

Principal's Note

Polarity gives dimensions to an otherwise dreary life. Small polarities in our day-to-day interactions only add depth and meaning to our atmosphere, they do not define them.

Yet, I would say it is our mind which divides everything into polarities, opposites. Nothing is opposite in existence. Laws like the earth's movement cannot be felt, it's predetermined. Night and day, fall and spring, cold and summer, birth and death, are only apparent when in reality they merge together.

Heaven and hell; success and failure; all exist in unity.

Carl Jung believed that all humans possess certain specific patterns of behaviour and perception. He considered these patterns or characteristics as polarities. A polarity is the relationship between two elements that are on opposite ends of a spectrum with neither element, or in this case pattern of behaviour and perception, being right or wrong.

Duality of a man can never be contested, for every man is not one but two – Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. According to Stephan King, "There's a Mr. Hyde for every happy Jekyll face, a dark face on the other side of the mirror".

Truth is featureless without a lie. Likewise, happiness rendered without discerning sorrow is nugatory.

Does the sun ever set, or the moon ever rise? Some may describe the beautiful evening scene – the flaming orange canvas at evening twilight as a surreal horizon, while others may call it moon rise. The truth is that the universe subsumes all, the object and the subject, the vanquisher and the vanquished. Perception is circumstantial, nevertheless humans convince themselves in believing the permanency of the situation.

Head and tail are but two sides of the same coin.

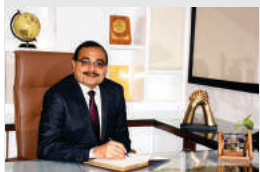
It is only when one experiences both the extremes that one can reach somewhere in between, and it is this between where lies the real meaning of life – true happiness.

Then what is it that obstructs humans from being in the state of eternal freedom! Is it the fear of experiencing polarity?

I believe so. As the caged bird who attains freedom is one that values freedom.

Hence, contrast is not the contradiction but the essence of life and embracing it will only propel you out of your stillness and stagnation.

- Ashish Agarwal



Student Editorial Board



Mannat Kaur Kandal
Editor-in-chief



Aamya Tuteja



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THE BLURRED LINES BETWEEN HEROES AND VILLAINS

"We can often be hero to one person, villain to another, and something in between to lots of others."

Karthika Nair

A Robin Hood-esque warrior against injustice, a superhero that flies his way to rescue little kids, a character that embodies everything that is good, or a person who faces innumerable challenges but emerges victorious. This is probably what comes to your mind when we say "hero". On the other hand, what is the probable image that flashes when we say "villain"? Perhaps, an evil man with an eye patch, a gun in his pocket, and a ghastly voice? Or, one with a haunting laugh that is used while committing mass murders?

For us, heroes and villains fall on opposite spectrums of ethics and morality. However, this lens that we have unconsciously adopted, one that only allows us to see the world in black and white, makes us ignore the glaring grey shades in between.

A strange trend follows the treatment of proclaimed "villains" and "heroes." If a tragedy befalls a hero, his journey against the status quo is termed as wanting "justice." The same, when done by a villain, is painted in a negative light as "revenge." If a hero runs over a cat, it will most probably be an "accident." However, the same translates to "cold-blooded murder" when it comes to the villain. From the fiery ashes of personal tragedy, a hero is said to rise like a phoenix. A similar flame, on the other hand, would further burn a villain's yearning for revenge. Any person who tries to go against the so-called hero for any harm caused by his actions is considered a villain, and the invulnerability of the hero in the public's eye goes as far as turning a blind eye to their faults and sometimes even encouraging said faults.

Labels are suffocating and limiting. They tie a selective blindfold around our unsuspecting eyes, allowing us to see a person only in one light. Winston Churchill is known as one of Britain's greatest leaders and a wartime "hero", but how can we dismiss the fact that he was an unapologetic white supremacist who caused much



agony to Britain's colonies, especially India during the famine? Marie Antoinette, the French Queen, went down in history as one of the greatest villains. Her words "Let them eat cake" were said to lead to the French Revolution.

However, what about the fact that historians have repeatedly said that the phrase was not said by her, and that she was actually a philanthropic queen sensitive to the needs of the population, despite her lavish lifestyle?

In the media, flawed heroes and humanised villains have finally entered the storyline. A few such characters are: Wanda Maximoff, the Scarlet Witch, who after repressing the grief of losing her entire family including her brother, Pietro (Quicksilver) for the longest time, finally snapped after the death of Vision in 'Infinity War'. She further dealt with all that grief by creating a TV sitcom universe where all her loved ones are alive. Although her trauma justified her actions to some extent, she still became a fallen hero. Another such example is Loki, the God of Mischief, who has displayed moral ambiguity throughout the MCU, from being the sole villain to being a nuisance as well as a hero to sacrificing himself for his brother, and to lastly breaking and trying to fix the timeline. Although he was often reluctant to do the right thing, the character formed his own unique set of morals. These characters have changed through the course of their situations, walking the line of moral ambiguity.

Why do we have the irresistible need to have someone to idolise and have someone to ostracise? Why do we have the tendency to place human beings in oppressive boxes that one can't possibly breathe in? Within our own selves, the contrasting shades of black and white are muddled up in questionable shades of grey. Why? Because we are people. People who are scared. People who feel clueless. People who are anxious. People who try to do their best every day. People who fail. We can't be right all the time, and we can't be wrong every time. That's what makes us human, and that's the only label we need.

- Editorial Board

Unfiltered joy and bitter sadness. Bubbling excitement and jittery anxiety. Calming peace and raging chaos.

Contrasting emotions rush through me as I type my final Editor's note for The Billabong Bulletin. Fittingly, we end our tenure as the Editorial Board with the theme "Contrast", an attempt to showcase the dualities abundant in all of our lives.

There aren't enough words to describe how grateful we are to all those who decided to contribute to our newsletter (which seems ironic considering I wrote four paragraphs about it) and without your unconditional support, the EB would have been unable to perform its duties to the fullest. I sincerely hope that when you opened these past 4

issues, at least some parts of them brightened your day and gave you a tiny peek of sunshine through the clouds.

There have been innumerable moments that have been etched in my mind through this tenure, ranging from being blown away by some excellent entries to laughing at fully plagiarised ones, to of course, developing a sisterly camaraderie with my fellow EB members.

In the spirit of the theme, this Editor's Note is both a greeting and a farewell. As Emily Dickinson once said, "I dwell in possibility." Thus, as we bid you farewell as the EB, we greet the several possibilities that linger on the horizon, not only for us but also for you, dear Billabongers. So, Au Revoir!

- Mannat Kaur Kandal, Editor-in-chief

2022 IC3 Regional Forum

IC3 Regional Forums are the meeting place for educators and counselors to further their knowledge, learn from peers, and promote the highest quality of counseling in high schools. Billabong High International School, Bhopal had the privilege of hosting the IC3 Regional Forum at its campus and the event turned out to be a great success.



