

Temple of Dreams

-Ojas Krish, X

This month was historic, to say the least. Hindus all around India and the world rejoiced as the decision to reinstate Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was made. Now, this is astronomically important in today's social landscape, and let me explain why.

Since the days of the Delhi Sultanate to the era of Babur himself, thousands of temples all across India have been demolished, Hindus and those of other religions, massacred. Babur also demolished one of the holiest shrines, the birth place of Lord Rama, whom millions of Hindus revere, the Ram Mandir temple in Ayodhya and instead built a mosque at its place. The Mughal rule continued but when the British came, reformist Hindus hoped that the Westerners would bring about "progressive" changes to Indian society. But what they did was the polar opposite. While the country was squeezed out of its wealth, treasures and resources, its civilizational history tarnished and corrupted, the population brutalized. While the independence movement gained more traction, the British policy of continued appeasement of minorities led to the partition and one of the most horrific genocides in human history. This brings me back to the crux of the matter. Since the medieval age, Hindus have been persecuted and oppressed, in a country to which they belonged, despite their strength in numbers. The construction of Ram Mandir is important, not because it fulfils an agenda of the BJP as a "Hindu Supremacist Neo-Nazi Party" (which it is not) because Ayodhya, and the temple

by extension is an important part of our heritage. A centuries old dispute heard and settled at the apex court, after scouring multiple sources that proved the existence of the temple on these holy grounds beyond doubt, negates the oft churned theory that the verdict in favour of the construction of the temple came, at the heist of a populist agenda. The Ram Mandir at Ayodhya is quite simply, the Vatican of the Hindus. In a world where the media constantly harps at the rise of the majoritarian sentiments, the truth is, Hinduism is a pluralistic faith encouraging individual belief system accepting and respecting the presence of multiple faiths. Hinduism is innately secular and those who practice it or have a personal belief system akin to this theory, is a Hindu at heart, if not in faith. Despite the secular nature of our Constitution which allows all 'minority' religious institutions to practice and propagate without state intervention, Hindu temples, those left standing, languish under State control. The State exercises this power in the name of anti-corruption move, yet, the steps it has taken from drawing of queues according to prices to indiscriminate selling of Temple owned agricultural land to builders, is a shameful misuse of Constitutional power at the altar of secularism. In order to protect our diversity and our pluralistic faith, we must stop wielding the Secular character of our Constitution as a mere façade and instead be a Hindu at heart, no matter the faith, so that we may remain yet, the Secular State that was envisioned.

Your representation

-Mr. Sabir Ansari, Chair of Mathematics

Islam is the second-largest religion in India, with 14.2% of the country's population an approximate 172 million people identifying as adherents of Islam (2011 census). The question arises, what percentage is the representation of Muslim youths in the Civil services?

Since independence and before 2016, the representation of Muslim candidates in Civil Services was approximately 2.5 percentage. This is not a very encouraging figure, if we note that nearly 14% of India's population hails from this community. Who is responsible for such a dismal representation? Why is it that most Muslims feel it is the RSS or the BJP led Government who is biased and don't allow capable Muslims to join the Civil Services?

For the Civil Service Batch of 2016, for the first time in history, 50 Muslims were selected through the UPSC, with 10 making it to the top 100. In the 2017 Batch, too, 50 Muslims were selected through the exam. For the years 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 Batches, this number was 30, 34, 38 and 36, respectively. Since 2016, the percentage of Muslim candidates has remained around 5 %, which is 100% better than previous years' representation. We are well aware as to who's been in the government since 2014.

Why then can the Muslim community not trust the RSS or the Modi led BJP-Government despite the popular slogans "United India, Great India" (Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas) and in 2019 (Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Viswas).

Whenever a terrorist is encountered or captured belonging to a particular community, the entire community and its common man is looked upon with suspicion. States under the present government and its ally states single out and target people from this community and we hear of innumerable cases of human rights violation. It is essential to let the law of the land take its course instead of leaving it to media trials and worse, mob lynching's. The entire community or a person from that community shouldn't be put on trial alongside with a question mark on their sense of patriotism. This would help reinstate the faith of the people on the government. This also poses a recurring question about political party's and leaders who claim

to be the sole protectors of the Muslim community and have since independence, basked in the certainty of their votes. Where are the evidences of opportunities in respect to education, employment, resources and health care facilities etc? Where is even a glimpse of effort made earnestly? Continuing the British tactic of divide and rule, leaders from within and outside the community have merely fanned age old fears and mistrust for the sole purpose of vote bank politics.

