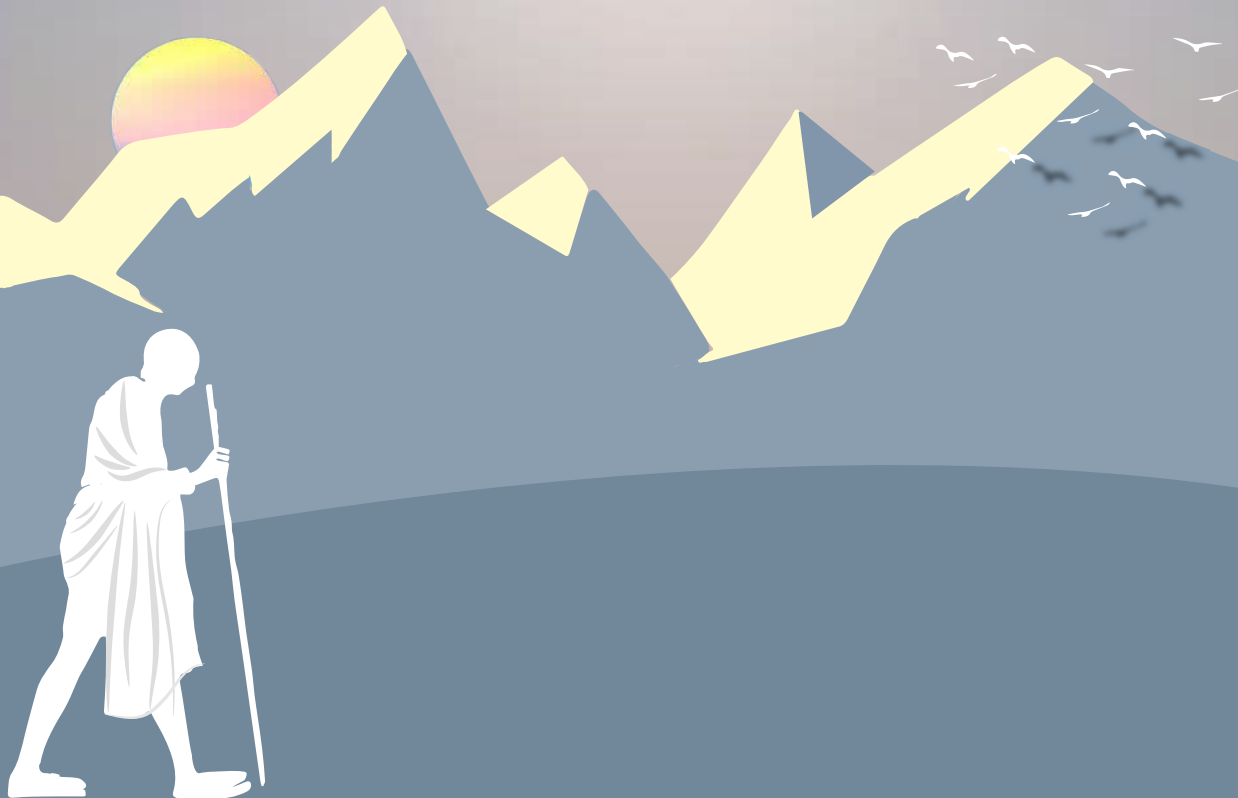




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Qila Quotes

THE SCINDIA SCHOOL TRIANNUAL PUBLICATION



Astachal - Instilling the seed of *Adhyaatmik Vistaar* in Scindians



Glimpses of the first-ever off-site induction programme organized in Orchha especially for new entrants

THE FOUNDER

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Invited Members

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Mrs Darshana Jaini (Parents' Representative)

Mr Ravi Saund (Expert - Infrastructure Development)

Ex officio Member, Principal & Secretary

Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat

Scindia Old Boys' Association

President

Mr Rahul Kulshreshtha

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Mr Banjul Badil

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Mr Virupaksha Kadam

Secretary

Dr Anurag Dixit

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information printed in this edition of the Qila Quotes. If an error has occurred, please accept our apology and contact the editor at visheshs@scindia.edu.