The "Jugalbandi" performance, a perfect fusion of dance and music, performed by our talented students was a perfect start to the day. Our keynote speaker, Ms. Rashmi Arun Shami (Principal Secretary, School Education Department, MP Government), and Mr. Ganesh Kohli, who is also the founder of the IC3 Movement, addressed the attendees and provided valuable insights on bringing counseling to each and every school in India. They enlightened all those in presence about the important role that counseling can play in a student's life, influencing all their life decisions.

The second session of the day, titled "Joyride", was held by Ms. Arpita Kaswa, the Consultant psychologist at Billabong High International School, Bhopal. It was based on the importance of pursuing a career that makes one truly happy. A panel discussion was also held on the "Commonalities and Variations in British and Indian education", which also proved to be



extremely beneficial and worthwhile.

Completely student-driven, IC3 Regional Forum held at Billabong High International School,

Bhopal was an amazing opportunity for all of the attendees to interact and share their thoughts and ideas.

Sign Language Competition

Celebrating the true spirit of our theme this year - "Inclusivity", 12th graders at Billabong High International school, Bhopal utilised their summer vacations to learn Indian Sign Language, the primary medium of communication used by the hearing impaired community in India. Going a step further, the school organised "Sign your line", a competition on Sign language, where

participants' enacted a poem and introduced themselves using the same!

It was delightful to watch our participants communicate in ISL, and their fluency as well as facial expressions not only helped them in the competition but learning ISL also taught them an important lesson for life. It helped students embrace the



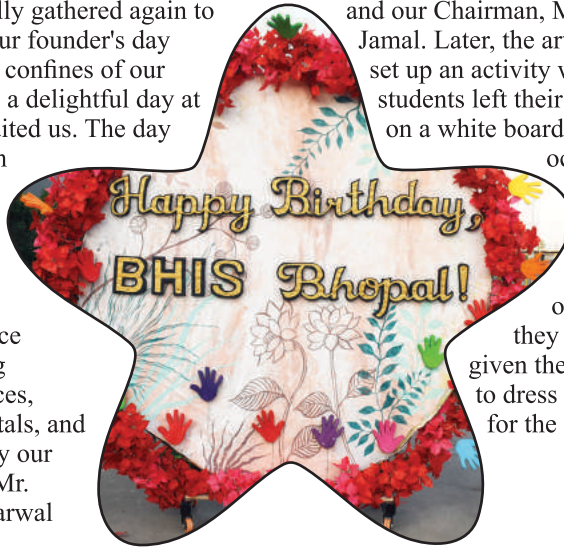
concept of Inclusivity, and enabled them to recognise the privilege they have been born with. Moreover, the students realised the benefits sign language brings with it! After all, what's better than being able to communicate without saying anything?



BHIS Bhopal Birthday Celebrations



As we finally gathered again to celebrate our founder's day outside the confines of our own home, a delightful day at school awaited us. The day started with the morning assembly, having an incredible mix of dance and singing performances, poetry recitals, and speeches by our Principal, Mr. Ashish Agarwal

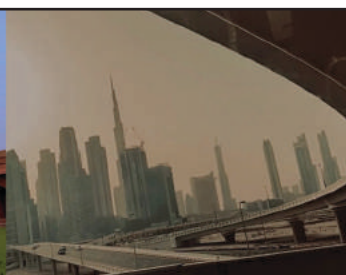
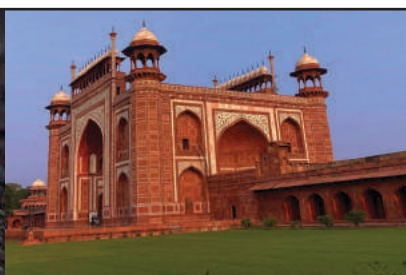


and our Chairman, Mr. Najam Jamal. Later, the art department set up an activity where students left their handprints on a white board to mark the occasion. The students thoroughly enjoyed the festive spirit on campus, as they were even given the opportunity to dress up casually for the day!

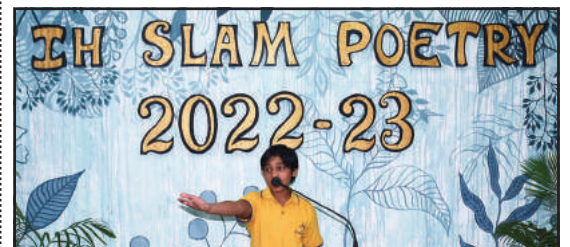


Inter-House Shutterbug 2022-23

Those who can capture the nuances of the world through their camera lens are truly blessed with an aesthetic sense, and through the Inter-house Shutterbug Competition, we aimed to encourage the budding photographers in our school. With the theme "Contrast" for Grades 5 - 8 and the theme "Then vs now" for Grades 9 - 12, we were blown away by the myriad of creative entries we received.



Inter-House Slam Poetry Competition



We Billabongers pride ourselves in having a way with words. To celebrate an important part of the literary sphere, the school organised the Inter-house Slam Poetry Competition based on the theme 'Things that make me who I am' for grades 9 - 12 and 'If I were you' for grades 7 - 8. All participants came up with varied interpretations of the themes, and the jury immensely enjoyed listening to the young poets. With powerful orations and meaningful poems, the event was indeed full of literary magic!





Is the **CUET** really beneficial for students?



Image credit: scroll.in

Every hour, one student commits suicide in India, with about 28 such suicides reported every day, according to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). Horrifying, isn't it? The Indian education system is unnecessarily unsparing. It revolves around memorisation, cramming and most importantly "marks". In my opinion, it is futile and outdated. It may teach us about dealing with pressure and hard work, but it promotes a hustle culture and an unhealthy lifestyle at the cost of the mental health of students. A very good actualisation of this is the board exams.

"Boards." How many times does an average student hear this word? Probably too many to count. It is written in stone that a good board percentage in 12th grade automatically means a spot at a good college. The worry of mistakes and failures bears a heavy weight on our shoulders. Learning becomes studying and passion becomes a chore. But, what if there is a second chance, a chance of redemption? The CUET exam is just that.

CUET, Common University Entrance Test, is an all-inclusive test conducted throughout India for UG(Undergraduate) courses in centralised universities. It is rapidly gaining popularity and is supposedly going to replace the board examination percentage for admission to colleges.

Acclaimed universities, from the Mahatma Gandhi National University(Bihar) to Delhi University are now under CUET. State and private universities have also begun to follow the trend.

Through the CUET, subjective bias will greatly be reduced as one can take CUET for their domain subject without the weightage of other board subjects. This is a sigh of relief for all those students who scored well in their subject of choice but may have tanked the other (weaker) subjects.

It will finally help reduce the mainstreaming of science and math courses and tuitions as proper institutions, for courses in subjects such as English and humanities will also be required depending on the field one is choosing. The CUET ranking will also give the students a clear idea about their preferences, and where they stand. Thus, they can focus on getting admission to a particular college without any hassle and confusion that specialized exams previously conducted by centralised universities ensued.

