

VASANT VALLEY TODAY

OUR JOURNEY OF RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Sometimes, we only wish for things, never expecting them to come true. But when they do materialise, we regret having desired for them in the first place.

A year ago, we yearned for freedom from rigour, that is, more time to escape into our own little enchanted worlds. But now we mourn as our parents' saying, "Too much of anything isn't good for you", is proved right.

At first, the thought of staying at home was similar to entering an almost-paradise. However, no one warned us that the pinnacle of paradise would be the depths of monotony. Our eight-hour school days were tiring, but there was always *something* that could happen, for better or for worse. The uncertainty enlivened what could have been a repetitive and bland routine. Online school has its own fair share of memorable moments, but those are surpassed by the experiences we have had in the presence of one another. Sit-



ting behind our laptop screens and chuckling at a passing joke, the ringing of our own laughter reminds us that we are alone. The spirit of the classroom kept us attentive. Even if we did rest our heads on the desk to find a few silent moments to breathe, the vibrations of people playing *tabla* on the table and the coalescence of voices jolted us awake. At the time it was annoying—yet now, the mere thought of it is comforting.

Online school gave us a novel way of life. But in full candor, I am sure that the vast majority of us could not "find ourselves" during the lockdown as we had initially been optimistic about. Even as we developed hobbies, attended seminars, and let the technicalities of the Zoom application intertwine with every little thing we did every day, all of us missed what once used to be our daily schedule. Those who dreaded school or weren't too fond of socialisation in general remembered their favourite getaways in it when the bounds of their houses became a nuisance. What we missed was a part of our heart, the piece that we had left behind those coffee brown and maroon walls, tucked into the nooks and corners of classrooms, alcoves and hallways.

When the news first spread that schools would reopen, there was a wave of mixed emotions. Some were effervescent with excitement. Others were not too glad, engulfed in the nervousness that marked their second 'first' day of school. As cars drove up to the sign which proudly and boldly said 'VASANT VALLEY SCHOOL', it felt as if we were just returning to a place that felt like our true calling. Things were starkly different from the way they were eleven months ago, when we last came to school—we were now greeted with a procession of school staff who gifted us with temperature checks. We had to maintain a distance between us and our friends, those who we wished to hug the life out of after not being able to meet for so, so long. Half of our faces were hidden well behind masks.

But the energy of the school that kept it alive and well could not be hidden or masked, and it gave me hope that its spirit can never change.

-Shyla Upadhyay, 10

SCHOOL WATCH

Social Science Essay writing competition for Class 8

27th January, 2021

1st

Harchet Singh Majithia

2nd

Nikasha Manaktala

3rd

Jai Kalra

Sociology Movie Making Competition

3rd February, 2021

1st

Issue: Nuclear Family versus Joint Family

Vallabhi Dalmia, Sanah Bedi, Ananya Mehra, Devashii Sahu and Khushi Lohia

2nd

Issue: Arranged Marriages versus Love Marriages

Bani Narag, Aiman Ghai, Suhana Gupta, Saiesha Kumar and Harsh Verma

The Truth About Vaccine Nationalism

The term 'vaccine nationalism' is being used in the status quo to describe the tendency of nations to promote vaccine production within their boundaries rather than importing vaccines from other countries.

A few of the wealthier countries, such as Canada and the USA, have stored up to 5-6 times the dosage needed by their population, while the relatively poorer ones have been left scrambling for ways to vaccinate their population. About 60% of the vaccine stock has been hoarded by merely 16 countries—an extremely small proportion of the world—and supply seems to be running out for low-income countries. Not only can this potentially affect our global health recuperation, but it may also slow down the global economic recovery.

We have been patiently waiting for a COVID-19 vaccine for months, and now, even though multiple vaccines have been produced and approved, more issues seem to emerge with their production and distribution. Organizations such as the UN and WHO have already warned the world against vaccine nationalism and stand firm in the belief that vaccines should be shared globally and not treated as private commodities. While safeguarding the lives of our own citizens may seem to be the most appropriate course of action, we must remember that we are fighting this virus together, as global citizens. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to struggle to get vaccines firstly to those who need them most, and then systematically to the rest of the population. Ultimately, until everybody in the world is safe, no one is safe.

