

Principal's Note

'Crossroads'

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

- Robert Frost

The thrilling twists and turns are the veritable charm in the voyage of life. Ideally, one must not let the initial euphoria with which one begins the journey, diminish in the long run. Easier said than done, one must admit.

Crossroads are inevitable in any journey; undoubtedly, the choice you make at the crossroads of life takes you toward your dream or to an unexplored new path.

One assumes that a diligent soul knows which is the right way. A wise decision is sine qua non at this point. Decision making itself is an arduous skill that must be nurtured and refurbished constantly; after all life itself is a series of evolutionary experiences.

Follow your intuition and keep yourself abreast with the times. Focus on the concrete facts, eliminate unworkable options, and visualize the outcomes associated with choosing one among the different available options.

Although variety is the spice of life, eschew jumping on a pathway imprudently. Instead, empower yourself with the acumen of a wise traveller and embark on the journey.

Indeed, the great achievers, from Mahender Singh Dhoni to Barack Obama, attained success precisely because of the choices they made at the crucial crossroads they encountered. At such time, one must listen to one's heart, no matter what. Nothing fuels a dream as much as self-belief. Trust yourself, believe your intuition and pursue the path ardently. Every opportunity carries a cost – it is up to each individual to decide whether the benefits outweigh the costs. Specific choices are nearly always irreversible as it affects not just you but everyone around you.

*"Shall I follow the stream
Or cross the sea,
Strive for a dream
Or let life be?"*

- Anonymous

Always remember that it is the power of choice and not just chance at every crossroad that will take you to your destination.



- Ashish Agarwal

Student Editorial Board



Mannat Kaur Kandal
Editor-in-chief



Aamya Tuteja



Devyani Sadho



Nilotama Singh



Ridhima Dwivedi



Carte Blanche

Your heart is pounding out of your chest, and your hands are shaking as you try to figure out

how to take control over your breath. Thinking straight is the last thing you can do right now. As you look over the counter again, the apple cinnamon donut and funfetti donut are just a disastrous sugar rush waiting to happen, but picking one isn't an option you want to face either. You are at a crossroads, albeit a minor one, or in this case, at a bakery counter.

Your palms feel clammy, your heart is racing, your forehead is glistening with beads of sweat and your mind is rattled by the possibilities of the unknown. This time, it is not a tiny decision. It is crucial. It may potentially be life-altering. After the one-millionth aptitude test, it is time for you to choose the career you wish to pursue and the college you wish to go to.

Dear readers, whether it is the choice between donuts or career prospects, the same anxiety pulses through your veins when it comes to finally making a decision. Whether you choose the apple cinnamon or funfetti donut, or whether you choose the conventional option of engineering or the off-beat career of photography, you will have a path, a direction to follow regardless of the choice you make. There is no force that will punish you for one choice and reward you for another, your world will simply adjust around your decision. It will create a plethora of opportunities based on your decision.

The only wrong choice that you can make, dear readers, is to not make a decision at all. Imagine yourself on a thickly wooded trail, aimlessly walking, dry leaves crunching beneath your pure-white sneakers. You freeze on spot, your eyes fixated on finding the correct way. You try to look beyond their dark and menacing yet inviting appearance. Perhaps you should go on the trail towards the right. Or maybe it might be better to go through the left trail. With an exasperated sigh, you stand there and

*"If everything goes right, we get a good experience.
If everything goes wrong, we get a good story."*

- Simon Sinek

decide to put off the choice till you can understand which path is the "perfect one."

The sun sets, darkness envelops you, and you stand there, uncertainty literally surrounding you. That's what happens when you refuse to take a decision. You are stuck in a vicious circle of unwanted thoughts, cooked-up scenarios, and inaction.

Recently, the Editorial Board had the chance to interview Mr. Suyash Keshari, a famous wildlife photographer. You would be astonished to know that he held a political advocacy job before switching to photography. According to him, he learned a lot from his degree and his previous job, and in a way, it was a step towards realizing his dream. That's it, dear readers. Any decision you make is a step closer to your dreams. However, if it does deviate you from the path you thought you'd take, it will lead you onto another, which perhaps would be the one you will end up loving.

Life is a concoction of nothing but choices. Sadly, we often get caught up in the unfortunate practice of regret - stemming from apparent "wrong choices" we may have made in the past. If not that, then we suffer under the all-consuming fear of making one, as if one simple choice will have Doom pounding at our front door in the morning, ready to destroy every fiber of our being. However, we all ignore a glaring fact here - There are truly no wrong choices.

There are often instances in life - perhaps an unhappy career or a stuffy relationship - where you resign yourself to your fate. You refuse to believe that you do have a choice. But, you always do. You have the choice to shape your experiences in the way you want to. That leap of faith always waits at the horizon. Be brave and feel free. After all, it's always about a choice.

- Devyani Sadho (9B) and Mannat Kaur Kandal (11B)

Editor's Note

In times of uncertainty, art is the perfect medium to declutter, disengage and disconnect from the

chaotic mess that is the world. It transports you to a place that is exclusively your own, and it is astonishing that the stroke of a brush or the scribble of a pen can possess the power of such magnitude. But, dear readers, that is the unimaginable strength of the art. It connects me to you, just as this newsletter, curated with much love and joy, binds me to you.

Choices are inevitable at each step of life, and as students, we need to remain on our toes at every instance. Thus, while we, the Editorial Board, sat down to choose the theme for this issue, we realised that the problem and privilege of making a choice is the perfect thought to present before you. This newsletter is a blend of the innovative and thought -

"Life beats down and crushes the soul and art reminds you that you have one."

- Stella Adler

provoking entries that we received from the students, and we were delighted to receive a plethora of

entries despite ongoing examinations, especially from high school. To all those whose work couldn't be featured, we extend our heartfelt gratitude, and we sincerely hope that you will continue to contribute to the Bulletin with unwavering enthusiasm.

While I write this, I can imagine the outcome of this newsletter already and as you flip through the next few pages, I hope that you can see the essence of the vision that we had for this issue. I can only wish to relay the rush of adrenaline that surges through me while I type these words and I thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for helping us shape this issue into what it finally has become.

- Mannat Kaur Kandal, Editor-in-chief

Visit to the M.P. Shooting Academy

64th National Shooting Championship - Rifle Event



Focus, precision and pin-point accuracy-Shooting is indeed an amalgamation of these three. To witness this intriguing sport, our students visited the Madhya Pradesh Shooting Academy to watch the 64th National Shooting Championship - Rifle Event. Talented shooters from across the country displayed their exemplary skills, and our students were enthralled by the event. They were not only treated to this exciting tournament but also had the opportunity to learn the basics of this sport from the Range Officers at the Academy. It was undoubtedly an interesting day for our Billabongers, who would surely have been motivated to take up this unconventional sport!



Roller Skating Federation of India (RSFI)

M.P. State Roller Skating Championship 2020-22

The wind in your hair as time freezes and you glide down the rinks - the feeling of roller skating can be quite spectacular. At the M.P. State Roller Skating Championship 2021-22 organized by the Roller Skating Federation of India, many of our school's finest roller-skaters scored various medals.

SELECTED FOR NATIONALS



Shivom Singh Bisen
(Grade 11)



Siddhi Makol
(Grade 11)



Tanisha Bhargava
(Grade 9)

49th M.P. State-level Swimming Championship

Our Billabongers made us proud once again, as Anvi Khanduri, Arishka Kak and Aarush Kak won multiple medals in swimming at the Forty-Ninth state level championship held at Arjun Taran Pushkar. Individually, Anvi Khanduri won 5 Gold Medals and the title of "Overall Champion", Arishka Kak won 5 Bronze & 1 Gold Medal, and Aarush Kak won 2 Bronze & 1 Gold Medal.



