

Principal's Note

The Japanese concept of 'MA' (pronounced as 'maah') conveys an emptiness, a gap or space - a plethora of possibilities and a decluttered life like a canvas awaiting its first stroke - imagination finding a manifestation. That is the essence of Minimalism!

The pauses between the notes of a piece of music, speech or conversations are the silver gaps peeping through the dark clouds. They are hope amidst the disappointment that hedonism constantly throws at us.

Minimalism is an antidote, a medicine, and a therapy. It is a convalescence for the frenzied lust for materialistic gains caused by the grasp that consumerism has on our simple lives. It arises from our bereft of our deep-seated primitive nature of seeking satisfaction in merely fulfilling our necessities.

Our lives are based on instant gratification while we are mere puppets in the hands of this idea of happiness that's derived through pleasure. We crave, collect, and cherish our accomplishments and attainments! Objects define our contentment, and in things and ownership, we find our bliss. Pigeonholing people by the brands they buy things from and logos that tag on their possessions appends pride in the things and not the person. "A hatchback is a mediocrity while a posh sedan is not!"

Minimalism focuses to resolve this conflict-tagging and branding people versus recognising them as humans first.

Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 also aims at making "cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" and bringing about "fundamental changes in the way that our societies produce and consume goods and services." This cries for comprehensive goal-seeking for humanity and not just one single individual. Minimalism thus promotes the tenor of *Einfühlung*, the German for empathy - not just disseminating emotions but engaging emotively with the world around us.

Whether it is Altruism or Minimalism, our steady aim should be to edify the constitution of our lives and uphold the quintessence of life.



- Ashish Agarwal

Student Editorial Board



Mannat Kaur Kandal
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Digital Minimalism

100+ unread emails, 50+ mobile applications, 10+ unused apps, 1000+ photographs, and 25+ unread text messages - if all of this simply sounds exhausting, imagine how much it exhausts our mental capacity when we experience it each day. Forget our devices, have we ever thought of the humongous space it takes up in our mind - the original cloud?

When we think of hoarding, our mind goes to stacks of cardboard boxes, photo frames, clothes, and DVD players stuffed up in a dusty basement. However, what about the overload of unnecessary information that is stored in our devices "just in case" we may require them in the future? If all our music files, pictures, PDFs, and unread emails were physical objects, we may have required a separate house to store them all.

This inundation of digital information has had a crippling effect on our generation by inducing anxiety and decreasing productivity. This has been multiplied by the COVID - 19 pandemic. So, how are we supposed to use technology without feeling overwhelmed by it?

The answer is Digital Minimalism. Don't worry. It does not mean deleting all applications, throwing out your phones, and sinking into the dark ages. Instead, it means being intentional with the way we interact with technology.

Digital minimalism centrally is based on

the reduction of digital clutter such as devices, apps and digital services from one's life. This amplifies performance, increases available storage space and relieves the risk of security threats.



Whenever you feel overwhelmed by the deluge of digital media, ask yourself questions – "Does Instagram make it easy for me to interact with people or is it a way to simply avoid people entirely?"

"Does Twitter allow me to learn diverse opinions or is simply a waste of my time?"

If the answer to the above two questions come out to be yes then take a pause, and think if it actually is adding any value to your life.

Unsubscribe, unfollow and turn off the notifications

Being conscious of why you use social media and how it's affecting you emotionally and psychologically can allow you to Marie Kondo your lives. It will help you recognize if technology is helping you getting your work done or actually hindering it.

So, go ahead and set yourself free from the shackles of the content you don't wish to engage with. It will truly be a relief.

Becoming a digital minimalist carves the pathway to focus on more meaningful, offline activities. So, dear readers, take back control for all the time that you have lost - you will not regret it.

- Editorial Board

"A work of art which did not begin in emotion is not art."

Paul Cézanne

Editor's Note

There is something incredibly personal about every piece of art we create. Irrespective of its inspirations, it contains remnants of the artist, making it truly ours.

The overwhelming number of entries we received for this issue may seem contrasting to our theme of "Minimalism", but it is only fitting to thank all those whose entries elevated the magic of this newsletter. For us, amidst the hectic days of curation, there was never one moment when we lost sight of the privilege we had. It was always incredibly difficult for us to not be able to feature certain entries and choose some over the others, but such was this process. We thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for filling our hearts (and our inbox) with such a diverse range of poems, short stories, artwork, articles, and photographs. *Henri Matisse* once said - "Creativity takes courage", and you, my dear Billabongers, are Bravehearts.

- Mannat Kaur Kandal, Editor-in-chief

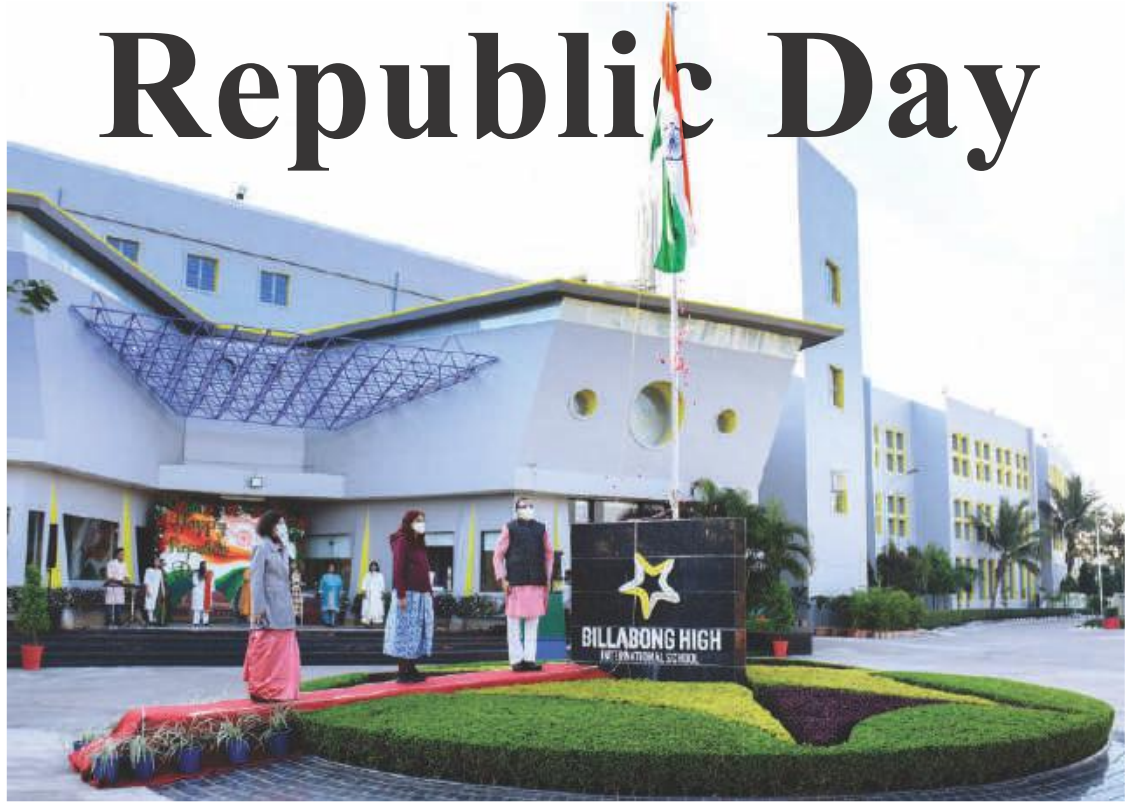
On 26th January every year, our hearts beat to the uplifting tunes of patriotism heard in every corner, and smiles stretch across our faces as we witness the annual Republic Day



