters India at Kibithu in the extreme East. While the Barak river with its tributaries, waters Southern Assam and Tripura which in turn are flanked by the Naga-Patkai that are home to the Naga, the Manipuri, the Kuki and the Mizo, while the Meghalaya Hills house the Jaintia, the Khasis and the Garo people.

Till the late 19th Century, the final course of the Yarlung Tsangpo had not been charted; the river seemingly disappearing after it went around the great bend of the Namcha Barwa massif. The Siang River which enters India near Tuting, was indeed the Tsangpo that then made the Brahmaputra the ninth longest river on the planet.



The hugely popular Khasi festival - Ka Pombiang Nongkrem

Similarly, using helicopters where necessary, even the route followed by Captains Fredrick Bailey and Henry Morshead in 1913 has been illustrated with breath-taking shots of Yonggyap La and the Mishmi area north of Anini. This expedition would form the basis for the McMahon Line that was drawn up a year later in Shimla to define the border between British India and Tibet in the East.

Life and Culture in the North East has taken four years to write and involved over a hundred visits to the area, each averaging five days. What



The Tawang Monastery or “celestial paradise on a clear night”

has emerged is the earlier illustrated three-part Northeast Trilogy, which was by far the most comprehensive and detailed book on the entire region. Bipin Shah’s Ahmedabad-based MAPIN Publishing, known for its pole position in large size books on art and culture, then got its design team to put together this masterpiece!

The book is laid out in ten chapters, each devoted to a state, except for Arunachal Pradesh, which boasts three chapters covering Western Arunachal or Kameng, Central Arunachal and Eastern Arunachal.





The Chang of the central section of the hilly Tuensang District

Incidentally, no lateral movement is possible from one area to another due to the river valleys and the lie of the ranges. The starting point of each chapter is a map that helps give a better understanding of each state, and thereafter it covers the history, terrain, important places, flora and fauna and its people to include various tribes, their colourful dresses, habitat, customs, culture and beliefs.

Ethnicity is an important aspect of this book, central to the 46 million inhabitants of this region. They still practice their unique lifestyles in some parts. There are over 475 different ethnic groups speaking more than 400 languages here. Interestingly, the population in Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya is mainly Christian of which Mizoram is largely Presbyterian, while Nagaland is the only predominantly Baptist state in the world. Manipur has an equal mix of Meiteis who are mainly Vaishnavite Hindus, and Nagas and



A spectacular view of the less familiar north face of Kanchenjunga

Kukis who are Christians. Assam and Tripura are dominated by Hindus and Muslims while Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh both have a very high percentage of Buddhists, and house important monasteries at Rumtek and Tawang respectively. Within each state, there are various tribes, for example Nagaland has sixteen major tribes, each fiercely guarding its own identity.

Dipti and Fauji together wear many hats. They have produced many documentaries on the Indian Air Force and the National Defence Academy. Fauji is also known for having filmed the Kargil War and is recognized as one of the foremost military historians in the country. His book on the Sino-Indian conflict, *1962: The War That Wasn't* has won widespread critical acclaim.

He has also authored *The Long Road to Siachen: The Question Why* which according to Gurdial Singh was 'one of the best works to come out from a Doon School Old Boy!'

Side note: while on the subject of the Northeast, the other Dosco who comes to mind, whose love and commitment for the area was similar to that of the Verma's, is the Late Vinay Sheel 'Mooli' Oberoi (327 T, 1972). A much loved bureaucrat (a rarity) for the manner in which he served the people of this area, he too was passionate about photography. Mooli was the District Commissioner of Barpeta Road in Assam when Fauji shot the film on the Manas Tiger Reserve. He for one would have most certainly 'freaked out' on this latest offering from Mapin!

For many, the book has endeavored to lift the veil of secrecy around this seemingly mysterious land, capture its richness and feel its pulse.

Those interested in purchasing a copy of the book, can contact account@mapinpub.com and place their respective orders. For the Northeast Trilogy, contact biswajit@luxorprints.com

Media at the Crossroads

Gautam Vohra
154 H, 1963

Having spent 15 years working for the national media, my first job after completing university, I reacted to articles written by Sanjaya Baru, Kiran Karnick, Patricia Mukim and others in the Civil Society issue of August 2020. I wrote to the publisher Umesh Anand agreeing with his view that India's media companies were preoccupied with making moolah, and hence their credibility was declining, as was their quality.

I was delighted that he and Rita, the editor, had collected resources to bring out Civil Society that could be independent of corporate control, and thus focus on development - and environment-related concerns without fear or favour. Since I had been particularly involved in writing about development issues, I also hosted a current affairs talk show on Doordarshan in the late 1970s, I have been critical of the priority on political issues given by the mainstream print media in the letter reproduced below.

Dear Umesh,

Kudos to Rita and you for bringing out the special section on Media At The Crossroads. You have rendered a signal service to your readers on a vital issue. There was huge space for a non-establishment publication. Above all for one that gives priority to development stories unfolding in the remote hinterlands. These changes are being led by a remarkable lot of local leaders entirely ignored by the mainstream media. Civil Society has drawn attention to their contribution, these hitherto unsung heroes. And that is a major achievement of your magazine.

The mainstream or established media, Patricia Mukhim has rightly argued, is essentially metropolitan media covering the political gossip and economic news that emerges from the metropolis. For if it was national media, would rural India be sidelined, if not ignored, as it is? Sadly this media is supportive of the government, it invariably kowtows to the powers that be. Whereas its role should be adversarial, checks and balances, the hallmark of good journalism. That concept has been cast away with the wind.



New crop at the DRAG Farm

Sanjaya Baru has done well to raise the question of whether such a media, print and electronic, has the right to be called the fourth estate. For its focus is not righting wrongs, taking on the fight on behalf of the underdog, or challenging the big boys who cross the line. This media is involved in making money.

For it, especially in an increasingly competitive and trying time, earning revenue is all. The bottom line is what the established national media looks at. And during the Covid period it has sacked many journalists. For as the media's revenues dip, the employees are let go.

But let me not judge too harshly an institution of which I was a part for 15 years. The media does rise to the occasion. And when it does, the marginalised and the damned do benefit. R Balasubramaniam has provided a telling example of the tribals who were displaced by the dam on the Kabini river and the creation of the Bandipur National Park.



DRAG Vikas Kendra students rally to support a green lifestyle

When the plight of the indigenous people was drawn attention to by activists, that included Balasubramaniam, the press rallied to the cause. Their regular outpourings caught the attention of

the PM. Sympathetic to the oppressed, Vajpayee initiated measures to ensure the state government met the needs of the tribals. He did so, and I emphasise, because the media drew his attention to the issue.

The saddest part of India's development story is the neglect of its indigenous population. DRAG worked among the Katkari and Thakkar adivasis in Pen taluka of Raigad district, Maharashtra in the late '80s. The shocking neglect of a population not three hours drive from the commercial capital Mumbai, was to be seen to be believed. Their forest homes destroyed, their land cornered by the dominant caste, they lived a life of starvation in their hamlets. Denied even the basic facilities, water, electricity, link roads, let alone education, DRAG mobilised them to secure benefits under the Integrated Tribal Development Programme. No government official, gram sevak upwards, had made them aware that the IRDP was meant specifically for them. The panchayat, dominated by the Marathas, more often than not exploited them.

MEDIA AT THE CROSSROADS



Redefining citizen journalism

Rita & Umesh Anand

When we were in the process of launching Civil Society, the few people we confided in raised obvious and well-meaning concerns. ...

[Read More >](#)



Media is much more than the medium

Sanjaya Baru

Addressing the silver jubilee of the Chandigarh Press Club in September 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh warned the Indian media ...

[Read More >](#)



Media-mess age: fake news, garbled politics and more

Kiran Karnik

This is the media-mess age — the era when the media is making a mess of many things: news, politics, ...

[Read More >](#)



FACEBOOK POST



Walking a fine line on the nation's periphery

Patricia Mukhim



How a story on tribals finally reached the PM

R Balasubramaniam



Farm magazine by farmers works well for them

Shree Padre

TWITTER TWEET

Tweets by @CivilSocietyIND

Civil Society Magazine
@CivilSocietyIND
Little is known about the #QutbShahi dynasty, but their mausoleums and gardens are an integral part of Hyderabad's #history. Coming soon: a Qutb Shahi #heritage park in #Hyderabad.

Read more in our April issue.



Gautam in the midst of farming

This was one reason why DRAG became part of Medha Patkar's Narmada Bachao movement. The tribals were being displaced without the authorities bothering to give them an alternative place to enable them to survive. Our view was that the government had no right to further marginalise a population that had been treated shabbily all along since Independence.