Anvi Khanduri
Grade 6



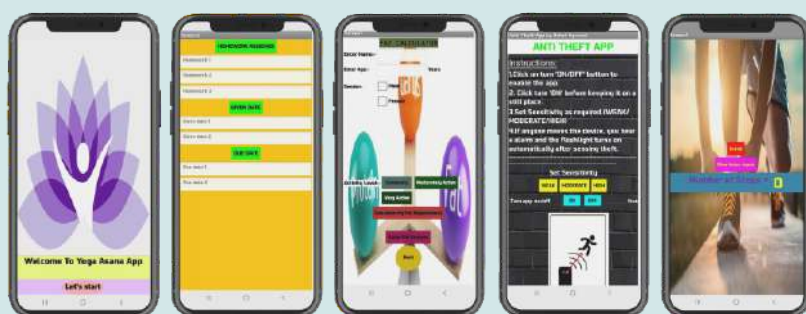
Arishka Kak
Grade 4



Aarush Kak
Grade 4

Inter-house Android App Development

As the Sun rises in the East, so does a worldwide influx of technology with abilities as far as the human brain can imagine. As the bond between technology and the education system becomes closer than ever, the two often cross paths. Just a couple weeks' prior, a competition of app development took place with astounding results. This competition not only brought about a deep understanding of the programming of the applications among the competitors but also gifted us with five apps to use in our everyday life. Among grades 5 and 6, under the theme of 'Daily Utility' Jahnvi Makhija won first position with an app called Yogasana, Shriansh Sushil Belgamwar won second Position with an app called Homework Notebook and Parth Jhawar won third position with an app called Nutrition Calculator. Among grades 7 and 8, under the theme of 'Sensor Based Application' Daksh Agrawal won first position with an



app called Anti Theft Alarm and Jashith Daryani won second position with an app called PedoX.





Inter-House Fireless Cooking Competition



A delicious aroma wafted through the corridors of Billabong High, Bhopal, as over 150 of our students prepared healthy and scrumptious dishes. With overwhelming participation from Grades 1 to 8, the Inter-house Fireless Cooking Competition was a roaring success. Our panel for the day included three experts- **Chef Nesar Ahmad Noorullah** (Bhopal Baking Company), **Chef Prateek Raizada** (Alfresco) and **Cake artist Ms. Ankur Uppal** (Cake Temptations).



Roald Dahl Day

From 'Gremlins' to 'Bill and the Minpins', Roald Dahl has something in store for every child to move out and about with a book in their hand. His books fill your heart, make you grow keen and wonder what you had ever seen in a ridiculous machine like the television.

Our school has always appreciated and promoted his play with words, something that leaves

you inspired to find your own writing style, which can one day be as awe-striking and memorable as Roald Dahl's. This year, our school planned a day of fun and adventure where children of grades 3 & 4 rejoiced on his birthday. They dressed up as characters from his books, and prepared special tokens of their love for his work in the form of various arts and crafts.



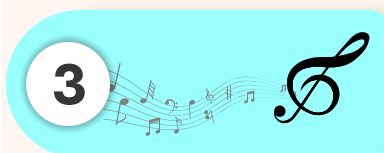
Amayra Mishra (3B)



Rebus Puzzles

There are various ways to stimulate our brain and Rebus Puzzles is one fun way of doing it! Rebus puzzles are visual word puzzles consisting of clues pointing towards a popular idiom or phrase. The following puzzles have been designed specially by the members of the Editorial Board to recreationally engage the readers of The Billabong Bulletin. We hope you enjoy decoding these as much as we did creating them.

We will soon share these puzzles on our Instagram/Facebook page where you can post your answers and get a kick out of the other replies as well.





Sex determination of the fetus should be legal



Image credit: wsj.com

While the ban on sex determination of the foetus showed an increase in sex ratio from 1980 to 2004, it was however not a permanent solution. The UN has reported that an estimated 2000 unborn girls are illegally aborted every day in India. The Indian parliament passed the 'Prenatal Diagnostics Techniques' Act in 1994. This act bans the determination of the sex of the foetus before birth, in an attempt to decrease the rising cases of female foeticide. The act, however, has not succeeded much as there are doctors who transport ultrasound machines to rural areas trying to conduct the illegal activity of sex determination.

The methods of aborting a foetus after illegally finding out its gender can be severely baleful to the female. Abortions in unhygienic places, by inexperienced medical practitioners, lack of attention to the process of healing, haemorrhage, sepsis, mental and physical trauma can be life-threatening.

Statistics show the rate of conviction has been poor. In 12 years, only 206 doctors have been convicted by the court. The issue, according to specialists, is not the act but the lack of attention on the execution of the act. The faulty monitoring of ultrasound clinics, lack of maintenance of proper records of the scans that are conducted, along with the poor state of the committee that helps with implementing the act has contributed to the failure of the act.

Albeit the act does help with trying to minimise the gender gap, statistics show the nourishment conditions for an unwanted girl child are beyond egregious. Young girls are often trafficked or married at an early age or sold into prostitution. They are forced to work and live in inhumane surroundings. There is no covenant, that the baby who is saved from foeticide will not suffer through mental and perhaps physical trauma because of a family that already did not want her. An unwanted child might increase chances of domestic abuse, toxic living conditions etc.

On a less dark note, the determination of sex before birth can help parents in planning the surroundings that they wish to raise their child in. A study by Gateway Genomics has helped explore the benefits of sex determination of the foetus. The study stated, it helped remove the element of surprise, naming and shopping for the baby. Parents have also reported it has helped them prepare the older sibling(s). The planning committee is proposing the idea of alleviating the ban on sex determination as a part of an initiative to 'adopt a female foetus' and encouraging families and health workers to the safe delivery of girl babies. Instead of completely prohibiting the idea of sex determination, it would be a smart alternative to be versatile in letting families choose if they wish to determine the gender, and if it is a girl foetus, letting the government 'foster' her, if the family wishes, till she finds a permanent home. This is a much better solution than an unpredictable future for the female foetus. The government would ensure the welfare of the foetus, through its nexus of volunteers, midwives and social workers. The workers could also be awarded cash incentives.

Legally aborting a foetus, that is not guaranteed to grow up in a sustainable environment, is not a misdeed. The initiative taken by the government, to minimise the cases of foeticide, has not brought satisfactory results. Sex determination of a foetus has advantages, and disadvantages that the government is taking steps to solve. It is not wrong and it is time people realise that.

- Gurnoor Bedi (11B)

FOR



AGAINST



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the normal child sex ratio ranges from 102 to 106 males per 100 females. Converting it to the Indian standard, it would mean having a range of 943-980 females per every 1000 males. In India, the child sex ratio has shown a steady deterioration since the year 1991 (945 girls for every 1000 boys) but it was the release of the 2011 census (for every 1000 boys there were merely 918 girls) that drew the nation's attention to the alarming fall in the child sex ratio, which was the worst since independence. Although there were wide variations seen in ratios across different regions of

the country, the decline was widespread, across the country, ranging from urban to rural, remote as well as tribal areas. If the government in India makes sex determination legal then this situation will have even more far-reaching consequences.

The Indian Parliament in 1994 legislated the 'Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act. This Act prohibits the determination of the gender of the foetus before birth and was passed to narrow down the growing gender gap in various parts of India. The Act became furthermore reformed in 2003 and came to be known as the PC-PNDT Act -- Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection). Though it's been a few years since the Act was put forth, the discrimination towards the girl child and women in general still carries on. We all know that more efforts are needed to prevent female foeticide in a country like India, but imagine if the above-stated laws are abolished, it would take us almost forever to reach our goal.

