

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">OUTPOST</p> <p>Pg. 4</p>	<p>Smoke and MIRRORS</p> <p>An article by Adrija Das</p> <p>Pg. 3</p>	<p>THIS WEEK'S THE READLIST</p> <p>Featuring: To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee 1984 by George Orwell No Longer Human by Osami Dazai The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger</p> <p>Pg. 6</p>
---	---	--

Puppet Master's Concundrums

-Aarav Jain, XI

“Sonia Gandhi tired but not retired”, “Rahul Gandhi out but still in”, “Priyanka Gandhi in but out as she is not tested” – The Congress party seems to be irrevocably tied to the Gandhis and simply cannot function without them. After the much hyped and dramatic Congress Working Committee meeting and despite the dissenting Letter of 23, Mrs. Gandhi is back as the interim president if reluctantly, for another six months until the next AICC session. All the members who attended the CWC meeting had unanimously voted for Sonia Gandhi to take hold of the reins once again, albeit temporarily, thus concreting the myth that the Congress party and the Gandhis indeed share a Mobius Strip-like relationship.

Ever since the 2019 elections where Rahul Gandhi lost the Congress stronghold Amethi constituency, things have gone downhill for the Congress and its leader, with the BJP leaving no stone unturned to add to the miseries of the oldest political party of India. In the past few years, the BJP has been quite successful in claiming many of the Congress’ major turfs such as Karnataka, Meghalaya, Manipur, Goa and Madhya Pradesh. The list could soon have had Rajasthan too but the 134-year-old party seems to have temporarily averted this crisis with Pilot landing safely at the Congress headquarters. All these have raised a lot of eyebrows with regards to the inefficient leadership of the Congress party, and why the Congress members seem to be negligent of that conspicuous fact. The question, thus, persists – “Can the Congress party accept a non-Gandhi at its top position

or is the spot solely reserved for the Gandhis after all?” It’s for time to decide the fate of the Party but what certainly is evident is the tussle between the youth and the veteran leadership which has intensified over the past few months. 23 senior Congress leaders, including Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ananad Sharma, Shashi Tharoor and Kapil Sibbal put forward a letter during the CWC, calling for a “full time and effective leadership” which is both “visible” and “active” in the field; elections to the CWC; “transparent” elections for the PCC, AICC; and the urgent establishment of an “institutional leadership mechanism” to “collectively” guide the party’s revival. Rahul Gandhi was quick to blame them and accused them of conniving with the BJP, questioning the timing of the letter with the additional emotional twist citing the failing health of his mother. In response, Kapil Sibbal took to Twitter laying out the the old vs. new Congress inside-out to the public. The 23 dissenters have also maintained that the letter was not against the Gandhis but for reforms within party, none of which found any mention or given due consideration in the course of the meeting.

The real concern, as of now, is that the Congress has to take on the formidable election machinery of the mighty BJP in Bihar. If the Congress does not undertake an honest introspection to analyse the reasons for its continued decline and patch up their central leadership, the oldest political party of India might well have to resign itself in the words of its dissenters ‘to another 50 years in the Opposition’.

Through Their Eyes

-Aftab A. Ahmed, XII

Growing up in a boarding school, the only thing I learnt about my religion was “As-Salaam-Alaikum” and “Wa-Alaikum-Salaam” (the Arabic greeting meaning “Peace be unto you”, “And peace be upon you, too”, reciprocally). When we were kids, nobody batted an eye over one’s religion. We were all unaware of the world around us. I guess when you are younger, you don’t worry over names you only identify friends.

My name has often brought me to the center of multiple queries. I’ve had people, tell me, “People from your community kill in the name of religion, and that feels okay?” Someone else asked, “You must be happy, no? Your team won,” after Pakistan won the Champions Trophy in 2017. Like many other Muslims I know, stereotypes dressed as harmless “jokes” are routinely flung to our faces. My surname provides a sustained spark for creativity of this kind and, not wanting to be perceived as unsporting, I play along. Little did I know that there would come a time when a teenager named Junaid would be lynched and left to die in a railway station with no help forthcoming from the onlookers all because he was a Muslim.

