

all of you, quietly, that also goes into the making of you as a good student, citizen, Indian, and above all human.

Now let's face it – kindness does not really have a good reputation. What Lady Macbeth was actually saying there was, 'Mac, Mac, Mac, you do not have what it takes to get ahead in life, to be King of Scotland. You are just too full of the milk of human kindness. Be ruthless. Pull people down!'

It is true how people say nice things about kindness and kind people. They give out Nobel Peace Prize and Best 'Jolly Good Sport' Awards, don't they? But kindness is seen by far too many people in the world out there as a kind of weakness.

Well, it is not.

The AVS motto is 'Truth is strength'. That is so, well, true. I would supplement that with 'Kindness, too, is strength'. And it is not an add-on, not a side dish in the main course of character-building and life. It is a primary tool, a quality that should be infused in all things we do. And you know why? No, not just because being kind is being nice. It is because it is also key to negotiating with this world better, smarter.

Let me explain. I will give you an example from the completely objective world of sport where results matter. In the 2022 World Cup match between Argentina and the Netherlands, in the 35th minute Leo Messi is slicing through the midfield, leaving Dutch players utterly dazed and confused and is rushing to the goal mouth. If you see the YouTube video, you can see that Messi has already done all the hard work, he has cleared the obstacles and he has a clear line of vision and can very well take a shot at goal. What does he do?

He actually makes a more difficult manoeuvre by passing the ball almost between the legs of a Dutch defender passing it on to the incoming Nahuel Molina. He passes because Molina has an even clearer line to shoot from. And Molina scores his first international goal.

Now, you may be wondering what has this got to do with kindness. Messi did it because he strategically felt that there was a better chance of Argentina scoring by passing the ball to Molina than if he had taken a crack at goal. But that is what kindness also is – a strategic gesture.

We tend to think of strategy as a cunning move, where we do shifty things for our advantage. But in kindness we have an in-built strategy that does the right thing which makes negotiating – whether in the football field like Messi or in the bigger field that is life – far more rewarding and dare I say easier.

At the centre of learning to be kind and generous lies learning the value of empathy. What is empathy? Empathy is the ability to take on another person's perspective, to understand, feel, and share and respond to their experience. It sounds like a superpower. Because it is. But it is a superpower which like, say playing the violin, or riding a horse, or cracking quadratic equations, can be learnt. Indeed, should be learnt.

Think of being empathetic, being kind, as being a good chess player. Chess is essentially about trying to figure out and knowing your opponent's moves in advance. If you do A, then she will do B or C, and if she does B then you do D, but if she does C you do E. Now, take away the notion of doing this kind of telepathy with an 'opponent'. Instead, you are empathising with another person's situation or condition and then act accordingly to make it better. That is the wealth of kindness.

Being kind is like having a sense of humour – it lights up every room you walk into. Yes, sometimes it will feel stupid, not worth its while – when a generous gesture is met with nothing, or even ridicule. But like the last laugh, the act of kindness is on you. I can quote important philosophers older, wiser, shabbier than me like Nietzsche who said that kindness and love are the 'most curative herbs and agents in human intercourse'. I can quote studies that tell you that behaving kindly improves a person's measurable well-being.

This is something that I feel is Assam Valley School's secret sauce – valuing, learning, honing kindness. You learn it through its own equations, grammar, lab experiments, practical tests, and histories and geographies. But going out into the world, armed with empathy, each of you are armed with a special tool to deal with the world. Kindness is strength.

Thank you.

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*Indrajit Hazra*

# HEADMASTER'S *Founders' Address*

(SUNDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 2024)



It is my honour to have witnessed with you all the grand founders' celebration. The Assam Valley School celebrated its 29th founders' celebrations- a celebration of its students, a celebration of this campus, a celebration of the visionaries who envisaged this grand institution, a celebration of all the work the staff puts in everyday but most importantly, a celebration of the legacy that AVS continues to build and live up to. As we stand here at the cusp of the penultimate year before our 30th founders celebrations, it is essential to ask ourselves pertinent questions, that only help this institution keep up with the dynamic times and keep ever evolving. This is also the year when we enter the 25th year of this century, and as we complete a quarter of the first century of this millennium, it is important to ask ourselves, what defines a good student in the 21st century?