It is a reflection of pre-birth discrimination that manifests itself in the form of gender-biased sex selection and post-birth discrimination against girls. The implications of this are extensive and pervade the social, economic, and political spheres of our society. The steady decrease in the child-sex-ratio presents a future with a considerably lesser number of women as compared to men.



This gap has led to a sharp rise in violence against women, in India. This has thereby, led to a situation where, in addition to the congenital son preference, people are discriminating against a girl child based on concerns for their safety. If sex determination is made legal, then it will multiply the risk of violence against women by the marital family either to ensure the elimination of the female fetus or force her to keep the male fetus in situations where it may be risky for her to continue with her pregnancy.

Yes, there have been subtle changes concerning the acceptance of the girl child in the family, however; the preference of a son is uniform across all groups with a few exceptions who saw the girl child as a benefit. The archaic mindsets and perceptions that cause people to abort the girl child (dowry, power relations with in-laws, etc.) persist.

In the age where blue for boys and pink for girls is an idea that should long be discarded, there is no need, except in cases of genetic abnormalities, to know if a baby is a boy or a girl, as long as the baby is healthy.

- Nilotama Singh (9B)





SARAH EVERARD

Let's talk about Sarah Everard, the girl whose Wikipedia page is her death.

Sarah Everard was a 33-year-old marketing executive in South London. She attended the comprehensive Fulford School near her hometown New York. She later attended St. Cuthbert's College at Durham University from 2005 to 2008 for the study of Human Geography, after which she moved to London and started working as a marketing account manager. According to LinkedIn, Everard worked at several marketing and PR agencies after moving to London, graduating from senior account manager to group account director between 2009 and 2020.

This intellectual, beautiful, amazing woman with a supportive family lived a pretty quiet life and was never known by such a large amount of people up until 3rd March 2021. Sarah Everard is the woman, who on the night of 3rd March was brutally raped, kidnapped and lastly murdered.

Sarah Everard made sure that she wouldn't end up in her situation by doing everything that was supposedly right. She wore bright colours, didn't go out late at night, called her boyfriend to tell him where she was and stayed in public places with a lot of people around. Despite all her precautions she was grabbed on Clapham Common, raped and murdered.

Before I mention the name of the

rapist/kidnapper/murderer I would like to talk about his occupation, the position of authority that gave him the power he abused. That horrendous man was a police officer, a person to look up to as a symbol of safety, a person responsible for enforcing the law, and preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal activities.

The abhorrent antagonist of this article is a Mets police officer Wayne Couzens. This disgraced officer was paid at least £33,000 a year for his role as diplomatic protection officer and continued to receive his salary during the criminal proceedings as a standard protocol if he pleaded not guilty. Not until his plea hearing on 9th July 2021 did he face the severe consequences he deserved, a life sentence.

Without any deviation, let us talk about the events following Sarah Everard's death. As the world felt remorseful for the death of Sarah Everard in such cruel and disturbing ways, not knowing her exact location at the time of the kidnapping or murder a large cluster of flowers at Clapham Common mark the spot where she was the last seen by a CCTV camera nearby. People all over London came there to honour her memory and share their experiences with sexual assault or talk about their fear of becoming one of the 97%.

Patsy Stevenson, the girl that went viral because of police brutality.



Image credit: MSN news

Patsy Stevenson's relevance to this article is that she was one of the many people present at the Sarah Everard vigil. As you may have seen on the news or social media, Patsy Stevenson was the girl who had been tackled to the ground by a police officer. To quote Patsy, "All we wanted to do was pay our respects".

She was an innocent woman who, when talking about this incident in an interview said that she was terrified because she had never been in an incident like this and that the officers were in the possession of a baton that could be used against her if she didn't comply. She was then issued a £200 penalty notice on the salary of a physics student given in accordance with the Clapham vigil being illegal under lockdown restrictions. This amazing woman mustered up the courage to get lawyers involved and asked the force to withdraw a £200 fixed penalty notice as well as acknowledge and apologise "for their wrongdoing".

As I continue to talk about the inspiring women highlighted at this time of grief, I would like to dedicate a paragraph of my article to Baroness Jones, a Member of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom, who bravely suggested that a 6 pm curfew should be implemented for men in the

UK. She backed up her suggestion by talking about the Sarah Everard case and the UN Women report on 'Prevalence and reporting of sexual harassment in UK public spaces'. She faced a lot of criticism for her thoughts, but she rose above them.

The addition of the 'Kill the Bill' protests seem irrational but it plays a significant role. Even though the two events took place 120 miles apart, the PCSC bill passed that was briefly protested wrongly affected the Sarah Everard vigil. To give you a small insight on the PCSC bill, it was proposed to give the police new powers when it comes to protestors. The metropolitan police and the Avon and Somerset constabulary wrongly applied the lockdown regulations to a bunch of people in mourning and failed to understand their legal duty to facilitate peaceful protest rather than using excessive force against the innocent public both times.

We walk the streets panic-stricken, we either lose our freedom or lose our life. Every one of us faces misogyny, in different shapes and forms, some of us get gaslighted or mansplained and some get harassed or murdered. Let us take one step towards a better future, let us reclaim the streets.

- Devyani Sadho (9B)

CRYPTO



I'm sure that you must be familiar with the picture above. A lot of you right now must be thinking "Oh, yeah this is that meme dog". This NFT (Non-fungible token) that we popularly known as "that meme dog" is Dogecoin.

Wait, what is an NFT though?

NFTs are digital tokens or currencies that help in exchange and trading. NFTs are like digital art. "But I can still download them from the web, right?" Think of an NFT being a unique art token or simply a token. It's how a fake painting of the Mona Lisa can't replace the original one. That's how NFTs are.

Dogecoin is a type of Cryptocurrency. The crypto in Cryptocurrency stands for cryptography. Cryptography is a technique for securing information and communications through the use of codes so that only those people for whom the information is intended can understand it and process it. Cryptography usually requires a computational key, a public key and a private key. The public key is the one that the user shares with everyone and the private key is the one that

acts as a signature of the user.

The number of cryptocurrencies available over the internet as of 19th August 2018 is over 1600 and growing. According to Wikipedia, "cryptocurrency, crypto-currency, or crypto is a collection of binary data which is designed to work as a medium of exchange." Bitcoin, Ethereum and Shiba Inu are a few popular cryptocurrencies. The value of cryptocurrency depends on certain factors like the value of the crypto, demand and supply. For example, Dogecoin had an immense increase in its value after Elon Musk spoke about it.

Most of the cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Bitcoin Cash and Ethereum are secured via the Blockchain network. In a Blockchain network, transactions or a series of transactions are saved at various locations. Any change in information at one location would require a change in all the various locations where the information is saved. This is similar to how in a school, there needs to be a change in marks in the answer script to make a change on the school portal in the marks

that a child has scored. This blockchain system of storing information makes it more accurate as the information is constantly being verified by huge amounts of computing power.

Crypto makes transactions easier without the need of a middleman like a bank or payments processor, allowing values to be transferred globally 24/7 with very low fees.

Cryptocurrencies are not usually managed by a bank or a central authority. They're still safe for transactions due to the Block-chain system.

There has been an ongoing debate in the world whether Cryptocurrency should be considered as a currency or not as it is not usually managed by a bank or a central authority. In India, a bill has been proposed to consider Crypto as an asset rather than a currency.