There is a large Madrasa near my Grandmother’s home consisting of about 200 children, aging between 5 to 18 years. Whenever we have a gathering of any religious significance at our house, we would invite the children from the Madrasa. Looking at them, I would often ask my grandmothers why they didn’t go to a regular school like me and instead chose to go to a Madrasa. The answers I got were mostly: “How would the family feed seven children?”, “Religion is above everything”, “They can be Imam/Muazzin in a Masjid or a teacher in Madarasa and provide for their family”, “Quran is the truth”, and “God is everything”. There I was, taking an interest in the arts juggling between my books or risk looking foolish, while people my age had the pressure to start earning, not by way of setting up for a good job, but by way of quickly starting to contribute to the family income.

They attend Madrasas and confine themselves to religious education because the food, accommodation and teachings are practically free. In completion of their education, they are set off into the world with very few employable skills. This means no employment and no prospect for advancement. The urgent need to introduce modern education lies at the center of this for it equips a student to think rationally. It encourages logical reason and analysis before accepting everything at face value. If this education is obstructed and we are instead asked to follow everything without question bound by religious

text and dichotomy, an entire generation is being created that doesn’t know how to think on its own and is very easy to radicalize. If change is constant and evolution a force of nature than why should religion be left out of this order?

A peculiar reaction I have come across amongst the religious in my family and community is that they greatly under-appreciate education and market theory. Someone who prays five times a day is appreciated far more than someone who earns five lakhs a month. So, the powerful levers of societal pressures and motivational techniques are used by the community to make someone more religious than inspiring them to be successful. The Census 2011 data on education level by Religious Community and Gender reveals that Muslims have the highest percentage of illiterates (42.7 per cent) in India. Activists working for the empowerment of the Muslims cite financial instability of the community as the primary reason for this. Nearly 43 out of every 100 Muslims in India are unable to read and write, the worst affected being the Muslim women subjected to patriarchy, feudalism and conservative outlook to cite a few. Muslims, unlike other minority communities, don’t push for reservations, where the aim is to narrow the gap between communities. Amongst Muslims, the priority seems to be to try and maintain a consciously separate culture.

One can go to any town in India and, if we happen to be in the shadiest and most crowded areas, they will invariably be Muslim dominated. With 182 million Muslims (2017 estimate), India’s Muslim population is about the world’s third-largest and the world’s largest Muslim-minority population. India is home to 10.3% of the world’s Muslim population. Why then is there so less percentage of Muslims in the government? Is it an evil design of the people in power to keep the second largest community of the country backward by depriving them of a fair share in the corridors of power? Or is there a general lack of awareness and ambition among the community? A lack of confidence in the system because there is disillusionment and a sense of discrimination? A nation with such a large minority driven with fear and foreboding is not likely to be a place of peace, development and aspiration.

Our Constitution promises equal opportunities for all citizens. Unless we look out for those opportunities ourselves, we won’t get anywhere. Muslims, like any other population group, must themselves ensure that they don’t get left out from the governance structures of the country. More Muslims are enrolling for education

than ever before, and families are becoming smaller as they try to aspire to achieve the Indian dream. Although under-represented, many still serve in government,

particularly in the police, paramilitary and armed forces. Like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan rightly said, Ignorance is mother of poverty.

Smoke and Mirrors

-Adrija Das, XI

The Baghjan Oil well was discovered as early as 1991 along with other major oil wells in the North East due to seismic activities of Level 2 and Level 3. However, its proximity to the Dibru Saikhowa park made it a sensitive zone. That is why there were no further activities carried out by OIL in the National Park.

Assam has always been an area with rich flora and fauna and also rich in resources. As such, the first job of any Government and any Company should be to respect the delicate balance that exists and use utmost care and diligence in all mining, drilling activities.

However, the lure of profits, the lack of knowledge of the local populace and the apathy of social groups makes it very easy to undermine all such fundamental essentials and instead concentrate primarily on the commercial necessity that brings on the LEECHING EFFECT.