If the established press, the national press, has not covered itself with glory, the small boys, the local press as it were, has been a surprise. Adike Patrika, its history related by Shree Padre, is serving the cause of farmers. It not only provides them information on the crops but also implementation guidelines so that they can maximise yield. And farmers have been trained to become journalists, or at least communicators to spread



Girls learn vocational skills at the DRAG Women's Centre

the information so as to promote chemical-free farming, rainwater harvesting and so on.

Adike Patrika is now 33 years old. As old as DRAG which was established in Maharashtra in 1988 to work among the adivasis. We are on the lookout for someone who can manage DRAG, take over its reins. Someone young, willing to accept the challenges of development, and not easily disheartened. Any takers?

And one more point before I bore you Umesh. The point you made about democracy's dependence on information it can trust and the fact that good journalism can deliver the goods. All the more reason for the government to enable the media to stand on its own, not be dependent, or sycophantic for that matter. In fact, the Emergency was lifted I believe largely because the press had been muzzled. I remember those days of 1975-77 well. I had recently joined a newspaper in Mumbai and when the press was gagged and it chose to crawl, my world fell apart. I was idealistic then.



DRAG farm hands waiting for their batteries to be solar charged

In the absence of feedback, there were any number of atrocities all over - India is a large country to manage. Innuendo and rumour spread and governance became an issue. Indira Gandhi required feedback and so the Emergency was lifted and the press was handed back its right to provide the information that no ruling elite can do without. Anyway that is my take.

With warm regards,
Gautam Vohra

A Short Story

The Lalbujh Affair

Armaan Verma
465 K, 2019

Every evening, on his way home from school, Ravi Singh would sit on his haunches outside Mahajan Sweet Shop, the most inconspicuous sweet shop in Aulapur, to play a game of marbles with his friends. It was a short but tense wait for Shah Nawaz, who usually began the evening's proceedings. Ravi Singh considered himself an expert at the game, which he had learned by watching his older brothers – both marbles champions in their time, he was told – until they had traded the round and colourful trinkets of their youth for bus tickets to faraway cities with unpronounceable names. At precisely five forty-five in the evening, Shah Nawaz, a tall boy always clad in a tea-stained kurta, would use his toe to draw a circle in the ground as his scrawny, squinting companions searched the orange haze for any sign of their fathers, and stood poised to sound the alarm at the slightest threat of being harangued.

But not one parent came.

Only Ravi Singh sat on his haunches in utter blankness as he waited; every other boy found his own engagement. One would sit in the sweet shop itself and finish his homework early, picking at chapped lips. Another would hunt for the lice in his hair. Yet another would sleep under a nearby banyan tree, after having slept through all his classes. The most daring of them all would pay his cousin at the general store for the usual Marlboro Red. On some days, a group of girls on their way home from school would pass by, all the while glowing under

the boys' wandering gazes. Some of them laughed, some blushed at the attention, even though to them, the boys were no more than local equivalents of out-of-fashion movie stars. Ravi Singh knew only one of the girls properly: Pushpa. She had a cautious look and her brown, resolute eyes would often scrutinise Ravi Singh when he waited to run into her outside the classroom. She was never to be found without a textbook in hand, and her sharp nose shot up into the air when she bore witness to any sort of demotic recreation, like marbles.

Shah Nawaz, arbitrator for all potential arguments that could erupt mid-game, would sit down on his haunches first, followed by Ravi Singh and the rest. Shah Nawaz would then draw, erase, and redraw the circle until it fit his notion of perfection. Each boy played his part. They whooped, they hollered, they shoved each other aside, and in the end they counted their winnings (or losses) and counted them again, when dusk finally surprised them. They would return to their homes and take great gasps of air as they sat down to eat, and their parents would smile – inwardly, of course – at their children coming home from a day of rigorous academic pursuit.

All in all, the ritual of marbles almost always made for a routinely fulfilling day for the boys, notwithstanding the slight chance of rain and a few thrashings from parents who might discover their children's pastime. However, Ravi Singh was not prepared for a break in this routine on the third Monday of a deliriously humid June.

It began with his charade of an early morning splitting headache, a trick he diligently tried with his parents every month in vain. The impossible childhood exploits of a genius or world leader would be thrown at his face with the force of a rolling pin, and sometimes the rolling pin, accurately aimed but without the accompanying anecdote, would drive home the subtle point that acting was not his forte.

Ravi Singh's father was a proud schoolmaster, often referred to as the most knowledgeable man in all of Aulapur. When Ravi Singh was no taller than his father's knee, he used to believe that his father's study was home to every book in the world. Now he knew better, but at a very early age he had been acquainted with the works of John Steinbeck and Thomas Hardy, and several other writers whose names his classmates could not spell. Most adolescents progressed from simple and easily understood writing and children's stories to more complex works, but Ravi Singh enjoyed no such luxuries. He was not necessarily fond of this literary yoke, but his father had nonetheless drilled zeugmas, double entendres, and even chiasma for good measure, into his skull.

Having been made to learn *In Xanadu* by heart the night before, Ravi Singh floated through all his classes that Monday, seeing everywhere the ghost of Samuel Coleridge smoking a bidi with an equally ghostly Kublai Khan. As soon as the bell delivered him from his tedium, he ran to Mahajan Sweet Shop and assumed his customary position, waiting.

Shah Nawaz did not appear. Squatting outside Mahajan Sweet Shop in the glare of the setting sun, Ravi Singh began to feel himself sway as he stared at the owner, Mukesh Mahajan, regally fanning himself with a folded-up newspaper and looking unusually distressed at his customary lack of customers.

The sun fell a little further out of the sky when he decided that it was too late for any marbles to be won. Kicking a pebble as he strode all the way to the bridge across Aulapur's muddy creek, his head struck an enormous sign blocking the road, which bore the mark of jaded adult workers – "Road is closing for constructing."

Ravi Singh's mouth twisted into a disapproving scowl. All he wanted now was to go home and rock himself back and forth under the eye of his parents in his usual pretence of studying. He deviated from his return route and took to an unfamiliar street, all the while humming the tune of an English song he had heard on the radio. He passed a fleeting glance over all the once-colourful houses that lined the street, and soon began to imagine all the faded colours splattering the fabric of Pushpa's salwar kameez.

As he poked his head around the corner, his eye caught the crimson hue of a large brick building. It must have once been the sole building on that street, but now it was flanked by tin-roofed shacks and smaller shops. Despite that, it was clearly the most brightly-painted and noble structure in that part of Aulapur. Perhaps its out-of-place appearance was what made Ravi Singh stop in his tracks and squint up at it. It was immensely large, perfectly rectangular but for a small box-like extension of the front wall, forming a kind of shaded porch area with steps leading up to the front door. Ravi Singh finally stood right before the steps of the mammoth building. The discoloured signboard beside the door read: "Lalbuji Library."

"Are you lost?" a voice rang too close to his ear. He jolted and spun around to find a set of crooked teeth uncomfortably close to him. Taking an astonished step back, he found that they belonged to a hunched, balding old man with eyes hidden behind folds upon folds of patchy skin – skin that might have paled due to hours on end spent indoors. He stood with one foot swapped for a

wooden peg, and the other presumably in the grave, but he seemed to stand nonetheless.

“Are you lost?” The old man frowned. His manner of speech was strange: his lips took their time contorting to produce vowel sounds, unlike the rapid elocution that Ravi Singh was accustomed to in Aulapur.

“Why does the sign have ‘Lalbujh Library’ written on it?” Ravi Singh asked, his eyes riveted on the man’s wooden peg.

The old man was clearly stumped. He had almost certainly never been faced with such a question before. His knobby hands reached up to fix his frayed collars as he replied, “Because it’s a library called Lalbujh.”

Ravi Singh flushed after realising his foolishness. After the old man explained he had been the librarian at Lalbujh for over 26 years, Ravi Singh asked whether he owned the building.

“No, no,” the librarian replied, sniffing the air as he examined Ravi Singh, “The owner is a very rich and important woman.”

He led Ravi Singh into the building. The floor of the library was tiled. It was two-storeyed. Each floor boasted a labyrinthine grid of bookshelves, their wild geometry at once welcoming and terrifying. The white tube lights that lit up the whole building were the kind that Ravi Singh had often seen in government offices. There was a staircase winding up to the upper floor like a vine and a raised platform at the very back of the library whose bookshelves stood apart from the rest. Not a soul was to be seen on either floor.

The librarian left Ravi Singh to explore as he pleased, which he did with no regard for the time. He ran his hands over all the new and

ostentatiously bright children’s books and lifestyle magazines. Many of the books he knew already, but had never seen their exteriors so colourful. The books that resided in his father’s study did not have an identity – their covers were as decrepit as the librarian himself, and bereft of any title. So it excited Ravi Singh to find such an array of designs, and patterns on all the familiar books – *Middlemarch*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Ivanhoe*.