Principal, Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat receiving the award in Dubai



Principal, Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat presenting a memento to Mr Mahip Tejasvi - CEO of Gwalior Smart City Project

PRINCIPAL'S DESK



Every year when the School reopens after the summer break, I feel a fresh surge of energy within me. And why not! After spending an insipid summer alone, I once again get absorbed into the rhythmic chatter of the school community as they go on with their 'daily round of duties'. My team seems more energised, as if the hot months of May and June almost solar-powered them. New resolutions are made, the lessons learnt in the previous term are used to fine-tune existing policies and processes, and the administrative machinery is oiled to ensure a smooth functioning throughout the year. And here we are - all set for another year of sterling achievements.

As I write this message, it has just begun to pour and I can see the boys playing football in the Madhav field in their blue-white T shirts. Although the showers have been few and far between, yet they have been enough to make the Fort's unique biodiversity come alive. You cannot but be mesmerised by the sight of the stately peacocks as they strut around spreading their glorious plumage. Equally mesmerising is the beauty of the lotuses, the wild purple-white *Karang* flowers and the mildly fragrant yellow bunches of *Amaltas* which abound the Fort and blend against the green backdrop. This seamless amalgamation of sights, sounds and fragrances set me thinking - Isn't this exactly how the life of teachers and the students blends to create a unique educational experience in this haloed *Gurukul*.

At the very outset, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the 'new Scindians' and congratulate them on becoming a part of the great legacy called The Scindia School. I would like to assure them and their parents that the size and structure of our school and the design of our curriculum allows for each child to be treated as a special individual. The staff at Scindia takes their role as mentors with absolute earnestness. They seek to mentor students as they begin to take responsibility for their own decisions, determine their own attitudes and form their own opinions as to what life is all about. Assistance is given to students to achieve academically and grow physically, socially and spiritually in a happy, secure environment.

The renovation of the Kanerkhed House in the Junior House campus is complete and Nimaji House too shall be done before the 2nd week of August. These Houses now not only look more contemporary, but boast of modern amenities and comforts which will make our young boys feel at home. Keeping the hot and humid weather in mind, we've air-conditioned all our classrooms and we sincerely hope that the transaction will now be 'cool'.

After much debate and discussion, we've finally moved the Jeevaji and Mahadji Houses to their original place. Jayappa and Daulat have gone to the newly constructed buildings at the southern end of the Fort. I do extend a warm welcome to the Old Boys of Jeevaji and Mahadji, now that they can return to their original home.

My compliments are due to the students and the staff who kept the Scindian flag flying high during summer holidays and continued the legacy of 'Experiential Education' for which Scindia has been known for decades. Educational excursions, mountaineering expeditions, trekking expeditions and community service projects kept Scindians busy during vacations.

Our alumni are the real wealth in every sense of the word, into which we dive whenever we wish to go beyond the Fort. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the SOBA chapters and the Central SOBA office bearers, without whom we could never have organized the 'Outreach Programme' of our school. In the last few months we visited the cities of - Nagpur, Raipur, Lucknow, Kapnur, Aligarh, Chandigarh and a few more, and had very meaningful engagements. We were able to strengthen our ties with our alumni and also reach out to our prospective parents.

Lastly, I believe that teaching and learning offers us all numerous opportunities to focus on a number of 'small things' that culminate over time to produce students that are prepared to do the 'great things' in life. Ultimately, as a school community we are judged by the actions of our students and the way their learning connects and impacts the world beyond our school. With this in mind, I urge all stakeholders to collectively come together and create an educational experience which eventually makes a difference in the world.

Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat
Principal, The Scindia School



A still from the annual Hindi Play



A still from the annual English Play

EDITORIAL

School welcomed new entrants into its fold in a different style this time. A three day off-site induction programme was organized for the new members of the Scindia fraternity in Orchha. Engaging sessions of Hindi and English drama and dance were especially planned and designed for the young ones. A workshop on etiquettes, positive social interaction and fine dining was also organized for these boys. All the sessions were thoroughly enjoyed by everybody. They were also taken for sightseeing to the 'Orchha Fort' and 'Ramraja Mandir' which informed them of the historical importance and the rich heritage of the region. The off-site induction programme paved way for strong peer interactions and friendships; a good beginning of their voyage in Scindia.