Parade on our television screens. However, before anything, we stand in reverence as we recite our National Anthem, watching the Tricolour unfurl before our eyes.

In 1930, it was on the 26th of January that the Indian National Congress proclaimed the Declaration of Indian Independence or "Poorna Swaraj", rejecting the Dominion Status offered by the British Regime. Thus, this significant date was chosen in 1950 to bring the Constitution into effect and to officially make India a Republic. The golden words in our Preamble - Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, and Democratic are a true reflection of the ideals upon which our country is based.

To commemorate this auspicious and momentous occasion, Billabong High International School, as per annual tradition, began the morning with the flag hoisting ceremony and the singing of the National Anthem. Due to COVID - 19 protocols, students were unable to be present on campus. However, a small cultural programme was held by the teachers, truly elevating the atmosphere of the significant day. Some of our talented teachers sang soulful renditions of popular songs like "Maula Mere" and "Desh Rangila". Their mellifluous voices infused the cold winter morning with the spirit of true patriotism.



Graduation Day Sr.KG

On 5th March 2022, our Sr Kg kids took a step forward and marked their transition to Primary School. The school organised an Online Graduation Ceremony for the tiny tots, and the excited students showcased their learnings through models, posters, dances, etc. Each child received an Online graduation certificate and an award, making it a truly memorable day as they stepped foot into 1st grade!








Grandparents' Day

"Grandparents are the perfect blend of love, laughter, and happy memories."

Whether it is their comforting embrace, their vast pools of wisdom, or their magical storytelling prowess, having the blessing of our grandparents is truly a privilege we often ignore.

Our tiny tots of Nursery, Jr.KG and Sr.KG celebrated this very blessing in the blissful company of their grandparents, on "Grandparents Day." They thoroughly enjoyed spending quality time with their loving grandfathers and grandmothers, who didn't shy away from enthusiastically participating in the fun activities and games planned for the day. It was a day that made children realise the importance of their loving grandparents and reminded them that they too are children at heart.









Graduation | Class of 2022

With beaming faces, moist eyes, and celebratory grins, 12th March 2022 marked the day when our fresh-faced, school-going 12th graders officially embarked on a new journey. They spread their wings to explore the real world, leaving behind the institution most of them had known as their second home.

Mr. Pranav Kothari, the CEO of Educational Initiatives and a revolutionary in the field of Edtech, elevated the event with his presence as Chief Guest. He enlightened the students, parents, and faculty

members with his powerful words and golden pieces of advice.


Dressed in dignified black regalia, the batch of 2022 took their graduation oath as their parents watched with

pride. The ritual of throwing the graduations caps up in the air by the students filled the evening not only with jubilation but also with nostalgia for many in the crowd. Our Chairman

Mr. Najam Jamal and Principal Mr. Ashish Agarwal as well as other faculty members conveyed their best wishes to the students and wished them success in all their future endeavors.


With a melodious musical performance by our students, the evening became even more memorable and beautiful. It was truly a wonderful ceremony, commemorating the transition of yet another batch of our students from school to college.











Olympiads


Our Billabongers have always achieved marvelous results in the various Olympiads conducted by The Science Olympiad Foundation (SOF) each year. This time, our students outdid themselves once again with a splendid show at the International English Olympiad (IEO). Congratulations to all the winners!!



					
GAUTAM DAGA Grade 3	TANISH RAJPAL Grade 3	NANCY CHAWLA Grade 4	ARSH GUPTA Grade 6	SHAURYA TYAGI Grade 6	HIA SADHO Grade 12
International Rank - 1	International Rank - 6	International Rank - 6	International Rank - 2	International Rank - 3	International Rank - 3
School Rank - 1	School Rank - 2	School Rank - 1	School Rank - 1	School Rank - 2	School Rank - 1
Zonal Rank - 1	Zonal Rank - 5	Zonal Rank - 6	Zonal Rank - 2	Zonal Rank - 3	Zonal Rank - 1
Regional Rank - 1	Regional Rank - 6	Regional Rank - 6	Regional Rank - 2	Regional Rank - 3	Regional Rank - 2

Comic Corner

Happiness does not depend on material possessions. We can be happy minimally.



- Vidit Batham (2F)



- Sragvee Wadwekar (4C)



Breaking News: Djokovic was allowed to play the Australian Open all along. He was also granted a visa despite his unvaccinated status. He, along with his entire entourage of coaches, trainers, dieticians, publicists, managers, physiotherapists, medical staff, and family members flew all the way to Australia, and upon their arrival were arrested, detained, mistreated, and humiliated. Djokovic's visa was revoked and he was banned from entering Australia (and subsequently banned from contesting the Australian Open) for three years.

Djokovic had presented a medical exemption from two independent medical panels, satisfying the requirements for the entry visa. Granting and then revoking his visa was an undeniable act of hypocrisy from the Australian government's side. Any argument about any of his actions is pointless as the Australian Open authorities themselves had no grounds in their rulebook that disqualified him. The entire embarrassment could have been avoided if the association had stressed the inescapability of the country's vaccine regulations months in advance so that he could have had the chance to get vaccinated.

The Australian Open's initial exemption of Djokovic from vaccination rules is the crux of the problem. Governed by Tennis Australia, the tournament has been the crowning arena of Novak who holds jaw-dropping 9 singles titles, out of a total of 86 ATP titles. He was previously tied with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for 20 Grand Slam titles. Djokovic's qualification through Direct Entry, his long-held doubts about vaccination, and Australia's fervent vaccination mandates were very obviously intersecting facts. The easily predictable outcome should have been perceived by the authorities and the right steps should have been taken to avoid the unfortunate circumstance. Being such a high-status player, and their most cherished victor, Novak deserved better than being put to shame like this.