He even hazarded stepping gingerly onto the platform at the back of the library, which rose up from the ground floor like some god himself had ordained it thus. The librarian spotted him while he was gazing at yellowing hardbacks in the bookshelves on the platform. “Those faithful old things are going to go any day now,” he said almost in a whisper, though in that enormous space, it came out like thunder. “Haven’t been borrowed for many, many years.”

Ravi Singh went home long after the sun had set that day. Even when the cane ravaged his palms, he could not help but recall the books housed on the raised platform at the back of the library. His mother shook her head as she exclaimed, “What’ll become of you, Ravi Singh!”

Ravi Singh absentmindedly waited for Shah Nawaz to appear the next day and was once again disappointed. Where the hell was he? Ravi Singh wondered whether this was a reprise of Shah Nawaz’s brief disappearance when they had been younger, far younger. At the time it had, in fact, transpired that Shah Nawaz had run away in search of work. He had made it some two kilometres out of Aulapur before being delivered back by concerned holy men coated in ash and vermilion.

His usual parliament of friends soon began to disband, wary of squabbles in the absence of Shah Nawaz’s mediation. Shah Nawaz, having grown up in a gully that was absent on most maps, was more

or less already a man. During the game, his word was law. More importantly than all that, it was Shah Nawaz, Ravi Singh's first and truest friend, who had invited him to play marbles for the first time. But Ravi Singh was not too disappointed, for he now had a new place of pilgrimage in the evenings.

When the sun had almost set, Ravi Singh rushed into Lalbujh Library. He shoved the door open carelessly and heard a great thud as he stumbled forward. To his shock and regret, Pushpa lay on the ground before him, grimacing and clutching one side of her forehead.

Ravi Singh merely stood there. His vision was normal for a moment, before reeling into a montage of horrifying images: Pushpa's face attached to an oxygen mask in an ambulance, Pushpa's mother wailing and beating her chest, Pushpa writhing in her death throes, Pushpa's skeleton withering away with the passage of — "You ass!" Pushpa managed to cry out.

If Shah Nawaz were here he would have picked her up gently and placated her using Urdu words like *alfaaz* and *maazrat*. Ravi Singh made a mental note to learn Urdu. Meanwhile, Pushpa continued to curse his clumsiness.

It took a few moments but Pushpa finally stood up, with no help from a petrified Ravi Singh. She dusted herself and stormed off without a word. He watched her leave, taking any hopes of courtship along with her. The whole town knew that Pushpa had a head for opportunity, and like the other schoolgirls of Aulapur, she hid it well under her headscarf. He thought she had left the building, but when Ravi Singh sat down with Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, she was back in mere minutes to prod at him.

"You read?"

"Hmm?"

"Do you read, Ravi Singh?"

Ravi Singh nodded eagerly, indicating that they must be a part of the same secret society of readers. Pushpa smacked his arm. "Stop looking so excited. What are you reading?"

In this manner did Ravi Singh and Pushpa soon become the ghosts of Lalbujh Library, drifting in between the bookshelves and fishing out cobwebbed editions of books they had already read, but had never really been interested in. Pushpa began to frequent the library at the same time as Ravi Singh and their movements in between the bookshelves began to become more and more familiar.

A few days passed. When Ravi Singh would borrow books and bring them home to read them for a second or third time, his father knew immediately where he had been but said nothing. Instead, he would pass an observant glance at his son and stick his nose back into his newspaper.

One such day, Ravi Singh found himself staring at the copy of Aristotle's *Poetics* that Pushpa had just thrust towards him. He had never read it, but his father would often use its contents to explain other texts. He ran his hand over the gold-and-silver etchings on the cover. The title was embossed upon the leather. He craned forward close enough to go cross-eyed so that he could make out the scratches on the spine in detail; each one, he was certain, had a story behind it — one caused perhaps by being pulled out from a splintering bookshelf by a book hoarder, or by falling from a dying professor's withering hand, or being hurled in anger by an uncomprehending student.

Suddenly, he slammed the book shut, remembering what the librarian had told him some time ago. This gold-and-silver *Poetics* was bound to be trashed, or worse — given to somebody who would never read

it. Ravi Singh gawked at the book, then at the entire library surrounding him, the beautiful collection of old and new manuscripts that had kindled an almost obscene fascination within him. The book was indeed beautiful, partly because it had been virtually untouched for so long.

Ravi Singh decided that he was going to rescue Aristotle.

“What?” Pushpa asked, puzzled at his strange expressions. But to Ravi Singh’s ears, her question was almost accusatory, a cry of disbelief at his depravity. When his answer was silence, Pushpa rolled her eyes and went away to the biographies section in exasperation. Ravi thought that perhaps he was a monster. A fiend so wicked that even winning the most colourful marbles could not possibly redeem him. He thought all this even as he slipped the book inside his t-shirt. The leather was warm and mellow. The one-legged old man was checking the reference numbers of some books by the counter just beside the door. When he saw Ravi Singh, he smiled warmly. Ravi Singh smiled back, but only with his mouth. He gulped. He began a measured walk to the door, his ears straining to hear Pushpa’s footsteps. The book was already hidden. It was as good as pilfered. There was no turning back, not now. He hoped she would eventually realise he was missing and follow him out.

Ravi Singh was acutely aware of the slapping noise that his worn-out shoes made against the tiled floor. It hit his eardrums like the sound of crashing waves, but he kept walking nonetheless. He realised his spine was oddly straight as he walked. It made him feel like a tree with legs. Even his legs became heavier and heavier, and in his mind’s eye, morphed into roots that refused to carry him forward any longer. But no, he had just about made it. Ten more steps and he would be past the counter and out the door. Eight. Five. Three.

“Stop right there, Ravi Singh,” the librarian called out. Ravi Singh froze. The book under his t-shirt seared him like a branding iron. He watched the old man limp in his direction and rested his arms on the librarian’s counter. His eyes locked on Ravi Singh from beneath the folds of his skin. “You haven’t borrowed your customary book today.”

Ravi Singh feigned laughter and scratched the back of his head with a sweat-soaked hand. “Sorry, Uncle. Not today. Exams are upon us.”

“But aren’t your exams in September? That’s more than two months away.”

Ravi Singh gulped. His hand unconsciously wandered to his abdomen, where Aristotle himself was being drenched in perspiration.

The librarian stared at him for a moment longer, and then flashed a look at his t-shirt, a heartbeat in which the horrors of a life sentence played out in Ravi Singh’s mind. Finally, the old man smiled. “In any case, you must be busier now. Carry on.”

Ravi Singh could finally breathe. He could not believe it. He was out. The doorknob felt like butter as he clutched it and he felt the heavy, humid air hit him in the face as the door creaked open. Out of nowhere, Pushpa’s voice ensnared him like a fishing net. “Abbey wait, Ravi Singh! Where are you going without me?”

Ravi Singh could bear it no longer. He broke into a run. He dashed through the narrow streets until he was unable to hear her voice calling out to him. One day, he would do with her all those things that film stars did with actresses, or that Shah Nawaz did with the girls in his class, but today all he wanted was to disappear.

The next day, he came back and realised from Pushpa’s unrelenting glare that she knew exactly

why he had deserted her. She poked his belly several times while inside, checking for any hidden books. When she surprised him by hiding Mulk Raj Anand under her kameez, it became their custom, falling into place in the patchwork of their lives almost as if it had always belonged there. The two accomplices would even smile at the librarian on their way out.

Novels by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, travelogues by Ibn Battuta, essays on Dante’s Divine Comedy, rare books on the lives of mountaineers – nothing was spared and everything was split like plunder between pirates. Ravi Singh became addicted to this routine. He felt that Lalbujh Library was where he belonged, even when it was practically emptied, and where he would finally make love to Pushpa under the watchful eyes of Edward Gibbon and Herodotus in the History section.

One such afternoon of fanciful imaginings, Ravi Singh’s father called him into his bedroom. Ravi Singh was certain he had done nothing wrong. In fact, he was already coming up with a hypothetical (but not too bold) defense of any actions that his father may have misunderstood. Instead of tearing through him, his father’s eyes were distressed, almost moist. He folded the newspaper he was clutching and held out the bottom half of the page so that Ravi Singh could read it.