Public schools which are usually under the state board, often do not give marks as freely as the Central Board of Secondary Examination. This entrance test may make life easier for these students, creating a certain level of disparity in the admission process. Hence, it will greatly level the playing field for school graduates, especially from the marginalised and rural communities, and provide them with the opportunity of pursuing their dreams without having to brood over unrealistic board percentages and almost ridiculous cut-offs.

This is the much-needed breath of fresh air needed by the asphyxiating pedagogic system. This may pave the way for an educational renaissance and a brighter, smarter future to look forward to. I, for one, truly believe that the CUET examination is highly beneficial for us students, so let us together embrace the welcome change.

- Twisha Chand Warwade (10C)

YES



NO



The Common University Entrance Test, the test set for conducting rapid, transparent, and global standards assessments to assess candidates' competency for admission to prominent higher education institutions, has become a topic of conversation for a while now. Even though the CUET might be well-intentioned, its disadvantages outweigh the advantages.

The CUET was formed to fix a non-existent problem in the admission process rather than fixing the board exams. This not only derailed the path to finding actual solutions but also turned a blind eye towards the issues faced by students. These include moderation in marks to give some an unfair advantage over others, the domination of the 'big' boards (CBSE and ICSE)

over all the other boards and not creating a way to equate the percentage of marks across all the boards.

Adding to the problems, the CUET will result in an unfair disadvantage to boards other than CBSE, as the syllabus for the domain-specific subject tests is created from the NCERT syllabus. The CUET contributes not only to the



Common University Entrance Test

trivialisation of schools but also to the promotion of coaching culture. With this, the education system has once again refused to prioritise our mental health, so students feel more pressure to get better marks than they did in their boards with little to no help in studying.

Replacing the board exams with another anxiety-inducing MCQ test not only stunts the academic growth but also promotes a pattern-cracking system, further serving as a marketing opportunity for the coaching industry on a silver platter. Expanding coaching culture in such a way will lead to additional affordability-related inequity as well as innumerate collaborations between schools and coaching centres.

Even with the efforts of the National Testing Agency (NTA) to make board exams supplementary to the CUET, it still diminishes the significance of schools to some extent. Though not meant to invalidate the role of schools in our lives, we have to accept they have been reduced to mere board exam centres used to get kids into college. Taking that into account, the decision of not considering the board marks for undergraduate administration is bound to affect the importance of schools.

The first step towards coming up with a solution is acknowledging the problem. Although the NTA was able to accept a fault in our education system, creating the CUET by assuming the problem was in the admission process obviously won't be able to get the desired results. Keeping this in mind, at least the knowledge of the actual problem can bring us to the second step.

- Devyani Sadho (10B)



India's Recent Ban on Wheat Exports

The Government of India recently banned all private exports of wheat and this decision, amid the already tight supply of exports from regions like Canada, Europe, and Russia has caused international prices to skyrocket to nearly €430 (₹34,500~) per tonne.

This decision came as a result of loss of crop yield due to extremely high temperatures and heat waves that swept across regions like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, which are responsible for the majority of wheat produced in India. This has caused the government to cut its output estimate from 113 million tonnes to approximately 105 million tonnes.

Low output rates paired with increased export demands caused local prices to shoot up, which in turn led farmers to private sales. This prevented the government from buying the grain at its fixed procurement prices, causing the welfare programs and schemes to subsidize due to tight supplies.

The government has said that it may or may not accept special import requests from countries in need of India's wheat, with about a dozen countries reaching out to the Ministry of External Affairs in the same regard.

This has sent India into a quandary- export to countries that desperately need India's wheat, or keep it in so as to fend off inflated prices. It may result in extremely high prices internationally (a rise of as much as 60% in some regions), driven by disruption due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Other countries have begun to pressurize New Delhi into disbanding their plans of further tightening the ban. The United States agriculture secretary called this action of India an "ill-advised decision" at the ongoing G7 summit in Germany.

Some might even consider this action "anti-farmer" since government procurement of wheat has failed mainly because farmers are able to sell at higher prices through private sales to exporters and traders. If there were an added bonus on top of the current MSP, there would be no reason for farmers to not sell to the government.

In my opinion, if the government continues with its decision, and goes as far as tightening the ban, it will help out the country over the next few months. But, considering the already tight international supply chain, it may do the opposite for countries that rely on India's export. On the other hand, if New Delhi decides to give in to the pressure and reverse the ban, the issues that led them to make this decision may arise again, but they could be easily dealt with the "bonus" on the MSP for farmers.

Although there is still no clarity on what the next decision of the government will be, some effects have already started to show, with local prices falling by as much as 2% over the last week, with more drops expected considering the majority of wheat will now circulate within the country.

- Joshua Gupta (10C)



CONTRAST

The way to enjoy life

When I first heard the word "Contrast", I wondered what it meant. Until then, the only contrast I knew about was a setting on our television where we could balance the brightness and darkness of the screen. Upon reaching home, I discussed it with my mother.

My mother then gave me all my favorite sweets – dark chocolates, "gulab jamuns", "rasagullas" and muffins in a bowl and asked me to finish them off. I ate two of them and then I stopped. My mother asked me the reason for stopping. I told her that it had become too sweet for me and that I was not getting the taste of the sweets anymore. She then gave me "namkeen" in another bowl and asked me to have that. When I finished half of it, my mother asked me whether I enjoyed eating namkeen after having sweets. I told her that I did. She then offered me the rest of the sweets in the previous bowl and I could then enjoy the remaining ones. My mother then said, "Such is contrast." She told me that having a similar thing over and over again can't give us joy or enjoyment for too long. To enjoy the taste of our favourite sweets, we have to necessarily experience the contrasting taste of namkeen in the middle. For us to enjoy anything, we should have contrast in our lives. She further explained to me that if there were only summers and no winters, the world would become too hot, plants and trees would dry up and we all would get sunburns all the time. I realized that we could only enjoy summers after having long winters and vice-versa as it brought contrast to our lives. Understanding the concept, I got up and said to her, "Okay, now I am off to playing games since only studies and no playing will make Ananya a dull girl." She laughed and exclaimed, "Oh, contrast!"

- Ananya Sahu (2F)

Do I know everything?

Last summer, I went to my grandparents' place. One day, I was watching a video. Suddenly my grandfather asked me, "What are you doing?" Showing him my mobile phone, I told him that I



was watching a video and asked him if he wanted to see it. But, to my surprise, he didn't know how to operate the mobile phone. He didn't even know about YouTube, Google, Facebook or WhatsApp. I wondered, "He is so much older to me, and I am just a kid. But, I know everything about mobile apps and functioning, while he doesn't." I started laughing at him for not knowing those simple things.

My grandfather wakes up very early in the morning. One day, he was chewing a stick-like thing, and I asked him what it was. He said that it was sugarcane, and kept our teeth and gums strong. Seeing him, I tried the same but I was not able to even cut it properly. Another time, he was having lunch and eating jaggery. I asked him, "Why don't you

eat some sweets and ice cream instead of jaggery?" It was so hot there but my grandfather was not ready to switch on the AC. He only used the fan and a cooler. Then, he explained to me the importance of

rising early, eating healthy, and spending time with nature, like wind, sunshine, trees, and ponds. He gave me a very simple way to choose between healthy and unhealthy food. He said that food that comes directly from nature is always healthy, and told me to have lots of it. On the other hand, food prepared by artificial means is never healthy.

