

THE POWER OF NARRATIVE
An article by Sriшти Bajaj, X

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INDIA FIRST

-Ojas Ayapilla, XII

The Russo-Ukraine War of 2022 has garnered at-least twenty seconds of attention from every human being connected to the internet since it started on 24th February 2022. Since then, the whole world has reacted to it, from governments to celebrities except one entity; India.

Well, the answer can be put this way: when you get the best of both worlds; there are sure to be some caveats. India right now is in a geo-political situation where it must maneuver from a position of strength. While the conflict is being played out in Ukraine it really is a play between the major powers trying to establish their supremacy in their respective regions.

USA and Russia both have boundless strategic importance to India. Russia is India's most historic-ally. Most prominently, Russia is India's chief arms supplier, contributing 68% of Indian arms. More importantly, in numerous occasions it has used its power of veto to help India caught in a spot.

In recent years, US-India relationships have greatly developed. They have come to have important relations and co-operate in defense, counter-terrorism, culture, trade, education and energy. India's high-altitude helicopters, the Apache and the Chinook are supplied

by the USA. 1% of the US's population are Indian immigrants. Thus, the US is an ally the Indians need in the rapidly developing world. India cannot side against the US. India knows well that the true conflict region will be the Indo-Pacific and therefore the QUAD needs to be made stronger. It has to strategize to use both Russia and USA to counter China for the actual threat to the world will come from the far east.

The war horrors from Bucha have gripped the world and public opinion against Putin is at an all-time low. The demand from the West for India to pick a side grows. India's Foreign Minister extraordinaire Dr. S. Jaishankar has stated clearly that "India has only one stance; India's stance." These words which he said in 2019 at an economic conference still lie true today.

This very brave and unipolar stance by India is certainly something to admire; but as Russian war crimes increase in the Ukrainian region, India will have to walk a tighter rope for it is not morality or history that it will have to contest with, but the existential threat it faces from China. It needs time to get to where it must and in the days ahead will unfold the true potential of India's presence in the subcontinent.

THE POWER OF NARRATIVE

-Srishti Bajaj, X & Hiyaneijemmy Das, XII

THE CURRENT NARRATIVE - ZELENSKY THE HERO, RUSSIA THE BAD GUY

Putin wanted the US and NATO to promise that they would never allow Ukraine to become a member of the alliance, saying that Ukraine should be a buffer, a neutral state. However, western leaders rejected those demands.

Russians claim that Zelensky, the president of Ukraine is a pawn in the hands of the Ukrainian nationalist forces harbouring Russia-hating Nazi extremists. There has been, according to the same narratives, visible evidence of rallies by these extremists. However, reports also suggest that Zelensky has become the hero he is today by only leading the country with courage and determination. It seems his motivational speeches have inspired many in Ukraine, and beyond.

Many claim that Russia has used the matter of NATO membership as a false excuse to invade Ukraine. However, facts point to a different conclusion. History is, after all, all about how the sequence of events has been described and put forward to the masses, who form opinions based not simply on facts, but on the story they have been told. Is Russia really at fault? Is Zelensky really the hero everyone claims him to be? There are no right or wrong answers, for all the answers are shaped by opinions and all the opinions are fuelled by imperfect, instructional narratives.

HOW DO NARRATIVES SHAPE POLITICS AND WAR?

Narratives are mere opinionated views of an individual or a group on any sequence of events or simply one event in particular. However, in modern history, politically involved individuals have transformed "narrative" into an art of inventing concepts and then arranging them as a part of a multi-pronged conceptual discourse. Narratives from powerful sources have the ability to create myths, legends and heroes. Since ancient times, political leaders and rulers have been using narratives to justify actions or to expose so-called conspiracies of adversaries in order to resolve socio-political challenges.

Modern politics requires political narratives for public support. These narratives in fact help the less educated members of a community develop opinions of their own. However, narratives are completely subjective, and may or may not be truly informing you of the course of events taking place. These narratives usually have a target audience and are most effective when they are not neutral.