Shah Nawaz had been shot. It was reported that a gang of drunken delinquents had attacked him in an unlit gully while he was coming home from Mahajan Sweet Shop. The body had been found only two days ago as it decomposed in a pile of garbage. There was no photograph accompanying the article. Ravi Singh read the 92 words of the report again and again, hoping that, like one of his father’s books, there was some scope for further reinterpretation. His father grimly led him away from the newspaper and sat him down on the dining table, his faraway voice saying something or the other about the many debts owed by Shah Nawaz’s father. Mumblings about law and order, about the homicide statistics of Aulapur, and about a waste of young human capital, wafted over Ravi Singh’s head. So, too, did images of the one-legged librarian, Pushpa, and their audacious book heists, but they were all slipping through his mind like sand through his fingers.

His mother, unusually quiet now, prepared his favourite sweet lassi for him.

All that could be heard was the sound of Ravi Singh’s fingernails scratching the wooden table with his fingernails.

Ordinarily, his father would have admonished him for it, but today he was silent.

FOLLOW COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS & STAY SAFE



STAY HOME &
ISOLATE YOURSELF
IF SICK



WEAR A FACE MASK
IN
PUBLIC SPACES



WASH / SANITIZE
YOUR HANDS
REGULARLY



MAINTAIN SOCIAL
DISTANCING
(6 - 8 FT)



CLEAN SURFACES
REGULARLY

The Swachh Yogi

Raj Chengappa

For Param, a Doon School and St Stephen's College alumnus, sanitation and environment had been something of a religion ever since he joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1981 and was posted in Uttar Pradesh.

Parameswaran Iyer (517 K, 1974) was in Hanoi, Vietnam, watching television with his wife Indira, when Narendra Modi delivered his maiden Independence Day address in Delhi in 2014, calling for a Swachh Bharat mission. He recalls almost falling off his chair when Modi mentioned the lack of toilets and the shame and indignity women faced when they defecated in the open. For a prime minister to bring up a subject not spoken about in polite company, that too from the ramparts of the Red Fort, was unheard of. Param, as his friends call him, was then leading the World Bank's work on Urban Development and Water/Sanitation and recalls telling Indira he was keen on returning to India and being part of the programme.

For Param, a Doon School and St Stephen's College alumnus, sanitation and environment had been something of a religion ever since he joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1981 and was posted in Uttar Pradesh. From 1994 to 1998, he was the founder project director of Swajal, the community-managed rural drinking water and sanitation programme launched by the state. In 1998, he went on deputation to the World Bank as a senior water and sanitation specialist. By 2009, he had decided to quit the IAS and work exclusively for the World Bank, anchoring major sanitation projects in West Asia and then in South Asia. So when he heard Modi's speech in 2014, he saw it as an opportunity of a lifetime to fulfil the mission of

making India open-defecation free (ODF). A year later, on a visit to India, he was sounded out for heading the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and, by February 2016, he had started work as a Secretary in the Union ministry for drinking water and sanitation which would implement the programme.



Param leads by example, cleans toilet pit in Telangana

The task was truly daunting. Modi, who had a penchant for setting audacious goals, decided India should be declared an ODF country by October 2, 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. That meant building an incredible 20 million toilets a year, for five years. To get an idea of the scale of that ambition, in 2014, despite the massive sanitation programmes launched in the past, only 70 million individual household latrines had been built since Independence. It fulfilled only

39 per cent of the total requirement. The pace of building toilets before SBM was an average 4-5 million a year. The target set now was four times that number. Doubters and naysayers alike scoffed at the ambition. But Modi was clear it had to be done. Soon after Param took charge of the ministry, Modi told him the only way SBM could meet its target was if it was made a jan andolan (people's movement). The prime minister, along with the then finance minister, the late Arun Jaitley, assured him there would be no shortage of funds for the mission. Terming it a "handsome budget", Jaitley set aside Rs 1.3 lakh crore (\$20 billion) for five years, to be split between the Centre and states in a 60:40 ratio.



Heralding a sanitation revolution in India

Param realised that to make SBM a success he would first have to launch the world's largest behavioural change programme. He was, in essence, selling a product that was neither being effectively delivered by the government machinery nor demanded by its market - the people. "It was as difficult as trying to paint the wings of an aeroplane when it was in flight," he observed. He began by cutting the red tape that characterised his ministry. That meant initiating a mission-mode approach, flattening the organisational hierarchy and bringing in young and fresh talent. He evolved a system of agile planning, strong communications network, including social media posts, and rapid feedback from districts on the progress of the

SBM. The new normal for working was from eight till late every day and coming in on Saturdays to have video conferences with district collectors. Param summed up the challenges he faced as the 4Ses. The first S was the scale of the target of 100 million toilets. The second was speed - the time available to accomplish it was less than three years. The third S was stigma, of wiping out centuries of taboo and prejudices regarding toilets in homes. And the fourth was sustainability - how to keep toilets functioning after they had been built.

Aware that sanitation was a state subject, Param knew his ministry could act only as a coordinator, provide financial and technical assistance and monitor the programme. The nuts and bolts of implementation would have to be left to the bureaucracy in the states, districts, panchayats and villages, what he referred to as the PM-CM-DM framework. To this, his team added the concept of VM or village motivator to drive the programme at the grassroots level - each of the 625,000 villages where the SBM would be implemented was to have a designated swachhagrahi. Param made as many as 150 field visits to states to convince senior state leaders and key officials to make the SBM among the top three priorities on their development list and to monitor its implementation. To bring about behavioural change and to enable rapid construction of toilets, the team involved over 120 million students, 1 million masons (many of them women), 250,000 sarpanches, 700 district magistrates and over 500 young professionals in the districts. Mass media too was roped in, as was Bollywood, to spread the message. Akshay Kumar contributed with his hit film - *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*.

It was a proud day for the SBM team when the prime minister declared India ODF on October 2, 2019, meeting the target he had set five years ago. By then, the SBM team had built a record 106.2 million toilets and had made 599,000 villages, 699 districts and 4,303 cities ODF. While his critics

(and there are many) point to his obsession with numbers rather than usage, Param prefers to quote the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) to answer them. Conducted between November 2018 and February 2019, with a sample size of 92,000 households across 6,136 villages, NARSS found sanitation coverage to be a high 93 per cent and the usage among those who had access to toilets to be as much as 95 per cent. As regards the impact of the programme, the SBM estimates that it saved close to 300,000 lives between 2014 and 2019, which would otherwise have been lost to a wide range of diseases as a result of poor sanitation facilities. In 2017, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's assessment of the health impacts of the SBM showed that it had resulted in 32 per cent fewer cases of diarrhoea among children in ODF areas apart from 32 per cent fewer cases of women with low body mass index.

Param classifies the key lessons he learnt from implementing the SBM as the 4Ps: political leadership, public financing, partnerships and people's participation. Param believes that the first P-the political leadership and support that Modi provided-and the last P-people's participation-

were vital to SBM's success. He admits there's still plenty of work to do. Apart from sustaining the ODF status, the next big step is to implement solid and liquid waste management, especially in urban areas. Also, ensuring that the made-in-India, twin-pit latrines built in villages across the country as part of the SBM remain functional.

There is a sense of urgency even now in the way Param goes about his business. A white board in his office records a daily count of the number of days he has spent on the job and the number of days he has left, an idea his wife gave him. On December 15, it read: Days spent, 1,386. Days left (for his contract with the government to expire): 136. For Param, the standout moment was not the announcement of the number of toilets built by October 2019; it was in February 2017, when he entered one of the twin pits of a toilet in Warangal district in Telangana and personally emptied out the dried and decomposed waste to demonstrate its safety and use as organic compost-possibly the best gestural evidence of the sustainability of the SBM.

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This is His Life - Gurdial Singh

Suman Dubey
167 J, 1958

To see a World in a Grain of Sand And a Heaven in a Wild Flower, Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand And Eternity in an hour.

—William Blake

On the mid-morning of 28th May 1962, John Dias and I were in our tents on the South Col of Everest, having earlier seen off the summit party of Gurdial Singh, Mohan Kohli and Sonam Gyatso on their attempt to reach the top of the world's highest mountain. Supported by Hari Dang, the legendary Ang Tharkay and five Sherpas had soon become dots slowly making their way up the final pyramid, the support group going on a little ahead to help them to set up camp as high as possible and return before the three made for the summit the following day. Suddenly, one dot detached itself at about 8250m and began to descend. It turned out to be Gurdial, who had decided to return, yielding his place on the summit party to Hari Dang. Few words were exchanged then but he said something about feeling dehydrated and didn't want to be a drag on the summit party.

This was the 2nd Indian Everest expedition. After spending two nights in Camp VII near the site of the Hillary/Tenzing last camp, the three were obliged to turn back from just below the south summit by a combination of weather conditions and slow progress. It was not till 1965 that an Indian expedition succeeded in putting climbers on the summit of Everest—and nine, at that. But this incident reveals something at the core of Gurdial Singh as a mountaineer and a human being.