"This could have been prevented, this could have been addressed way earlier than it was. What happened after, I don't think there was anybody who looked good in any case. That became a bit of a circus." said WTA player council member Victoria Azarenka.

It's not surprising that ATP did the bare minimum to defend their 'prized champion'. Ever since he withdrew from ATP Player Council elections in December 2020 due to a conflict of interest with his role in the 'Professional Tennis Players' Association (PTPA)', relations have soured. Though he might be the leader of the breakaway union, his contribution to tennis is irrefutable, and he should have received more support for his almost two-decade-long career as a pro tennis player.

The Australian Coalition Government seemed to have made up their mind about Djokovic even before the Federal Court came to a decision over his appeal about his detention. They flexed the Immigration Minister's power of "Ministerial Discretion" to override the decision, re-arrest him and deport him. The Australian Medical Association has stated: "In general, vaccines should only be given to individuals with appropriate consent", coinciding with Djokovic's vaccine mandate opposition. Turned into a scapegoat for vaccination politics, Djokovic's influence was used as the reason to not overturn the decision. It is grossly unjust that Djokovic was punished for his personal choice, just because it might sway others.

His fellow tennis players such as Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray had reluctantly agreed upon the general sentiments of unfairness and frustration about the decision. Even his longtime opponent Nick Kyrgios said "I feel quite embarrassed as an Australian athlete that's seen what this guy has done for us and the sport," Despite all the hapless controversy, Djokovic continues to have the unwavering backing of his fans, and respect and support from all around the world.

- Hia Sadho (12B)

Should Novak Djokovic have been allowed to play the Australian open?



YES NO



I am a personal fan of the Serbian's stretches, and I feel despondent to have had to see an Australian open without Novak Djokovic.

However, let's speak from a more realistic view, with respect to the security of not only the Australian people but also the world. Djokovic's team of world-class lawyers lost their appeal in court to the Australian government, leading to him getting deported. Fans consider this to be an outrageous action by the Australian government, but is it really one?

The Serbian was on his way to probably win the 10th

Australian open of his career, adding another grand slam to his nearly impossible list of achievements. But, when he arrived at the airport, he was halted as he had not been vaccinated. His RT-PCR test was last done on 16th December, and it is mandatory excluding the vaccination that the test must have been conducted a maximum of 5 days before, for international arrivals.

People speculated that the Australian government was attacking and trying to slander the world number one. But how is that even slightly plausible? The government was treating every person equally. Djokovic has won the Australian

Open 9 times, making him no less than an ambassador for the country. The government could have been lenient and allowed him to play, using him for their country's publicity. But, they decided not to do so. It was a step to indicate to the world that the fight against COVID - 19 is still being waged and that no one should take it lightly. How could Australia, a country that had seen one of the world's strictest lockdowns, let the person remain in the country? All Djokovic was denied was a right to ignore the basic rule for entering a country that had struggled during the pandemic - being vaccinated.

Was deporting Djokovic a step too big? Maybe, but we must understand that it was done to make people aware of the consequences. Is it too much to get a prick in your arm, which most of the governments around the world are providing for free? This simple, five-minute effort goes a long way in decreasing the spread of the infection.

People suggested that the government could have handled the situation differently. The Australian medical board could have had him vaccinated in Australia, assuming everything was fine with his COVID test. But, you must have two doses to ensure you are thoroughly immunized. There were also chances of him developing fever and muscle pain. According to the UN, the body takes time to develop immunity after the vaccine dosage. It is recommended to avoid strenuous physical activity post-vaccination. Thus, playing in a tennis tournament wasn't ideal. This action by the Australian government also discouraged anti-vaxxers who spread rumours about vaccines being dangerous.

Djokovic had also displayed irresponsible behaviour when he had made errors in his visa paperwork and not disclosed that he was in Spain 14 days before making the travel declaration to go to Australia, something that would have automatically denied him a visa. He blamed this on his agent. Moreover, he openly admitted that he had interacted unmasked with adults and kids after testing COVID positive in Mid - December. Could all of this be ignored? Should a man have been allowed to flout public health laws just because he's an ace tennis player? I'm afraid not.

- Srivardhan Shukla (10B)





METAVVERSE

The word 'Metaverse' is made up of two words, 'Meta' meaning 'beyond' and 'verse' meaning 'universe'. Metaverse is a technology using which we can go beyond the current universe and create a new universe altogether. It is used primarily to refer to an anticipated future version of the internet that's often hailed as Web 3.0. This new world will use augmented and virtual reality to give the user an experience of the environment. VR headsets and smart glasses would be used to access the metaverse.

The metaverse would be an entirely new smart world in which you could do anything while being present there yourself. For e.g. If you are watching a cricket match on TV, metaverse would allow you to enjoy the match as one of the spectators present on the ground while actually being inside your house. You can interact with friends, shop, and perform many more daily tasks while being present in your house.

As it is a new technology, there are some terms and technicalities that you must know:

Virtual World

A virtual world, also called a synthetic world, is a simulated environment that can be accessed by many users who can explore the world

simultaneously and independently using a 3D replica of yourself called an 'Avatar'.

Virtual Reality

Virtual reality is a simulated experience that's usually provided by a virtual reality headset. It projects realistic images, sounds and other sensations to a user within a virtual environment. A person having all the equipment will be able to move around and interact with other users and objects.

Following are the challenges faced while building the metaverse:

Data and Security in the Metaverse

Even though tech companies keep updating their security systems and data privacy to provide a better user experience, users still have many concerns regarding the security of their personal data. Submerging completely in the Metaverse would require the tech companies to evolve their security systems to a completely new level. New methods would have to be built to keep the data secure. This would mean that the users would have to submit more personal details to the companies.

Reputation and identity in the Metaverse

Representation of personal identity and reputation

is very easy in the real world. But, when talking about the metaverse, a question to think about is how one would prove his or her identity. It would be very difficult for people to believe if it is actually you or a bot trying to mimic your existence.

Law and jurisdiction in the Metaverse

It would be very important to find a way to enforce jurisdiction among the millions of users worldwide in the metaverse.

Thus, we still have a long way to go before the metaverse can be adopted completely. There's no guarantee if people would even like to hang out in a virtual café or play games with a virtual Mark Zuckerberg, even if AR and VR become as common as smartphones. The real 'metaverse' would be something more than VR games and artificial avatars. It would be something that we still think of like a dream!

- Arsh Gupta (7D)



#BINDIONHiM

Fashion has no gender. Or so we thought.