There are so many ways to join the same set of events and circumstances and yet arrive at different conclusions. That is what narratives do. One strong narrative helps in shaping the opinions of thousands whether it be right or wrong. In war, every side has their own narrative. Whatever the situation may be, when sympathy and public support is being wrung out, narratives provided by the 'powers that be' form all of our opinions, for better or for worse.

Illustration: Limeka Ayemi, XII



Illustration: Migan Angu, XII

The tragedy is that while we continue weeping over the Ukrainians at the cold mercy of the Russians, we turn a blind eye to the ravages of Western influence and interference over the last half-century; simply because they control the narrative.

THE WEST'S CONTROL OF THE GLOBAL NARRATIVE

Politics is shaped primarily by warfare and political narratives. While the former sanctions force to display autonomy and power, the latter is the deliberate shaping of opinion to wield influence over the masses, and subsequently, power over the people. For the past 200 years, the West has been the dominant force in world politics. The hemisphere has sought advantage of this by continuously shaping the narrative of what is politically

Illustration: Remeeya Mithi, X



right and wrong, what is democratic and not; on all matters and conflicts, the way they see fit.

Currently, we can observe that the war in Ukraine has been taken up as the fight of the little guy for democracy against the big, bad, authoritarian bully. However, what about the US invasion of Iraq? As the world forayed into a new millenium, the US took it upon herself to invade Iraq in the name of democracy, when there was never a consensus on it in a global forum. When 9/11 occurred, even when the US knew Afghanistan was the culprit, she invaded Iraq instead. Interference in the name of democracy is the West's trademark, and its results are painfully apparent in the news coverage of the Middle East today.

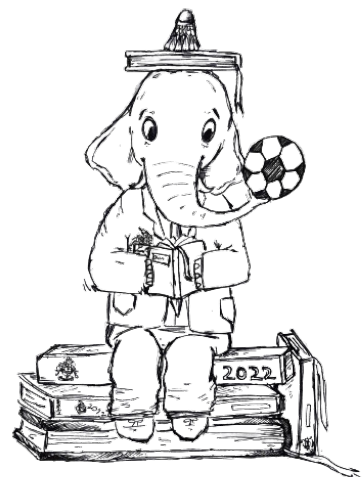
While Russia is in the wrong for invading a neighbouring country that insisted on policies that made Russia feel threatened, the US goes scot-free for interfering in matters thousands of miles away because the country has perfected the art of shaping the narrative. While Ukrainians are painted as "one of us" and the country described as not one where war is the norm, the Middle East bears the brunt of being used as the horrifying parallel and example of a country chronically at war and its people persistently not normal.

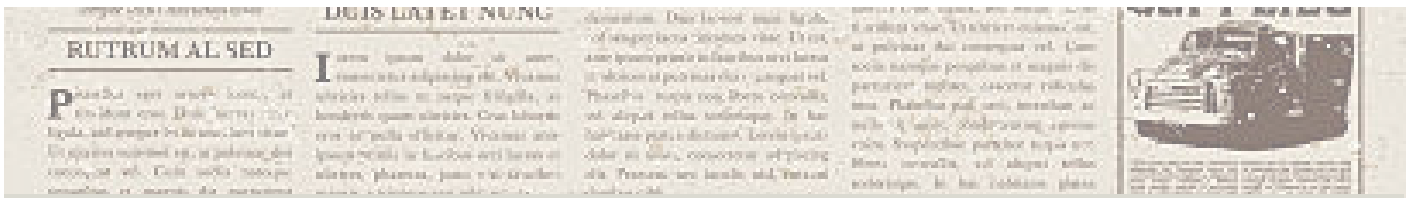
Russia is infinitely wrong for instigating a conflict that has led to the deaths of countless. However, so is the US. And she has done this multiple times. In Vietnam, in Syria, in Iraq, in Afghanistan. The tragedy is that while we continue weeping over the Ukrainians at the cold mercy of the Russians, we turn a blind eye to the ravages of Western influence and interference over the last half-century; simply because they control the narrative.

Campus Caricature

A New Chapter

-Ssara Jha, X





One Last Time

As we slow down to the end of what has been a wonderful, dynamic, and sometimes, indeed fiery, relationship between the Assam Valley Express and Headmaster Vimal; we took the opportunity to interview him one last time.