In an era where the world is constantly shifting, it is clear that academic excellence alone no longer defines success. Marks, while important, are not the sole measure of potential or character. Today, it is much more than that- the right values and interpersonal skills that set one apart. It's about how we treat others, how we navigate relationships, and how we build a future that goes beyond personal achievements. Manners, respect, empathy—these are the cornerstones of a truly successful individual, someone equipped not only for professional success but for making a genuine difference in the world.

In the 21st century, we must ask ourselves: Are we grooming individuals who are not only intellectually sharp but also emotionally intelligent? Are we teaching our students that their ability to engage with others, to communicate, to collaborate, is just as important as the subjects they master? A good student today understands that life's most critical lessons don't always come from textbooks but from the way they interact with the world around them. It's about building relationships, nurturing teamwork, and understanding that real leadership comes from lifting others up.

At the Assam Valley School, we believe in shaping the 21st-century student who is more than just a number on the report card. Here, education extends beyond the walls of the classroom; it is an experience that enriches the whole individual. AVS offers

more than marks—it offers life skills, hands-on experiences, and opportunities to explore one's full potential. From art to science, sports to leadership, this is a place where students discover who they are and what they can become.

We understand that the world outside is evolving, and so are we. This is why AVS brings in the best instructors and experts from across the country for specialised workshops, where students gain practical training in everything from artistic expression to the ever-important soft skills like communication, leadership, and problem-solving. Whether it's mastering the canvas with a renowned painter or learning the intricacies of entrepreneurship from a successful business leader, our students are constantly exposed to real-world learning. We believe that education should be about empowerment—about preparing young minds not just for exams, but for life.

Through personalised seminars and dedicated career counselling, AVS ensures that each student receives individual attention, guiding them towards their unique paths in life. Whether it's medicine, humanities, design, filmmaking, engineering, or any other field, our students are equipped with the knowledge and exposure to make informed decisions about their futures. The career counselling at AVS opens doors to endless possibilities, allowing students to pursue their passions and excel in whichever path they choose.

At AVS, we don't just focus on academic disciplines; we provide exposure to non-academic fields as well, ensuring our students have the freedom to explore their passions. The 21st century demands specialised skills from everyone, as Indra Nooyi, the former CEO of PepsiCo, famously describes this concept as a 'hip-pocket' skill. A 'hip-pocket' skill is one that you become known for, a unique talent or expertise that sets you apart from the crowd. To truly stand out, you must not only master this skill but also be committed to lifelong learning, constantly refining your knowledge and staying ahead in your field.

At AVS, we prepare our students to be lifelong learners. We teach them to develop their own 'hip-pocket' skills, ensuring they are not just ready for the challenges of today but equipped to lead in the ever-evolving world of tomorrow. AVS shapes individuals who don't just keep up with the changing world—they define it. Imagine a

batch reunion 20 years from now—a gathering of doctors, engineers, filmmakers, culinary experts, corporate leaders, photographers, sportspeople, journalists, scientists and much more. The room will be buzzing with stories of achievements across every imaginable field, from academic to artistic, all tracing back to the opportunities and guidance they received here at AVS. This diverse, dynamic

group will reflect the full spectrum of careers, showcasing the boundless potential unlocked by the education they received at this remarkable institution.

A dynamic education like the one offered at AVS comes with its share of challenges, and one of the most essential elements for success is strong parental support. In the triangle of stakeholders—teachers, students, and parents—a symbiotic relationship is crucial. We must strive to maintain open communication and collaboration among all three to ensure the best outcomes for our students. While the school is fully committed to shaping and nurturing its students, this journey cannot be completed without the active involvement of parents.

As parents, we always want the best for our children; seeing them succeed fills us with immense pride, while witnessing their struggles can be deeply painful. However, it's essential to remember that these

early learning experiences are vital. Navigating challenges during these formative years equips our children with the skills they need to become responsible adults. Learning to confront obstacles now can save them from faltering later in life.

When the school addresses an issue or seeks to guide a student, it is not the sole responsibility of the institution—the onus is equally on the parents to be involved, engaged, and supportive throughout the process. A strong partnership between school and home ensures that our children receive the guidance they need to grow into well-rounded individuals.