Unisex clothing is extremely uncommon even today. Yes, women have widened their sartorial horizons by slipping into pantsuits or cargo pants, and there are hardly any men's fashion items that women can't or don't pull off. But, some gender-based rules of fashion still exist for men.

It is often said that a suit, a great watch, quality shoes, and minimum accessories make a man look smart and decent. This, in turn, has made loose garments like dresses and skirts take on a feminine association, and today, most men avoid these garments for nothing more than that reason - a fear of femininity. This is in combination with recognition of social norms that say that they should dress in ways that uphold their masculine identities.

To bring all of these stereotypical ideologies to an end, many men step forward with creative and unique fashion reforms with a sense of revolution and a key message - "Do what makes you happy!" One gentleman amongst all these men is Pranit, a youngster from Mumbai who fell in love with 'bindis' and named his Instagram handle "bindionhim." Pranit publicly shares his pictures wearing a 'Bindi' and has inspired thousands to do what they love.

In an interview with SheThePeople TV, Pranit shared how lonely he was and how difficult it was for him to initially make new friends at college. Gradually, when he became fond of wearing "bindis", his seniors supported and even accompanied him. Luckily, his family did not mind it either. Since then, Pranit has received tons of love through his account on Instagram. He frequently shares his views on feminism and toxic masculinity and has made it clear that a certain way of dressing or expressing oneself does not make one strange or weird.

He is an inspiration who motivates many to make their own choices, not put any labels, and live their life to the fullest.

- Arslaan Beg (12B)



Image credit: [instagram.com/bindionhim](https://www.instagram.com/bindionhim)

Me and Minimalism



Image credit - [becomingminimalist.com](https://www.becomingminimalist.com)

Those who know me well would say that I am a cute and cuddly boy who reaches out to help others and tries putting a smile on their faces. While doing so, I feel as if I am some kind of a superhero! My life was going on well with online classes, gaming, tennis, catching up with friends, watching movies and troubling my mother. But then one day, my class teacher, Mrs Reema Chhabra introduced a new topic - 'Minimalism'.

I had heard this word before and had known that it simply meant 'less is more.' Normally, my mother would ask me to attend online classes all by myself but when she heard my teacher speak, she sat down next to me.

After my class, mom asked me what I knew about minimalism. I replied, "It means we could stay happy with lesser things in life." She nodded and asked, "So how can you start 'Minimalism'?" I answered, "by giving away things I no longer use like old toys, books, clothes, etc." While I was telling her, I knew from within that something was not right. Since I always knew that I was a superhero, I felt I had the superpower of guessing what would happen next. Then, there it came, "Come on, let's start decluttering", said mom. I asked her, "Mom, don't you think one must not make a child work? Isn't it child labour?" To which she replied, "It is not child labour, rather it is called being independent."

So, now the topic had changed from 'Minimalism' to being 'Independent' and I was so confused! I felt the need to speak up. Therefore, I said, "Mom, I have a question. If Minimalism means less is more, then shouldn't it be practised everywhere? Why should I learn six subjects, when I could do with one? Similarly, why do we need so many colours, people, malls, restaurants, schools, cinema halls, superheroes etc, when we could just do with one?" My mom looked at me with surprise. She said, "Yes, you are right, Minimalism does not have a clear definition. Something that might be of importance for you, might not be important for someone else, so it is not a secret to a happy life for everyone at the same time. The whole idea of minimalism is not to be greedy and materialistic. One must value resources as resources are very limited."

Phew! I thought and said to myself, "I saved the day yet again, thanks to my super thinking power."

- Vedarth Samal (2F)



THE WORLD OF MAMMON



Image credit: theconversation.com

He stands at the corner, staring at the busy street
 Expecting, requesting-anguished he seems.
 His ribs wrap his stomach, his skin to his bones
 His eyes are in tatters with the fatigue they hold.
 Pieces of rags cover his humiliating body with shame,
 His hand stretched out, his legs wandering in eternal pain.
 Each day passes in an aimless empty struggle to survive,
 He stares at the house of worship and heaves a cold smile.
 In the evening at the corner of a very busy street,
 I jump out of the car on an unending errands duty.
 Groceries, clothes, shoes, stuff, all that hands can hold,
 Needs which I have and ceaseless wants that are untold.
 A quick glance I spare towards a sad figure looking strange,
 Deep in my bag, I unconsciously rummage through some loose change.
 The impoverished shadow peers at my car, purchases, and the tiny penny,
 I turn around and return to my opulence feeling the epitome of mercy.

- Minha Durrani (Teacher)

A VOYAGE THROUGH THE WOODS

I went again so far,
 I opened the door ajar
 Flying with the wind
 I found myself stray
 Departed from the world and dimmed,
 I decided to go away.
 The woods were deep and forsaken,
 I was perhaps mistaken.
 I promised myself to return back
 The wolf was there to attack.

I ran and ran,
 But still couldn't get far.
 Soon I realized this was a nightmare
 It was anything but a funfair.

- Nancy Chawla (5A)

Image credit: wallpaperaccess.com

More in the less



The eyes see what they want to,
 Doubting whether opinions are untrue.
 One who interprets the beauty of simplicity,
 Discovers that luxury is not only complexity.
 Like the lamp posts of an empty street,
 Where the strangers meet,
 Where the winds flow,
 And small bushes grow.
 The serenity of a place can be so fine,
 Where I can rest this keyed-up mind of mine.
 Ever wondered how a hundred Suns would
 have been?
 The scorch and the chaotic scene?
 Everything must be at the limit one needs,
 Put an end to man's miseries and greeds!
 For the simpler the mind,
 More in the less you will find.

- Anandi Mitra (9B)

Lost in the purple hue



Image credit: Mehar Batra

I was in a pensive mood, one day,
 All looked black, as they say.

Looking at everything and nothing at all,
 Sitting at the deck chair by the yellow brick wall.

I saw a bush of roses in my neighbour's bay,
 I saw it every day but it felt new today.

I gazed and gazed at the purple hue,
 I'd never seen these flowers with so much dew.

The dawn sky, the porch light,
 And the little breeze added to my sight.

I wished for the Sun to stop at the sill,
 I wished for the dawn to continue still,

But as the Sun rose, I saw,
 The roses blossom more and more,
 The colour darkened giving it a majestic gleam,
 The rainbows are dancing on its petals, it seems.

Try as I might, I couldn't break my glare,
 The heart was melting with its beauty flare.

Something so beautiful, something so pure,
 I was very lucky, that's for sure.

All my worries seemed fading away,
 As I looked at the purple roses sway.

Never had I seen roses with colour so deep,
 I felt the purple colour of it, in me seep.