-Saanya Anand, 9



UNDER THE COLD GAZE OF THE CAMERA

*You. Yes, you. Get up, go take a shower and brush your teeth, do you wanna smell?
Then proceed to look at yourself in the mirror and say "damn, I look like hell!"*

*Straighten your hair or braid them up or you know the new school gossip,
Is gonna be how your hair are more tangled than the earphones in your pocket.*

*Every time you look in the mirror you feel you aren't good enough, but the makeup is help,
You're so scared they'll hate you so you end up changing yourself.*

*But no matter what, you better push back the tears threatening to leak out of your eyes' base,
Or you will ruin the perfect painting you've painted on your imperfect face.*

*But. No pain, no gain,
Fake it till you make it.*

*Then take a deep breath and look around until you see a familiar face,
Who's smiling and waving at the imposter who somehow took your place.*

*So you wave back and join a group who can walk you to class,
Because God knows you can't walk alone, so you hide in the mass.*

*And you can't stand up for yourself 'cause you're trapped and defenceless,
And the popular kids are the royalty dictating your sentence.*

*But no pain, no gain,
Fake it till you make it.
Right? Right.*

*I'm scared, I'm scared they won't like me, so I'll become another,
I'm scared they will leave me so I won't let them in.*

*I'm scared that will lock me, so I'll keep running away,
I'm scared they'll devour me, so I'll devour myself.*

*I'm sure that every one of us has had at least one of these thoughts or fears,
I know every person here has felt this way at least once, so kindly let me interfere.*

*Under the cold gaze of the camera the world sees through, criticising our every flaw,
Under the cold gaze of the camera the world makes us feel like we aren't good enough and need to keep giving more.*

*Still, you must keep going on, don't let them know you've reached your breaking point, this act you must never drop.
Never let them know that you feel so hopeless, like you fill a bucket right up to the top,
But it's got a hole and is leaking more than you can ever stop.*

*Always remember, fake it till you make it
No pain, no gain
Right? Wrong.*

*Everyone in this generation is corrupted by this infection
Of forgetting they're human, and striving for inhuman perfection*

*Because looking through the camera you'll see a thin waist, blonde hair, white teeth and pretty smile is ideal
But the camera is cracked, society is broken, you're perfect, you deserve respect, not to skip a meal.*

*So no need to "fake it till you make it"
If the camera's gaze makes you feel trapped,
Go ahead and break it.*

-Mannat Kukreja, 8 (This was the entry that won the 1st position in the Slam Poetry Competition, Speakers' Forum 2021.)

Football and I in 2020

The World Cup winners change every four years; the Champions League winners change every year, and so do the Europa League's—but last year, for the first time since November the 6th, 1869, when the game started, it had to press the pause button. The lockdown dashed all our hopes.

My friends and I could not even watch it on TV—we were very let down when 2020's Champions League was called off. Being enthusiastic fans of the sport as a whole (I'm saying that after watching every single match from the Serie A to La Liga, and collecting 38 jerseys and prestigious balls!), we had to look for alternatives.

Even after we practised tricks on our balconies, keenly attended our on-line football classes on Zoom, and played downstairs, we found ourselves yearning for the smooth, grassy football pitches, the sunshine that illuminates them in the morning, the sportsmanship, the medal-kissing, and the banter between the losing and winning sides. Life needed to go back to normal.

On June the 17th, after what seemed to be forever, matches resumed. I am certain that my fellow "football freaks" shouted for joy when everyone was back in action!