Equally important is the need for parents to support school policies, rather than challenge them, as these policies exist for the benefit of the students. From major school policies to something as simple as arriving on time to school, these structures are designed to instill discipline and responsibility. Parental cooperation in reinforcing these policies plays a significant role in ensuring the school runs smoothly and that the students thrive within a structured and supportive environment. When parents and the school are aligned, it creates a strong foundation for the holistic development of every child.

To illustrate the power of partnership and the lessons it offers, I'd like to draw from the timeless wisdom of the Mahabharata. In one pivotal moment, the Pandava brothers, parched with thirst, encounter a lake guarded by a mystical heron. The heron warns them not to drink the water until they answer its question. But driven by impatience and recklessness, the brothers ignore the warning and drink anyway, only to fall lifeless, one after the other—except Yudhishtira. Unlike his brothers, Yudhishtira pauses. He takes a moment to reflect, to listen, and to make a thoughtful decision. In that moment, we see a transformation—the man who once gambled away his kingdom without hesitation now embodies prudence, patience, and the wisdom to heed good counsel.

When given the chance to revive one brother, Yudhishtira's choice of Nakula, the weaker stepbrother, over the stronger Bhima or skilled Arjuna, seems surprising. Yet his response was, "My father had two wives. I, the son of Kunti, am alive. Let one son of Madri live too." This reveals a profound understanding of duty,

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*It is our duty to educate our children about these pitfalls, helping them understand its critiques and empowering them to make responsible choices both on and off the internet. This challenge may seem daunting, and the strong urge to become "helicopter parents" may arise. However, we must approach our children with compassion, love, and understanding.*

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fairness, and compassion in him. In this selfless act, Yudhishtira demonstrates that true leadership isn't just about strength or skill—it's about caring for the most vulnerable, ensuring that no one is left behind.

This transformation didn't happen by accident. Krishna kept Yudhishtira and his brothers in exile for twelve long years, followed by a year in hiding. It wasn't an act of cruelty, but rather a profound lesson in character-building. Krishna, in his wisdom, knew that these hardships would teach Yudhishtira patience, humility, and the importance of prioritising compassion and responsibility. The trials they endured were not punishments meant to break them, but challenges designed to refine their character, preparing them for greater responsibilities.

In much the same way, the rules, boundaries, and consequences we establish for our children in our school community are not meant to burden them. Like Yudhishtira's exile, they serve to build character, instil resilience, and teach life's most important values—compassion, responsibility, and integrity. As parents and educators, we are the guiding forces that help our children navigate through these moments. When we work together, we ensure that our children grow not only in intellect but in heart and spirit, preparing them to lead with empathy and strength in a world that needs both equally.

As the world undergoes rapid changes, it can be overwhelming to keep pace. Even as educators, we face numerous challenges that accompany these new times. One of the most pressing issues is the impact of social media and its painful effects on our children. While the debate over whether social media is a boon or a bane is ongoing,

we cannot ignore its detrimental consequences. It is our duty to educate our children about these pitfalls, helping them understand its critiques and empowering them to make responsible choices both on and off the internet. This challenge may seem daunting, and the strong urge to become “helicopter parents” may arise. However, we must approach our children with compassion, love, and understanding. We need to create safe spaces where students feel comfortable sharing their experiences and struggles. They should trust us to be the umbrella that provides shelter and comfort as they weather the storms of life, offering support and guidance without instilling in them fear. As Aristotle famously said, “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all”. With love, respect and understanding, we can navigate these challenges and help our children thrive in today’s complex world.

The Mahabharata teaches us that ‘he who is compassionate to all creatures is a true devotee and will achieve the highest good.’ As we approach the penultimate year before completing three decades, I am filled with gratitude as I reflect on an institution that has consistently upheld this value of compassion, along with the virtues of character, integrity, excellence, and truth—the very truth in which we find our strength.

I would like to take this moment to thank our Chief Guest, members of the Governing Body, our alumni, and all our parents for taking the time to join us in celebrating yet another milestone year with the

AVS community. I would like to especially thank our teachers and students for their tireless dedication in putting together this grand three-day celebration of Founders.

This year has been truly extraordinary, as The Assam Valley School was recognized as the School of the Year among all boarding schools across the country. It is with your continuous blessings, support, and unwavering belief in our mission that we have achieved such a remarkable feat and I remain grateful for that.