AVE: What is one important policy change you believe will help shape the school in the days to come.

VKL: I believe the most important aspect in any policy is consistency in execution. I have always believed in a bottom-up approach, you know? It is the students first, and then there is a way to take matters with the students at the helm. These ideas can only be implemented with consistency.

Another policy I'm really interested in for the future of AVS would be looking into the opportunity of implementing an international curriculum. It requires a certain work ethic, which the students very much need. Another change I'm hoping for is allowing exposure of different subjects and fields to the Lower School students. Then, they can choose their curriculum in the Upper School.

These are a few policy changes which will really shape the school in the future.

AVE: How would you like to be remembered in the days to come?

VKL: (laughs) I'd like to be remembered for a number of things actually. Number one, someone that was present in the toughest phase of the school, of education really, and ensured that the ship did not rock. Secondly, somebody for whom the students were the most important. Number three, somebody who talked about relevance in time, there is a time and place for everything. Someone who worked for equity, something which is extremely important for this world, and particularly AVS because there is quite a bit of inequity predominant here. I want to have left behind a better set-up where we are working towards equity, not just that I tried to remove it altogether. Finally, I want to remind the school that we are all custodians of this place. I want to be remembered as the custodian who preserved what was important and ensured that the next generation reaps the benefits.

AVE: Sir, An AVS experience you will always remember.

VKL: Actually, I can describe my most important experiences in three hugs. In Namdang Greens, a Kopili Captain hugged me and said, "You give a papa-type

feeling." (claps his hands and laughs) The next was a boy, who asked me if he could have a hug. After hugging him, he opened up to me about how he had lost his father when he was only in grade 5 and never experienced anyone talking to him in the fatherly manner that I provided for him. (takes a moment) And finally, in my first investiture ceremony, the outgoing School Captain told me that I was to wear the academic gown. As I was putting it on in the office, he stopped me and asked me to wait till we were outside the WMH, and he would put it on for me. Putting it on and sharing a hug, he explained to me that while I would have the opportunity to wear this gown many more times, it would be his last opportunity to offer the Headmaster the gown.

Oh, besides that, I will never forget the performing arts performances. The quality of music, dance, and theatre was just... unforgettable. And of course, I will never forget AVE. The room, reading the skin every Thursday, going back and forth with your MiC.

AVE: Of all the many things you began at School, what do you hope to see continue and prosper?

VKL: One thing I really want to say is that publications must continue. I have observed that the students are not very expressive here. The more opportunities we provide to express themselves, the more it will become a way of life. I can see nothing but great benefits in this. Another thing is scholarly spirit. The changing of the Scholar's Tie criteria is a step in the right direction. After all, I have said many times, how can we call someone who hasn't read five books in a year a scholar? The spirit of academics must carry on in this institution.

Finally, I want to emphasize that within the organisation there are many institutions, committees, etc., and we must empower them. We need to allow the people the space to make mistakes. We need to allow space for unlearning so that we can truly relearn. Lastly, two things that I definitely want to see continue and prosper are the tutorial systems and the parental outreach programmes. I think both are essential for the proper development of the child, and the development of the relationship of the child with the school.

AVE: You are known for your human connections and are full of stories. Will AVS feature in any of them and if yes, what will be it?

VKL: AVS will definitely feature in all kinds of stories. Stories of tutorials, of learning from the students and sharing such intimate moments with them. Stories of a Headmaster choosing to ignore. For example, when the AVE room would work late into the night and I decided not to even walk to that area! (laughs) Or when Mr. Pyne promised me to stop dramatics practise by 11 p.m. but went on to midnight, I decided to turn a conspiring blind eye. So yes, stories of ignoring certain things that will create magic later on.

An important tale will be that of COVID. The planning, sacrifice, and commitment that went into keeping us running without students, and anticipating having them

back.

If I had to give a story in particular, though, it would be that of New Year's Eve last year, 31 December, 2021. The boys had come back to school but were in the infirmary, not their houses. I sat outside the hospital, spending the Eve night with them. What a privilege. It's really special when you don't expect people to connect with you, and when that does happen, it's something special.

AVE: Sir, you are known for your love of poetry, and we'd love to hear you describe your tenure at AVS in the words of your favourite poet.