In a world that has seen massive strides in development of technology, it is sacrilegious that these oil giants have not deemed it necessary to research and lay down impeccable and infallible safety and precautionary measures before drilling for oil.

Even more deplorable is the fact that they have done nothing to make aware and train the people of the neighbouring areas on fire and safety hazards. These companies talk about Corporate Social Responsibility without ever truly investing in it. Belonging to a family who have lived their entire lives in an Oil township I

know well how they function.

Their safety measure "Standards and Enforcement" covers:

1. Vehicle collisions
2. Struck by/Caught in/caught Between
3. Explosions

The question however arises as to how many experts does India have on oil explosions? I would say negligible.

Why else would the companies need to fly experts from

abroad in the middle of a Pandemic wasting precious time waiting for the airlines to

permit air travel? All the while the Baghjan fire raged on devouring animals, acres of

forest and agricultural land and property causing unimaginable trauma to people

living in the surrounding area and all over the state. The National Media

however gave it hardly any mention probably because it did not have the

necessary spices to generate the all-important TRP.

In a growing ambitious country such as

ours, where the Prime Minister promotes 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat', we still do not have experts on Oil Wells

despite the fact that we have Government owned Oil Companies drilling for the black gold. It is imperative

that safety measures be laid down keeping well in mind environmental concerns just as much as technical skills

developed to ensure that we do not have to ever again stand on the side-lines watching helpless a fire devour

precious wild life and forest cover.

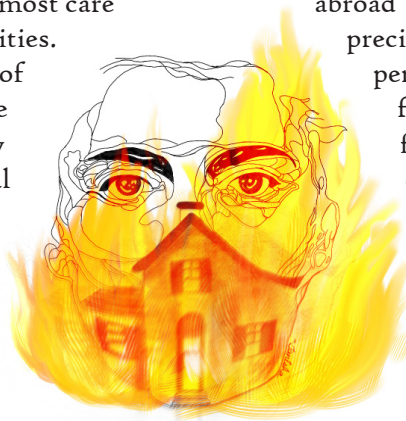


Illustration: Tanisha Bhadra

Warriors in Teaching

-Mrs. Nabanita Jassal

My first brush with technology in AVS dates back to the month of August in 2008. It was a demonstration class with an over-head projector with plastic slides. The rescuer in the class was the over head projector which was largely popular and sought after by students and teachers. The students, Rajat Gattani, Anirudh Deorah, Nishant Ray and many others, to name a few, had aced their knowledge in programming in Java, Class 9

having chosen Computer Science. We could print on the OHP slides using the laser printer and we sailed off well taming the turbulent waters of logical reasoning and imagination with only the computers in the lab and the over-head projector steering us. The Founders' exhibitions in the ICT department were filled with glossy print outs of the students' work. Arijit Phukan, a little kid then, had the penchant for designing visiting

AVE, Saturday, 12th Sept

cards, greeting cards and collages. His creativity and passion led him to design the cover of the Founders' exhibition booklet, being a young kid in grade 6.

A surge of upgradation followed in the next few years with multimedia projector and whiteboard being installed in the ICT department which is the fountain spring of the tech-life in the school. The media centre followed at close heels with high-end computers powered with graphic cards. The students, as usual, are in awe of the Systems Administrator and his prowess on the depth of technical tools. The era of laptops for education was a bout of fresh air and each student, empowered with a laptop, tried to ace up. They are in a constant battle with the firewalls placed in the system and the victory of bypassing them knows no bounds! The information superhighway was accessible and so was the upskilling of the teachers to provide online preps. One of the most enjoyable preps I have seen are the online ones which give a sense of freedom to the child. The focus and pace of the work done by them surpasses all parameters. Recording classes with the handycam was a trendy introspection on the pedagogy followed.

