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THE SHISHUKUNJ GAZETTE

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ISSUE #2

EDITORIAL

Greetings!

As the month of August unfolds itself, we find ourselves learning from the mistakes in our examinations and making resolutions to not make them again, which we ultimately end up making. The month of August also brought back Pratibimb, the school exhibition, which saw a record participation of over a thousand students as the school was adorned in showcase activities and projects of different subjects.

The ides of August also bring about the 71st Independence Day, a symbolism of not only of the win of the Indian nationalists over their colonial masters, but also a time when India is undergoing a massive structural change in its society and thinking. It is a time for change in our habits and mannerisms.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who sent in their entries. We have built on your suggestions and tried to make this the endeavour we aspired it to be. But, we do realise that we still have a long way to go and so, we would love your idea on what we should write about next. Make sure to send your ideas by the latest!

Happy Reading!

Garvit Zalani
Editor-in-chief



The school exhibition, Pratibimb, was a grand success. It saw a participation of over a thousand students right from class 6th to class 12th, who put in their heart, mind, and, soul in being creative to the fullest. Across various subjects and various activities, students excelled themselves as the school was adorned with scientific experiments, charts, live models, artwork, and not to mention, full-fledged stock exchange simulation!



Activities like these help break the monotony of regular classwork and allows the students to explore a little more about their field of interest. We learned the practical applications of the theory they study in class. It helps us get a better understanding of the topic at hand and helps build a interest in that field or subject. We learn a lot by a little. Regardless of the capacity in which we took a part, we all took away something, whether it be academic learning or just an experience worth remembering.

Opportunities like the Pratibimb don't come around often and when they do, we must make sure to make use of them to the fullest.



The year 2015 saw the small sparkle of startup turn into a wildfire in India. This 'Golden Year' of startups witnessed every small idea with little potential being funded and backed by investors. Both national and international players like Ratan Tata, Softbank, Kalari, Sequoia, Accel, and, many more through their investments presented confidence in the concept of startups. Their aid is seeding capital directed multiple industries like the Healthcare to bloom. A few businesses which in a very short time became a household name, include Paytm, Ola, Flipkart, Zomato amongst many others. However, there were startups like SnapDeal which did not see as many mornings.

Startups basically aim to come up with a solution to certain problems in our society. Its audience might vary in quantity, age, gender and other categories. Above all, the service and its means of provision play a significant role in claiming and retaining the customers apart from the prime solution that it delivers. The companies like Flipkart, Ola, Paytm, etc. have their own strategies to retain their customers. The strategies include giving offers like cashback, coupons, movie tickets, etc. These strategies have helped them in retaining the customers as well as attracting new customers.

The year witnessed the overall tech start-up base in India cross 4750, having grown at 10-12% YoY. The country has moved up to 2nd position only after the USA and has the fastest growing base of start-up worldwide. IBM Institute for Business Value and Oxford Economics found that 90% of Indian startups fail within the first five years. And the most common reason for failure is lack of innovation. 77% venture capitalists surveyed believe that Indian startups lack new technologies or unique business models. Reasons for this meteoric rise and equally quick fall in the sector could be attributed to a number of reasons such as aggressive use of an aggregator model, the rise in me-too startups with no clear idea, unique product or execution, and difficulty in conducting ease of business across states or even pan India. Startups slowly turned into a fashion or a trend which attracted many to invest without a concrete idea. Further, businesses especially those related to e-commerce, m-commerce, and hyperlocal services focused solely on user acquisition in order to prove the validity of the product in the market, overlooking that the next step, that is, the user retention was equally vital. It is important to note that an exceptional and novel idea with brilliant quality service is the key to customer retention, a key that most these startups lacked.

The issues plaguing the Indian startup ecosystem in general and a few sectors, in particular, have created an unrest among the investors who are no longer loosening their purse strings for every seed stage, early stage and late stage entrant around. They have become more cautious and are taking heed of shifting market valuations, user retention, unviable business models, and more before pouring in any money. The investors have become more sceptical and selective in making decisions about the investment in startups.

New businesses in the startup economy were supposed to fill the blue ocean space and solve real problems faced by real consumers. However, the basic premise of the new economy was built on business on freebies or discounts instead of addressing a real problem or need of the consumer. Businesses invested in addressing real needs are doing well and the remainder are struggling to survive due to a dearth of money for further growth of business built on discounts. Today, before launching any product or service, the owner focuses on a launch offer leading to diversion of the emphasis from chief business to deals. The failure to comprehend that a startup cannot exist for a longer duration if its business depends on offers and discounts has proved to be a huge reason for the downfall.