I heard a lot of stories from my grandfather, which were very interesting! That day, I came to know that even though I know about mobiles and laptops while my grandfather doesn't, he is very intelligent and knows many things which I do not know. From that day, I decided not to belittle anyone.

- Pransh Parija (1C)

Yin and Yang



Yin and yang is a Chinese philosophical concept that describes the natural dualities in our world. This dual nature can be understood very well in almost each and every sphere of our lives. The symbol has been divided into two parts with the help of two colours- black and white. The black dot signifies that there is a lot of darkness in our universe represented by competition, expansionism, pessimism, conservatism, rigidity, and a self-centred outlook. The white part emphasises all that is good in the world represented by liberalism, love, optimism, and social consciousness.

The symbol of Yin and Yang teaches us that we should learn to keep a balance as both the parts of the symbol are interconnected. On one hand, Yin brings energy and rebellion, and on the other, the yang brings peace, harmony, and compassion. A balance of the Yin

and the Yang is required for our overall development.

However, we can see a lot of dominance of the darker side in our life, where we are all busy engaging in unhealthy competition, leaving behind our morality and ethics. In this cycle, the balance between light and dark is missing.

Human energy has become negative, and we are being consumed by our own selfish thoughts.

I believe that with a better understanding of the philosophy, we can create a good balance where there can be a ray of hope for everyone; and, where we can function together as a truly balanced society. We must try to accommodate the duality of nature depicted by this symbol in such a way that we can attract positivity and goodness from everywhere.

- Nishita Khemchandani (5A)



Same Yet Different



My friend and I,
We are the same as we never lie.
But we are different in so many ways too!
I am short but she is tall.
I am older in age but she is small.
I like hot chocolate; she likes cold coffee.
I love rock music; she likes the sound of the sea.
I love talking too much, she loves to listen to me.
I think she is fantastic.
She thinks the same for me.
We all are same yet different,
Let's learn to appreciate this with glee.

- Mahira Sami (1B)

VARIANCE OF SOCIETY



Image credit: pinterest.com

Red, blue, green and bold,
Flashed a thousand neon bulbs,
Lighting up the palatial mansion.
Dim, dim, dimmer still,
Grew the single lightning wick,
Darkness engulfed the muddy hut.
Meters of silk and satin,
Used to drape a wealthy few.
Pieces of jute and cotton,
Roughly stitched up to barely clad some.
A delicious aroma wafted from a scrumptious feast,
Spread out for an overfed crew.
A pungent smell spread out from a paltry meal,
Laid out for a starved many.
Tossing and turning laid a single soul,
On a four-poster richly quilted bed.
Huddled together slept many a head,
On the hard earth covered with gunny bags.

- Aarna Tiwari (8B)

I Have a Dream

Image credit: nationalgeographic.org

I have a dream,
An unbounded world and,
A nation without grim,
I have a dream.

Where male and female,
Are given equal rights;
Where people don't fail,
In eradicating their own plights.

Neither the fear of nether caste,
Nor the apprehension of creed;
Where the society exists,
Without the demon of greed.

I have a dream,
Of a nation that gives attention,
To every agony filled scream;
To see the world as a better place,
Devoid of a raging stream;
I have a dream.

I have a dream,
Where black and white,
Are just shades of grey;
Where hands are raised,
Only to pray.

- Iha Prasad (11A)

The Experience of Life



Once there was a time when the noise of my
laughter spread wide,
Around my house, around my pond and some
way into the woods beside my home and then
gone.
Now the silence around my heart haunts me time
and again,
And I keep on blabbering to myself,
Is it peace or loneliness?
Once there was a time when I used to lay my head
on my mother's lap,
Tension - free and having a nap.
Now I lay my head on the pillow and think about the past,
And my eyes get filled with tears remembering the days of the last
tension-free naps.
Today, I have no one to share my feelings with,
But my heart is still pounding,
Just to see the day's new sunshine.

- Trishit Ghoshal (6A)

Why Should I Smile?

I enjoy the fortune and not the bad luck,
But sometimes grief is the one struck.
Would I cherish the fortune if sorrow had been unknown?
Certainly not, the worthless sunshine that shone.

I wail on the demise of a dear one,
But would I be carefree to live forever, if death could be undone?
The same world with just the new centuries,
Would I not like to have a new start, to close all the memories?

Would the warmth be pleasant to me,
If the weather wouldn't ever be chilly?
Same weather all the time, oh no!
Undoubtedly, I would want some snow.

Oh! I've learned to be merry all the time,
As it will not always be daytime.
Everything has its own unique place,
So do enjoy all the tastes!



Image credit: nationalgeographic.org

- Dewanshi Sood (7B)

Contrast



Image credit: natalialzam.wordpress.com

Life is an abode of a plethora of contrasting creations,
Like the ephemeral emotions of elation or desolation in different situations,
The evanescent moments of ire or peace,
Facing the vicissitudes of life is important to thrive and not cease.

When hopes and dreams are burned,
Failure and despair are earned,
When sadness explodes, there is bedlam all around and no light,
The mind is stuck in a labyrinth of fright.

When endurance can disintegrate but not die,
Success and happiness are your allies,
When joy does not vacate your soul,
Your unique inner self sparkles without control.

Reality and imagination are not merely words,
They are two contradictory yet related worlds,
Utopia and dystopia are two contrasting imaginary societies,
One emits light and the other emits darkness in different varieties.

Life is a contrasting act that renews every day,
So, you can choose whichever role to play.

- Hanna Moin (10C)



The Unknown Passenger

This incident happened a few months ago when my father was coming to visit us in Bhopal from Delhi by train. He was on the metro to the station, where he saw several posters regarding terrorism. He read them but didn't mind them much.

When he reached the station, he made his way to the platform and saw a book stand where he purchased a newspaper. He meant to read it, but instead unconsciously used it as a fan in the unbearably hot afternoons of Delhi.

As soon as the train arrived, he made his way to the coach and reached his seat. He noticed that the train was mostly empty. He laid down, unfolded his (now slightly crushed) unread newspaper, and began to read the headlines. The stop at Delhi was for about 15 minutes, and the train hadn't begun to move yet. My father heard the coach door open, and he looked out to see who it was.

It was a young man, his complexion fair and his hair long. His face looked flushed as if he was in a rush to get there, but his demeanour was calm nevertheless. He sat in the lower berth, almost directly adjacent to my father's seat. That's when my father got a good look at him. The young man was wearing a plain kurta with jeans and leather slippers. He was light-skinned, and my father thought that he perhaps was a Kashmiri man.