While coaching centres like "Zakat Foundation", Hamdard Study Circle, Aaghaz Foundation and Larkspur House have helped in the increase of UPSC aspirants from the Muslim community by providing free or subsidised coaching, by itself, is not steps enough. In the areas with Muslim dominated community, children either stay away from school or drop out early to enter the world of crime. Lack of proper educational institutions, resources, family background (mostly business that's too small scale) and the fact that majority of the parents are uneducated affect the upbringing of their children.

Leaders of the community do not help by limiting the aspirations of the new generation to the regimented and limited Madrassa education which promises other than religious virtue, one free meal a day.

The larger half of the Muslim Community that swelters under age old dogmas, desperately needs reforms and a scope of modernisation of thought and ways that allow the aspirations of the new generation to bloom. All political leaders irrespective of their party affiliations must work together to make policies that help the community to break the shackles of their persecution complex and ingrain themselves in mainstream India.

The youth of the country must change their perceptions with the help of the three "D's" Determination, Dedication and Discipline. Believe in themselves and remember the timeless quote by the Urdu poet Allama Iqbal Khudi ko kar buland itna ke har taqder se pehle Khuda bande se khud poche bata teri raza kya hai (Elevate yourself so high that even God, before issuing every decree of destiny, should ask you: Tell me, what is your intent?)

Errata

AVE wishes to clarify that The Assam Valley School does not promote any commercial organization or agency. All Career related queries are to be directed to the Department of Careers at careers@assamvalleyschool.com

Obü

-Marwati Imsong, XI

It was the spring of 2016, a peaceful evening, where father and I sat sipping green tea after dinner. A sudden a phone call put a shadow across my father's face and he told me that grandpa had a stroke and had been admitted in the ICU.

We rushed to the hospital immediately. With my heart pounding, the Doctor informed us that grandpa had suffered a minor stroke and would be fine. We had to be careful however for this was a sign of deteriorating heart conditions.

We stayed the night at the hospital and it was decided that I would stay with Grandpa for a few weeks to keep an eye on him. Grandpa and I had never been that close. Other than the family visits, I had not really spent much time with him. Having settled down in the room next to his, I peeped in to see if all was good. I found him going through an album of old photographs. Grandpa called me over and drew a chair and sat next to him. The photographs showed strapping young men in uniform and berets from his regiment along with pictures of him with my dainty grandma. He told me the story of how he and grandma met. Grandma had been a nurse associated with their regiment and he had fallen in love with her at first sight. Since then, Grandpa said, he had fallen in love a little of every moment he had spent with her. Grandma had passed away a few years ago, it was hard for my Grandpa and his health started to deteriorate. As the days passed he would tell stories about his days in the army along with his regiment who were more like family.

We would often visit grandma's grave who had been buried in her garden amongst her precious flowers according to her wish. It was a garden full of mango trees and flowers, orchids of many kinds, planted by Grandma. Grandpa made sure the flowers beds were trimmed and the garden was maintained beautifully.

My stay with Grandfather was about to end when one evening he told me the story of how as a child he had gotten lost while playing and couldn't find his way home. A sparkle of fireflies, he said helped him find the road that led him home. He often said that it was the spirits of the ancestors who had led him to safety. He had then removed the silver necklace he wore around his neck and gave it to me before telling me to get a good night's sleep before the journey home.

School began almost immediately and I went back to the routine of my life. It was in the month of December when one-day father visited paid a sudden visit to school and informed me that Grandpa had passed away. We buried him next to grandma in the garden. Grandpa had left me a letter with my name on it. I put it in my pocket and went to the garden where he and I would sit sharing stories. The letter read "Dear Bendang, if you are reading this it means I am no more. Live a life without regrets, where you are surrounded by people who love you and while you worry about your studies do not forget to seize the moment. Your's loving Obü" Tears rolled down my eyes and as I wiped them, fireflies rose from the bushes and in that fading light, I saw the shadow of my dear Obü.



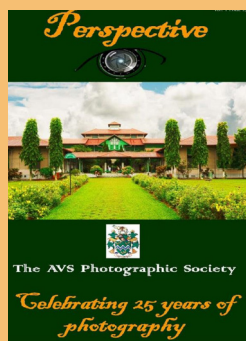
Illustration: Elozini Senachena

CAMPUS NEWS

The month of August saw new additions to the Publication circuit at School with the Departments of Hindi, Assamese, English and Photography unveiling their Quaterlies. May the world of ideas continue to foster great reads.



The English Department



The Photography Department



The Assamese Department



The Hindi Department

Rising Concern

-Adrika Borah

The Brahmaputra is both a lifeline and a threat to Assam. It is more than a river. Consisting of multiple channels and water bodies, it is a massive river system. Assam receives both the monsoon rains and water from various rivers including the Brahmaputra, originating from the Himalayas. This should ideally be good news, but it is not. The glacial melt in summer coincides with the monsoon, causing the annual flooding. These reoccurring floods are infamously known as 'The Assam Floods'.

