

*Winter winds on a misty morn
Many a head exam fever adorn
All aboard, mark the grading call
Farewell to the old and welcoming the new all
-Jeremy L. Jahau, Editor-in-Chief*

WHO AM I?

-Humraj Singh Jussal

When I woke up on the 12th of December, 2019 it was in all practical sense, a normal day. This state of mind was however pulverised when I received a text message from my father living twenty-five kilometres away in Tezpur. He informed us that curfew had been imposed and people were on the streets protesting against the CAA. Political friction, like a never ending soap opera, is aired everyday on multiple news channels as much to entertain the general public as it is to run a stream of misinformation. On the streets of Assam however, things had turned serious as well as violent as protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act raced like fire through erstwhile peaceful neighbourhoods.

Therefore, for the first time I took up upon myself the task of raking through the internet to seek information regarding a political topic that had suddenly surfaced within the confines of my home. In the midst of words that screamed 'unconstitutional', 'non-secular', 'fascist' and 'revolution', I ended up seeking instead the answer to the question, 'Who am I?' in this *bublaboo*.

I have been raised a Sikh after my father, as well as a Bengali, after my mother. This allows me a heady culmination of two very spirited cultures. Perhaps therefore I am given as easily to the pursuit of the arts with a boldness that does not hesitate in taking a risk. This also brings with it in inheritance a political standpoint that could easily turn volatile.

Amongst the glorious past of the Sikhs lie the shadows of the infamous Operation Blue Star, the

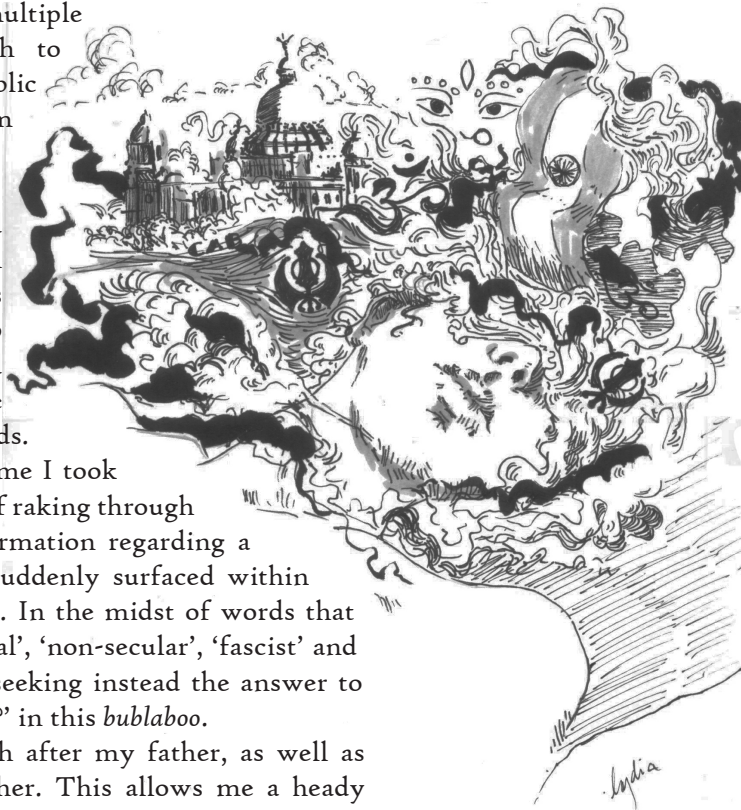
brutal retaliation in the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the vicious Sikh riots that followed which resembled ethnic cleansing. I began asking myself if my stand must therefore be for compensation for all that was taken away or should I instead be asking for justice for the innumerable lives lost? When I look at the Trinamool Congress, flooding West Bengal with illegal

immigrants for vote bank politics, turning the state into a veritable time bomb waiting to explode, I wonder if I ought to show resistance and raise my voice or merely wait for time to ring in the inevitable.

This is not merely about any two particular sections of people in this country. Every state and every culture and unfortunately every region and with it every religion seems to have associated itself with a particular political narrative. This narrative may suit the cause of the subaltern or may merely be a fabricated theory used as propaganda to

serve a certain political agenda. The one common thread these sectarian ideologies have is that they promote separate identities.