In between reading his newspaper, my father kept glancing at the young man. At one point, the man exited the carriage, leaving his bag behind. He didn't return for about 20 minutes. This made my father slightly unsettled. He had seen the posters, and an abandoned backpack on an empty train could be something dangerous. He waited for about five minutes before the mysterious man came back to his seat. This time, he was talking on the phone to someone in hushed voices, and furiously scribbling things down in a notepad that he produced from his suspicious backpack. He did so for about 15-20 minutes, cut the call, and went back to writing in the notepad.

That's when my father decided to take a nap. When

he woke up, it was about 7:45 PM, and the train staff was selling dinner trays. This time, it was plain rice and Aloo-Gobhi with some mango pickle. My father got a tray for himself and noticed the young man get one too. My father mustered up some courage and invited the man to eat with him.

My father and the mysterious man then began chatting away. It turned out that the man was half Spanish. His mother was from Spain, but she had passed away when he was younger, which is why he had a fair complexion. But, the way he ate with his hands, it was hard to say that he was a foreigner! After his mother passed away, he came to live in India with his father, about 2 years ago.

My father inquired about his career, and the man said that he worked at an NGO. "I was sick and tired of living the same boring life every day. I couldn't take it any longer, and today is when I realised that I've had enough of this. I wanted an escape from this monotonous lifestyle, and I rushed to the train station to go somewhere, to go anywhere."

They mostly conversed in English, but this man somewhat spoke in Hindi, too. He had a slight communication gap with people because of his lack of knowledge of the language, but he managed to get things done, and even booked the train ticket himself!

That's when he talked about how he was talking to his friends on the phone, asking them about how the railways in India worked. He had noted down all the main trains to Delhi, and the various stops of that particular train, with the timings.

My father further helped out the man by informing him about Tatkal tickets, the most common trains



in India, and which apps to use to book and track them.

The man was eager to learn the language, and inquired about the different 'matras' in Hindi, as he was very confused about them. He asked about the spellings of specific words in Hindi and their pronunciation. My father was flattered that a foreigner was so inquisitive about the Indian language and culture, whereas some Indians didn't bother about it themselves!

They conversed for about two hours and then went to their respective seats. My father turned on his tablet and went through his messages, watched some videos, and had some biscuits. He then dozed off.

My father had just about slept for ten minutes when he was awakened by the young man tapping on my father's window from outside. Smiling cordially, he thanked my father again for listening to him and hoped that they would meet again.

The young man then walked away, blending in with the massive crowd at the station. My father went back to sleep, with a smile on his face, realizing that he didn't even know the young man's name.

- Aparajita Singh (10B)

Appie - The Apple Tree

Once upon a time, there lived an old man called Adam at a river bank near the edge of a village named Hailing Cove. The old man had many medicinal and ornamental trees on his farm. Adam used to adore his beautiful trees and take pride in gazing at them. One day, he received a letter while he was busy gardening in his backyard. It was from his sister, who lived in another city and wanted to see him as she was not keeping well. He rushed towards his backyard and explained the situation to his trees. Then he plucked some leaves and apples from the trees.

"Please take good care of yourselves till I return." He made all the necessary arrangements for them, like water for every plant and provision of requisite manure, and quickly left his backyard. All the trees followed Adam's instructions and accordingly took care of themselves.

One day, Appie the apple tree was feeling sad and miserable. Another tree asked him, "What happened my friend, why do you look so sad?"

Appie answered, "I don't like the nighttime whereas I love the daytime." He explained, "When the sunlight goes through my leaves, they shine dazzlingly, and my fruits and flowers dance daily. Everyone cheers me up by telling me how beautiful I look, but at night, they don't even see me! Everyone adores my beauty but only during the day. As evening approaches, I lose all my charm. I feel dull, and my flowers are no longer dancing. Nobody comes to see me either. I don't like dusk at all."

His friend replied, "I feel you must see the positive side of everything, my dear. It is during night time that we get to sleep, and it is also when all the little birdies come and rest on our branches so that they can be ready for their next day. Every night has a day ahead and that is the rule of nature.



Always remember, 'Light against light gives us nothing, dark against dark gives us nothing. It is the contrast of dark and light which gives each other its meaning.' "

After a month, Adam came back. He said, "A big thank you to all of you, especially, dear Appie, as your leaves helped my sister in improving her digestion. Without you all, my life wouldn't be happy at all. You always help others in healing. I am privileged to have you all."

Appie was delighted on hearing this and understood that happiness and sadness are the two sides of a coin, they are an integral part of our lives.

- Prayaan Handel (4D)



Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness is a 2022 film directed by Sam Raimi, who has also directed the Spider-man Trilogy as well as the Evil Dead movies. Micheal Waldron is the scriptwriter of this movie and was also the scriptwriter of the most watched MCU TV show 'Loki'. This film is a sequel to Doctor Strange (2016) movie.

The main plot of the movie revolves around Doctor Stephen Strange trying to protect a girl with special powers (America Chavez) from Wanda Maximoff, a powerful witch. Wanda wants to kill America Chavez because she can travel through the multiverse and Wanda needs her power to travel to an alternate universe where her children are alive.

You need to watch Wanda Vision before watching this movie to understand the plot. The movie simply explains the multiverse without giving rise to any complications for the audience but non-Marvel fans may have trouble understanding the concept. Elizabeth Olsen is the best fit for Wanda one can ask for. Benedict Cumberbatch also does a decent job playing the different variants of Stephen Strange. The movie is a perfect blend of action and horror along with outstanding visual effects. Watching the movie in 3D will enhance your experience.

As a huge Marvel fan, I found the movie extremely enjoyable.

- Lakshya Rathore (7E)

Image credit: marvelstudios



KING RICHARD

Image credit: themoviedb.org

The movie King Richard is the incredible and true story of how the world came to know of the tennis superstars Venus and Serena Williams.

At the beginning of the movie, we see Richard Williams (Will Smith) approaching many tennis coaches to train his girls. We keep hearing of his plan which he had made for both of them even before they were born. He and his wife, Brandy (Aunjanue Ellis) had devoted their lives to making their children tennis prodigies, and all they needed was a coach to fund their further training. Along with dealing with the social complications of their rough neighbourhood of Compton, California, Richard and Brandy continue to train their daughters to the best of their abilities. Luckily, Paul Cohen (Tony Goldwyn) agrees to train Venus (Saniyya Sidney), while Serena (Demi Singleton) continues her training with Brandy following the same strategies (thanks to the recordings that Richard makes of Venus and Cohen's sessions).

Venus and Serena shake up the whole tennis circuit by winning many tournaments at the Junior level, till Richard and Cohen have a fallout. Richard still sticks to his plan and convinces "THE" Rick Macci (Jon Bernthal) to coach both girls and fund their education as well.

"King Richard" is a heartfelt movie that follows the uplifting journey of a family whose unwavering resolve and unconditional belief ultimately delivered two of the world's greatest sports legends. It inspires us to believe in our dreams. With Oscar-winning performances, memorable dialogues, and an apt background score, I would recommend this movie (streaming on Amazon Prime) to everyone.