The previous trimester was the time for recognizing and honouring the achievers in the field of academics and sports. The Annual Scholars' Banquet, Sports' Banquet and the House Report ceremony were occasions to felicitate the top performers in an atmosphere of regalia. **Mr Bharat Vir Wanchoo** (Ex Je, 1968) and **Brigadier Ashok Abbey**, AVSM were the Chief Guests respectively for the two occasions.

The School observed *Sonsa* Day in the spirit of service reiterating our commitment to contribute our little bit in the lives of the less fortunate. Like every year, the festival of Holi was celebrated with a lot of enthusiasm despite the examination fever, which had the entire school in its grip. The Holika Dahan, play of colours on the Fort, the special meal and the get-together for the staff at the Principal's residence, made it a day to remember.

The Annual English Play was staged on the 17th April 2018. The play was based on Frank L. Baum's, 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz', a children's story about good and evil.

The Annual Hindi Play - Taj Mahal Ka Tender written by the acclaimed Hindi dramatist, Ajay Shukla was staged on the 18th April 2018.

Trending

The Scindia School was recognized and felicitated as 'The World's Greatest Brand' and **Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat**, Principal - The Scindia School was awarded the 'The World's Greatest Leader' award. The award was presented in a grand Award Ceremony organized by - Asia One Magazine and URS Media Consulting Private Limited in Dubai on the 9th of May, 2018.

The ABP News National Education Awards have conferred 'Outstanding School Award' on the School and the 'Education Leadership Award' on the Principal.

A cover story on the Principal – **Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat** appeared in the July issue of the ubiquitous 'Mentor' magazine which has a reach of more than 17,000 schools

in over 90 cities across India. Mentor Magazine strives to provide a common platform for educationists and other readers to exchange ideas with regard to education.

The Scindia School has been featured in a Coffee Table Book just released by the 'Education World', titled - '17 Great Legacy Schools of India'. You can order it online from either www.amazon.in or from <http://educationworld.in/EWStore/NewStore.aspx>. The Scindia School was ranked 2nd best All Boys Legacy Boarding School in India and the first in Madhya Pradesh by 'EducationWorld' - 2017

Faculty News

Mr Gopal Chaurvedi attended a conference at the India International Centre, 40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi. He also participated in two more, namely the 'In-DaF' and 'PASCH Conference'. All these conferences were attended by German teachers from all over South Asia. Famous writers and artists from Germany delivered lectures in the same. This workshop was especially for school teachers. Latest teaching methodologies and a few new books were introduced to the teachers.

Ms Niharika Kulshrestha attended the three days' workshop entitled 'International Certified Career Coach in-person' in New Delhi as part of the 3-months' Certification Programme. The workshop laid emphasis on Global Best Practices, Experiential Learning & State-of-the-Art Career Guidance Tools.

Mr Dharendra Sharma, Dean of Co-curricular Activities, was nominated by the National Award Authority for 'Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Service' for his dedicated support towards 'The International Award for Young People', India. (Formerly, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award). The award was presented at the Annual Gold Award Ceremony, which was held at India International Centre, New Delhi on 10th July 2018. IAYP Gold Award was awarded to **Prasoon Naithani, Raj Yadav, Piyush Baghel, Madhav Agarwal, Pavan Jaini and Archit**

Bhardwaj.

Ms Divya Verma attended a Career Counsellors' Meet organized by the Hong Kong University in Hong Kong from 8th – 10th March 2018. A total of 23 counsellors from across the world attended this Meet. She explored the possibilities of scholarship for Scindians as the University is ranked 49 world-wide.

Ms Anita Pandey - Faculty in English; **Mr Siddharth Majumdar** - Faculty in Arts; **Ms Tanu Tiwari** - Faculty in Science; and **Mr and Mrs Mathai** - Faculty in Mathematics also moved on in their professional journey. School gave a heartfelt farewell to all of them. Their colleagues and students will always remember them for their immense contribution.