The pandemic brought about a revolutionary change in the machines as well as methodologies of teaching and learning. The average benchmark of technical knowledge for a teacher upscaled in one shot. There was no substitute for smooth transitions in the apps used in the classrooms, thanks to the much-hyped Google platform. Video conferencing was the way forward

with the teachers marching forward to attend webinars on their chosen area of work and interest. Live shows on Facebook, webinars, chat-shows, online competitions catapulted regular teachers and students into tech-wiz individuals, beaming with the confidence and know-how of tools in education technology. There was no other option but to upskill and upgrade oneself. I think that the significant contribution of this metamorphosis is that we as a community have wholeheartedly embraced technology as the way of life and we truly appreciate its effectiveness in empowering teachers. We battle with our daily demons of gaps in comprehension of content by our students, disengagement in class by lazy lads, monotony at home and perhaps a general inertia in study habits. The rescue comes from the amalgamation of the teacher's inputs to connect with students and adequate use of educational tools in technology. Today, we are armed to the teeth with the tools and filled with love in our hearts to become the harbingers of positive change in our classrooms. The energy and vibes in the virtual classroom become palpable. Indeed, grateful to the Assam Valley School for initiating this transformation and growth. I am sure that not only shall we, as the school community, survive but that we shall thrive. We are but creating memories and success stories of the transformation of a Teacher into a Warrior! Would it be erroneous to call ourselves COVID Warriors? I leave it to your own wisdom, dear readers, to arrive at your answer.

THE OUTPOST

India now has the most number of daily COVID-19 deaths in the world, while all eyes look towards the Indo-Russia co-production of Sputnik V. Novak Djokovic has been disqualified from the US Open for accidentally hitting a ball at a line judge. This could well be a lesson on staying calm. India-China tensions have heightened amidst shots while the country salutes the elusive SFF or Establishment 22 a Tibetan regiment that took the Kailash ranges. The drama surrounding Rhea Chakraborty keeps the country transfixed even as the economy nosedives beyond Sitaraman's reach. Amazon burns again while Bolsanaro smokes 'lies'.

Illustration: Eloziimi Senachena



STARS OF THE WEEK

Nilay Dhakal has got the best achievement award in 'Retro to Metro', an International Online Painting Competition conducted by Kala Prabodhini, Pune. We extend our heartiest congratulations to him.



the middle page ^{#4}

By: Eloziini Senachena and Tanisha Bhadra



The Quarantine Readlist

Need help finding a gem amidst a sea of monotony? Grab a cup of coffee or tea and dive into the world of these enthralling stories, here is a list of some of our suggestions:

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD BY HARPER LEE: A compassionate and moving story with an easy flowing narrative that is extremely powerful in it's discussion of race, tolerance and human decency.

1984 BY GEORGE ORWELL: Big Brother's watchful eye follows all in his totalitarian state, to be conscious and to think is an act of rebellion.

NO LONGER HUMAN BY OSAMU DAZAI: A poignant story on the critical human condition from the perspective a disturbed young man named Yozo.

THE CATCHER IN THE RYE BY J. D. SALINGER: A coming-of-age story about a young boy of sixteen going through a phase of teenage angst and rebellion.

Ripple #139

-Eloziini Senachena, XI

The roaring twenties:

He always kept up with the trends of the time.

Buying toothpastes, toys and other trinkets imbued with the latest element: radium.

Keep It Reel!

HORIZONS

-Dristi Rathi, XI



Editor-in-Chief: Jeremy Jahau

Deputy Editor: Letminlun Haokip

Associate Editor: Anoushka S. Rabha

Correspondents: Ojas, Lavanya, Ssara & Neelabh

Design & Layout: Moom Lego & Jeremy Jahau

Illustrator: Takhe Tamo Reela & Eloziini Senachena

Photo Credit: Letminlun Haokip

Mistress-in-Charge: Ms. Sarmistha Paul Sarkar

Publisher: The Assam Valley School, P.O. Balipara, Dist. Sonitpur, Asom-784101, India

E-mail: ave@assamvalleyschool.com

Telephone: 09678074320/08812009627 Website: www.assamvalleyschool.com

Patron: Dr. Vidhukesh Vimal, The Headmaster of The Assam Valley School

The views expressed in articles are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of AVE or its editorial policy.