- Tvisha Jhawar (5A)

THE BFG is a captivating story written by Roald Dahl. It is about a little girl named Sophie who wakes up at midnight and sees a giant, the B.F.G (Big Friendly Giant), who takes her to his home. The giant tells her that there are 9 more giants other than the BFG, who are dangerous and love to eat human beings. Sophie and the BFG make a brave plan to stop the other giants.

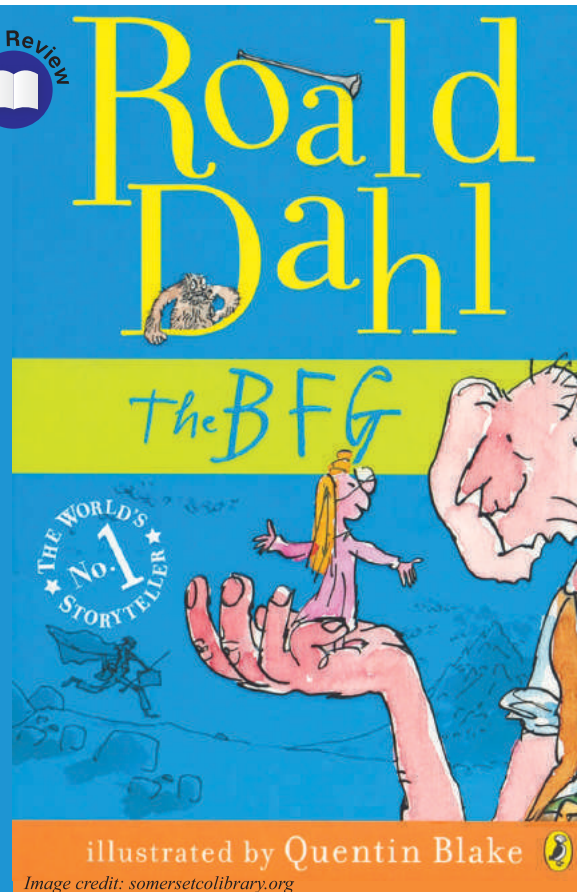


Image credit: somersetcolibrary.org

The plan starts at the Queen of England's palace. The giant gives her a nightmare informing her about the other giants' intentions. Sophie tells the queen that the dream she saw was real! The BFG informs the queen about the other 9 giants and the queen calls on the head force to help out the BFG to fight the other giants.

In this story, there are many adventurous events in which Sophie shows her bravery. This story was extremely fascinating, showing us that with bravery and kindness we can achieve anything we want.

I would rate this novel a 5 out of 5 and I would recommend this novel to all my friends who enjoy reading fantasy books.

- Prayaan Handel (4D)



It is the little moments of life that give us happiness. The web series Gullak (all three seasons streaming on SonyLiv) is a show that perfectly captures these raw and emotional moments.

Based on the life story of a middle-class household, this show has given us a bunch of new "lead" actors whose potential was clearly underutilized playing minor roles in big-budget films. The characters are so real that one can't help but relate to them. TVF (The Viral Fever), the network house that came up with some magnificent, heartfelt tales like Panchayat, Kota Factory, and Aspirants adds yet another feather to its cap with Gullak.

Starting where it left off, season 3 of Gullak portrays a new chapter in the lives of the members of the 'Mishra Pariwar' narrated by the 'Gullak' of this middle-class household. Annu Mishra (Vaibhav Raj Gupta) the 'elder' son, has started taking up more responsibilities in the

family, while Aman Mishra (Harsh Mayar) is struggling with the dilemma of choosing his subjects for the higher grades. Geetanjali Kulkarni is back playing the strong-minded matriarch, Shanti Mishra, paired with Jameel Khan playing the evergreen and humorous Santosh Mishra. They give us a glimpse of a flawed, ordinary family dealing with typical everyday problems. The makers of the show have successfully presented the daily perils of a dysfunctional family, one which we can all relate to, that still stays together in the hardships of life.

The flawless performance of the principal cast is propped up by amazing writing and superb cinematography. It is a must-watch for those who want to watch a meaningful story with real, relatable characters.

- Nilotama Singh (10B)

Image credit: indh.com

Wood Apple Squash



Wood apple is also called bel fruit. Wood apple squash is a very refreshing drink, especially in summers. It helps in digestion, blood purification, and also cools down our body. It is also a good source of vitamin C, calcium, iron and other minerals.

Ingredients:

- 1 medium sized wood apple (bel fruit),
- 1 glass of water,
- 1 tablespoon of sugar

Instructions:

1. First take a wood apple and crush it with the help of a rolling pin.
2. Scoop out the pulp with a spoon and put it in a bowl.
3. Add 1 glass of water and mash the pulp.
4. Strain the mashed pulp in another bowl with the help of a strainer.
5. Add Sugar as per requirement.
6. Pour the squash into a glass and your drink is ready.

- Toshani Nalwya (3F)

SWEET AND SOUR MANGO SALSA



Image credit: Vedika Jaisinghani

Ingredients:

Finely chopped -

- 1 Tomato
- 1 Onion
- 1 Sweet mango
- 10-15 Green coriander leaves
- Green chillies (according to taste)
- Salt (according to taste)
- Juice of 1 lemon

Instructions:

1. Take a bowl. Add all the ingredients and give a good mix.
2. Put the prepared salsa in a bowl and garnish with more chopped coriander leaves.
3. Plate with nachos and serve.

-Vedika Jaisinghani (8B)

THE LIVING BALANCE

A soothing activity that has the magical ability to rejuvenate your mind and breathe life into your senses, yoga is an ancient practice rooted in Indian philosophy. Derived from the word "yuj" meaning to unite or integrate, it promotes harmony between the mind and body. On 21st June, the International Day of Yoga celebrated this very 5000-year-old art. With innumerable benefits associated with its asanas (poses), here are 3 poses you can try at home!!



Benefits - Strengthens the spine, releases fatigue and stress and helps manage breathing problems.



Benefits - Alleviates stress, anxiety and fatigue, improves posture, strengthens back and hips and aids in digestion.



Benefits - Strengthens the ankles, thighs, calves, and spine, and improves endurance and stamina.

- Mannat Kaur Kandal (12B)

Paan Shots



Ingredients:

- Betel Leaves
- Fennel seeds
- Desiccated coconut
- Ice cubes
- Rose petals
- Powdered sugar
- Tutti frutti
- Milk
- Fresh cream
- Green colour

Instructions:

1. Take some Betel leaves in a bowl.
2. Wash and wipe them with a wet cloth.

3. Remove its stem and chop the leaves finely.
4. Take a mixer jar and churn up the leaves, fennel seeds, desiccated coconut, some ice cubes, rose petals, green colour, and powdered sugar.
5. Take out the paste in the bowl.
6. To serve- put two spoonfuls of paan-paste in chilled milk and fresh cream and mix it using a beater.
7. You can garnish it with some chopped Betel leaves, dry rose petals, and tutti frutti.

Tasty paan shots are ready to serve.

You can store the paan paste in the freezer for 10-15 days.