- Shrishti Sirwani (9B)





Despair

Image credit: scitechdaily.com

Where once an endless fire burned,
All that's left is a bit of ash,
Where the sea of hope and will flowed free,
All that's left is a dreary clash.

Where imagination and creativity were at wheel,
All that's left is an abandoned ship,
Where joy and light were common sights,
All that's left is a dead soul's last sip.

Where energy and happiness resided,
All that's left is a painless void,
Where serenity and tranquillity took home
All that's left is a haven destroyed.

Where confidence and self-love oozed,
All that's left is a dead, dry spot,
What once faith and belief encased,
All that's left is despair to seek.

But yet, you still see a star shining brightly upon thee,
The dead soul's ashes scatter the plane,
A Phoenix is born reigniting the flame,
The spirit never meant to die, you see.

Rebirths again and again through life,
The reason happiness is valued is because there is strife.

- Twisha Chand Warwade (9C)



Image credit: artranked.com

I am nearing the crossroads where I am to choose,
What I must keep in life and what should I lose,
I ought to leave behind the subtle things,
And make right choices and spread my wings.

Where to go? Left, or right?
The way of acceptance or the way of fight?
O mighty one please clarify my hesitation,
So that I can safely go to my destination.

Should I go straight or follow my gait back?
Should I focus on the future, or hold on to the past?
My instincts kick in as I look through this confusion,
My mind is clearing in this abyss of illusions.

The journey is nearing its finishing line,
Now it is my turn to fully shine.
God has carried me on his shoulders all the time,
Now the future depends on decisions of mine.

- Sheryl Singhai (8E)

An Incomplete Dream

Waking up in the middle of a dream,
Thinking what it really meant.
Was it an achievement I have wanted all my life?
Or just part of an imaginary non-life?

"Why did it end so abruptly?", I thought,
Was it fiction or the mission I sought?
There were no monsters, no ghosts, no spirits,
But there was a young lady trying to reach new limits.

It all ended when she was operating a patient,
Giving her best, her heart was racing.
Sensing it would have been of the weird kinds,
I asked myself, "Could it be a sign?"



Image credit: psychnewsdaily.com

Could it be my service to mankind?
Could my dream and life be intertwined?
The answer to these questions was 'Yes',
And my heart was bursting with happiness.

A sign is just what one needs,
To know if they have the right way to proceed,
A heart and mind filled with dedication,
Telling me this is the right aspiration.

- Aamya Tuteja (9B)

Road Sign



Roads...aren't they so overstated
Path, lane, by-lane, alleyway, trail
Should it matter what one follows
Where you come or how you go
I know my track more than you
Why I left this footprint or didn't take that route
Pass no judgements for this is my life
I enjoy the best and wither in strife
My journey is for which I am adept
I live it full and cherish my mistakes
Make, unmake, and break the rind
Dreams under construction-that's my road sign.

- Minha Durrani (Teacher)

In A Quandary

To eat candy or go for a cake
These are the decisions that I have to make

To watch the television or play with friends
That's how my day comes to an end

I'm happy there are no big decisions in life
I'm just a kid and there is no strife

I hope that I never come at crossroads and make any choices
But even if I have to, I will raise the voices
We all make mistakes, we all try to learn
We should always face the choices and never try to run.

- Gurbani Bhat (3B)



Image credit: getvegan.com





In the deep wilderness of the north, there was an ancient shrine on the mountainside. The forest covered this shrine like a shroud. Here lived Jack with his little brother & father, who was the priest of this shrine.

Jack and his brother Mack used to live all alone at the shrine with no other kids to play with them. Every day they used to do mundane tasks which were quite boring. So, to break the monotony, they decided to take a detour to the beautiful waterfall at the far end of those dense and mystic woods.

One hot and sultry afternoon, Jack and his little brother Mack planned a trip to this waterfall. Since Jack wasn't confident about the exact whereabouts of this waterfall, they both started their journey by following the trail made by the footsteps of the travellers passing through those woods.

In the excitement of the trip, Jack forgot to carry a water bottle with him and felt very thirsty while walking in the endless woods. After a few minutes of walking through this dense and maze-like forest, they both were sweating like a porous pitcher. They started looking for a water source nearby. While searching, they stumbled upon a ramshackle hut. As per the native folklore, once upon a time, this hut used to be the secret lab of a witch, where she used to make many magical potions.

The Frozen Touch



Image credit: Julien Jaroso

Without caring much about this legend, both of them entered this dark and spooky hut. Jack started to search for water and found a jug filled with transparent liquid which looked like water. It had the words 'Frozen Touch' engraved on it. They were at the crossroads.

Mack warned Jack against drinking this transparent liquid but since Jack was very thirsty, he gulped down the entire liquid in one go. Since Mack wasn't too sure about the liquid, he didn't drink anything, and they continued the journey.

After walking for a while, Jack could hear a large sum of water gushing down from a height, which indicated that the waterfall was somewhere nearby.

At that very moment, Mack fell to the ground because he was completely

drained out of all his energy while walking in the woods. He was so tired that he couldn't move even an inch. Looking at Mack's condition, Jack decided to carry him on his shoulder, but as soon as Jack touched him, Mack started to freeze and turned into a block of hard, white ice. Jack was startled and stunned to see this. At first, he couldn't understand the reason for that happening to his brother, but soon, he realized that it could be because of the liquid substance he drank at the mysterious hut in the woods. Jack quickly ran towards the waterfall for help, freezing everything, he touched on his way. He found a dwarf at the waterfall and when he narrated the entire incident to him, the dwarf decided to help him and his brother from the anomalous sorcery.

Jack took the dwarf to that

mysterious hut from where he had found the potion. The moment they entered the hut, they found that the witch was standing right in front of them.

The witch became at least 20 feet tall; she had a long nose, longer nails and a face filled with many blisters. She wore a black and blue cloak. They got scared for their lives and thought that she would eat all of them.

The dwarf mustered some courage and asked the witch in his trembling voice, "This kid drank your 'Frozen Touch' potion in the afternoon and converted his brother to an ice slab by mistake. Can you help them by making an antidote of this potion?"

To their surprise, she was a good witch and readily agreed to help them. She closed her eyes, recited some gibberish and produced a magical heater from thin air. Without wasting any further time, Jack turned on the heater and kept it near the ice block. The ice block started melting and soon Mack recovered from the 'Frozen Touch'. Both the brothers thanked the dwarf and the good witch for their help and vowed not to meddle with anything which doesn't belong to them in future.

That's how their astonishing and eventful voyage came to an end!

- Suryansh Shukla (7B)



Ramiz had been an extraordinary child all his life - from learning to speak English fluently at the mere age of four to graduating high school at the age of fifteen. However, his family was not financially stable, so he couldn't go to college. His father had a crippling gambling addiction, and he would go in the evening and come back drunk at night. This addiction was aggravating the family's already weak financial situation.

One morning, Ramiz found a letter thrown in his small garden. It was addressed to him. He opened it in a hurry and as he opened the pink envelope stained with mud, he was in a state of shock. The words 'College Scholarship' was written at the top in bold letters. He was elated to see this letter but confused at the same time, because of his family's financial state. He had reached a

crossroads in his life. He loved his family than anything, but also felt that such an opportunity might not present itself, in his life again. He mulled over it and decided to support his family during the tough times. He then started working for a meagre wage to sustain his family.

They all went through tough times together. Ramiz helped his father leave his addictions. He was happy with his family, but still regretted not going to college. He was extremely passionate about archaeology and wanted to pursue it. He visited some colleges and looking at his talents and achievements, got scholarships from every college he applied to. His dedication and commitment towards his family was truly rewarded as he finally pursued higher studies.