-Prasann Batra, 7

कुछ तो बोलो

रेलगाड़ी में बैठकर मैं खिड़की से बाहर देख रहा था और यह चाह रहा था कि मेरा जीवन भी बाहर के क्षितिज की तरह उज्ज्वल होता। मैं हार मान चुका था क्योंकि मैं जानता था कि मेरे आस-पास कोई भी मेरी बात पर विश्वास नहीं करेगा। यह समय कैसे आ गया कि अपने हक के लिए लड़ने के जुर्म में, मुझे देशवासियों का सहयोग करने देने की जगह कारागार ले जाया जा रहा है? हे ईश्वर! मुझे कुछ तो उत्तर दीजिए।

कारागार का जेलर एक भारतीय था जो उन तानाशाही अंग्रेजों के संग मुझ पर और अन्य कैदियों पर हुकम ज़ाहिर करता था। वे हमारे साथ जानवरों जैसा व्यवहार करते थे और हमसे गुलामों की तरह काम करवाते थे। उन देशद्रोहियों के कारण हम बेकसूर लोगों को दंड क्यों भुगतना पड़ता है? मुझे मेरे प्रश्नों का उत्तर कौन दे सकता है?

मैं अपनी कक्षा की ज़मीन पर बैठ दीवार देखते हुए अपने परिवार की सोच में डूबा रहता हूँ—मुझे अभी तक वह दृश्य याद है जब मुझे खींचकर बंदी बना दिया गया था। मेरी माँ की आँखों में आँसू भर आए थे और मेरा चेहरा भी आँसुओं से सना हुआ था। हे ईश्वर! क्या मैं उन्हें एक आखिरी बार अलविदा बोल पाऊँगा?

आज, तीन सालों बाद भी, मैं वहीं बैठकर यही सोचता रहा हूँ—परन्तु मुझे अपने जवाबों के उत्तर नहीं मिले। क्या मैं अपने उत्तर जानने के योग्य नहीं हूँ? क्या आपको नहीं लगता कि मैंने काफी सहन कर लिया है? क्या मेरे प्रश्नों ने आपको अवाक कर दिया? कुछ तो बोलो भगवान, कुछ तो बोलो।

-दिशिता नातू, खुशी जुनेजा, लावन्या अग्रवाल, 9

GAMESTONK!

GameStop is a video games retailer especially hard-hit by the pandemic—it could, however, feature amongst the Fortune 500 in 2021 solely because of an army of amateur investors who also, in turn, caused losses of billions of dollars to multiple hedge funds in the United States.



The hedge funds were 'short-selling' the GameStop stock, which means that they borrowed shares from GameStop and sold them to a third party assuming that the cost of the shares will go down—they would thus have to pay less money to officially buy the shares, and earn a profit on the difference. They were essentially betting on GameStop losing money. A few social media users noticed this and encouraged people to buy GameStop stock to drive up its prices, and hence force the hedge funds into a 'short-squeeze'—a situation where they can either buy more stocks to cover their position, or abandon all their stocks in the company, incurring big losses.

In under 3 weeks, GameStop share prices peaked from \$19.95 to \$347.5, and all the social media attention only helped it rise further. Eventually, the Discord server 'WallStreetBets' was banned, and the 'WallStreetBets' SubReddit was made private. Even Elon Musk tweeted "Gamestonk!!", amazed by this mass movement of social media users.

It is indeed beneficial for the common man to start investing, as it provides another stream of income, leads to financial security, and sometimes unbelievable returns.



-Kaustubh Doval, 10

A Bear Who Got Stuck Up In A Tree



One sunny morning, Bob the bear was watching Leon the leopard climb a tree. Bob wanted to climb a tree too. Bob climbed to the top of the tree and he got stuck there. He called his friend Chimpy the chimpanzee and asked

him to help him down. Chimpy told Bob to jump onto the lower branch. But Bob was scared he would fall. So Chimpy called Mr Zebra. Mr. Zebra said his friend Giraffe will be able to help him down. When they found Giraffe, he was sleeping. Bob said if Giraffe was sleeping, the two baby giraffes can help him down. Both baby giraffes agreed to help.



One baby giraffe climbed on top of another and asked Bob to lower his paw. The baby giraffe took his paw and pulled Bob down. Bob jumped on the baby giraffe's back. He was very happy to be back on the ground again. He

thanked them and ran off to play with his friends.