As I draw toward the end of my speech, I would like to leave you with a few lines from our school song, which resonate with the ethos of what these changing times ask of us:

*I can see, confusion is the sign of all times  
Everywhere, compassion's getting harder to find,  
Someday when we learn that no one's strong enough  
to make it on their own  
I just hope there's someone there  
Who will take the time to care  
And Pass it On.'*

Thank you for listening to me patiently. I wish everyone a restful Exeat and a very Happy Diwali. May this festive season bring us all quality time with our loved ones, and may we return refreshed and ready to continue making greater strides toward glory at this magnificent school.



# FOUNDERS'

EXHIBITIONS & PRODUCTIONS



## ARCHIVES



This year, the AVS Archives showcased mementos from its rich 29-year history. The visitors were all gratified to experience a memorable journey through time, presenting diverse documents and photographs recording some of the most remarkable moments and milestones. It promised to be a marvellous moment for reflection and nostalgia and thus a space to definitely watch out for those interested in the school's legacy.

## ART EXHIBITION



The art exhibition was based on the theme "Shadow and Light". The artwork focused on the interplay of light and shadow, highlighting the contrasts they create. A variety of paintings created by students were displayed, each showcasing unique perspectives on the theme. Guided by our art teachers, the exhibition reflected both artistic vision and skill. It was a remarkable display of talent and imagination.

## CRAFT, DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY



The Craft, Design, and Technology (CDT) Centre of AVS decided on the theme of “Transcendence,” a floral concept, for this year’s Founders’ exhibition. Students at CDT made a variety of flowers from different materials such as paper, cloth, and more. They also worked on root carving, a traditional Chinese art form. Team CDT worked very hard to ensure it remained the most sought-after exhibition of the day.

## COMMERCE EXHIBITION



The commerce exhibition was a crowd-puller with its interesting products that ranged from healthy delicious drinks to exquisite crochet products. The combination of entrepreneurship, delectable drinks and beautifully handmade crochet pieces made the event a notable experience for all, sparking both delight and a desire to take

home a special keepsake. Colourful advertisements of the products had also been put up across the campus, inviting people to come and see the special products in this special exhibition, which intended to make a substantial profit for Founders’.

## FRENCH EXHIBITION



France enjoys a vibrant and varied cultural heritage. From food to music, art, and history, it is vast, intricate, and inspiring. Under the supervision of Ms. R.Srividya and Mrs. Debolina Bakshi, the French Department of AVS put up an exhibition on French culture. The Exhibition celebrated French culture and demolished the stereotype that ‘French is difficult to learn’ and established that a little dedication and interest can make one experience the beauty of the French language and culture.

## GAMING EXHIBITION

“To Provide a Chance for Everyone to Experience Gaming.” Was the overarching theme of this exhibition. Playing games can be fun, but not many people can experience gaming as they would like to. Under the guidance of Mr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar, the team in the gaming exhibition this year provided a high-quality gaming experience to its visitors by setting up a high-end console. Popular games like Forza Horizon 5, Mortal Kombat, and other co-op and LAN Multiplayer games were also showcased. Undoubtedly, everyone had a lot of fun!



## HANDMADE CARDS

This year's Founders' Day celebration showcased the popular card-making exhibition yet once again. An exquisite collection of creative and heartwarming cards was made and showcased by the students under the guidance of Mrs. Sagarika Dutta and Miss Pooja Borah. The wonderful array of handmade cards, which reflected the individuality and imagination of their creators, was also open for sale and sold like hot cakes!