- Shaurya Agarwal (5F)



Tête-à-Tête with PRANAV KOTHARI

CEO of Educational Initiatives



This time around, the Editorial Board, along with a few other members of the Student Council and students of Grade 12, had the opportunity to interact in-person with Mr. Pranav Kothari, CEO of Educational Initiatives. A pioneering Social Intrapreneur and the man behind the deployment of Mindspark, Mr. Kothari shared some valuable insights with all the students that ranged from his own educational journey to the impact of technology in making education accessible to all. It was surely a fruitful and engaging session for all those who were present.

Excerpts from the Interview

Q1 There are many students who aspire to study abroad. As an Indian student, please take us through your preparations to get admission into one of the leading universities for undergraduate programs, and how was the journey?

I got into both local and international colleges, and my only way of deciding was on the basis of my getting a US visa. The US is quite remarkable in terms of its public institutions. With students from more than 100 countries, people think differently from us, and that is an education in itself. Moreover, when I was doing mechanical engineering, 30 percent of my coursework was mandatorily non - engineering. When I did my internships and entered the workforce, I realized that the modern world requires interdisciplinary knowledge. The exposure that colleges provide is great, and you end up learning a lot from your classmates.

Q2 How can data analytics help in education and what are some values one can measure to understand how much the student has learned?

Data is now being generated at a very rapid pace. In the school system, there is something which I call an "administrative data set", which is basically how many students logged in, how many students did the tasks mindfully, etc. depending on the need. The greater impact that data can have is on pedagogy. For the last 21 years, we have been doing assessments. For a simple calculation like 23×18 , we simply mark the answer as right and wrong. That tells you the percentage of students who can do it. But when every step, every cursor movement etc. was tracked, we found that there are 17 different ways to get this calculation wrong (without a silly mistake).

Educational data that is used for drawing out pedagogical insights can be given back to teachers before they introduce the topic, which can greatly improve performances. To me, that's the most exciting space of data in education. Sadly, this work is not getting enough time. But, we need to see how we can look at pedagogy underneath the technology of the data and use it to improve education on a large scale.

Q3 Do you think that online education will replace the current educational system, or do you think the two of them can co-exist, or to a certain degree, even complement each other?

Rarely is anything replacing something. We need to look at this in terms of what is solving what problem. Any form of education that is taking full advantage of different people being together in one room will remain in a space of traditional learning. On the other hand, online learning can do a lot on the personalisation front. We need to play to the strengths of both.

Q4 What do you think is the role played by technology in democratising education? On the other hand, more than 400 million people don't have access to the internet in India. What can be done to reduce this digital divide that has become a barrier to learning?

When any country started a school, there was always a vast majority that did not have access to it. You can't stop innovating because it won't be immediately available to everyone. Other than technology in education, there is no way that we would achieve dramatic improvement in education for people who would need it the most.

India took part in the PISA test, and globally we stood second last. The vast majority of Indian education needs dramatic support to get better. To bring improvements this quickly and on a large scale, you need

technology. You need technology to serve the 400 million who don't have access to it today. That is a function of India's economic growth. As India's GDP continues to grow steadily, there would be more money in the system. So, as India becomes richer, the 400 million will have access to technology. But what after that? If at that time we don't have a good solution, they won't use it for education. It's better to start now so that by the time those 400 million get the technology, we know what to do with it in education.



Q5 We know that there has been a wave of edtech startups in the last 5-6 years. But when Mindspark started, it was a relatively unique and out-of-the-box idea for that time. What were some of the challenges that you faced that startups do not have to face today?

Starting out in 2009, we took Mindspark to different schools to train teachers. There was a teacher who refused to touch the mouse because she thought it would electrocute her.

I was thrown out of a Principal Secretary's office as the idea of installing computers for 40,000 schools in a state seemed impractical, whereas, most schools have computers installed today. I am thankful to COVID for reducing people's aversion to technology, even though it took some time.

I met a six-year-old in the slums of Delhi, who could rapidly double-click the mouse, which is quite a difficult motor skill for that age. Recently, that child who is now a software engineer in an established MNC commented on one of my LinkedIn posts. I was flabbergasted.

It is difficult to recognize learning outcomes that are invisible. Parents need to acknowledge conceptual understanding. With the increase in demand for quality education, there will be a greater appetite for learning with tech.

Q6 The Mindspark interface has developed a lot in the past few years. How has it increased usage among the students who have not been introduced to it in school?

We search how young adults and adolescents react to computer systems and how we can make them easier to access. We started with a keyboard and mouse for desktops but now we have an application for tablets since touch is easier. 'Sparkies' are very popular so we really had to think deeply about the leaderboard and the badges to get more students to use the application. For the future, we are thinking about speech recognition where students can just speak an answer or perhaps even just look at it! We need to start thinking about virtual reality and AR and how they both play their parts in learning. Ultimately, the 21st century is about collaboration and creativity, and we are planning on initiating group projects on Mindspark.

Q7 What are some plans you have regarding the growth of Mindspark and what are some new features that you plan on adding to the student learning platform?

We are planning to have more subjects like Science and English, along with modern subjects that students want to learn. Collaboration is going to be an important addition wherein students from different parts of the world can talk, discuss and solve problems with each other. We have also talked about speech recognition and AR.



"The picture that you took with your camera is the imagination you want to create with reality."

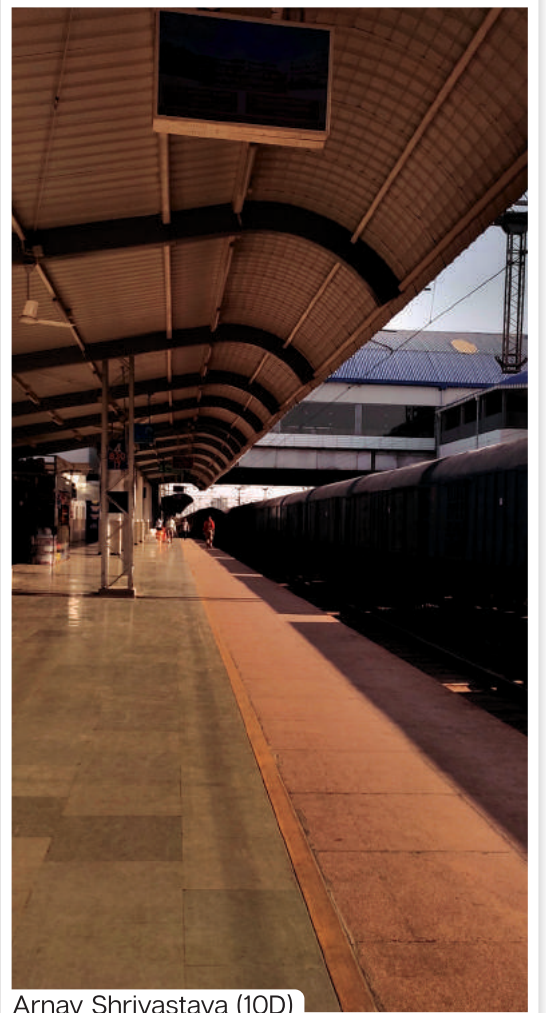
- Scott Lorenzo



Trisha Jaiswal (12C)