-Tara Rishi, 2-B



SCIENCE

Oh! Science Oh! Science you are a key to knowledge, People who study you, will always acknowledge.

Boys and girls like to study facts about you,

You give lots of knowledge we all want to seek from you.

From gravity to black holes and vaccines- you help us solve mysteries,

With every new invention you change the world histories.

You are present in everything around us,

Humans, birds, animals and other creatures.

Because you are so realistic,

It makes our homework so fantastic!

I can't wait for to move from Life Science to Biology, Physics and Chemistry,

Science you will always be my favourite subject, much ahead of English, Hindi and History.

-Anvita Bose, 4-A



The students of Class 1 illustrated 'The Baobab Tree' that represents life and positivity.



कुछ मधुर यादें

वह दिन मेरे लिए खास था जब मैं अपने परिवार के साथ मनाली गया था। मेरा एक ही मकसद था स्कीइंग का अनुभव करना। जब हम वहाँ पहुँचे वहाँ बहुत बर्फ पड़ी थी। स्कीइंग के लिए हमें सोलांग वैली जाना था। सोलांग वैली पहुँचने पर मैं बहुत उत्साहित था। वहाँ पहुँचने पर मैंने स्कीइंग के विशेष जूते पहने और दोनों हाथों में सहारे के लिए एक-एक छड़ी पकड़ी थी। प्रशिक्षक ने स्कीइंग के बारे में निर्देश दिए और ढलान की ओर धकेला। पहली बार ढलान से स्कीइंग करने पर मेरे दिल की धड़कने बढ़ गयी, लेकिन इस अनोखे अनुभव को मैं शब्दों में नहीं समझा सकता। मुझे आज भी याद है कि मैंने दो घंटे स्कीइंग की थी। जल्द ही दिन ढल गया था और मेरा स्कीइंग को अलविदा कहने का समय हो गया था। यह पल मुझे हमेशा याद रहेंगे।

-अधिराज जस्वाल, 4-ए



My Dad's Tall Tales

My dad told me some crazy stories about his childhood days. His sense of humour is amazing and I could never tell when fact blended into fiction. And I still don't know which ones to believe. Like the one when he jumped off the first floor window! Surprising, right! You won't believe me when I say he has broken upto 24 bones, even bones that you can't get plastered. If I tell you how many stitches he has got, your eyes will pop right out of your sockets. It was a bright sunny morning and my grand mother had gone to work leaving my dad alone with his 70 year old grandma. My dad was too much for his grandmother to handle. For disobeying his grandmother he got locked up in a store room on the first floor. This was a very special room in the house as instead of locking the door from inside you could lock it only from the outside. My father's eyes fell upon a telephone. On plugging it in and dialling his friend's number he found that it actually worked. He asked his friend to get some couch pillows. Once the pillows were placed in the right place outside the window, my dad made an eight foot jump and walked away happily. The next door neighbour saw this and called his mom. My dad's mom was shocked, and rushed back home. My dad was grounded for a month and this time under parental supervision!! The window still exists in our house and I occasionally peep out trying to figure out how my father made that jump.

-Tarini Dhingra, 5-B

WORLD TODAY

The easiest way to ace a GK quiz!

After a 7.7 magnitude earthquake hit the South Pacific, a tsunami has been generated. This was later confirmed by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology.

'Bittu', a short film directed by Karishma Dev Dube, has made it to the Live Action Short Film shortlist for Best International Feature Film in the Oscars.

Trump's impeachment trial was voted constitutional by the Senate in a 56 to 44 vote allowing impeachment proceedings to begin on grounds of "inciting insurrection." He becomes the only president of the United States to have been impeached twice.

Russia issues an international warrant against Alexey Navalny's ally, Leonid Volkov, along with detaining thousands of protesters for demanding Navalny's release.

Farmer protests are still going on with section 144 imposed in Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh due to the impending 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' and upcoming festivals.