Investors are waiting to open their purse strings to the Next Big Idea. Even the Government of India has taken a step to encourage entrepreneurs. They have started the Startup India website in order to help young people. The secret sauce needed to make startup a success in the present economic climate is coming up with solutions for your audience, building for PMF (Product/Market fit is the degree to which a product satisfies a strong market demand) attain growth through a sustainable business model instead of one based on wild valuation or unrealistic user growth and show real traction.

THE GREAT START-UP WAVE

TALKING MENTAL HEALTH

If you ever heard someone being called ‘insane’, ‘mental’, ‘crazy’, ‘delusional’, ‘depressed’, ‘schizophrenic’; you would probably shun away from the conversation or subconsciously judge the person who is at the listening end. Mental health as a topic in urban India never makes it to the discussion table and if it needed any mention, it is only spoken rather uncomfortably or kept a hush-hush affair. Even though people know there are some issues that need to be addressed, sweeping it under the rug seems a more feasible option than visiting a psychiatrist or psychologist and earning one of the coveted titles aforementioned. Whereas in rural India, it is not uncommon to see people take their children or family members to temples and god-men rather than doctors and hospitals.

A countrywide National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS) study has revealed a shocking prevalence of mental illness in India. At least 13.7 percent of India’s general population has been projected to be suffering from a variety of mental illnesses, and 10.6 percent of this requires immediate intervention. But before we start self-symptomising ourselves or others, let’s understand what is mental illness. A mental illness is a physical illness of the brain that causes disturbances in thinking, behaviour, energy or emotion that make it difficult to cope with the ordinary demands of life. Research is starting to uncover the complicated causes of these diseases which can include genetics, brain chemistry, brain structure, experiencing trauma or having another medical condition, like heart disease. The two most common mental health conditions are Anxiety Disorders and Mood Disorders.

Good mental health is more than the absence of a mental health problem. Abnormal is the new normal in today’s quid pro quo life. Everyone is trying to be the best and stress persecutes most of us. A child in school is faced with competition and induced to high-level comparison to outperform his or her peers to the limit that there is a significant percentage of teenagers who take their lives by suicide as they think this is the only option rather than facing the world. An intern tries hard to prove her worth. A grown man deals with emotions and feelings of inferiority while struggling to impress his boss at work. A working woman is facing a dilemma to grab the top management level position while dealing with domestic violence. An elderly couple is failing to understand how their habits are child-like when they are growing old and need assistance with their daily chores. All of them are trying to convince themselves that this is all an experience of the game called life and it’s not that big a deal. If anyone of them were having a severe cold, they would visit the doctor, if they had chest pains, they would visit a cardiologist, but they refuse to stand up to the ongoing stigma and visit a mental health practitioner.

In a growing society such as India’s, mental illness is still perceived with a stigmatic tag. As accepting as people may seem superficial, there remains a dab of shame when dealing with mental illness. This is where, as seen in multiple societies, pop culture steps in. In India, particularly, a pop culture entity as big as cinema plays a crucial role in influencing the masses’ mindsets. From disseminating information regarding lesser-known subjects to shining light on issues cornered in societal foundations, cinema is very influential. Some that have helped people understand certain mental health conditions include; *Dear Zindagi* which highlighted the major battles that an adolescent goes through ranging from heartbreak to parental pressure; *Fight Club* which portrayed the fight that is encountered by a person having bipolar tendencies; *Taare Zameen Par* for showcasing dyslexia and *My Name is Khan* to make us aware of Asperger’s Syndrome. Movies have always made people feel less alone in the world. They make them feel like there is always someone out there who understands. Who has gone through the same things as they have? Who fights the same war’s as they do. Who just gets them.

Maybe the people at Walt Disney & Pixar did understand the importance of breaking down the complexity of things people feel and explained it in their movie ‘*Inside Out*’ which showed that the brain has feelings like Joy, Anger, Fear, Disgust, and Sadness. The most important thing the movie taught us is that without sadness, there would be no joy. People need to embrace their sadness and treat them with love and care. Friends and family also play a very important role in recovering from mental illness. Therefore, the next time you feel that someone needs to talk, be there and listen; if someone needs help, take them to the shrink without rebuking them. We can blame Westernisation for the rise of mental health issues or, like Rakhi Sawant, blame the poor ceiling fan for increasing suicide rates, but it does not change the fact that our society is in a state of constant flux. We need to bring about a shift in our attitude and develop a more open mindset on mental health. In the past, many of us lost the battle against mental illness by letting our fears get the better of us. We need to identify our concerns and stop judging the inner voice inside our head that begs us to speak to someone.