- Maan Rajani (6D)

Mrs. Sally

Mr. Billings was a great fan of travelling and loved visiting the hill stations for a well-deserved break. He stayed at his friend John's mansion which was located at the outskirts, surrounded with pine trees. Upon entering the mansion, Mr. Billings' eyes fell upon the old rusty name plate saying, 'J. Richard'. The servants at the gate informed him that John was away and only visited during the winter months.

Mr. Billings was taken to his room. The room was quite spacious, and it seemed like it hadn't been unlocked in a long time until recently. The furniture over there was quite antique. As he turned to his left, he saw a faint figure of a middle-aged woman pass by the door. Mr. Billings walked to her and questioned her. She was surprised to see that someone had noticed her. She told him that she was Mrs. Sally, one of John's aunts.



Image credit: susanavery.com.au

Something about the lady bothered Mr. Billings, as she seemed very anxious. He didn't see her face for the rest of the day. It was late, so he went back to his room. As he lay on the bed, he was startled by a sound from the corner of the room. He saw a casket lying there with a broken lock.

Mr. Billings opened the casket. Like the room, it was also very rusty and untouched. Inside it, he saw a photograph. The figures standing were quite clear. A middle-aged man was wearing rich clothes with a white beard. Along with him stood his wife and children. Just below the photograph, in bold letters, it was written - '1822, Jack Richardson and Sally Richardson.'

Mr. Billings' heart froze. He dropped the photo and rushed out to ask the servants about Mrs. Sally. They informed him that she was John's great grandmother. He ran back to get another look at the photo, but it was gone and behind him stood Mrs. Sally!

- Teerth Sacklecha (12A)



Image credit: imdb.com

Before I continue saying anything about this film, I would like to take some time to explain what all has happened before, if you are not aware of the Marvel Universe. In Phase 3 of the Marvel Universe, the saga of 22 films had been built up for one movie - Avengers: Endgame. The main conflict around which the story revolves is that our Marvel superheroes must overcome Thanos, the big bad purple guy. The MCU directors are heading into the beginning of Phase 4 with this movie 'Eternals' as a crucial point.

The film starts by explaining the beginning of the Marvel Universe where the race of God-like beings- the Celestials caused the Big Bang and created the Six Infinity Stones. They also populated the various planets resulting in the formation of three species: Deviants, Eternals and Humans. The Deviants were created to fight the apex predators of the planets like Dinosaurs, but they went out of control and started killing the other life forms like Human Beings. This leads to the creation of Eternals who are then sent to planet Earth to kill the Deviants and protect Humans from eradication. You may be wondering if Eternals were there all along why they didn't help the rest of the superheroes in the battle

against Thanos. Well, it turns out the leader of the celestials- 'Arishem, The Judge' had instructed them not to interfere with human conflicts as the different planets served as a cocoon for new celestials to rise. The problem with the emergence of Celestials is that it destroys the planet, killing its native beings collaterally. The Eternals realize this and want to stop Tiamut from rising from the Earth.

The movie by any means is great with the action scenes but I feel due to the limited time of the movie, a lot of scenes had to be edited out which were important for the story. The movie would have been better off as a web series, like how Marvel is doing with the other shows like Loki, Wanda Vision and Hawkeye. But then again, in that case, we would have not had a chance to witness Tiamut's colossal fingertips rising from the surface of the Pacific Ocean on a giant screen.

This movie serves as a pivotal point for the entire universe and its contribution will affect many Marvel movies in the coming years, so it's a must watch.

- Srivardhan Shukla (9B)



Image credit: rottentomatoes.com

Dirk Gently (Samuel Barnett) claims to be a "holistic detective", and instead of getting assigned cases like a real detective, he follows and makes up cases in the direction the universe points him, based on the inter-connectivity of all things, or so he claims.

Todd Brotzman (Elijah Wood) is a bellhop drowning in debt, as he struggles to pay his rent and take care of his sister Amanda (Hannah Marks) who suffers from an unusual disease. When an abnormal murder takes place at the works, he meets Dirk, who unsolicitedly adopts him as his assistant. Dirk drags him along on the case where they meet Farah Black (Jade Eshete).

The entire series is an amalgamation of different stories.

One story features Bart Curlish (Fiona Dourif) as a "holistic" assassin and Ken (Mpho Koaho), her

kidnappee. Yet another story has a pair of military men hunting for Dirk. As the show progresses stories keep piling up.

Each season of the show has multiple seemingly unconnected storylines running parallel, creating a bell curve of confusion that heightens until the very climax of the show. Whimsical characters coupled with sharp dialogues placed in increasingly odd scenarios provide a strong basis for this method of storytelling to function. The classic Douglas Adam's writing is paired with American absurdism, and it makes for a gripping watch.

The show is undeniably goofy and playful, with tones that keep shifting per storyline (the second season features a Romeo and Juliet-esque queer romance... set in an alternate fantasy dimension). The pacing of the show is urgent, almost breathless, but the excitement works for people. This science-fiction comedy is certainly a hit or miss and the first five minutes are a reliable litmus test.

To make things easier, if you are interested in any or all the following, Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency is a must-watch for you: Science Fiction, absurdist humour, indoor shark murders, assassins, colourful jackets, time travel, dungeons and dragons, an entire race of pink-haired people, a misnomed band of psychic vampires. Don't worry, it's all connected.

- Hia Sadho (12B)



Image credit: brewedhoney.wordpress.com

Written by Dan Brown in 2003, The Da Vinci Code is the second book of the Robert Langdon series, the first being "Angels and demons".

The story is set in the present times with two main characters- the first being Robert Langdon, a professor of symbology in Harvard, who comes to Paris for an interview and Then, there is Sophie Neveu, a cryptologist in the French Police who herself has a hidden identity.

The magnificent City of Lights' and Robert Langdon's peaceful slumber is interrupted when the famous curator of The Louvre, Jacques Sauniere, is found brutally murdered in the museum alongside a trail of clues only a symbologist could decipher. The problem arises when the Harvard Professor is called by the Police and meets Sophie Neveu, a French Cryptologist. As they try to decipher the baffling codes, they are stunned to find a plethora of intertwined riddles that hint towards the works of Leonardo da Vinci. They unravel mysteries of some of the world's most renowned quests that could never be successful and were so confidential for the authorities to gauge.

Thus, Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu must unravel the puzzles as fast as they can, before anyone else reaches them including the police. The Da Vinci Code is an intriguing book that keeps the reader hooked from the very first page. This helps one finish the seemingly huge number of 583 pages in no time. Dan Brown's easy, fast - paced style of writing further makes it a fabulous read. Reading a historical novel, one doubts the order of the events, but reading this masterpiece is an absolute joy. I would most definitely recommend this book to teenagers and adults alike.

- Ridhima Dwivedi (11A)

Bulbbul is a revolutionary tale of how women are treated and viewed in society. Taking place in the nineteenth century in Bengal, this movie documents a little girl's journey to womanhood, after being married as a child. She is wed into a family of royal blood and is dearly loved by her husband, who is much older than her. Bulbbul befriends her brother-in-law Satya, who is the same age as her and falls for him.

As soon as her husband becomes aware of her feelings, he sends Satya away to law school and he, too, moves away. Bulbbul is heartbroken. When Satya finally returns, mysterious killings take place in the village. Mahendra, her second brother-in-law has been killed as well. The night of every murder, a blood red moon emerges. Fog coats the thick forest. Murderous shrieks are heard from



Image credit: netflix.com

afar. Bulbbul is the 'thakurain' (mistress) of the house. There is not a trace of innocence, only slyness and self-assurance. So much has changed, but Satya can't point out why.