Jack Ma was spotted playing golf at a resort on the Chinese island of Hainan. It is the first known sighting of him since the live streamed video conference with rural educators on January 20th.

A Myanmar based insurgent group 'Chin National Army' sought asylum for forty families in Mizoram after a military coup in their country. Authorities have been alerted against an influx of refugees.

The UK COVID-19 strain has been detected in 86 countries and shows an increase in transmissibility. The South African variant has been detected in 44 countries.

I Am An Artist

*I am indeed an artist,
My movements flow, I can't be restricted,
Dance, a whole new realm for me,
It makes me feel—oh, so free.*

*My passion, my life, my hobby, it's all dance.
My confidence and agility, it does enhance.
A language of my thoughts and expressions,
I feel as if I am heard, in every dance session.*

*Dance, a gateway to poise,
No matter who you are, it gives you a voice.
Inspires young minds to keep going,
Keeping love and light overflowing.*

*I am an artist because I create,
Jazz, ballet, hip-hop—they never cease to amaze.
Swaying my body, my legs, and my hands,
To the rhythmic music of the band.*

*I am an artist—yes!
For me it opens a new window,
A window of opportunities,
For my best ideas to show.*

-Veda Kalra, 6

क्या जनतंत्र है स्वतंत्र?

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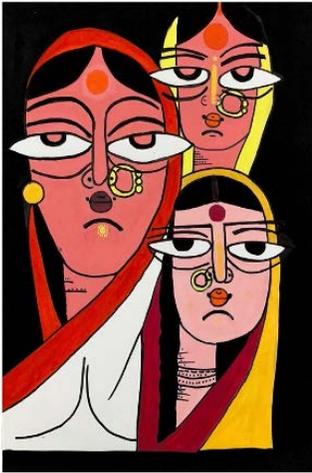
The UK COVID-19 strain has been detected in 86 countries and shows an increase in transmissibility. The South African variant has been detected in 44 countries.

चंद दिनों पहले ही भारत की पर्यावरणविद दिशा रवि को राजद्रोह के कारण गिरफ्तार किया गया। एक लोकतांत्रिक राष्ट्र के लिए यह कदम कई प्रश्न खड़े कर रहा है। दिशा रवि ने एक लेख को देखा और संपादित करा। उसने एक घटना के बारे में अपने विचार व्यक्त किए और इसके लिए उसे गिरफ्तार



किया गया। इसका अप्रत्यक्ष प्रभाव हम सब पर पड़ता है। अगर हम अपने विचारों को प्रस्तुत नहीं कर सकते हैं और हम अपने मन की बात नहीं कह सकते हैं तो हम एक सफल जनतंत्र नहीं हैं। जनतंत्र में हमें विचार व्यक्त करने की पूरी आजादी होती है। आज उसी आजादी पर अनेक प्रश्न उठ रहे हैं। यह काल युवाओं को सोशल मीडिया पर कुछ भी लिखने से पहले सोचने के लिए विवश कर रहा है। व्यक्तिगत सोच को बेबाक कह देने के परिणाम से डर बढ़ रहा है कि हमारी किसी बात पर कानूनी कारवाही ना हो जाए और अदालत में पेश न होना पड़े। दिशा रवि के मामले ने निश्चय ही युवा वर्ग में सतर्कता की एक घंटी बजा दी है। जो कुछ भी सोशल मीडिया पर लिखा जाता है वह देश की सरकार की नजरों से भी गुजरता है और सरकार निष्पक्ष होकर प्रतिक्रिया भी कर सकती है।

-जेहान सिंह भंडल, 10



Big, Bold, Beautiful

This is a recreation of one of Padma Bhushan Jamini Roy's artworks—he was amongst the most famous pupils of Abanindranath Tagore, whose artistic originality and contribution to the emergence of art in India remains unquestionable. It was made on an A-3 cartridge sheet. The big, bold, and beautiful eyes of these three women drew Dakshayani towards painting it.