India has always been seen as the land of spiritual awakening. We are an amalgamation of multiple religions, cultures and tradition. But we remain despite



Illustrator: Lydia Timungpi

it all, a single country. And therefore we have over and above and primarily, a single identity. That of being an Indian.

It is however a different reality in the trenches where 90% of this nation survives. We are manipulated, our wisdom shrouded in doubt, our focus waylaid from what it ought to see, to merely concentrate on what is fed to us in substantial doses from multiple platforms. Misinformation, religious animosity, a history twisted off facts and truth, all to feed a political ambition and the fight for power. Unity in diversity is our strength,

our diverse culture our gift. However, if we do not leave behind the blinding veil of religion and our own prejudices in the confinements of our home, we will stagnate. When we leave our homes, we must move with a greater identity. The identity of an India, because that is who we are and how the world sees us. On the eve of our 72nd Republic Day, we must remind ourselves to own it with pride and bear it with honour. Unless we keep in mind the greater good of our country and push aside our differences, nothing can be accomplished. I am an Indian and nobody can take that away from me.

AMIDST THE WILDFIRE

-Anushka Rai, XI

In the distance, I could hear the cry of the approaching siren. I perked up at the chirping of the birds, which had become a rare luxury these days. The majority of aerial creatures had either flown off for an early and unexpected migration or had perished in the deranged flames. I had been standing on the burnt soil, of what had once been a thriving maize field, for some time now. The arid smell of smoke filled my lungs, forcing me to stifle a cough but besides this mild irritation, nothing much bothered me. The thick dark glasses I wore like a second nature, shielded my eyes from tearing up. The Ophthalmologist had told me that I did not need it anymore but I preferred keeping it on nonetheless. People around me tended to become uncomfortable when I did not have it on.

I walked around the charred land, assisted by a walking stick. The sirens grew louder in their warning. I heard a shout from a few yards away,

instructing me to return to the safe house. A strong wind gushed past me, sullyng my hair and carrying with it the thick smell of smoke. I realised this erratic wind with its unpredictability had become the cause of worry.

The wind had been feeding the wildfire, which had been raging for five days now. People had been praying to the heavens for the rain, their eyes glued to the sky in the hope to see the outline of dark clouds heavy with a promise but so far it had remained stubbornly bare. I heard the voice shout a warning to me again but I did not budge. I raised my eyes skyward and breathed in deep. I knew it was going to rain today.

I tilted my head up, as if to say, 'Your time is done!' to the sun. All my life I had seen only darkness and hence was spared from having to watch my hometown being ravaged by the wildfire.

As I was giving my thanks, the first pitter-patter of raindrops fell on my cheek.