Not all wounds are so obvious. Walk gently in the lives of others.

LETTER FROM THE HEAD GIRL

It goes without doubt that Shishukunj has taught me everything that I know today. From learning the right way to study, to social mannerisms. But most importantly, Shishukunj, in all the 13 years that I've been a part of its family, has helped me discover myself and has urged me to go beyond bookish knowledge and look for the why behind things.

I think that's what Shishukunj really is not just a school but a platform for all of us to discover ourselves. Every small or big thing that our educators tell us can create a huge positive impact in our lives if we just keep ourselves open to listen to them and not merely hear them. The reason I say this is because I've experienced it myself. I remember the first time I had participated in an elocution competition, contrary to what you think this story would lead to, I didn't win. That day the teacher who'd accompanied me said, "I think you sway a lot when you speak; maybe if you practice standing still it'll make a better impact." Since that day I decided to work on my posture and I think I can very confidently say that that small piece of advice has helped me win almost all oratory competitions ever since.

Yes, it is true that such stories have become a cliché, but that does not mean that they aren't still true. If all of us Shishyans start attending school with the idea of being more observant and active, we'd realise how amazingly receptive our school is towards our views and ideas. Shishukunj has always treated each and everyone of us as family and I feel it's imperative for us to do the same. In fact, this notion is what is unique to our school, and also our biggest strength as Shishyans.

Involving ourselves in new areas of work while keeping this idea in mind is what I believe will help us in the development of both ourselves and the school. Hoping you all seek to do the same, I look forward to working with all of you this year!

--
Omisha Purohit
Head Girl



MY JOURNEY TO HARVARD

Applying to college is perhaps one of the most difficult processes you'll ever have to go through. Since the previous issue covered about the admission process, I'm going to focus on what I feel is important for other students to understand rather than just stick to what I have done in the past. Since I've been asked by many what my supposed 'secret' to success is, I'd just like to say it was a combination of always doing what I loved, whether it be related to academics or extracurriculars and hobbies, and striving to make a difference to the many different communities I am a part of: my school, my family, my city, my country, and as a global citizen.

Look around you. Identify problems and develop solutions to them. It doesn't matter if you fail 9 out of 10 times you try to solve a social, economic, scientific, environmental, or any other problem. The one that you are able to solve, even if it's a partial solution, has the ability to make a huge difference. The best students and individuals are those who strive to make that difference regardless of the returns they get. If you look at it in the purview of college admissions, colleges love students who have proven that they have tried to or actually made a difference, and these are the students they happily and readily admit. I have said this many times before, but I implore you to take advantage of a unique advantage that being a student at Shishukunj entails. The advantage and privilege of having an entire support system that works to aid you and your peers in the development and implementation of your ideas. Administration that always makes the time to listen to you and give you the tangible and intangible support you need, teachers with their valuable input, and all others who help in their own special ways. No idea is stupid, no idea is too small or insignificant. Each has its own merit. Strive to make a difference, even if you do not get the recognition or credit you feel you deserve. Also, you will always hear of students and other people who have 'achieved' much more than you perceive yourself to have. Do not fall into the trap of thinking your efforts are futile because you may never be able to do what they did. After talking to so many people going to the same college as me, I've realized that everyone is so different, so passionate about the niche they've carved for themselves, and fully dedicated to what they believe in. With every person I have talked to, I have felt the inferior, the least achieving, the 'non-worthy'. It took me a long time to realize (that realization is still sinking in to be honest) that just because I haven't revolutionized cancer research, founded my own billion dollar company (as Pranit mentioned), or painted masterpieces it doesn't mean that I haven't utilized the resources I had at my disposal to the fullest extent possible. I continuously strived and worked hard to be the best version of myself possible and make a difference around me, and that's what mattered in the end.

Straying from the original intent of this writing, one thing I have always wanted to say but have not been able to is, when it comes to your social life, friends, get-togethers, events, etc., it doesn't matter if you do not the most active social life possible. From personal experience, I can say, it's hard to see the fun that others have, depressing to witness the love they get from their friends while you pine for such affection, and heartbreaking at times to be the supposed loner. Though you may feel so, it, by no means, suggests that there is a problem with you or your personality, nor does it mean that you will be in that state permanently. Some of us just take more time to find our 'place in the society' and you must understand, it is perfectly normal and not to be worried about. Talking to someone about how you feel, a friend, a teacher, an elder, anyone, really helps, you just need to have the courage to talk about it.