The waves, the sand nothing could I see,
 As the bed of purple roses took over me.

- Mehar Batra (10E)

Bye Bye Birdie

One bird coloured red,
 Flew over my little head.
 It was during the day,
 The bird flew on her way.
 It was looking for some food,
 If were a bird, I would fly and feel good.
 Some birds are white and some are bright
 With their little wings, they fly towards the light.

- Aqsa Ansari (4E)



Simplicity

The essence of simple yet
 unadorned,
 Anticipating to be informed.
 Not to be reasonable or defined,
 Just trying its best to unbind.
 Unseen under the baubles,
 Finding its own morals.
 Unclear within the haze,
 Under the polished rays.
 Brawling against the glamour,
 Striving for valour.

Blazing through the darkness,
 Emerging proud and dauntless.
 Under the shining victory,
 Behind all the mysteries.
 Stands the beauty of grace,
 Is now all to embrace.
 To the world of oblivion,
 Minimalism is the vision.

- Mysha Jain (8E)



Image credit: icertis.com



THE SANDALWOOD KNIGHT

After she told me that, I decided never to turn my back on the little town of Hackberry.

I remember that when I was nine, dad used to take me to his wooden workshop on his bicycle. I sat on the thin rod joining the handle with the cushioned seat. I spent my evenings playing with friends, outdoors and nights playing chess with my father. He taught me how to play and he seldom let me win.

My elder brother James was a bookworm. He would read all the history books that the school distributed in their class. We didn't have enough money then, so he would read anything he could get his hands on, even clippings of newspapers.

I was never a studious boy. I used to get excited looking at the fancy-colored pictures in the schoolbooks, maybe even flipped through them, but never had the enthusiasm like James did. In school, James performed well and all the teachers praised him. On the other hand, I did so much as to pass the class and played without worry in the world. I never cared about anything I suppose, always oblivious to my family's sufferings.

One unfortunate day, when I returned home, everyone was silent as if a huge wave of sorrow had hit them. I asked, but no one could utter a word. I could hear dad cough as usual, but this time, Ma and James rushed towards him.

As days passed, I saw dad become weaker and weaker, and he left work. Our chess sessions shifted to his bed, but the king in the battle never got any weaker. He was full of life, teaching me new things every day.

Within a few days, James left school to support the family and started working in a local shop. I could not believe it, as everyone in the town believed

that James would make it big and be a successful man wearing suits and carrying a briefcase to work.

Tough times pass as slowly as anyone can ever imagine. We barely managed to pay for our father's treatment. Through these difficulties, I somehow managed to continue my studies because of my brother's hard work and the little savings.

A few years later, I moved to the city and became a lawyer at a big firm. I used to send money home every month and write letters to my family. One day, I received a letter from home, saying that dad had left us. A sudden pang of emotions swept through me, and I started sobbing like a little boy.

On reaching the town, I was astonished to see my home that had not changed even in the slightest. I sat down with Ma and we started reminiscing. "Your father was really proud of his boys. He always regretted not being able to support you both, but he always wished you to lead a happy and healthy life," she said with a smile on her face but with a tear in her eye.

"Oh wait! I have something for you. For the last two months, your father spent carving your favorite chess piece as a gift for your promotion. It is still unfinished, but you should have it." I suddenly felt ecstatic as I received the carved piece of a knight made of Sandalwood. It wasn't finished and sanded, but it was beautiful.

Those were the moments in which I decided that I needed to stay at home. I saw my family suffer for years, but they still found happiness in my success. I realized that whatever maybe, my family was always going to be there for me.

- Ridhima Dwivedi (12A)



Image credit: vmaritime.net



There was once a 39-year-old man named Russel. On a very bright and sunny day, he went into the attic to find something important.

When he was looking for that thing, he saw a rusty, old box with "Russel's best toys" written on it. First, he thought of keeping those toys in his room forever. But then he thought that what if he gave them to a poor child?

The next day, he went to give those toys to someone else in his Rolls Royce Cullinan. He saw a poor child with only one broken toy.

He stopped the car, opened the door, and gave those toys and some money to the kid.

The kid was very happy to see the new toys and the money which was for him to eat food.

Russel told all that to his parents, and they also felt happy for the little kid.

Moral: Russel adopted minimalism by donating the toys. So, you can also learn minimalism by donating things that are not in your use and which you think would be useful to others.

- Aabhas Mahour (4D)



THE ROAD TO EXUBERANCE

I could hear the whooping of super excited children playing in the park. I was surprised at the enthusiasm that the junior players displayed. It was the most ordinary park one could ever visit. I would go around for a walk to witness and enjoy the pleasures that it contained. It was dilapidated and had broken and rusted swings that cried for repair. The ground was a part of a township with all kinds of apartments. Right from the most luxurious penthouses to the average EWS flats, it had an entire miniature world dwelling in it.

I caught sight of a child drawing a table of numbers with something that seemed like chalk. A group of bare-footed children covered with dust hopped on one leg over that figure ladder. I had no words to describe their zest. I thought it was so good to be a child, with no worry and stress. I was brought back to reality by the screams of the children who were cheering for their friends.

The next day, I saw the same group of children playing a modified version of cricket with stuffed socks and wooden sticks. I caught sight of another neatly dressed child of about five years sitting with his friends in the same playground. He had beside him a remote control, a toy train, and a brand-new set of bat-ball. They argued over who had the best toys. It caused an altercation among the friends.

He seemed upset and lonely.

I used to visit that place of solace every single day.



Image credit: fineartamerica.com

Every day, I found the children playing a new game with waste materials. Looking at their enjoyment, one could never believe that they could not afford toys and were playing with broken stuff. At the other corner, I would find the same group of young boys and girls indulging in childish arguments and missing out on the fun.

One day, I found the boy talking to the children. He wanted to join them. They were surprised at first but readily agreed as they had befriended a new mate. They all started playing with toys made from paper and clay. It was amazing that they could shape their toys that way. He thoroughly enjoyed it and started playing with them every day.

Being from a well-off family, he got everything he desired. He was merely five years old and was amazed at how simple things could give so much satisfaction and happiness. He no longer had to worry about keeping expensive toys safe and changing batteries each time they were discharged. His way of looking at things changed drastically.

I found him sitting with all his toys laid out in front of him in the garden. It turned out that he had brought them for all his friends who could not buy them. He thought he did not need them anymore. The same room that he had found too small for himself now seemed enough for him. He now had many friends because he had no competition or jealousy in his mind.

There is a difference between needs and desires. When we understand those in our lives, we will be happier and more satisfied.