A Reminiscence of School

*How I miss those bustling corridors
The laughs and giggles of fun
The screams of those who lost a game,
And the taunts of those who won*

*The dirt on the classroom floors
The fear before a test
The warmth of a library
The books stuck to your chest*

*The complaints about the food
That smells and tastes quite sour
The groans as you look at the clock,
And realise there's still an hour*

*The indulging smile on the teachers' lips
The assignments that are pending
The irritation at how these lectures
Always seem never ending*

*The rush to go to the nurse
On a hot summer day
How the AC rooms are always full
In April, July and May*

*The educated debates over characters
The discussion over books
The teams playing games,
With applause and competitive looks*

*Preparing us for the unpredictable world
The obstacles that are our fate
Preparing us to go through
This world of money and hate*

*States of matter and Elements of the periodic table
Atoms, molecules
What is fact, and what is fable*

*Formulae for math
Experimenting new novels
Be it alcove activities or competitions
We never grovel*

*Though it can be tedious
Those days we must endure
For when we don't go to school
It's the little things you miss more.*

-Kaavya Mukherjee Saha, 7

Microfiction

Topic: Back to School

The swings creak silently, longing for company. The slide starts to rust, standing alone exposed to the burning hot sun. The see-saws, sit idly, collecting dust, waiting for the joyous screams and the laughter of children. **(Jhoola Badi)**
-Aarna Gupta, 6

We swing back and forth, up and down, high and low, just to touch the sky. The chatter and chaos not to be forgotten the pitch is low and high.
"It's my turn, no it ain't." The laughter of adults and children seems to abound. **(Jhoola Badi)**
-Aadya Seth, 6

The books held against your chest, the characters filled in your head, their struggles masking yours. The library is the greatest place in the world. **(Library)**
-Kavya Malik, 7

She walked in a land beyond the normal, each shelf holding something new, taking a worldwide trip until reality struck—she sat in the corner with a book. **(Library)**
-Ritika Panwar, 7

It had become an ugly shade of green. Uneven, dry with mushy patches. It felt lonely now, with no one to water it, no feet stomping over it, no soccer balls rolling, no chalk tracks drawn. Almost becoming used to this. Until the day came when we walked it again. **(Field)**
-Asmara Dang, 8

She looked around. The blue sky, lush green grass. She listened to everything around her. The cheers of the winners and the groans of the unfortunate and sat grinning. Today was a good day. **(Field)**
-Amara Lall, 8

Filled with alacrity, enthralled by the 'new normal', I trailed the amber arrows, traversed half a circle, and there I was, awaited by the Vasant Manch. **(Vasant Manch)**
-Vivasvat Rastogi, 9

The hallowed hall filled with laughter and joy,
Reduced to mere whispers,
Here we sit, our voices bouncing off the walls,
Waiting for everything to go back to normal once and for all. **(Vasant Manch)**
-Dishita Natu, 9

Tip-toe, we walk in when we're called into this room, scared if we did something wrong or something too good. Ms Krishnan's room is the centre of the entire school, sometimes our day starts there... and sometimes ends there too. **(Ms Krishnan's Office)**
-Vedika Sabni, 10

He trudged towards it. Glancing around, hoping for a miraculous saviour, at every step along the way. **(Ms Krishnan's Office)**
-Samved Ojha, 10

Yet again we were surrounded by those maroon and beige walls, surrounded by friends and laughter. Part of our heart still longed for those heartwarming conversations in the Sister's Room. Miss the days when Digene was the cure to all our problems. **(Sister's Room)**
-Prarthna Batra, 11

"Can I have some sugar please"
"I tripped and fell in the PE field"
"Sister mere haath pe chhot lag gayee"
"Sister I don't feel like attending history"
And she sits and smiles through it all, in the sister's room down the hall. **(Sister's Room)**
-Tarika Lowe, 11

When the the hidden ace is played
The best laid plans take center stage. **(Center Stage)**
-Avantika Vikram, 12

Alone and unaware of its purpose, the slightly longer step sits uncomfortably in the middle of the other steps leading to center stage. **(Center Stage)**
-Jai Kapoor, 12

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