Everyone of you has the ability to make a difference, carve out your own niche, and to show the world how bright you can shine.

--
Juhee Goyal
AB, Biological Sciences
Harvard University

INDEPENDENCE

Today on the occasion of Independence day, India completes 71 years in existence. Through the years we saw great successes and places where we could be better. Today, I don't want to talk about the glories of history or the future, but talk about a simple phenomenon of which we all are a part. The Great Indian Dream. What is the Great Indian Dream?

The Americans have a conceptuality known as the Great American Dream. It entails that every American should have enough to eat and should live a happy life. For a more accurate description, the American historian James Adams puts it as "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability and achievement."

In a nutshell, the American dream provisions that every individual should have a right to prosper and succeed through hard work, innovation and excellence.

We, the Indians do not have such a dream and simply copy-pasting the American Dream wouldn't be enough, as we have doing with every American substance. We need to actually define that what would the doctrine for the Great Indian Dream entail.

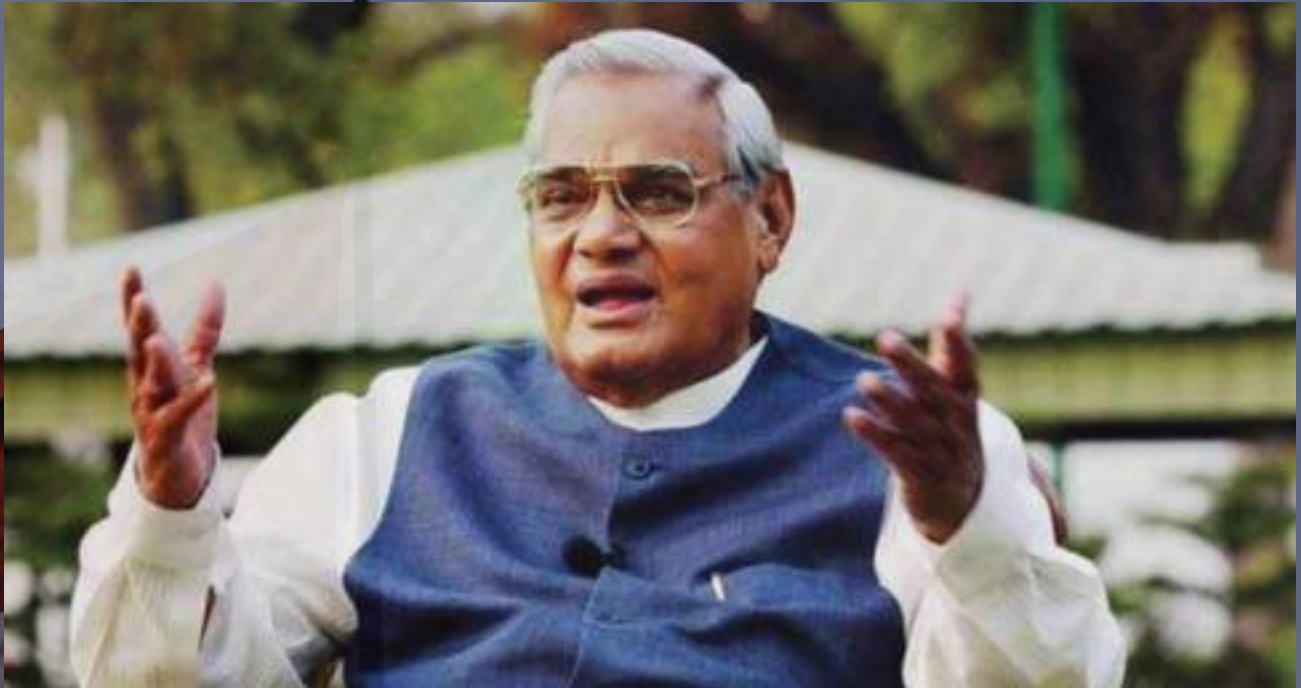
What I believe the Great Indian Dream should be is that every citizen's success should be valued, not upon by a sect they belong to or the money of their endeavours, but should be valued on the basis of their integrity, dedication, hard work, innovation, excellence and most importantly, their humanity. They should radiate an aura of general prosperity that inspires the countrymen to do the same. They should be the India that will shoulder the responsibility to make India a different nation, a better nation.