As he explained much later, reaching the top of Everest held no particular fascination for him,

and he had agreed to be on the summit party because the expedition leader, Major John Dias, a close friend and a climbing companion of many years, wanted him on it. At 38, he was the oldest and most experienced climbing member of the expedition, fit and capable, well-armed with the endurance and stamina required to reach the top. It would have been a fitting climax to the accomplishments of someone who has been described as the first true Indian mountaineer.

This was long before climbing Everest had become a fad, when it was still a very serious endeavour. But Gurdial climbed for pleasure, to enjoy the mountains in the company of friends, to savour the beauty and grandeur of the high ranges, not to find fame or bag summits. On that morning almost sixty years ago, I suspect he just didn't feel completely in tune with the task, and easily shrugged off the prospect of climbing Everest in favour of his younger and far more motivated climbing companion.

Over several decades of climbing and exploring the Himalaya, particularly in Garhwal and Kumaon, there have in fact been many successful ascents by Guru, as he is affectionately known to his friends and the generations of the schoolboys he has taught and inspired.

But the journey has been far more noble than the narrow pursuit of mountain tops. It has been a life of exploration, travelling where few have been before, spending weeks together in remote regions, self-contained, independent and unshackled, on expeditions marked by camaraderie over

conquest, refined by an uncommon sensitivity to nature, informed by a deep knowledge of mountain flora and fauna, to the accompaniment of poetry, literature and music. In a world where interests and abilities are narrowing, he has been something of a renaissance man who has lived an enviably full life while passing on his passions to many of the hundreds he mentored at their most impressionable age.

I am fortunate to have been one of them. Guru was already something of a legend when, aged 11 and freshly arrived in the Doon School, I had a choice to make of a mid-term excursion—a biannual tradition that encouraged boys to spend four or five days in the wilderness. Older boys went off on their own, younger boys were shepherded by schoolmasters. At the end of March 1954, I joined a group led by Guru and another master to climb Nag Tibba, slightly under 3022m, a thickly-forested hill across the Aglar valley north of Mussoorie. The experience was unforgettable. We walked from Mussoorie along the Chamba path, down to the Aglar, exhilarated by views of the Bandarpunch range looming above. 6000m summits were identified; tales of adventure were recounted; names of those who had trodden on them were uttered in hushed awe. These were mountains that Doon School masters and former students had come to be identified with.

Sleeping on the floor of the Forest Rest House in Devalsari, in a magnificent deodar forest, we made do with thin sweaters and rough blankets. Summit day started before dawn. Shod in rubber-soled sports shoes more suited to the playing field than rough trails, we walked on snow for the first time and felt like we'd accomplished a Himalayan ascent when we reached the tall wooden 'jhanda' or flagpole, erected on the summit. We lost our way on the return, almost got benighted, and sang songs in the dark to keep our spirits up. It was my first 'mountain' and I was bitten by the



Guru and John D (Kekoo Naorji)

bug but entries in the visitor's book at the Forest Rest House revealed that it was already a regular feature in Guru's life; he had climbed Nag Tibba numerous times with students, friends and fellow schoolmasters.

Gurdial Singh owes his love of the high mountains to Doon School, specifically the English masters who taught there. Among them were Jack Gibson, John Martyn and notably RL Holdsworth, an accomplished sportsman, skier and mountaineer who made the first ascent of Kamet (7756m) with Frank Smythe in 1931, and famously smoked a pipe on the summit. Mountains had played no part in Guru's early life, spent in the plains of the Punjab. Born on New Year's day 1924 in a village in Gurdaspur district, into a relatively affluent, landed family, he was the third of five sons. His father was the first Indian to be inducted into the newly formed Military Farms and Cantonment Service, which meant that he spent his early years moving from one cantonment to another. But he was a precocious youngster who matriculated at the age of 13 and joined Foreman Christian College in Lahore at 14. Not surprisingly, he sailed through college, acquiring two Masters degrees, in History from Government College in Lahore and in Geography from Aligarh Muslim University. The latter included a course on the history of geographical exploration which is when he first read about mountain climbing. In the meantime,

he had also become an accomplished horseman, swimmer and shooter.

Armed with these qualifications, Guru returned to his village home and wrote off to the Doon School and Mayo College, setting out his degrees and sporting skills and applying to become a teacher. Sight unseen, the Doon School offered him a job right away—a vacancy had arisen, and a replacement was urgently needed. So in the summer of 1945 he joined the school—eventually retiring 34 years later in 1979 as Deputy Headmaster.



Guru and The Doon Swim Team 1951

As a mountaineer he started modestly enough. His first treks were in Kashmir, in the Sonamarg region—walking to the Kolahoi glacier and crossing the Yamhar pass to the Sindh river in 1946, and doing the Amarnath cave circuit from Sonamarg to Chandanwari in 1947. Still just trekking, his next excursion was in 1948, when along with Martyn, Gibson and two schoolboys, the Koregaokar brothers (who later achieved fame in School by climbing the Matterhorn in cricket boots), spent a few days visiting Dodi Tal and climbing a few hours above to Darwa Top, about 4000m. The following year, he was back in these hills with Willi Unsoeld, who in 1963 made the first ascent of the West Ridge of Everest and had been a guest at the school, before joining his first real expedition to Bandarpunch (6316m), in 1950.

This was the third expedition in which with Doon School masters were joined by Tenzing Norgay, not yet a climber of renown, who reached the summit with Roy Greenwood, a Physical Training instructor at the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun. Bandarpunch was Guru's first climb on a real mountain, and he climbed to the last camp at around 5792m. Of Tenzing, he has the fondest of memories, describing him as "the most modest human being conceivable" and recalling that his "broad smile won over people in a big way."

Tom Longstaff's autobiography, *This My Voyage*, describing his 1907 ascent of Trisul (7120m) had just been published—it propelled Guru and Greenwood to make the third ascent of the mountain in 1951. Tenzing would have been with them, had the French on Nanda Devi not made him the more attractive offer of being Sirdar on their ill-fated expedition. On top of Trisul, Greenwood did a spontaneous, exuberant handstand and Guru followed with a headstand. These antics apart, this climb is recognized as the first ascent of a major Himalayan mountain by an Indian climbing for the love of it—and thus regarded as the birth of Indian mountaineering. The ascent also enabled him in 1952 to become the first Indian member of the Alpine Club in London. Guru's other notable takeaway from this expedition was the great value of Garhwalis in supporting climbing expeditions. He climbed with Sherpas, of course, but many tough men belonging to higher villages like Bampa and Ghamsali, joined him on expeditions in the years to come. They included stalwarts like Kesar Singh, who had climbed Kamet with Smythe's party—clad in local footwear made of straw, rather than boots—and in later years Kalyan Singh and Dewan Singh.

Guru's focus next shifted to Kamet. By this time it was the Bengal Sappers of the Indian Army, based in nearby Roorkee, who had taken to mountain climbing, thanks to the presence of both Major General WE Williams, a British officer who

became Engineer-in-Chief after Independence, and Nandu Jayal, a Sapper officer and Doon School alumnus, who was fast becoming a well-known climber in his own right. The army engineers were focussed on Kamet, and Williams, who had been on Bandarpunch, invited Guru, fresh off his pioneering ascent of Trisul, to join their expedition in 1952. They turned back less than 200m short of the summit, sinking in soft snow after taking a wrong line on the broad final pyramid. The following year, they were all back on Kamet under Jayal's leadership (the expedition included Guru's youngest brother, Jagjit, then a cadet at the Military Academy) and climbed to within 30m of the summit when severe dehydration—something Guru recalls they hadn't encountered seriously on earlier expeditions—turned them back. But Jayal did get up Abi Gamin (7355m), the peak across from Meade's Col, the site of the last camp.

A long trekking visit to the region of Tibet (including Manasarovar) bordering the yet-undisputed Bara Hoti plateau followed before, in 1955, Kamet beckoned again. Tenzing was now world famous for his ascent of Everest and working as Director of Field Training at the newly established Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling. So the Sappers turned to equally-experienced Ang Tharkay as Sirdar.

Indeed, before Tenzing climbed Everest, Ang Tharkay was the better known Sherpa for his heroic support of the French on Annapurna in 1950. The Kamet expedition was a great success. Not only did Nandu Jayal and others climb the mountain, the expedition also succeeded on Abi Gamin the same day.

It happened like this: on summit day, leaving before sunrise, Nandu Jayal soon found that he'd forgotten his sun goggles in camp. John Dias volunteered to give his to Jayal and return to Meade's Col to fetch them. Guru came back with him. At Meade's Col they realized that a return

towards Kamet was impractical, so they decided to go the opposite way, and accompanied by Kalyan and Dewan were soon atop Abi Gamin. The climb was notable for one other reason: it was the first time Guru used crampons!