VKL: (laughs and recites a ghazal) *khudā ham ko aisī khudā.ī na de/ ki apne sivā kuchh dikhā.ī na de*

Oh and, I've said this many times before, but a favourite line of mine is, "O Captain, my Captain!"



You have inspired and motivated Team AVS in the best way possible even when the water was choppy, you led us through success and ensured in building true team spirit in all of us. I wish you continue to reign success in your next chapter of life! All the best Sir.

-Mrs. Sagarika Dutta

THE OUTPOST

Imran Khan sends a googly to the Opposition reminiscent of his cricket days by dissolving the Pakistani Parliament on the eve of the no-confidence motion that was to be floored against him. He becomes the first Pakistani PM to directly take on the hegemony of the army. The Rajapaksa family business of running Srilanka goes kaput as the country faces severe economic emergency. Will Smith sends shock waves at Oscars by physically assaulting Chris Rock. It is the latter who comes across as the *Rock* of Gibraltar with sold out comedy shows while the only Smith left smiling is Jada.



Illustration: Ssara Jha, X

TOP TAX DEDUCTOR

AVS has been awarded as a Top Tax Deductor by the Income Tax Department and appreciated for significant contribution towards nation building. The award was collected by Manager Finance Mr. Parag Goswami on behalf of AVS



SENA MEDAL

Alumni, Batch of 2013 Dhansiri, Captain Rounaque Sparsh Chaudhuri of the 301 Light Regiment was awarded the prestigious SENA MEDAL (Gallantry) in March 2022.

On the 29th of February 2020, Captain Chaudhuri volunteered to lead a patrol of five Other Ranks in severely challenging conditions of adverse terrain and 6-7 feet of snow to open routes and prepare a helipad to enable air evacuation. With his diligent planning and meticulous execution under trying conditions, he led a successful casualty evacuation at 18,000 feet to save the life of the Officer. Captain Chaudhuri displayed unflinching resolve not only during evacuation, but also led his team safely back to post immediately; through a 70-degree upslope, occupying it by the last light, ensuring operational preparedness. His actions of exemplary courage and robustness in the face of multiple dangers saved the life of a fellow Officer. For this gallant act, astute leadership, and indomitable spirit; Captain Chaudhuri was recognised and awarded. AVS remains proud of its brave hero and extends the warmest congratulations to his parents and family.



INSCIGNIS

Inscignis is a mega science fest of North East India. It is organized by Tezpur Central University on the occasion of National Science Day. Like every year this year also students from the Assam Valley School have participated in various competitions and have brought laurels to the school. Results are as follows:

1. Naman Tibrewal - 3rd prize in Chem-mystry
2. Akanksha Kumar- 1st in Periodica
3. Krishna Agarwal - 2nd in periodica
4. Shreyan Dutta and Naman Tiberewal - 1st in Biobonanza (category-A)
5. Chinmoy Tamuli and Fareeha Ambrene- 1st in Bio-bonanza (category-B)
6. Nihal Agarwal and Neil Kashyap- 1st in Taboo (category-A)
7. Akanksha Kumar and Prateeti Baruah- 2nd in Taboo (category-A)
8. Yash Raj Agarwal and Aditya Upadhyaya - 2nd in Taboo (category-B)
9. Aryaman Bajaj - 1st in TMI
10. Anushka Jitani- 3rd in TMI
11. Manalisa Narzari- 1st in Genesis out of Crisis
12. Utkarsh Jajodia- 3rd in Chess-e-matic
13. Aryaman Bajaj- 3rd in Error

HINDI DEBATES

Topic: ऑनलाइन शिक्षा पढ़ाई का एक अच्छा विकल्प है।

3rd Debate Bhoroli- Lohit vs Subansiri-Namdang

Winner: Subansiri- Namdang

Best Speaker: Swadheen Banerjee

Most Promising Speaker: Khushi Todi

4th Debate Kopili- Dhansiri vs Jinari-Manas

Winner: Jinari-Manas

Best Speaker: Ahsah Agarwal

Most Promising Speaker: Shambhavi Chauhan

BIHU FESTIVITIES

Husori:

-Shambhavi Jindal, IX

The rich history of Husori can be traced back to the Ahom rulers who had the dancers perform at Ranghor. It picked up momentum and saw various court officials calling for such performances in their own courtyards. Thereby it caught the imagination of the ordinary folk which saw performers move from house to house performing the Husori during Bihu which remains hugely popular to this day. The songs used in Husori took on a spiritual flavour during the spread of Vaishnavism in Assam which has added to its rich and varied repertoire. Aviators got a heady taste of dancing the Husori with sessions being conducted by the Department of Dance headed by Mrs. Rubi Bordoloi and Mrs Torali Baruah. Girls and boys learnt a little more of the dance form and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon sessions accompanied by the characteristic shout-outs.

Craft:

-Zaheen Shah, IX

This was the first activity of Bihu for my group and dare I say the most informative one. We were shown the different types of mekhela such as Paat, Eri and Muga. We were told in length about them. Their materials like Muga Mekhela is made from muga silk etc. We were all shocked to know the prices of them too. They go from 30,000 to 50,000 each! Fun fact- I learnt that Eri is also known as golden wool. Getting to know about the fashion industry of Assam was more fun and interesting than I thought it would be. I really wish we get to do these kind of activities more.

Culinary:

-Zaheen Shah, IX

This activity had to be a student favourite as everyone knew it would involve eating. We were all taken to the Kopili Quadrant in the Girls CDH. As soon as we walked in, we saw many coconuts and cooking utensils. It all looked very exciting. First, we were instructed to make the famous, delicious, must-have-assamese Bihu sweet; Tel pitha. We grinded the rice using a ural then sieved the batter. Lastly we mixed the batter. It was so fun and a great bonding time with our batchmates. With the help of Ma'am Chayanika and Ma'am Mandeep, we put the batter on the pan. The tasty, hot, soft pithas right off the pan were amazing. We then moved on to making the coconut ladoos. After removing the edible part from the husk, we mixed it with sugar. We then, heated the mixture. I could not tell which one I liked more. They were both amazing. It was a well-organised and fun activity. We all learnt a lot.

Instrumental:

-Aanya Paul Sarkar, IX

On the Fifth of April, under the guidance of the Music Department and the keen eye of Ma'am Ishita Malhotra and the team, the melodic tunes of the husoori came alive in the music room. Group 6 was taught upbeat Bihu numbers ranging from 'Govindai Ram' to 'Peeriti Peeriti'. This aided us to delve into the realm of music and rhythm which has been celebrated for eons, and I am certain will be celebrated for years to come. Our enthusiastic voices filled up the room, echoing through the corridors, and were nothing short of invigorating. What we lacked in harmony we made up in gusto.

Art:

-Aanya Paul Sarkar, IX

On the Fifth of April, under the guidance of the art department, vibrant drawings of Bihu were brought to life by Group 6 with extreme zeal. This helped cultivate our imagination and clear out our thought processes all the while giving us an insight into the art and culture of Assam. The history of art in Assam is truly in a class of its own. The tradition of paintings in Assam is centuries old and got a special boost during the rule of the Ahoms. We learned about the fine planning and the expertise behind the architecture of the Ahom palaces and satras. It was a day well spent.



Photo Credits: Shrey Modi, XII & Prati Barua, X

Ripple #182

-Anushka Jitani, X

The urge to liven up my
life with pretty pictures,
And sacrifice myself to
the scrutiny of strangers,
Is to latch onto the
normal.
I prefer instead the
comfort of mundanity.

Tongue Of Slip!!

1. "I didn't hid it."- Adella F. Massar, XII
(What? Your brain? Because it sure looks like it.)
2. "I'm world famous in Manas." - Yajvin Prithany, XII (Modesty is a virtue.)
3. "Stop paining my eyes." - Silpi Bora, XII
(I bet your English teacher is in more pain with that grammar of yours)
4. "They beated us." - Donovan Figg, XII
(Beated the intelligence out of you?)
5. "You don't deserve me to hit me." - Aastha Jatin, XII (And you don't deserve to speak the English language again.)

Keep It Reel!

Focus

-Mahita Jindal, XII

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