Dr Bacchan Singh Bhakuni was given a heart-touching farewell on 18th April 2018. Dr Bhakuni served the School selflessly for 30 long years from 1988 to 2018. The Principal, **Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat** felicitated Dr Bhakuni and said that while speaking for some people, words are difficult to find. He said that Dr Bhakuni was the real embodiment of a public school master. Dr Bhakuni thanked the School for its immense support and said that the School is a conflux of history, spirituality and education.

Workshops

Workshops covering different skills were organized for the benefit of the students. A Photography workshop was conducted in the School by renowned photographer **Mr Saurabh Pande** for the members of the Photography Club. The workshop included a two- hour power point presentation focusing on composition of a photo, symmetry, equipment, alignment of the target, insight on aperture, ISO and shutter speed. The presentation was followed by 'hands on experience', where each group was asked to click pictures involving nature, landscape and patterns. Mr Pande evaluated them one on one, and explained to the students of the various intricate details for improvement.

A Mine-craft workshop was conducted by **Ms Astha Sharma** from Technomentis, under the aegis of Microsoft Showcase School Program, on 16th March 2018, in the School. A total of 120 students from classes VII and VIII participated in the workshop. Students learnt to enhance their creativity, problem-solving, self-direction, collaboration, and other life skills. The topics which were covered during the training were: Exploration, Controls, Navigation: – Children learnt about different game modes like gameplay, survival modes, about the interface and how to explore the templates available in the software, and how to navigate characters or objects in the workspace.

08 students participated in the German Street Play and visited the German Exhibition at MMB, New Delhi. The School team bagged the second position. The theme of the street play was 'Protection of Environment' and was organized by the Goethe Institut, New Delhi.

A workshop for the teachers by are presentative of the Trinity College London was conducted in the School on

28th – 29th June. The workshop was on the process and prerequisites with regard to the exams conducted by the Trinity College in the domains of drama, music and a few other streams. The prime focus was on enhancing the communication skills in students. The resource person - **Ms. Ritika Ratna** shared the various levels of tests and the content in them. The workshop also gave a detailed idea regarding ELT activities which can be used in classes to enhance outcomes. The resource person also informed us in detail how the Trinity Assessments assist students for admissions in UK universities.

34 teachers attended a two-day workshop facilitated by 'The Peace Project Team'. This is a value-based organization that interacts with teachers and students and seeks to generate a transformation in their thinking and actions. Acknowledging that change starts with self, the participants were exposed to various exercises and activities that focused on creating self-awareness and fulfilling their potential. Among other themes, the workshop also covered the importance of conflict resolution, team work and developing listening skills.

The Yusuf Hamied Inspirational Chemistry Programme for Science Teachers was organized on 1st & 2nd May, 2018 at The Scindia School. The objective was to enhance the skills of Indian science teachers. The programme was organized by the Royal Society of Chemistry - U.K. in alliance with the Association of Chemistry Teachers, India. Thirty Science teachers from various schools of Gwalior attended the workshop where they learned strategies to promote active learning in students. The Australian National Chemistry Quiz (ANCO) under the aegis of Royal Australian Chemistry Institute (RACI) conferred 'The Principal of the Year 2017' award on **Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat** for his contribution in popularizing Science among young Indian students.

Shantanu Kulshreshtha (Ex- Ja, 2016) conducted a debating workshop in School from 14th - 16th July 2018. He drilled children in the Oxford, Cambridge and Parliamentary styles of debating. The participants were familiarized with the minutiae of each format and the debating jargons peculiar to each. The technical terms were simplified for the purpose of effectiveness in developing cogent arguments. One session was devoted exclusively to get children initiated into alternate ways of approaching a motion. Mock drills made all the theoretical knowledge alive for our boys. In addition to active debating, the participants were also made to adjudicate so as to get a better understanding of speaker roles and the flow of the debate.

Mr Ashish Arora, Ms Manisha Singh and Ms Sudha Sharma attended a workshop conducted by the Institute of Counsellor Training, Research and Consultancy (ICTRC) Delhi from 1st - 5th June 2018. Workshop addressed the issues faced by the 21st century society and schools and brought to the fore, most practical and positive approaches to deal with these challenges. Child sexual abuse, behavioural issues, addiction, mental health and increasing number of children with special needs are some



Educational excursion to Japan



The Scindia School cricket team in South Africa

of the issues vexing the schools which were addressed during the workshop along with the issues of excessively demanding parents, increasing interference of regulatory authorities and mindless activism of groups with vested interest. The solution apparently is collective action by all stakeholders of the school.