Illustrator: Ananya Singh

THE OUTPOST

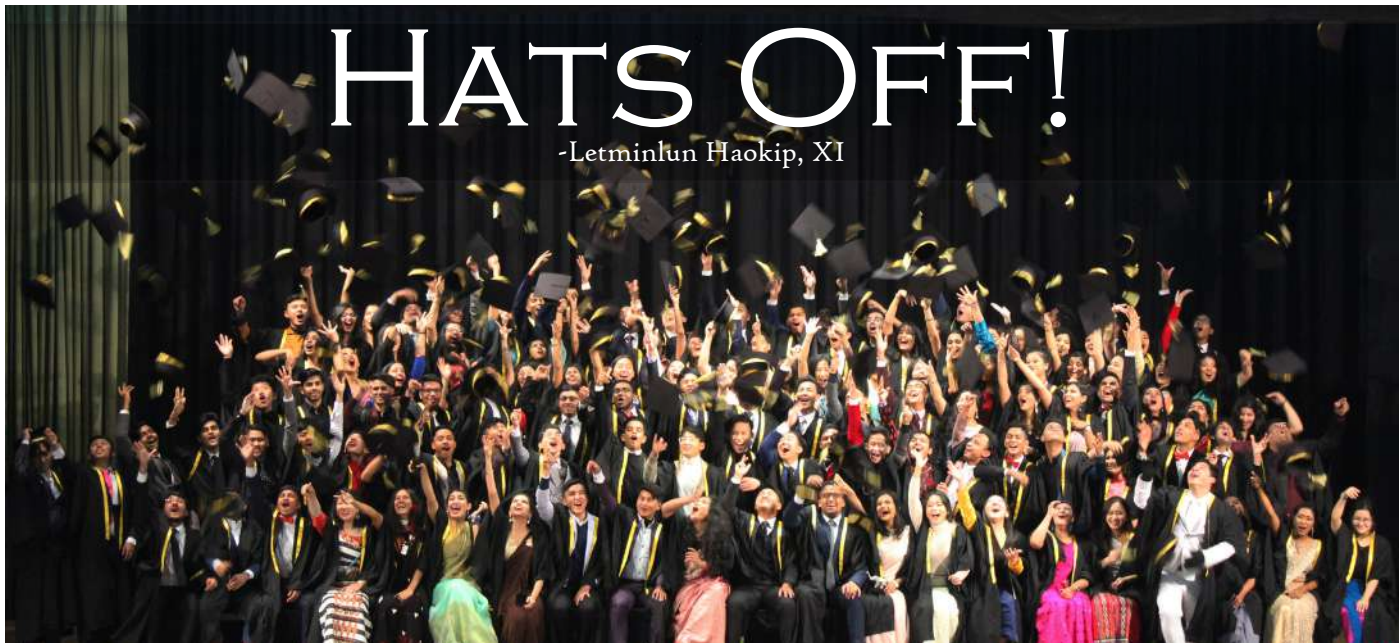
As the Wuhan Coronavirus spreads across the country, killing at least 26 people so far, China widens its travel restrictions to 10 cities. We will finally gather how well China has learned from the deadly SARs back in 2003. The Supreme Court refuses to stay the Citizenship Amendment Act without hearing the Government. ISRO unveils 'Vyom', India's first robot astronaut. Storm Gloria has ravaged parts of Spain with heavy rain and violent winds, leaving 13 dead while on the other side of the globe US Senators were seen chewing gum, handing out fidget spinners and sleeping during Trump's impeachment trial.



Illustrator: Levi Lego

HATS OFF!

-Letminlun Haokip, XI



As the sun set and fairy lights lit up the tennis court, the graduating Class of 2020 put on their gowns, their thinking caps and amidst cheers, sat down on the hallowed seats of the Williamson Magor Hall. It was time to say goodbye, as they say all things must come to an end. The Chief Guest for the occasion was Mrs. Sangeeta Sindhi Bahl, an Image Consultant and a celebrated climber having scaled six summits across the continents including Mt. Everest, becoming India's oldest woman to have achieved this feat. The evening began with the School Choir performing "One Moment in Time". The ceremony saw five graduating student speakers take to the podium, Jirmeen Tok brought the crowd to tears, as she spoke about her long journey from class 3 to class 12 at AVS. She ended her speech with a beautiful rendition of the classic 'Seasons in the Sun' by Terry Jacks. Nivranshu Baruah spoke next with wit and humour and in his own words, against the norm. He ended his speech on a personal note, as he spoke to his sister, giving her advice on her future as she

readied herself to join The Assam Valley School. The outgoing School Captain Ngukivi Chishi and Head Girl Aakangsha Dutta spoke as well, with their trademarked wit and passion, as they not only inspired but wished the School well along with the upcoming Batch.

The newly elected School Captain Param Singh Nongmaithem took to the podium next and in his speech bid a warm farewell to the outgoing Batch urging his Seniors to lead the way despite the political turmoil across the country. The Guest of Honour, Mrs. Bahl, handed the iconic silver elephants to all the graduating students. She then spoke of hard work and perseverance, adding in many anecdotes of her own life, to not only wish the students well but also to prepare them for the uncharted waters that awaited them in the future. The evening ended with the Headmaster, Dr. Vimal and Mrs. Bahl awarding the prestigious School Colours to the most deserving students and a trip back to the 1920s where everyone got their Gatsby on before hitting the dance floor.

STAR OF THE WEEK

The School's Deputy Head of Academics, Mrs. Shakila Banu, was awarded 'The Best Teacher' Award by The Telegraph in the month of December. We congratulate Ma'am Banu on her achievement and wish her success for her future endeavors.