- Kanishka Paltani (9B)



Before I introduce you to the highest rated MCU film, I would like to tell you about Phase 4. After Phase 3 concluded with Avengers Endgame, a new Phase began in 2021. It started with the Black Widow film that paid homage to the fallen hero which was followed by Shang Chi: The Legend of the Ten Rings and Eternals. Spider-Man: No Way Home is the first movie in the MCU that introduces the multiverse, so it is a critical part of Phase 4.

The movie starts with the post-credit scene of the previous movie where for the very first time, Spider-Man's identity is revealed. The whole world considers Spider-Man as "Public Enemy #1" because of the false accusations by Quentin Beck aka Mysterio. To fix the problem, Peter asks Doctor Strange to cast a spell that will make the entire world forget the secret identity of Spider-Man. The spell goes wrong and instead of doing what it was supposed to do, it tears a hole into their world. This hole reveals the most powerful



Image credit: marvel.com

villains who've ever fought Spider-Man in any Universe. Peter will have to overcome his greatest challenges yet as the future of the multiverse lies in his hands.

The action scenes were fantastic and so was the chemistry between Peter (Tom Holland) and MJ (Zendaya), as we see their relationship moving to the next level in this movie. The cameo by Matt Murdock aka Daredevil was jaw-dropping, but it had to happen eventually because Marvel has already introduced Kingpin (the main villain in "The Daredevil") in the popular series "Hawkeye".

It is a blockbuster movie and it will be for many years to come. It is a wonderfully heart warming film with a well executed bittersweet ending. If you want to watch the upcoming Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness film, you must watch Spider-Man: No Way Home to understand the intriguing concept of the multiverse.

- Diksha Nitin Chotrani (9C)

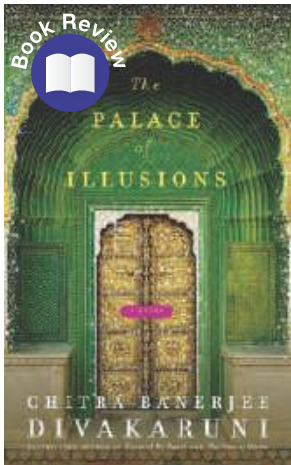


Image credit: brewedhoney.wordpress.com

The Palace of Illusions is written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and is a reinterpretation of the Hindu Epic Mahabharata from the eyes of Draupadi, the central character of this whole tale, something which is rarely seen in mythological retellings.

The story revolves around the royals - The hundred

Kauravas against the five Pandavas.

The novel starts with the chapter 'Fire' and gives a beautiful story of Draupadi's birth. The initial chapters revolve around Draupadi's childhood days and various aspects of it including her friendship with Krishna which plays an integral part in this story, making the reader feel connected with the book.

Draupadi's friendship with Krishna is beautifully described. She does not only seek comfort but also finds herself going to Krishna for any problem that she can't reveal to anyone else. "I was fascinated

by Krishna because I couldn't decipher him. I fancied myself an astute observer of people and had already analyzed the other important people in my life. I only knew that I adored the way he laughed for no reason, quirked up an eyebrow" writes Divakaruni describing their friendship.

As we go further, Draupadi becomes more of a non-idealistic character. You get angry, yet find yourself pitying her; you want to scold her and give comfort at the same time. In some instances, you feel like stopping her before she makes a mistake.

Paanchali's feeling of jealousy is very captivating to read. It also points out that though Draupadi was a very strong queen and woman, she was also insecure. She was a woman with courage, strength and confidence yet that didn't mean that she didn't feel jealous of other wives of the Pandavas, or that she didn't have her tough times. It was the circumstances that built her into the woman she was.

It is a women-centric novel, giving voices and power to women yet not disregarding the others. It tells the readers that a girl can be a princess, a queen, a wife, a lover, a friend and a mother, sometimes full of pride, sometimes arrogant, right as well as wrong, yet sacrificing and giving, all in one.

- Kanak Vyas (10B)

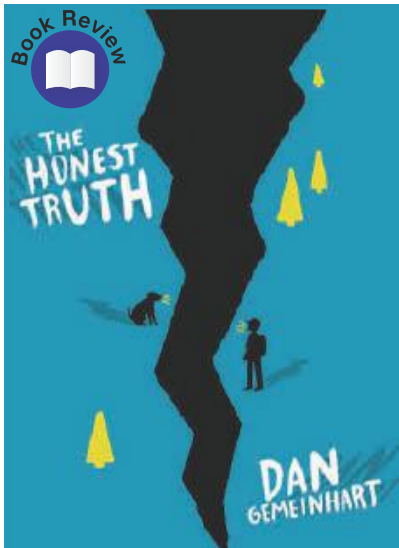


Image credit: royalroad.com

The Honest Truth by Dan Gemeinhart is a novel about Mark, a normal child just like any other kid. He has Beau (his dog) and Jess (his best friend) in his life. Suddenly, a storm hits Mark's life. Mark has cancer and probably won't be able to live long. So, he decides to escape from his home for his eternal love - the mountains. Back at his home, Jess is aware of Mark's runaway with Beau to the mountains. Jess sees two roads in front of her - either to tell Mark's parents about his whereabouts and save his life or to let him fulfill his dreams before his last breath. The story jumps from Mark's point of view to that of Jessica's.

It is a beautiful and heart-touching story about a young boy's rediscovery of the will to live against all odds. It is a rare and extraordinary novel revolving around the importance and joy of little moments in life, and the incredible and daring journey of a boy who wants to live his life to the fullest. Overall, I truly enjoyed reading this book which gives us a lovely message about kindness, love, and family.

- Shrishti Sirwani (10B)

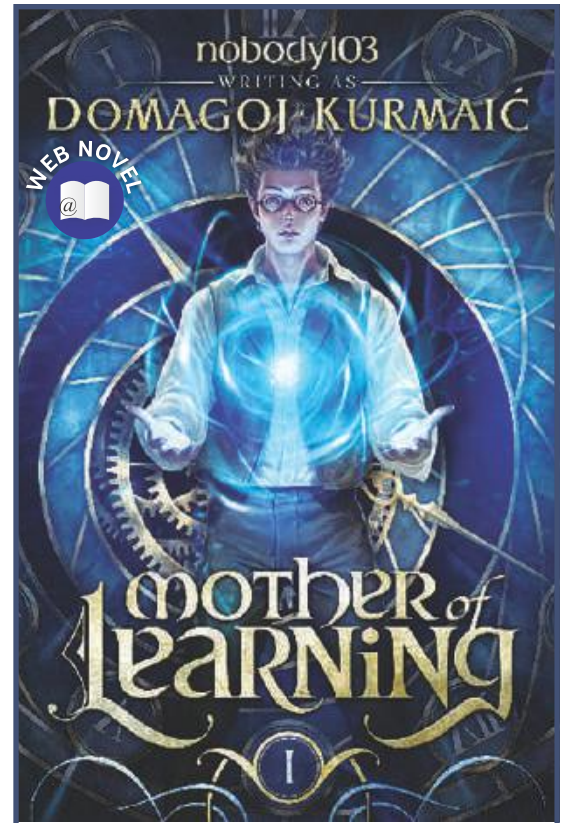


Image credit: Mother of Learning | Royal Road

Repetition is the mother of learning.