Ms Smita Chaturvedi and **Mr Dhirendra Sharma** attended a conclave organized in the splendid setting of the *Spanda* Hall at the Isha Yoga Center in Coimbatore from 8th – 10th June 2018. The theme of this conclave was - 'Human is not a resource...but an amazing Possibility'. This was attended by leading 75 CHROs and CXOs of the country. It focused on the ways in which HR and other processes can be leveraged to create inspiring leadership, organizations that are agile to changing environment, and promote a culture of collaboration, innovation and growth amongst employees. The focal point of the conclave was to engineer inner transformation in order to move towards excellence.

Sports

The School hosted the 16th His Highness Maharaja Madhavrao Scindia Memorial Cricket Tournament. 08 schools were a part of the contest for the coveted trophy which was eventually won by The Modern School, Delhi. For four days the Fort remained in the grip of Cricket mania as swashbuckling batsmen, lethal bowlers showed their prowess on the pitch. The Chief Guest for the Cling Ceremony was **Mr Mahip Tejasvi**, CEO – Gwalior Smart City Development Corporation Limited. He spoke glowingly about the superlative display of cricketing excellence.

The School's Cricket team went to South Africa for a cricket tour from 16th May to 30th May 2018. The team played three matches in Johannesburg and two matches in Durban. Our students also had an opportunity to meet the Consulate General of India in Durban, **Dr Shashank Vikram**. South African Schools and Clubs- namely, Centurion Academy, High School Wonderboom, Delforce School Academy, Durban Cricket Union, Elemby Cricket Union and Umjinto Senior Secondary School played matches with the School team. It was an enriching experience for the team.

Outreach Program

The Principal, **Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat** along with a few members of the faculty went for an outreach program to Nagpur, Raipur, Kanpur, Lucknow, Aligarh, Chandigarh and a few others to connect with like-minded people, who would be interested to know more about education in general and at The Scindia School in particular. The programme comprised an Open House wherein any queries of prospective parents were heard, discussed and clarified.

IT

The Scindia School hosted the Inter Public School Suryodaya IT Fest. Eight leading schools participated in

the fest this year. They were - Mayo College Girls' School- Ajmer, Mayo College- Ajmer, Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School- Jaipur, Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya- Gwalior, Heritage Girls' School- Udaipur, Welham Girls' School- Dehradun, The Punjab Public School- Nabha and the host school - The Scindia School, Gwalior. The theme for the Fest was 'Digital Integration'. It had various events like: Multi-Media presentation; Movie making; Audio-editing; Wiz-kids; Website Designing; Computer Quiz; Cartoon making and Digital Poster making. Trophy was won by The Scindia School.

Infrastructure

In the last few months, we witnessed substantial maintenance and infrastructure related works being done in the school campus at various locations. Kanerkhed House, located in the Junior House campus was fully renovated and handed over for occupation on the 22nd of July. Nimaji House too is almost done and shall be handed over in the 2nd week of August. Rest of the two Houses shall be completed by 30th of November 2018. Due to acute water scarcity, only the dry works e.g. fixtures and fittings were done in Dattaji and Jankoji Houses in the preceding months. Now that the monsoon is back in full swing, work will go on unabated and shall finish on time.

Looking into the hot and humid weather conditions which prevail for several months every year in this part of the world, all the classrooms are being air-conditioned at the moment. Most of the work is already completed and whatever little is left shall be finished soon. This is to enhance the comfort of students and teachers during academic transaction.

Chain-link fencing of almost about 900 meters has been completed from the circular gate to the rear of the recently moved Jayappa and Daulat Houses to ensure higher safety and security for the boys. This is in view of the Rope-way project which is coming up shortly behind the Principal's residence.

SOBA House renovation work continues in phases. Recently, stone-flooring, repair work etc was done on the dais in front of the SOBA House. Also, the elevated patio of the much revered Lord Hanuman temple which is in the same compound was repaired too. The next phase of work shall be commencing soon for which dismantling and other work is currently in progress.