In Conversation

Mrs. Sangeeta Sindhi Bahl holds the record of being the oldest woman from India to have scaled the Mount. Everest. As she stands on the threshold of completing her quest to scale the summits across the continents, she graced the Graduation Ceremony as the Chief Guest this year. AVE caught a moment with her for a quick conversation.

AVE: *Mainly being known as the “oldest Indian woman to scale Mt. Everest”, how did you develop your interest in Image Consultancy?*

Mrs. Sangeeta Sindhi Bahl (SSB): I was working as an air hostess with Emirates Airlines when I completed my MBA and became the first person to attain the degree whilst flying. I left Emirates in 2000 and began a strength-weakness analysis of myself while deciding on my next venture, even asking a few friends. I stumbled upon an online course for Image Consultancy. I completed the course and went around the world attending conferences in Image Consultancy in 2003, finally opening Impact Image Consultancy in 2005.

AVE: *Mountaineering is not a very conventional dream. What would you say to young people who may have an interest in other such unconventional activities?*

SSB: My advice is, GO FOR IT! Life is for the unconventional. Never stick to one conventional way. Build up your inner strength, believe in yourself and just keep on repeating this mantra, ‘Prepare, Be Passionate and Persevere’.

AVE: *As an image consultant and founder of Impact Image Consultants, what would you say is an important aspect of a person that many people don’t give importance to?*

SSB: It’s communication. You can beautify a person with make-up and dresses in an instant but you have to spend time to learn to communicate effectively. If you can’t communicate well, you can’t rise in life. Confidence and communication is key.

AVE: *What sort of inspiration do you want people to take from your two distinct passions?*



SSB: You need to have discipline and manage time efficiently. Be disciplined about following your passion, and do something about it every-day. You need commitment to satisfy your passion.

AVE: *What would you say to young people who artificially want to alter their appearance?*

SSB: No! Do not get involved in changing your appearance. I have noticed that people who tighten their skin to cover their wrinkles are anxious about smiling or even having a laugh. My advice is to focus on your behaviour, have an active and healthy lifestyle, read, ask questions and limit the use of the internet.

THE THINKING CORNER WITH MR. WATTS

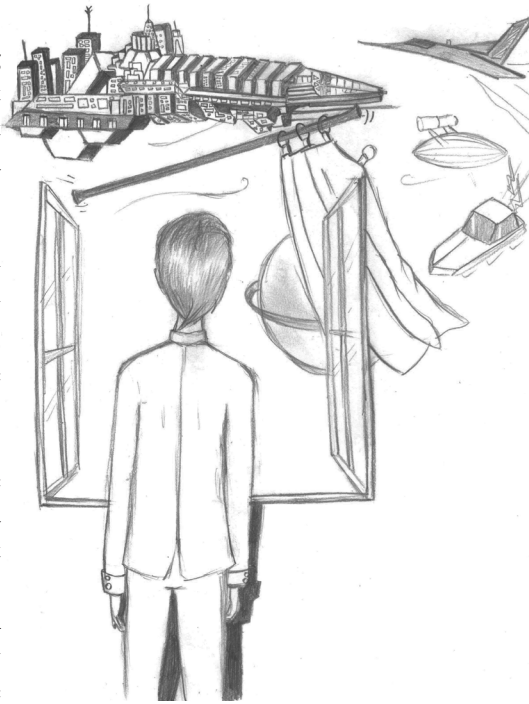
“Challenging the way you think”

How dare we go about spending our precious time, energy and billions of tax payers dollars on space exploration, animal welfare, entertainment stars and other such non-essential schemes when half the world's population cannot move freely, dress as they wish and live on their own terms, when poverty and malnutrition is blatantly juxtaposed with obscene opulence and whimsical extravagance, when human health in its entirety is dependent on profit considerations.