Base Camp, c.12,000 ft. on Bandarpunch

Then followed what might be called his Nanda Devi phase. But it began with a tragedy. In 1956 he set out with a small group for Mrigthuni (6857m), the gentle mountain on the outer ring of the Nanda Devi complex, just east of Trisul. At Dibrughetta, three long walking days from Lata village, one of the members, fellow schoolmaster Nabendu Chuckerbutty, fell ill suddenly and died from pulmonary oedema. But not before Indian Air Force officer Nalni Jayal, also a Doon School alumnus and cousin of Nandu, who was on this expedition, made a heroic effort to get the Air Force to airdrop medicines, walking in one day from Dibrughetta to reach the telegraph lines in Joshimath. But to no avail. The death was a big blow. Guru was in charge of swimming and geography at the Doon School, and Chuckerbutty was a recently recruited geography teacher whom Guru was introducing to the high mountains.

Not only was Guru a highly engaging and motivating teacher, he was innovative in his approach. His main subject was geography, brought more to life with the use of coloured chalk on dull black and greenboards. His lessons would include topics off the curriculum weaving in mountaineering terms and concepts and

exploration history. Another of his passions, introduced to him by Jack Gibson, was western classical music. Occasionally he would announce that the class would that day abandon the set curriculum—for music! We would troop to his rooms to be treated to the sublime cadences of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony ("There's nothing unfinished about it," he told us), the dancing rhythms of Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, or the melodic evocation of rural summer in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. "Did you hear the cuckoo?" he would ask, as the call of the bird was rendered on clarinets in the second movement.

His abilities as a teacher were widely recognized. In 1957 the British Council facilitated a year for him at Gordonstoun, a school in Scotland founded by the German educator Kurt Hahn and known for its emphasis on sports and demanding physical outdoor activities. The months he spent there and in the UK enabled him to meet climbers like Tom Longstaff, John Hunt and NE Odell, among others. It also gave him a taste of Scottish climbing: John Ray, who was later to become headmaster of Tyndale Biscoe School in Srinagar, took him to climb several Munroes ('mountains' taller than 915m) including Ben Nevis, the highest in the UK.

Returning to India, he was back on Mrigthuni in 1958, and succeeded in making its first ascent. The following year he teamed up with AD Moddie, a future President of the Himalayan Club, to spend much of the summer of 1958 trekking around the Nanda Devi massif from the Milam valley through the Girthi Ganga and down the Dhauri Ganga.

And that brought him face to face with India's new-found infatuation with Everest, triggered by the Hillary and Tenzing ascent, which drove Jawaharlal Nehru to take a personal interest in the establishment of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling under Jayal's directorship. It was only natural that the Sponsoring Committee,

which had earlier organized expeditions to Cho Oyu (on which, in 1958, Nandu Jayal died of pulmonary oedema), would look to the country's most experienced climber to lead the first Indian expedition that was being planned for 1960. The committee was headed by a senior member of the ICS, SS Khera, who invited Guru to be the leader.

As Guru puts it, for about two months he was in the saddle. Not being used to the ways of officialdom, he found it irksome. While Guru wanted a free hand choosing his team of climbers, Khera had some names that had to be included. Guru wanted the best equipment available anywhere, but Khera wanted him to use what was being manufactured by the ordnance factories—largely untested on the heights. Eventually, Guru gave him a list of equipment that he necessarily wanted to be imported. When this wasn't accepted, he turned his back on the expedition—along with John Dias, who gave voice to some acerbic thoughts on what he called 'sarkari mountaineering'. The leadership passed on to Brigadier Gyan Singh, then HMI principal. As with Dias, Guru declined even to join the expedition.

He didn't waste time, though. In 1960 he took a big step, compliant with his own fascination for Nanda Devi, organizing an expedition to the unclimbed Devistan I, (6680m) which would take him for the first time into the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. And in another first that speaks volumes for his mentoring capacity, he also took along a teenaged student, Dilsher Singh, who had no previous mountain climbing experience. The expedition didn't succeed but it was a rare penetration in those days of the Rishi Ganga gorge, and it whetted his appetite for more.

In 1961 he returned with a more ambitious goal, Nanda Devi itself, and for the first time felt the need to approach an outside agency, the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, for financial assistance. Remarkably, Guru had so far paid from his own pocket for all his climbing. Even on the

army expeditions to Kamet, officers on the team paid according to their ranks, ranging from Rs. 300 for a Lieutenant to Rs. 500 for a Major. He recalls that the total costs on most expeditions—all self-funded and very frugal—came to between Rs. 800-Rs. 1000 per person. The more ambitious 1961 Nanda Devi expedition cost Rs. 22,000, toward which, in another first, the Mount Everest Foundation in London contributed £400 and the IMF about Rs. 12,000. Interestingly, Jawaharlal Nehru agreed to be its Patron. Guru had written to him on an impulse and Nehru surprisingly agreed, though he did write back to say he wasn't sure what exactly a Patron was supposed to do.

Guru ranks the 1961 expedition as one of his most treasured memories. Continuing his practice of inviting a teenage novice, he agreed to my being a part of it. And there couldn't have been a more thrilling introduction to mountain climbing than in the company of men like Gurdial and John Dias. We were six climbers, fast friends by the end of it, three Sherpas and a dozen Garhwalis from villages like Lata, Bampa and Ghamsalii. In ten carefree and largely self-contained weeks in the Rishi Ganga basin, we climbed to 6000m on Nanda Devi before realizing we weren't equipped to tackle such a tall mountain in monsoon conditions. But we did make the first ascent of Devistan I, the second of Maiktoli (6803m) and almost made a hat-trick to the top of Trisul by moonlight.

An expert on Himalayan flora, Guru took pains to educate the rest of us ignoramuses on the abundant variety and beauty of Himalayan wildflowers, especially as we slipped into the verdant rainy months. We were expected to remember Latin names and identify the rainbow blooms dotting the lush pastures. One day, John Dias, on being asked once too often, what flowers he had encountered, tersely replied, "Primula bloodyfooliana." Guru and John D, as he was often called, were the closest of friends, with a common

attitude to climbing, a love of music and poetry, and the sensitivity, in William Blake's lines beloved by both, to see a world in a grain of sand.

Things began to slow down for Guru after the 1962 Everest expedition. He had turned back from the summit attempt but ended up spending six consecutive nights on the unforgiving South Col at 8000m, mostly without supplemental oxygen to ensure that everyone got off those extreme heights safely. Not many have spent so many consecutive days at this altitude, today melodramatically called the 'Death Zone'.

The IMF wasn't yet done with Everest. In 1965 Guru was invited to join the third and eventually successful Everest expedition led by Mohan Kohli. By now it was such familiar territory for many of the members that it was almost an easy climb. And it went like clockwork in perfect weather conditions. Although nine reached the summit, he believes that if there had been more oxygen, more could have made it.

That turned out to be his last major outing. A few small expeditions came sporadically in later years. In 1966, he was on Reo Purgial I (6816m) when he, Balwant Sandhu and I with Sherpas Ang Phutar and Chinze



Guru and Chris Bonington, 2003

turned back about 40-50m short of the summit because mists obscured the cornices on the summit ridge. Had we waited for the dry Tibetan air to drive away the mist, we would have stepped on top in less than half an hour. In the early 1970s he was back. He joined some IMA expeditions led by Brigadier Darshan Khullar as adviser and also accompanied women's courses at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering for about ten years.



Gurdial Singh at 90

Over the years, he collected several honours, including the Arjuna Award in 1965, the Padma Shri in 1967 and the IMF Gold Medal in 1983. In the 1990s and 2000s, he worked with

another close friend, Aamir Ali—a pupil at the Doon School when it first opened, briefly also a teacher there, later serving with the International Labour Organization in Geneva—on a proposal to convert the heavily militarized Siachen Glacier region into an International Peace Park.

Of the Indian climbing scene he feels strongly about much that passes for contemporary Indian mountaineering, such as the obsession with Everest that bespeaks, not a love of the sport, but worldly benefits such as publicity and reward. He decries the tendency to repeat easy routes, sometimes accomplished only because of the professional services of Sherpas and other experienced climbers from the hill communities. Few Indians test their mettle on difficult climbs, unclimbed routes, on lower but more challenging mountains that need higher levels of skill and offer greater satisfaction than well trodden routes up the more famous summits. Many Indians have climbed Everest but all, save a minuscule number, by the two well-prepared common routes. Guru laments that no one has attempted the West Ridge, for example.