Written by Nobody103 aka Domagoj Kurmaic, originally published as a web novel in 2021, Mother of learning begins with a new concept for the fantasy genre: a universe stuck in a time loop.

Zorian was a teenage mage from a modest background with slightly above-average abilities. He was in his third year of studies at Cyoria's magical academy. Everything was normal until the summer festival, when everything he knew was destroyed. In the aftermath of an invasion, he fell victim to a spell that made him relive the first month over and over again. He had no idea what was going on, but he needed to figure it out quickly.

Zorian, like most protagonists, begins with flaws and improves through time. But, unlike many stories, this development is shown by his encounters with the world and the people who live in it, rather than through his understanding of the book's core idea. He changes his perspective of the world by repeating the same occurrences. He views his friends and family in a new way, connecting with people he had overlooked before.

The action, monsters, dragons, magic, and humorous moments are all worth praising. Even the complete lack of plot holes, despite being a time travel narrative, pales in comparison to Mother of Learning's most astonishing strength: its cast of diverse characters. All of them are incredibly real, each with its flaws and different personal experiences. What attracted me, even more, was the protagonist, and how his sufferings in a time loop transformed and reshaped him. That is the essence of the novel and has been handled so beautifully that it elevates Mother of Learning to a whole new level in my view.

I recommend this book to everyone who enjoys reading fantasy books in general. If you're hesitant to read web novels, don't be: they are just as good as any other type of literature. Furthermore, they are both free and easily available. So, don't be afraid, pick up your phone, search for Mother of Learning, and start reading!

- Juveria Fatima (9C)



SCHMEERS



Image credit: thespruceeats.com

Image credit: Raaghav Saboo

These dips need minimal ingredients and are easy to make. They are vegan dips but contain nuts. I enjoy them with cucumbers and carrots. We can also enjoy them with grilled paneer or lavash sticks or cream crackers.

Mayo Bell Cheesy Dip

Ingredients:

- 16 soaked cashews (4 hrs. soaking)
- 1/3 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice 1/2 tsp salt

Instructions:

1. Simply blend all the ingredients together until smooth
2. Use immediately or store in the refrigerator for 2-3 days

Cashew Cheese

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup soaked cashews (4 hrs. soaking)
- 1/2 cup boiled chopped cauliflower
- 2 tsp Lemon Juice
- 1/4 tsp black pepper powder
- 1/4 tsp dried oregano (any Italian herb like dried basil or parsley or mixed herbs)
- 1/4 tsp salt

Instructions:

1. Simply blend all the ingredients until smooth
2. Use immediately or store in the refrigerator for 2-3 days These dips will serve a family of 4.

- Raaghav Saboo (2A)

LESS IS MORE

We have often heard of this phrase. However, have we ever thought about what it means? Sometimes, something simple is better than something advanced or complicated. Let's try to decode this with an example.



Image credit: Aanya Behl

There are many types of pencils in the market. We often get attracted to all the fancy stuff available in the market. However, did we ever realize that a simple pencil will also do the same work as the fancy one to which we are attracted? Moreover, it will be cost-effective and more durable, most of the time. The same applies to our daily lives, where we can opt for many simpler and way more efficient things rather than going for the fancy stuff marketed.

If we declutter stuff from our day-to-day life, we can save more even if we use less.

- Aanya Behl (5B)

The Ubtan Saviour

Ubtans are a natural and traditional way of exfoliating and cleansing your body and skin. You probably heard about it from your grandmother. As a result of its benefits, they are also used during marriages to give the bride a radiant glow. So, why wait until the wedding day to use them, use them whenever you want to get their amazing results.



Image credit: lifeberrys.com

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp Gram flour
- 1 tsp Turmeric
- 1 tbsp Sandalwood powder
- 2 tbsp rose water
- Required milk

Instructions:

1. Take an empty bowl and mix sandalwood

powder with gram flour, turmeric, rose water, and enough milk to make a thick paste.

2. Apply it all over your face and body. Leave it to dry.
3. Now, scrub it in a circular motion and wash it off with water.
4. Follow up with a toner and moisturizer

- Yousha Lokwani (8A)

Easy 5-step STRAWBERRY Lemonade

(This recipe yields one glass of lemonade)



Image credit: Siddhi Saini

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp powdered sugar/honey
- 3-5 ice cubes(optional)
- 4 medium-sized strawberries
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 cups of cold water
- 1 lemon slice for garnishing (optional)
- 1 strawberry for garnishing (optional)

Instructions:

1. In a bowl, mix honey/sugar with 1 cup of water and lemon juice until dissolved. Keep aside.
 2. In a mixer, thoroughly blend 1 cup of water with the strawberries.
 3. Add the water and lemon juice mix into the blender and blend again with the strawberries.
 4. Put the ice cubes into the glass and pour the lemonade
 5. Add a strawberry and a slice of lemon to the glass for garnishing.
- Enjoy!

- Siddhi Saini (8A)



Tête-à-Tête with Jerson Fernandes

Executive Chef

This time around, the Editorial Board gained valuable insights from Chef Jerson Fernandes, a Guinness World Record Holder and the Executive Chef at Novotel, Juhu Beach, Mumbai. With years of experience and numerous accolades to his name, the members got to learn a lot about his journey and the culinary world in general.

Excerpts from the Interview

Q1 'Kitchen Industry' has drastically taken a change of form into the field of 'culinary arts'. Please tell us a little bit about your experiences when you first tried to put forward ideas of modernization.

Food modernization means improving the ways food is treated as it goes from the farm to the fork. It includes making the product more desirable and safer, using ingredients or techniques from other cuisines, cultures etc. while still retaining a touch of the local and using different modern techniques along with ancient ones.

Gone are the days when the chefs used to use simple cutlery. Nowadays, as they say, "If the food isn't Instagrammable, it isn't supposed to be on the plate."

For me, the flavour comes first followed by feel and look. Modernization means ensuring that the flavours are intact and those basics are in place.

Q2 You played a huge role in the opening of the first Vegan Bar in Goa, Amalia. What do you think is the future of vegan food in a country like India and how important do you think is food sustainability?