This is a tale of how women are viewed in the typical patriarchal society. We can see Bulbbul's innocence transform into vengeance. This movie portrays how women were and still are belittled and overlooked. Everybody knows what's taking place, but no one dares to utter a single syllable about it. On the other hand, the women are silenced. This movie left me speechless and exposed me to a different aspect of society that still exists in the illiterate, rural part of our nation where the rights of a woman are still a fairytale.

- Aparajita Singh (9B)





WINTER SURVIVAL KIT

Self-care Checklist

Self-care inspires you to maintain a wholesome connection with yourself so that you can radiate good vibes to others. The raw essence of self-care is all about cherishing and nourishing all aspects of your personality including your intellectual, physical, emotional, and social self. Following is a checklist for you to nurture the well-being of your mind, body, and soul, especially as the new year begins:

| PHYSICAL | EMOTIONAL | INTELLECTUAL | SOCIAL |
|--|---|---|---|
| Physical self-care is not only limited to fitness. It includes taking care of the whole body, from head to toe. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dance or engage in yoga Develop a skin care routine Eat healthy food Get adequate sleep Exercise | Emotional self-care includes catering to emotional needs and thoughts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal or write down feelings Paint, draw, colour or doodle Cook or bake Set healthy boundaries Practice mindfulness and meditation | Intellectual self-care involves focusing on your personal growth, and expanding your horizons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solve crosswords or sudoku Listen to an interesting podcast Watch a documentary Read a book Take a workshop or online course | Social self-care involves nurturing our relationships with others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuddle and play with your pet Regularly meet up with friends Spend time with family, and make it more fun by having game nights! |

- Editorial Board

Lemongrass Tea



Image credit: femina.in

During the Covid era, herbal plants have come to our rescue. Loaded with many health benefits, these herbal plants are a must-have in every household. One such herbal plant is Cymbopogon, also called lemongrass. It has a distinct refreshing flavor. You can easily grow it in your backyard as all it requires is a little bit of sunshine. It has many health benefits such as, it helps in curing respiratory diseases, boosts immunity, detoxifies the body, cleanses oily and acne prone skin, and helps reduce obesity.

Lemongrass tea is a hug to the soul with its delightful citrusy taste and innumerable health benefits especially during winters.

Recipe (two servings)

Ingredients:

- Four to five leaves of lemongrass
- 2 cups of water
- Honey or Jaggery (as per taste)

Optional additions:

- Few drops of lemon juice
- Ginger
- Mint Leaves

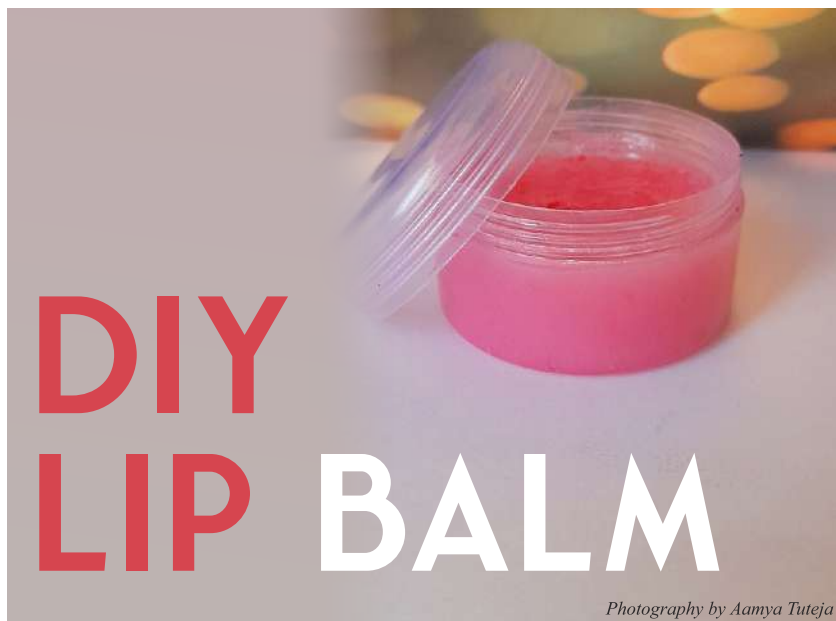
Procedure for brewing:

- Take fresh clippings of lemongrass leaves and cut them into small pieces.

- Add water and leaf clippings in a saucepan and boil for a few minutes. You may also add a few mint leaves or ginger at this point.
- Sieve it into a glass or cup and add honey or jaggery as per your taste. You may also add a few drops of lemon juice during this step.
- Stir & your lemongrass tea is ready to enjoy!

- Arsh Gupta (6B)

DIY LIP BALM



Photography by Aamya Tuteja

With the ongoing chilly and dry winters, it's essential to keep your lips hydrated so that they don't get chapped. Well, fear not, fellow Billabongers, because we have the ultimate DIY lip balm recipe to get you through this chilly weather.

Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoons petroleum jelly
- 3 tsp coconut oil
- 2 tsp rosewater
- 1 tsp beetroot juice

Instructions:

- Take petroleum jelly in a bowl and add coconut oil to it. Mix until combined.

- Add rose water to the mixture and stir vigorously.
- Now, add the beetroot juice and mix.
- Transfer your prepared lip balm to a small container.
- Refrigerate overnight and your nourishing lip balm is ready to use.

- Aamya Tuteja (9B)

Spiced Tea Cake



Photography by Aamya Tuteja

There is something about winters that makes us want to bake. Teacakes are a perfect way to satisfy that sweet tooth and a great complement with tea. This winter, I bring to you my secret spiced tea cake recipe that is easy and quick to make.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon powder

- 1/8 tsp cloves
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 tsp vinegar/lemon juice
- Few drops of vanilla essence
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped almonds

Instructions:

- Mix room temperature milk with vinegar. This is buttermilk.
- Sieve flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and cloves in a bowl. This is our dry mix.
- Whisk together brown sugar, white

sugar and oil in a separate bowl.

- Now add vanilla essence to the sugar and oil and whisk till combined. This is our wet mix.
- Now add the buttermilk and dry mix to the wet mix. Mix with the help of a spatula only until no large flour pockets are visible.
- Fold in the almonds to the batter.
- Pour the batter into a greased microwave-safe container.
- Microwave for 5 minutes and your tea cake is ready.
- Let the cake cool completely before you serve.

- Aamya Tuteja (9B)



Tête-à-Tête with Nishtha Satyem

Head of Office for UN Women Office for Timor-Leste, Dili

This time, the Editorial Board had the opportunity to interact with Ms. Nishtha Satyem, former Deputy Country Representative at UN Women in India. A futurist and a feminist, Ms. Nishtha was the youngest at her post across 193 nations. Currently, she is the Head of Office at the UN Women office for Timor Leste, Dilli. Her enthusiasm and passion towards gender equality reflected from her conversation with the members of the EB, and through her interesting anecdotes and opinions on the major issues facing women today, it was not only an engaging but also an extremely thought - provoking interview.

Excerpts from the Interview

Q1 Ms Nishtha, you started young and then became the youngest Indian woman ever to represent the United Nations. How did the journey begin? Did you face any stumbling blocks since it is majorly a big boys' club?

My journey began with a dream when I was six, when my father took me around New York in a rented car. During our ride, what intrigued me the most was a huge building with lots of colorful flags. It was the United Nations building. However, it didn't appeal to me at that time.