Pragyan Singh (4A)



Arnav Shrivastava (10D)



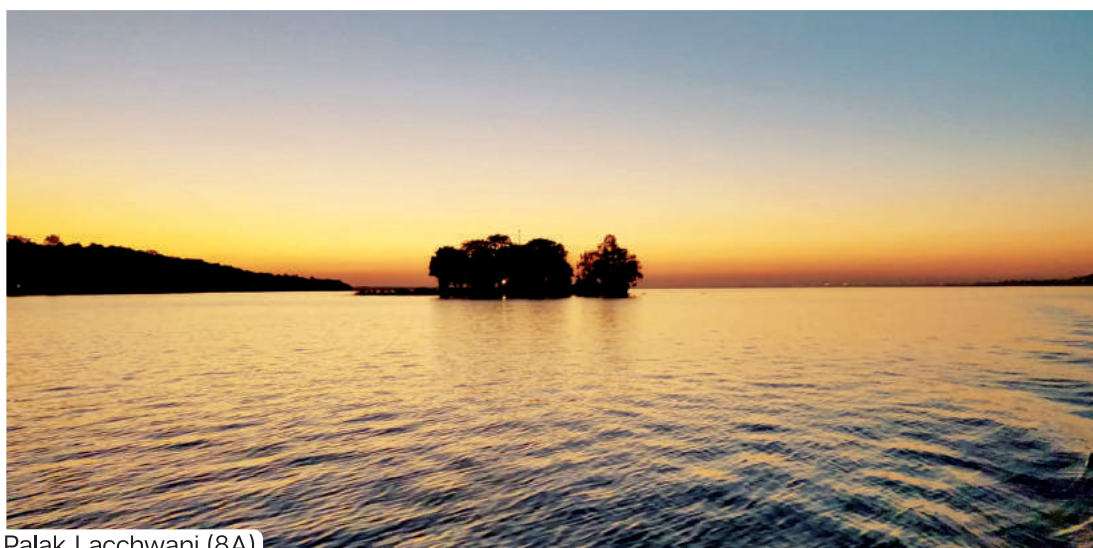
Mysha Jain (8E)



Sarthak Kumar (12B)



Om Gupta (12B)



Palak Lacchwani (8A)



Anandi Mitra (9B)



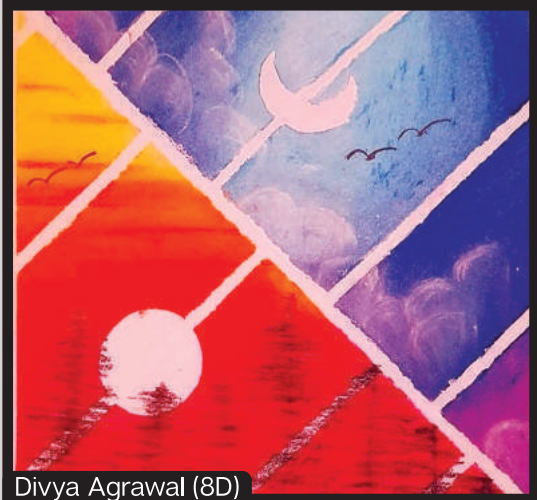
Harshita Lalchandani (8C)



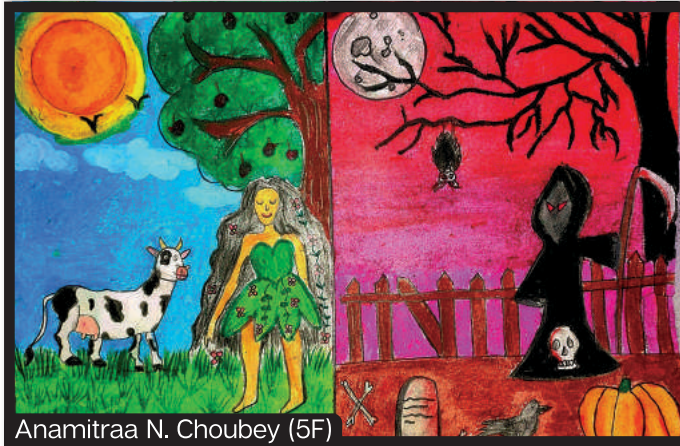
Sanvi Barnwal (10B)



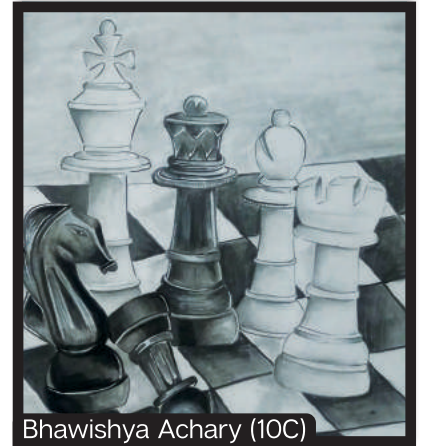
Vedant Singh (9D)



Divya Agrawal (8D)



Anamitraa N. Choubey (5F)



Bhawishya Achary (10C)



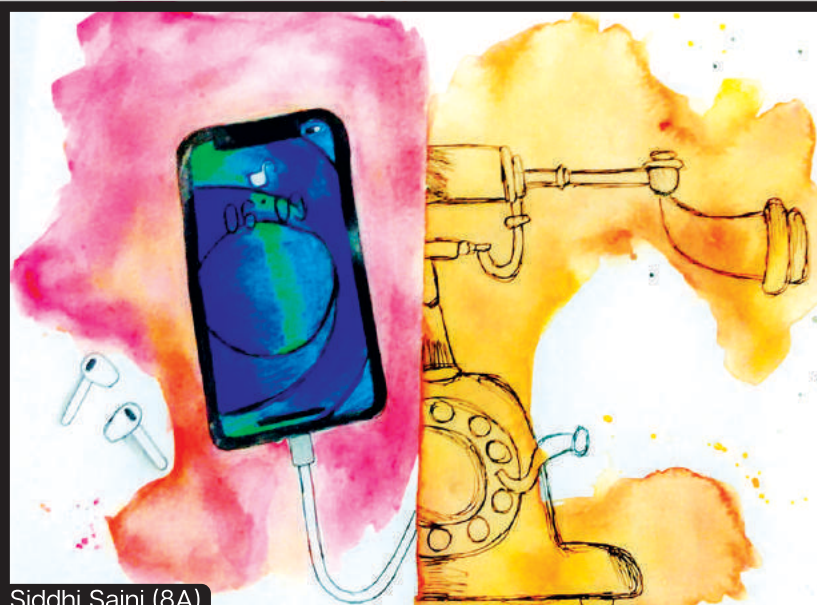
Rhythm Rohani (8B)



Rohan Sadarangani (4E)



Pransh Parija (1C)



Siddhi Saini (8A)



Anupreksha Shukla (9D)