The harsh reality about this far-fetched idea is that these things are as hard to find in India as an honest politician. Realistically speaking, any angle of practicality would point towards the non-existence of any such idealistic hope. People call me mad for believing in this idea, but without a streak of madness, this isn't possible. Let's try to create a different India by playing our role as the future builders of this nation, let's strive to create a better India.

To conclude I leave you with the words of John Lennon. "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will live as one."

The Shishukunj Gazette Team Wishes You a Very Happy Independence Day!

Jai Hind.



THE END OF AN ERA

In the year 1957, in the Indian Parliament, a first-time MP gave such a rousing speech that when the erstwhile Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru introduced him to a foreign dignitary, he touted, "This young man will one day become Prime Minister." That young man was no other than one of the finest politicians to ever walk the floors of Parliament, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Known for his top notch parliamentary debate which he shrouded in mystic lines of poetry, he managed to floor every opponent he came across. His government lasted different phases; for 13 days, 13 months and a full-term. He was the first non-Congress leader to last a full term in office. His initiatives set India for the turn of the millennium. He was the voice of reason and logic in the strong saffron wave of the 90s. His tenure as the leader of this democracy saw its fair share of troubles, whether it be the nuclear tests or the Kargil War or stitching together a 23-party coalition to run a government; he managed to wade India through these troubled times. He was among a fine, limited generation of leaders who deserve to be enshrined a place in India's history.

We usually associate politicians with all sorts of misdeeds, but when the talk of Atal Bihari Vajpayee came, there were only praises throughout the political spectrum, regardless of the political affiliation. He rose above the party lines and worked for the national interest. Today as he is laid to rest after a monumental 93-years, I would like it to be said, "Here lies a man, who has done his duty on Earth. Here lies a man."



- Manvay Rawat, VIII



- Aryan Gupta, VII

In search of water and food,
Long there a traveller stood,
On a path, long and crooked,
Wondering if he should give up.

Taken this journey through mountains and seas,
His aim was only to flee,
The dark asylum he used to call home,
Where, never did the sun shone.

A madman is what they call him,
They punish him for committing an unknown sin,
For what reason do they chastise?
For what reason do they despise?

This innocent man whose heart has turned to stone
Now he is just a traveller in search of a real home.

- Lakshya Somani, X

STUDENT CORNER

Certainly we all consider education to be the foot stone to a healthy and wealthy life. We all have blamed this system at some point of time but have also bragged about our grades at the other. But this system in which the youth of India has indulged viciously needs to be understood and questioned on a very serious note.

The present education system can be understood only by citing the history of it which was introduced by India's very own well wishers; The British. Around 200 years ago, when the Industrial Revolution was in full swing in Britain and subsequently in India, the British faced a problem of all problems; Miscommunication. This compelled them to assert the importance of English on our Indian minds which could supplement their 'skilled' labour force as well. They wanted people who do not possess any creativity rather, do as they're told to. So the format of education was a theory-inclined approach then and proves to be the foundation of the current system as well.

Influenced by the polished virtues of English language, the Indians turned to The United States for a better future, thereby letting down the demand of the USSR (presently the Russia Federation) which happened to be India's support system for recruitment of our very skilled human resources. In the early 20's, the number of Indian engineers who migrated to The United States reached a four digit figure. Nothing much has changed since then. The present system has gained the audacity to alter people's mindset. We have allowed it to do so. Creativity and the confidence to make mistakes at a bearable cost has faded, the minds which can contain the birthdates of Mughal Emperors abstain to debate upon our ongoing national issues, and the minds who belong to an extremely diverse country like India are carried away with a limited part of what is known to them and settle for a much lower outcome than they deserve.

We must question, why are the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) given an edge above other subjects like Humanities and Arts in our country? We must question, why is the IIT the only abbreviation which parents know? We must question, why are we still letting this system compromise the potential of our youth?

We must question everything which is standing as a building stone to our very own future.

- Sanika Ghodke, X

Jama masjid is a beautiful testament to the Islamic architecture. Built between 1644 and 1656 by the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan at an estimated cost of 1 million rupees, the Jama Masjid has stood tests of time and weathered everything, to the extent of terrorism. It stands as a resilient structure in the midst of Delhi, providing shelter and help to all those who flock towards it. It is an embodiment of what modern India needs to be. Resilient, helpful and tolerant. Due to its footing in India's history, it has been chosen as the cover picture for the August edition of The Shishukunj Gazette.

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