Sun of Mine

-Ojas Krish, IX

Jordan woke up, dusting his eyes. He sat up for a second looking at his untidy desk and then flopped right back onto his bed. He looked at the neighbouring bed; his brother had already left for Choir practice. He could not delay the inevitable but he could at least enjoy a respite, moments before they were snatched away. He sauntered over to the window and looked outside. The many flying cars raced over the sky; hyper-loop trains cut through the city. Oh, how he wished he was in that world. However, it was not to be. He remembered that the clock was ticking and so he walked over to the bathroom and whilst brushing, he stared at the mirror. He had a scar near his ear from an especially vicious beating by the Sister. He sighed, and left the bathroom to put on his robes. He flattened his hair, but he did not comb it. Unwillingly he put the chain around his neck, the cold metal plunging his nerves to the pits of hell. He wore his shoes as they were; he did not polish it. He did not want to put on



his belt as it hung loose on him. As he began to leave, the inevitable happened. The Sun rose, prompting the Choir below to break into a song. He hated it. He tried to shut it out even as the voices rose in supplication as he walked down the stairs, trudging his way to the chapel. He sat down on the wooden seat and in an attempt to pacify himself, he focused all his anger on the church. The sudden slap across his face came with very little surprise. "Where's your belt? And why have you not polished your shoes?" the Sister asked. "I've run out of polish and I've run out of patience." This was met with another slap that made his scar throb and for a while brought in the relief of drowning out the devout Choir behind a ringing of pain. The Sister stalked off. Jordan sat back down, a tear escaping his

eye. He refused to accept the truth even as it stared at his face.

He was stuck in a Sun-worshipping-Church-cult. In the year 3020.

Illustrator: Ssara Jha



Keep It Reel!

Connecting The Dots

-Parthiv Gargo, XI

Ripple #118

-Aryaman Choudhury, XI

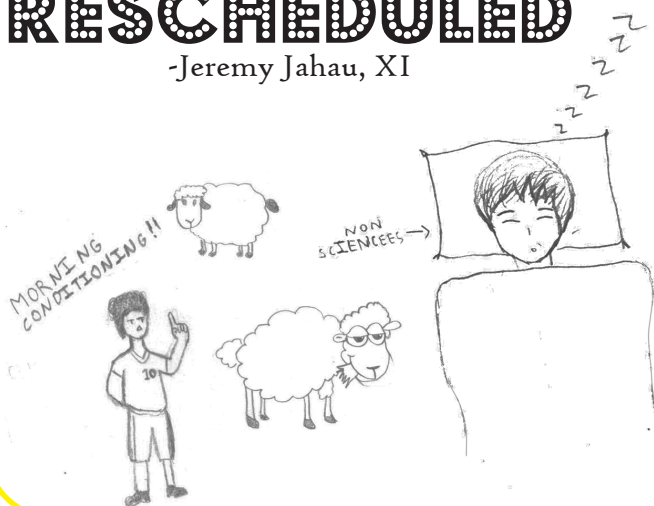
Autumn leaves
Drift into the winter
cold,
Skies orange and gold
Give way to a frosty
sun,
As the seasons change,
So do we, in that way,
we are all the same

Tongue Of Slip!!

1. I don't know how to brooming - Drishti Rathi, X (We definitely know who isn't a witch.)
2. Should have asked her told - Sampada Malpani, IX (Ask for some grammar lessons.)
3. Hurry up fast! - Zeenat Ullah, XI (Your mouth seems to be faster than your brain.)
4. When you go, switch off the roam - Madhurjya Baruah, IX (Roaming charges do not apply here)
5. Call that female boy! - Mr. Moses Herrick (We're not in Thailand, sir.)
6. I got a stung by a pea - Bonolakshmi Brahma, XI (Isn't it a buzzing sensation?)

RESCHEDULED

-Jeremy Jahau, XI



This Weeks Contributors:

Teachers: Mr. Leslie P. Watts

Class 11: Anushka Rai, Lydia Timungpi, Levi Lego, Ananya Singh

Class 9: Chumki Biswas

Class 8: Ssara Jha

Editor-in-Chief: Jeremy L. Jahau

Deputy Editor: Letminlun Haokip

Associate Editor: Anoushka S. Rabha

Correspondents: Parthiv & Ojas

Design & Layout: Moom Lego & Jeremy L. Jahau

Illustrator: Takhe Tamo Reela & Eloziini Senachena

Photo Credit: Letminlun Haokip & Parthiv Gargo

Mistress-in-Charge: Ms. Sarmistha Paul Sarkar

Publisher: The Assam Valley School, P.O. Balipara, Dist. Sonitpur, Asom-784101, India

E-mail: ave@assamvalleyschool.com

Telephone: 09678074320/08812009627 Website: www.assamvalleyschool.com