Now, less than three years short of 100 (he turned 97 this January), Guru has stepped back from his beloved mountains, from travels to the four corners of the earth, even from the games of bridge that filled his afternoons at the club in Chandigarh. Guru never married. The story may be apocryphal but his reply to those who quizzed him about his bachelorhood is said to have been, “Well, I am

married—to the mountains!” His old friends have passed on—Nandu Jayal lost long ago to the mountains, John Dias to sudden illness in 1964, Aspi Moddie, Aamir Ali and most recently Nalni Jayal to old age. But numerous other relationships stay vibrant, built on long years of deep affection and common interests. At one time, they provided him ports-of-call wherever in the world he found himself, for the diaspora of the Doon School has spread far and wide. Today, they manifest themselves in the many former students who make it a point to drop in on him whenever possible. His mind remains razor sharp and he has better recall than most of those he has taught. He is liable to surprise his visitors with details of their school days or events that they themselves have long forgotten. I have yet to meet anyone who felt that he wasn’t welcomed or acknowledged visiting him. And his values, like his interests and spirit, continue to shine undimmed: old-fashioned values, perhaps, based on decency, rectitude, integrity, honour and fair play. He remains a beacon of excellence, a role model and a symbol of high character. To paraphrase the words of the Bard whom he loves, it can be said of him, *“His life was gentle, and the elements so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world, This is a man!”*

This is a heartfelt salute to one of the greatest living Indian mountaineers, Gurdial Singh, 97 by his student, friend and renowned mountaineer and writer Suman Dubey.

All photos are courtesy “The Suman Dubey collection”.

Suman Dubey is a retired journalist who in his early years climbed in the Himalaya, the European Alps and tried his hand at rock climbing in Britain. In later years he trekked extensively in the western Himalaya. He has been President of the Himalayan Club and a Vice President in the Indian Mountaineering Foundation.

This article originally appeared in The Himalayan Journal Volume 75 and has been reprinted with due permission from the editor Nandini Purandare, with thanks!

Introducing Online Voting to The DSOBS

Vipul Swarup
438 K, 2000

In the DSOBS' ongoing bid to upgrade and digitise systems to address the contemporary needs of a dynamic society of Old Boys spread across the globe, the Executive Committee and Digital Sub-committees of the Society have recently introduced an online voting system to help elect members to its decision-making bodies. Here's an explanation.

In light of the ongoing Coronavirus lockdowns and social distancing requirements, The DSOBS VP and Executive Committee Elections 2020 were held online. The Society has developed a secure online system for running elections, developed by Arnav Chaudhry (679 J, 2022), as part of his S Form summer internship, under guidance from the DSOBS Digital Outreach Subcommittee. Well done Arnav! This system has been developed keeping in mind the following key considerations:

- the process should follow the DSOBS rules in a transparent manner
- votes should be anonymous
- only authorised voters should be able to vote, and that too only once

The online voting process we adopted is in 3 tiers:

1. The first tier involved doing a double-blind random selection of seven voters from five preselected age-bands among the entire community. This was achieved through the randomisation features of Microsoft Excel, with the candidates and other community members watching over a Zoom video conference.

2. The second tier involved confidentially polling
- (a) The existing executive committee,
 - (b) The collegium of past presidents,
 - (c) The Board of Governors of the school
3. Finally, in the third tier, a fourteen-person committee was formed with representation from the four groups mentioned in tiers 1 and 2 and the current President and Vice President of the Society. This committee confidentially voted for the final selection.

This system has brought in unprecedented accessibility and transparency to the election process. The society has chapters in over 20 states of India, 14 countries and 6 continents. We have a demographic that ranges from 18 - 90+ years of age. The society's aim has been to cast as wide a net as possible, and rely on DoscOs who do not only live in or near Delhi. This year the final selection committee had members voting from six different states of India, two who were in remote parts of the Himalayas, one member from Canada, two in the UK and one in Dubai. Each used phones, computers and other devices to vote. Many did not have great network coverage. Yet everyone was able to vote and have their voice heard.

How do committee members cast a vote?

1. The member's official DSOBS registered email address is added to the election system via the administrators' console and is confirmed by the alumni secretary of the DSOBS.

2. The member receives a mail from the DSOBS with a link which takes them to the secure voting site: <https://elections.dsobs.net>
3. The members enter their email address and name to login and that generates a One-Time-Password, which is sent to their email address.
4. The member immediately gets an OTP on their email.
5. The member enters the OTP in the voting site.
6. The member is shown the candidates with an option to vote for one of them.
7. Once a member casts a vote, he, she or they cannot login to vote again.

Can the votes be reset?

1. Members do not have access to reset votes.
2. Only designated system administrators can reset votes via the admin console after consulting the president, vice president and alumni secretary of the DSOBS.

How are votes tallied?

1. The following groups have been created in the system, with the number of allowed voters mentioned below:

1. Collegium of Past Presidents

- a. One person from the group will be designated group leader. This person will be able to login after all members complete voting and review and submit the result for the final tally.
- b. There are 3 votes within this group, once

the entire voting process has been completed the group leader will discuss the result with the group.

2. Board of Governors

- a. One person from the group will be designated group leader. This person will be able to login after all members complete voting and review and submit the result for the final tally.
- b. The winner of the vote within this group gets one vote for the final vote tally.

3. Executive Committee

- a. One person from the group will be designated group leader. This person will be able to login after all members complete voting and review and submit the result for the final tally.
- b. The winner of the vote within this group, gets one vote for the final vote tally.

4. Volunteers from the fraternity

- a. There is no group leader for this group.
- b. 7 members can be added (these are randomly chosen from the wider DSOBS community in advance using the Rand Between function of Microsoft Excel)
- c. Each individual's vote will be counted as one vote in the final tally.

5. President and Vice President

- a. Both get one vote each, that is added to the final tally.
- b. The vice president can cast a tie-breaker if needed (but this can be done outside of the online platform).

2. Once all registered voters have finished voting and group heads have submitted their group's final votes, the system will automatically generate results, which are opened in the presence of the selection committee.

How secure is the system?

- The system is written on a modern Python platform and hosted in Digital Ocean's secure data centres
- Proper firewalls are set up, and the system is backed up on a regular basis
- Users login via OTP, which is inherently more secure than a simple username/password combination

- No one (not even an administrator) can see who has voted for whom—the system only maintains a tally of who all have voted and how many votes each candidate has received—**it does not record who has voted for whom.**

This process has resulted in a fair and open election, without the need for members to meet physically. We would like to also congratulate the new DSOBS vice president and EC members on being elected.

Notice under Rule 7 of The DSOBS Rules inviting Applications from Prospective Members for the Executive Committee of The Doon School Old Boys' Society

January 1, 2021

Dear Members,

This year, **EIGHT vacancies** will arise in **The DSOBS Executive Committee** which are to be filled at the Annual General Meeting, to be held on Saturday, 23rd October 2021.

The details of the vacancies are:

Sl. No.	Age in years	Vacancy
1.	Above 60 yrs	ONE (1)
2.	50 - 60 yrs	THREE (3)
3.	40 - 50 yrs	TWO (2)
4.	30 - 40 yrs	TWO (2)

Please note: 40 - 50 years means, completed 40 years on the date of AGM or earlier and not completed 50 years on the date of AGM, similarly for other age bands.

As per the Rules of the Society, the process of election/selection of Executive Committee Member(s)

is to be initiated by the President by or before 31st January of the year in which the vacancy(s) is/are to arise and Notice of such vacancy(s) is to be posted on the Society's website, sent out by e-mail or other means of communication and also published in the appropriate issue of The Rose Bowl. Hence this Notice.

The current procedure postulates that **all those individuals from amongst The DSOBS who wish to offer their candidature for becoming a member of the Executive Committee shall confidentially send their applications to the President of The DSOBS through any member of The DSOBS as a Proposer and two other members of The DSOBS as Seconders. The Proposer and the Seconders must be from the same age band (but not the same batch) as the candidate. The five age bands are - below 30 years, 30 - 40 years, 40 - 50 years, 50 - 60 years and above 60 years.** No other recommendation in favour of a prospective candidate, apart from the one sent by/through the Proposer and Seconders referred to above, shall be either considered or given any weightage. The Proposer or Seconders cannot

nominate or recommend the name of any other candidate that year.

The Proposer and the Seconders, along with their recommendations, should also briefly state as to why the candidate they are recommending should be a member of the Executive Committee.