Assam is a flood-prone state with its vast network of rivers and therefore, this phenomenon is not new to the state. However, things are different this year. With the global pandemic at hand, people are facing a lot of trouble and there are challenges arising due to the floods as well. Reports in The Hindustan Times claim that as of 30th July, death toll had risen to 107 and 16.5 lakh people still remain affected. People as well as animals are being rescued and shifted to safer locations and relief camps. These floods are a result of both natural and man-made factors. Surprisingly, structures that are supposed to prevent floods actually make them even worse. These structures are called Embankments. Successive governments in Assam have spent crores of money over the past years in building embankments along Brahmaputra and its tributaries. Unplanned construction of these embankments have disrupted Brahmaputra's natural flow. Famed US civil engineer

Charles Ellet Junior stated that, "Rivers confined by embankments cause them to rise higher and flow faster." So why do governments continue constructing more and more embankments? Many say Politicians can point to embankments as a tangible sign of their activity. Large-scale landslides and faulty drainage have also weakened Assam's ageing embankments and many of them are very poorly maintained. Over the year's people have started building houses near embankments and because of the embankments being breached, the resulting floods are both sudden and intense. In certain instances, authorities used dredgers to deepen the Brahmaputra. However, many environmentalists say that these engineering processes are conducted with little or no environmental assessment.

The Brahmaputra cannot be tamed. Flooding will continue to become more and more intense in years to come. So is there any solution to minimize the destruction? Himanshu Thakker, Head, South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, suggests that there should be Better Flood forecasting. Information about flood forecasts must reach the affected villages on time. Secondly, strengthen only those embankments that are really needed and do not build new ones. Create more room for the river, not restrict it. Lastly, ban all constructions on low-lying floodplains.

Perhaps It's time we stop normalizing this annual destruction. Its time to act, not react.

Happy Teacher's Day!



*With pain, sweat and chalk dusted hands
You rise the new Leaders of our native Lands
Despite our differences and conflicts and such
To you, our dear teachers, we thank you so much*

STARS OF THE WEEK

The Vasant Valley School organized the annual Inter-School Competition - "TECH VVIZ" - from the 26th of August to the 27th of August. AVS Media Center participated in the 'Multimedia Contest' category which required the participants to submit a 5-minute long short film. This year the theme was - Lights, Camera, Action : It all happened Online. Led by the Electronic Media Captain, Hrish Raj Sureka and the Master in Charge, Mr. Tapash Das, the Team comprising of Anushka Barua, Bornam Bora and Parthiv Gargo were announced Winners amongst 21 schools who had battled for the first position. We extend our heartiest congratulations to the Team. May they continue to shine reel by reel.



THE OUTPOST

The banning of PUBG one amongst a fresh list of 118 Chinese apps by the Government after fresh tensions in Ladakh further hits Chinese revenue. Marvel Studios and the world, mourns the death of Wakanda's King T'Challa as actor Chadwick Boseman passes away. India lost the visionary Congressman and former President Pranab Mukherjee. India now becomes the only country in the world to report 80,000 positive cases in a day. Despite protests the 'life-changing' JEE and NEET exams are underway. In a modern David and Goliath story, Taiwan shoots down Chinese fighter plane in a display of courage and defiance.



Illustration: Eloziini Senachena

The Quarantine Readlist

Need help finding a gem amidst a sea of monotony? Grab a cup of coffee or tea and dive into the world of these enthralling stories, here is a list of some of our suggestions:

THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL BY ANNE FRANK: The Musings and hopes of a Jewish girl in the Secret Annex- her diary records two years of confinement during the Holocaust.

DON QUIXOTE BY MIGUEL DE CERVANTES: An imaginative old gentleman dubs himself Don Quixote of La Mancha and becomes a would-be knight off to humorous adventures after reading about literary heroes.

MAGIC STRINGS OF FRANKIE PRESTO BY MITCH ALBOM: The intriguing story of Frankie Presto, the greatest musician the world has ever seen, and his six magical guitar strings narrated by none other than Music himself.

FLOWERS FOR ALEGERON BY DANIEL KEYES: Charlie, a mentally disabled man, undergoes a surgery to increase his intelligence that changes his life in ways he had never expected.

Ripple #138

-Neelabh Kashyap, XI

*The mountains were calling out to
him,*

Inciting him to conquer them

And stand atop the tallest

peak and gaze down at the

inconsequential world below.

But how could he go?

The shackles on his feet kept him

constrained –

Shackles of responsibility.

Keep It Reel!

Insight

-Dhrupad K. Choudary, XII

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