Inspired by Barkha Dutt, I told my father that I wanted to become a journalist after completing 12th. However, that week, after a journalist was shot in Delhi, my parents concluded that I would take up Economics like my father. With a heavy heart, I took up Economic Honors at Delhi University. When I finished, I gave my Civil Services exam, and despite my lack of interest, I cleared it. However, I turned down the opportunity and told my parents that I wanted to study abroad.

Soon, I started working for American Express, a job that started at 5:00 a.m. Being a late riser, my parents didn't expect me to get up early. But, I was ready at 4:00 a.m. from day one. Since then, my journey of discipline started. Afterwards, I got a loan from SBI, went to London, picked up a cafe job where I worked in the mornings and studied in the evenings.

I became the chief economist at KPMG when I returned to India, at the age of 29. One day, after a conversation with my former boss, I realised that I wanted to become a career seeker, and not just a job seeker. So, that day, the scene of the UN building flashed across my mind and I realised that, that is my calling. I searched for a job in the UN, chose the first thing that came up, quickly applied and was called for an interview, during which one of the panelists asked me why I wanted to work there. (I didn't clear that interview) I gave a generic answer to please them without really realizing what that meant, but soon enough, I started believing in what I had said.

Once, our executive director came for a visit. I mustered up some courage and told her that I, being only 31, had applied for the position of Deputy Country Representative for India. She said, "I don't understand this about women. If the President of France can be 39, why can't you represent your country at 31?" That brought out a sudden confidence in me, and with tears in my eyes, I realised that she was the first person who had made me think that way.

When you call out your dreams and make them known, everybody else around will know that you're a woman with a mission. You need to treat life as a project, which you have to work upon every day. So, my advice for younger girls is to say anything and set any goal you want to because if you say it enough, you will start believing in it. If you start believing in it, I think the job is half done.

Q2 In your career, you have led a lot of projects like the implementation of the Government co-financed program on decentralized renewable energy and women's entrepreneurship, and women's participation in Governance in Bhutan. Prejudice lurks in the shadows of these achievements. Was there any particular project where you overcame such obstacles and established yourself?

Yes, I think in everything that you do, the world always reminds you that you're fighting prejudice. We have been taught that women are not only different, but also inferior in many ways. Women have been taught to not ask, and the world has been taught to not give unless asked. Society feels so entitled to give its opinion that it designs the empowerment of women by creating this propaganda that restrains women rather than freeing them.

Once you start working from the ground up, you realize that the world works in very different ways than what most books tell you.

When I was stationed in Rajasthan to train women in Panchayats, we

used to ask the women to take off the ghoonghat, but the women who refused to part with the tradition were still capable of handling their finances and taking calls at home. So, from this, I learnt my first lesson - Never judge a book by its cover.

At the time, we were working with a woman named Seema. When she was first selected through reservation, she used to ask us to talk to her husband, son or son-in-law while she cooked food. When we tried explaining to her the importance of her position, she started taking on her role as a representative in the panchayat more seriously.

Soon, the UNDP's highest administrator visited India to have a look at women in governance. As the event started, Seema was nowhere to be seen. We walked on to the stage where three main chairs were kept, the centre one being the biggest and the grandest.

The administrator arrived and greeted everyone present there and occupied the grand chair in the centre. Seema who was approaching the stage wearing a brightly coloured sari, called me and said that the administrator was sitting on the chair meant for her, as she was the pradhan there. After hearing that, I realised that that was the best outcome we could ever hope for. So, I nervously told the administrator that she was sitting in the chair meant for Seema. After that, she excitedly got up and welcomed Seema herself.

In my opinion, this is a story of prejudice and one of valour and courage. We always readjust to inequality because we have been taught to do so. Prejudice can be present in multiple forms, but the most basic way to resolve it is to give women platforms, to let them have a voice, have agency, have a seat at the table and have choices, regardless of the outcome.

Q3 India does not criminalize marital rape. In recent weeks, courts have given conflicting rulings on marital rape, resulting in renewed calls for the criminalization of rape within marriage. What are your views regarding this?

I think there can't be two views on rape, irrespective of where it happens.

Yes, marital rape is a crime. Any form of rape is a crime. 93% of the crimes against women and girls are by those who are in the circle of trust. Just because we know someone doesn't make it fine. Just because it is a marital relationship does not make it fine. This entire conversation about the sacrosanctity of marriage and that there are certain institutions where women can be treated however one wishes is not right. There have been conflicting judgements given by certain high courts and I think it is time that India picks this up as a conversation. At UN Women India, we were working very closely with the government to bring this issue to attention and

hopefully, we will see the light of it very soon, as there cannot be a negotiation on women and their bodies. Women deserve better.

Q4 The women's reservation bill for representation in the Lok Sabha has long been contested. To increase women's representation in politics, what is your view on reservations for them? Will this decrease their perceived competency?

It is because of our tutoring and upbringing that before we give out something to women, we have to ask a thousand questions to be sure. The lack of competency is the bogus argument that is given by the patriarchal world to conveniently leave women aside. Women are absent from leadership because they are not enabled to be there and there is a whole patriarchal system that is working to keep them away from the Parliament. The lack of women in leadership is because of the lack of women in the pipeline. Very conveniently, we have built the profile of "good" politicians, bosses and leaders which are in direct contrast to the stereotypical definitions we have built around 'good' women. I am very glad that today we have one of the most gender-balanced cabinets in the history of India. The reservation bill is an important tool as it is time for us to bring more women in. Reservation is not about giving merit to those who do not have it, but to those who deserve it.

Q5 Women are now becoming more aware and are excelling in whichever field they pursue. Despite this, women are often doubted for their capabilities and sometimes not fully accepted as equal workers or employees. How can these stereotypes be demolished to pave way for a more gender-equal world?

There is no silver bullet for deconstructing stereotypes because we're not talking about one night or a couple of years. We are talking about centuries. We are talking about the oldest living institution of the world, patriarchy.

There are certain things that I think are going to be important for this conversation. Firstly, it needs to be a collective effort, and secondly, we need to actively call out stereotypes whenever and wherever we encounter them.

What girls and boys can do is, challenge gender stereotypes in their households. It is not that a man does not face stereotypes. So, we have to oppose stereotypes for the entire spectrum of people that identify themselves within different sexualities and let them out of the cage.



“When the world asks, “what was it like?” Only the photographers can say, “See!”

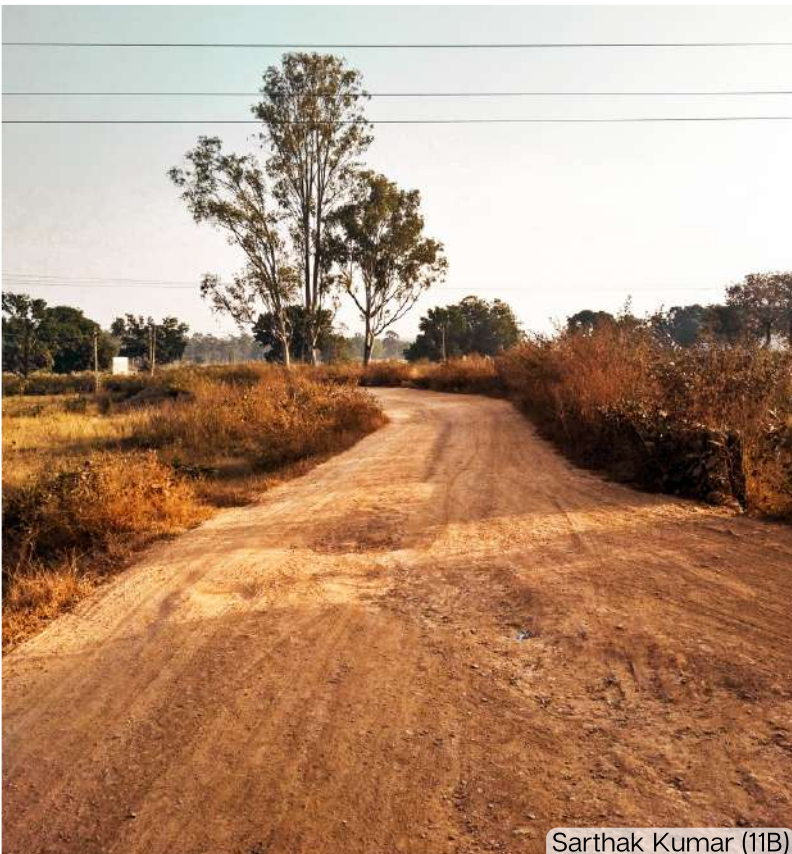
- Mark Denman



Aashi Jain (11C)