The applications should be accompanied by the following:

- (i) A Curriculum Vitae of the candidate
- (ii) The candidate's contributions to The Doon School and The Doon School Old Boys' Society in the past
- (iii) The candidate's strengths and the areas in which he expects to contribute to The Doon School and The Doon School Old Boys Society, in particular, and the society at large, in general
- (iv) What the candidate proposes or expects to achieve in four years, should he be elected/ selected as a member of the Executive Committee
- (v) The Batch or Class to which the candidate belongs

Age eligibility for nomination will be the age of the nominee as on the date of the forthcoming Annual General Meeting, which is to be held on Saturday, 23rd October, 2021 this year.

The term of an Executive Committee Member is two years with the option to extend it by another two years, totalling four years, should he like to continue.

All applications in conformity with the above and the provisions of Rules 7.2(c) - (f) **shall be submitted by or before 5.00 pm on June 30, 2021**. No application received after 5.00 pm on June 30, 2021 shall be considered.

Once all applications are received, I shall constitute a Committee to examine the applications and deliberate thereupon with the objective of arriving at a consensus and recommend the name(s) of

one or more candidates, as vacancies permit, for the Executive Committee to place before the House for approval at the Annual General Meeting. In this process, the Executive Committee, the Committee constituted by me and I shall follow the procedure postulated by Rules 7.2(h) - (m).

I accordingly invite applications from The DSOBS fraternity for Membership to the Executive Committee in the age groups of:

1. Above 60 yrs
2. 50 - 60 yrs
2. 40 - 50 yrs
3. 30 - 40 yrs

Applications should be sent in confidence, addressed to the President (me), to be received by or before June 30, 2021.

Such applications can be delivered (receipt to be obtained) or mailed to:
THE PRESIDENT,
THE DOON SCHOOL OLD BOYS' SOCIETY,
C 574 DEFENCE COLONY, NEW DELHI 110024

Kindly superscribe "**Application for Executive Committee**" on the envelope.

Alternately, you may send the nominations via e-mail together with all attachments directly to the President (me) at president@dsobs.net.

Yours sincerely,

Tarun Sawhney
(234 K, 1991)
President – The Doon School Old Boys' Society
(2020-22)

Intimation of process for selecting candidates to represent the House in the Selection Committee for Election/Selection of Members to the Executive Committee [as per Rules 7.2 (G) – (K)]

January 1, 2021

Dear Members,

I have, by a separate Notice issued today, invited applications for membership to the Executive Committee of The Doon School Old Boys' Society, in the following age groups, in respect of which vacancies will arise from and after the next Annual General Meeting of the Society, to be held on Saturday, 23rd October 2021.

The details of the vacancies are:

Sl. No.	Age in years	Vacancy
1.	Above 60 yrs	ONE (1)
2.	50 - 60 yrs	THREE (3)
3.	40 - 50 yrs	TWO (2)
4.	30 - 40 yrs	TWO (2)

The Rules of the Society were updated at the last Special General Body Meeting. The existing Rules and procedures to carry out the process of election/selection are given below.

(g) On receiving all such applications by 30th June of the concerned year, the President shall constitute a Committee to examine the applications and deliberate thereupon with the objective of arriving at a consensus and recommend the name(s) of one or more candidates as vacancies permit for the Executive Committee to place before the House for approval at the Annual General Meeting. During this process of election, the Committee may also request the candidate(s) to meet with this Committee informally to enable it to understand the candidate(s) vision and suitability for the post.

(h) The President shall constitute this Committee by 15th August of the year in which the vacancy or vacancies arise.

(i) This Committee shall comprise of the President and the Vice President of The DSOBS and two members of the Executive Committee as decided by the Executive Committee. The Collegium will also be requested by the serving President to nominate two members to this Committee. Apart from these six members of this Committee, six others will be chosen from the five age bands referred to in Rule 7(2)(c) above. One (1) volunteer will be chosen from the age band of below 30 years, one (1) from the age band of 30 to 40 years, two (2) from the age band of 40 to 50 years, one (1) from the age band of 50 to 60 years and one (1) from the age band of above 60 years. Requests for such volunteers will be posted on the Society's website and sent by email and other means of communication, by the last date of February of the year in which the vacancies arise. Since the total number of this Committee is an even number i.e. twelve (12), in case of a tie in voting, the Vice President of The DSOBS shall have the casting vote.

(j) The six volunteers to serve on this Committee, from the aforesaid five age bands of The DSOBS members, shall be selected as follows.

- (i) The DSOBS database shall be utilized for the purpose of selecting such volunteers with each member being tagged with their batch year and date, month and year of birth. This database will be kept updated through The DSOBS website.
- (ii) This database shall be exported into Excel, or similar, equivalent, appropriate or better software, and

used to create the aforesaid five age bands based on the date, month and year of birth of a member.

- (iii) The President and/or the Vice President of The DSOBS will use the Excel RANDBETWEEN, or similar, equivalent, appropriate or better software, function to randomly select fifteen potential volunteers for every one volunteer required to serve on the Committee. For instance, since one volunteer is required from the age band of above 60 years, the names of fifteen potential volunteers from this age band shall be selected at random using the Excel RANDBETWEEN function, or similar, equivalent, appropriate or better software. On the other hand, since two volunteers are required for the age band of 40-50 years, thirty potential volunteers from this age band, shall be selected at random using the RANDBETWEEN function, or similar, equivalent, appropriate or better software.
- (iv) Once fifteen potential volunteers from the age band of above 60 years, forty five potential volunteers from the age band of 30-40 years, thirty potential volunteers from the age band of 40-50 years, thirty potential volunteers from the age band of 30-40 years have been selected at random, the President and/or Vice President and/or the Secretariat shall write to each of the said potential volunteers enquiring as to whether they would be willing to serve on the Committee. In case a potential volunteer selected at random is an overseas volunteer, there would be a sixteenth potential volunteer on the presumption that an overseas volunteer may find it difficult to physically serve on this Committee in Delhi.
- (v) In case one or more potential volunteer(s) decline to serve on the Committee, the Excel RANDBETWEEN function, or similar, equivalent, appropriate or better software, shall be utilized in that age band or bands to select another volunteer in his/her place to replace the volunteer and similar enquiries will be made.
- (vi) Once all potential volunteers are in place, then one volunteer will be selected using the

RANDBETWEEN function, or similar, equivalent, appropriate or better software, in an age group where one volunteer is required and two volunteers shall be selected using the RANDBETWEEN function, or similar, equivalent, appropriate or better software, where two volunteers are required to constitute the seven members of the Committee.

- (vii) However, both rounds of the said selection process as postulated by sub-rules (iv) and (vi) shall be carried out within four weeks of each other with the first round being held on or before the 11th of July and the second round by or before the 11th of August, in the presence of the Executive Committee Members and other members of The DSOBS who wish to attend the selection process. For this purpose, a notice will go out to all members, two weeks in advance, intimating the dates and venues when the first and second rounds of selection would take place.
- (k) Any person who's relative, whether by blood or marriage, is a potential Executive Committee candidate shall automatically stand disqualified from being a member of such Committee. Similarly, any person who has been a proposer or a seconder of any candidate shall also stand disqualified from being a member of such Committee. Any person, apart from the President and Vice President of The DSOBS, who has earlier been a member of this Committee shall also stands disqualified from being a member of such Committee for four years. Additionally, the said six Committee members shall be ineligible to apply for membership to the Executive Committee or for the post of Vice President for the next two years

I eagerly look forward to your interest and active participation, should your name be shortlisted for becoming a part of the Selection Committee to select members to the Executive Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Tarun Sawhney
 (234 K, 1991)
 President – The Doon School Old Boys' Society
 (2020-22)

Time Table for election of Executive Committee Members and Constitution of Selection Committee under Rule 7 of The DSOBS Rules

Sl. No.	Description	Deadline	Rule
1	Process for election of Executive Committee Members to be initiated by issuing Notice of vacancy, to be posted on the Society's website, sent by email or other means of communication and published in The Rose Bowl	January 31	7.2(a)-(b)
2	Notice inviting members to witness 1st round of selection of volunteers representing the House	June 28	7.2(j)(vii)
3	Applications from prospective candidates to be part of the Executive Committee, in conformity with Rule 7.2(c)-(e)	June 30	7.2(f)
4	1st round of selection of volunteers representing the House	July 11	7.2(j)(vii)
5	Notice inviting members to witness final round of selection of volunteers representing the House	July 29	7.2(j)(vii)
6	Final round of selection of volunteers representing the House	August 11	7.2(j)(vii)
7	Constitution of Selection Committee	August 15	7.2(h)
8	Selection Committee to recommend name(s) for post(s) of Executive Committee Member(s) to the Executive Committee	September 15	
9	Meeting of Executive Committee to be convened to consider recommendation of Selection Committee	September 29 (but in no event later than October 05)	



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If undelivered please return to
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