## HUMANITIES EXHIBITION



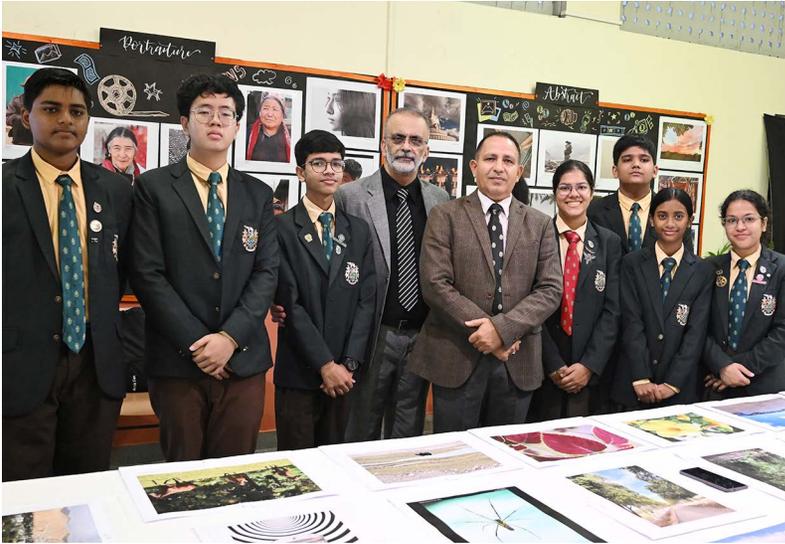
The Humanities Exhibition, led by Mrs. Raya Mukhopadhyay, Ms. Sukanya Hazarika, Mrs. Vaishnavi Sajeev, Mr. Kunal Banerjee and Ms. Pamela Syiemlieh presented a sensitive and thought-provoking topic titled “Ethnic discrimination in the North-East”. Through an interesting display of charts, they focused on property laws in Meghalaya as well as its mental health and social welfare sectors. Apart from this, they also talked about the history of witchcraft associated with the North East, making this exhibition a crowd puller!

## MATHEMATICS EXHIBITION



This year’s Mathematics Exhibition, entitled “Mathemagica”, mentored by Mr. Bijan Panigrahi, focused on ‘Jeux de Mathematiques’ which is French for ‘Math Games’. This included various games, puzzles, and number riddles that made for a very interactive and interesting session for the visitors. The exhibition also provided insights into the biographies of various mathematicians who have made immense contributions to the subject. The exhibition was both entertaining and enlightening

# PHOTOGRAPHY



The much-anticipated Photography Exhibition showcased the talent, creativity and unique perspectives of the school's young photographers. The exhibition featured photographs that had shaped the school community over the past year, as well as the



Photographic Society's popular publication 'The Eye of the Camera'. The photography exhibition was a beautiful reminder of the shared memories and growth of the vibrant AVS community that had flourished through the year.

## SCIENCE 1

The Chemistry and Biology students collaborated to provide a fantastic exhibition based on the theme "Eco Marvel". Some notable features were the concepts of sustainability and going green, while the emphasis was to inspire empathy towards our ailing planet, reeling under climate change. Some exemplary exhibits included models demonstrating how wind energy works and how it was possible to make bricks out of rock and plastic. Science and culinary expertise came together in the mouth-watering snacks, such as chocolate made with moringa and khakra.



## SCIENCE 2



This year, the Science Exhibitions had an array of exciting and thrilling exhibits to showcase for the Founders'. The AI exhibition showcased a profusion of AI robots, while the Physics Exhibition showcased a telescope that the students had constructed. The ICT department had collaborated with the Astronomy Department, also known as SLOOH. This collaboration saw the creation of a new website that permitted visitors to view the magnificent constellations captured by SLOOH through their mega telescopes.

## THE SOCIAL SERVICE LEAGUE

The Social Service League (SSL) organised an exhibition to convey its essence and showcase the qualities developed through membership of the League. The exhibition aimed to represent SSL's core values, objectives and various programs. The students along with the teachers-in-charge made charts and green boards illustrating their work, and a detailed model showcasing the various projects undertaken by the SSL this year.



## SUNNYSIDE



AVS Sunnyside participated in the 29th Founders' Day celebration by bringing forward the rich and vibrant cultures of the various tribes of Assam. The exhibition themed "Cultural Confluence of Assam" showcased the rich culture of a few tribes of Assam such as the Mising, Bodo and Tiwa. Informative charts were made by the students about the tribes' origin, occupation, cuisine, festivals, attire and dance. These charts were embellished with various handmade designs by the students.

Additionally, various bamboo items and the attires of each tribe were also showcased celebrating the rich handloom culture of the region. The Sunnyside children used their creative talents further and made some jewellery, bags, boats, kopou phool (foxtail orchid), rhinoceros, elephants; all from paper, jute, clay and hand painted to portray the various facets of Assam. The main attraction of the exhibition was the dance performance by our little dancers. They presented dance forms like the Jhumur and those belonging to the Mising, Tiwa and Bodo. Visitors thronged to the exhibition to watch the young artists of Sunnyside.