Ridhima Dwivedi (11A)



Sarthak Kumar (11B)



Tia Rege (4F)



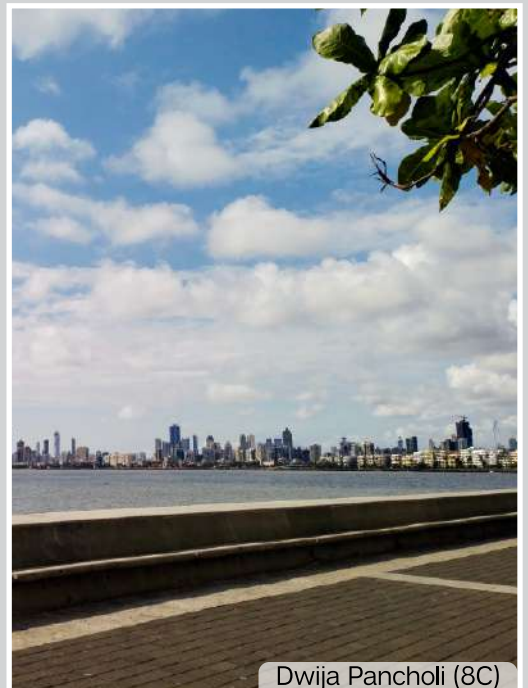
Nilotama Singh (9B)



Batul Saify (11C)



Sarthak Kumar (11B)



Dwija Pancholi (8C)





Devyani Sadho (9B)



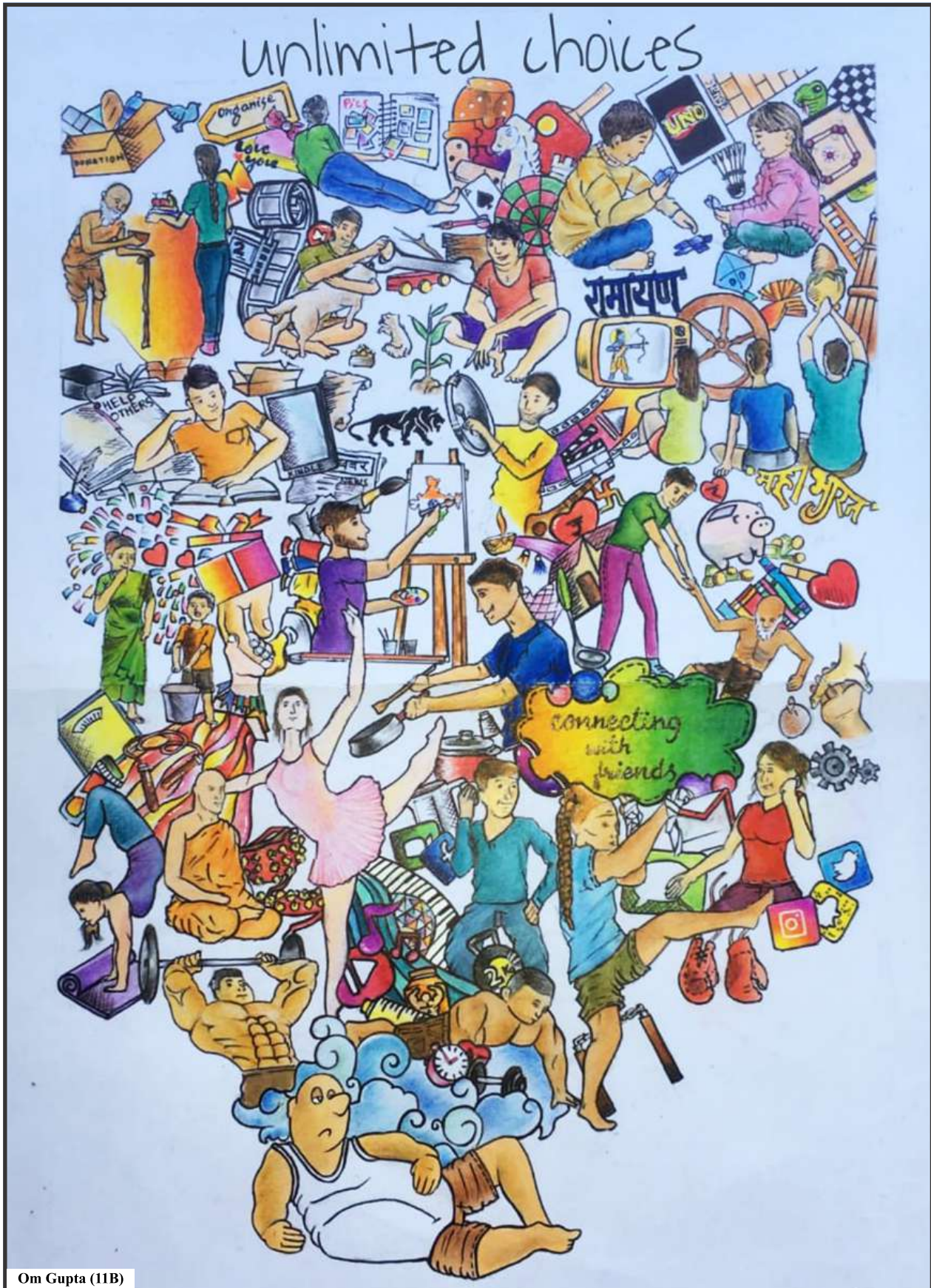
Nilotama Singh (9B)



Shreen Goyal (7A)



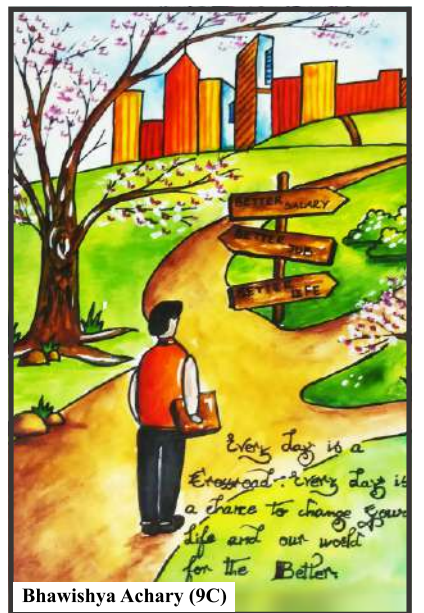
Aamy Tuteja (9B)



Om Gupta (11B)



Amayera Mishra (3B)



Bhawishya Achary (9C)



Palak Lacchwani (7A)