At Novotel Goa, we integrated the values of sustainable gastronomy into menus of healthy alternatives. My initiatives are inspired by ingredients that enable me to depict culinary creativity, mindful eating, etc., thus establishing the fact that the connection to sustainability begins with food. When I began Amalia, everyone told me that eating vegan food in a place like Goa didn't really do justice to the culinary palates there.

In 2018, I reached Goa and saw great scope for a vegan restaurant, especially after working with some of the finest vegan chefs in the world. Vegan means serving plant-based food. Anything that comes from animals including butter, ghee, etc. was forbidden.

The first few weeks, it didn't move well. It was very difficult to convince the local crowd, but it went well with Europeans, Latin Americans etc. However, as time passed, we educated people about vegan food, differentiated veganism from vegetarianism etc.

From the third month, I started infusing molecular techniques into vegan food, making it more appealing. Slowly, people began to come to Novotel Goa only for Amalia. It was wonderful to see hardcore carnivores coming to only try the vegan food.

Vegan food cannot be compared with non-vegetarian meals as the flavours and textures are quite different. But, once you know what it's about and what your clientele wants, the sky's the limit. Whenever a guest walked into the restaurant, I told them the story behind the dish. Within 6 months, I was awarded Goa's first "Best Vegan chef", and that still remains with me as a cherished memory.

Chefs will always remain catalysts for food consumption patterns, behavioural changes and propagating awareness for commitment to the environment. It is imperative to connect with nature, know where your ingredients are coming from and how they are being grown.

Q3 The average time you spent in the kitchen was 14 hours a day. What methods did you use to learn different cooking skills while still working full-time?

Cooking was more of a way of life rather than a profession for me because I learnt it at a very early age whilst helping elders in the kitchen. There was no one to hand-hold me in the process. I used to sneak into the kitchen, watch chefs cook and go practice it.

Nowadays, you have the media at your disposal. In the late 90s and early 2000s, that wasn't the case. When I left home at 17, I worked as a

dishwasher on the crews.

I used to wait and watch cooks, writing down all their secret ingredients and techniques and practicing them when I had the time. I failed multiple times, but then I finally mastered them.

I still spend 12 to 14 hours in the kitchen, but as they say, "If you love what you do, you don't work a day in your life." As a chef, if you don't love food, the hustle that goes around, your ingredients, your customers, and fellow chefs, you are not going to enjoy working in the kitchen.

It has been a wonderful journey, learning from people all across the world and mentoring budding chefs. I am highly indebted to food and to everyone who has helped me be what I am today. With the journey, the learning continues as well.

Q4 With social media food blogging featuring a fusion of different cuisines and dishes gaining popularity, do you think it is important to preserve the authenticity of dishes or is it better to be experimental?

It is a mixture of both. Food offers access to different cultures, traditions, and techniques of cooking. It creates opportunities for sharing experiences. Therefore, elevating and enriching traditional dishes aids in the progression of preserving the techniques and stories about the origin of the food.

Being experimental or preserving the authenticity of dishes depends on the clients and the dishes you are serving, the techniques and the cuisines. But most of the time, it is fifty-fifty of both for me, because you cannot serve food that doesn't have a tradition or a story attached to it, and you cannot serve food that is not experimental. That simply makes life monotonous.

Q5 What is your earliest memory in the kitchen and how did this passion translate into a career for you?

When I was about six or seven, I used to help my mother, aunts and sisters with cooking. I helped people in the catering community with cutting, chopping etc. I didn't have any knowledge of what food meant, but because of my love and passion for food, I tried to get myself involved in everything where food was involved.

When I made the decision to become a chef, a lot of eyebrows were raised. I come from a family of doctors, engineers and professors, and I didn't choose to be one of them. I decided to do what I loved the most.

Cooking is a lot about your own self. There are a lot of emotions attached to food. When you make the same dish while being happy or sad, there is always a difference between the two.

I always tell my team that if they are not feeling good while working someday, they should go home. One shouldn't be upset while cooking food, as that shows up in the dish. The customer would not feel good about the food as the person who made it wasn't happy. So, one needs to be in the best mood while cooking, and the food will take care of itself on its own.



Q6 Having studied or aspiring to study from various IHMs, do you think the way colleges are preparing students today is influenced by the expectations with which hotels come for campus placements?

Hoteliers need to know what's being taught in colleges because the same students will work with you someday. Colleges need to be in sync with the industry too, because unless you know the latest trends, it will be difficult for the students to get used to the hotel life.

We have students from various colleges coming in, and the recipes and techniques being taught to them sometimes match our expectations and sometimes they don't. It can be due to the infrastructure of the college that doesn't meet the standards, or because the faculty isn't trained enough.

We get students every year where their recipes differ from the hotel recipes. They simply answer - "That's what our faculty taught us." So, coming and working with us becomes an eye opener for many students.

I'm sure if you ask college students what exactly a "truffle" is, most of them wouldn't know about it. Some might know because of the internet. Since there is easy access to information today, one should make the best use of it.

Q7 What do you suggest budding chefs like me or newbies starting in the industry should look forward to?

A career in this industry is rewarding only if you evolve, are creative, experimental, persistent, hungry to learn and have a positive attitude, towards both food and life. Every budding chef wants to become a celebrity chef, but they need to learn that every celebrity chef has gone through the grind.

If you get the right opportunity at the right time, that's when you shine, and when you do, you shine like the brightest star. It is all about grabbing opportunities at the right time and working extremely hard without expecting anything in return. You also have to forget about your social life.

When I passed out in 2004, we couldn't look the chef in the eye or talk directly to him. But students today have the courage to do that.

So, the world is changing, and you need to keep evolving, keep up with trends and learn to adjust and adapt to the changing circumstances.



"God creates the beauty. My camera and I are a witness."

- Mark Denman



Ridhima Dwivedi (12A)



Nancy Chawla (5A)



Aashi Jain (12C)



Gurbani Bhat (4A)



Nitisha Latha (10B)



Parshvi Jalori (1F)



Sarthak Kumar (12B)



Shivika Srivastava (10D)



Raajveer Parakh (9A)



Devansh Kumar Sahu (10A)



Navika Sahu (6C)



Aadya Rathi (3F)



Aqsa Ansari (4E)



Hridesh Jethani (12C)



Hashvi Kataria (9E)



Rudrakshi Singh Dawar (7B)



Shreyaanshi Pahwa (3G)



Kaira Sharma (1F)



Atharv Mittal (3D)



Divisha Priya Banerjee (8E)



Madeeha Noor (4A)



Shaini Agrawal (10C)