Academics

Months of February and March were dedicated to exhaustive preparation for the Board and home examinations. Individual attention to students requiring remediation and enrichment was provided for as and when required. Teachers and students together could be seen engaging in academic work till late in the night. Sample papers were solved and latest content available on

authentic websites was downloaded and shared with the students. As a consequence, our students produced stellar results. A brief summary of the same is presented below.

AN OVERVIEW OF 2018 CLASS X RESULTS

SCHOOL TOPPER (ALL SUBJECTS):

ADITYA PARASHAR = 99 %

STUDENTS SCORED MORE THAN 95 %

SNo.	Student Name	%
1	ADITYA PARASHAR	99.0
2	ESHAAN AGARWAL	98.4
3	KARNIK KANOJIA	97.4
4	NISHCHAY AGARWAL	97.0
5	SAKSHAM BANSAL	96.8
6	RHYTHM KUKREJA	96.8
7	ABHISHEK MAHOUR	95.6
8	VEDANSH BANSAL	95.4
9	JAI SHAH	95.0

AN OVERVIEW OF 2018 CLASS XII RESULTS

SCHOOL TOPPER (ALL SUBJECTS) :

AADYA MISHRA = 98.2%

SCHOOL AVERAGE BEST 4 SUBJECTS : 83.98%

STREAMWISE RESULT & TOPPER (BEST 4 AGGREGATES)

Stream	Aggregate	Topper	Percentage
Science	83.85%	Snehil Tripathi	96.5%
Humanities	89.74%	Aadya Mishra	99%
Commerce	82.34%	Keshav Sarawgi	95%

In July, several new teachers have joined the Scindia family. They are -**Mr Manas Mukhoti** – Economics; **Mr Ganpat Swaroop Pathak** – Hindi; **Mr Suyog Upadhye** – Physics, Chemistry & Mathematics; **Mr Saurabh Kaul** – English; **Ms Mahvish** – Social Science; **Mr Parash Moni Dutta** – English; **Ms Sneha Bhagat** - English and **Mr Suggu Shekhar** – General Science. **Dr Javed Patel** has joined us as the Resident Medical Officer. We wish them a long and fruitful stay at Scindia. At the beginning of the session in early July, the entire staff had several rounds of meetings where they deliberated on the previous term's successes and possible areas of improvements. Finally, teachers gave a department-wise presentation with regard to their strategies for the new term to further improve students' learning-outcomes.



The renovated Kanerkhed House

OLD BOYS' NEWS

Our congratulations to Mr Kishore Dondilkar (Ex-DI, 1996) for being appointed as Assistant Drugs Controller (India) CDSCO- DGHS, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

Rishi Mangal (Ex-Mj, 2015) has got an internship in Greystar, the largest real estate management company in United States. He will be based in San Francisco, California.

Shashi Bhushan (Ex-Mj, 2001) played the role of Bakht Rawan in the recent film 'Bioscopewaala'. He has earlier also acted in the film Neerja and Kajarya. Based in Mumbai, he also teaches acting to young aspirants. Shashi directed the much appreciated play -Charandas Chor which was enacted at our Founder's Day in 2017.

Anish Garodia (Ex-Ja, 2013) has been admitted to IIT Kanpur for an MBA course. He will join in July 2018.

Jaskaran Singh Bakshi (Ex-Ja, 2014) has graduated from the University of Westminster- UK with a first class honours degree.

Yashwant Mahadik (Ex-Sh, 1985) has been appointed President- Global Human Resources of Pharma Major -Lupin Ltd. Mr Mahadik is based at Mumbai.

Amitabh Malhotra (Ex-Md, 1986) has been appointed head of Investment Banking for HSBC India.

Mr Girish Chandorkar (Ex-Ja, 1975) has been promoted as Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax. He is presently posted at Mumbai.

Manas Pant (Ex-JP, 2015) currently studying at the NYU - AD on scholarship, participated in a Mountaineering Expedition to 'Stok-Kangri' in Ladakh from 7th - 15th July 2018. True to the Scindian spirit which he has in plenty, he was among the few who made it to the summit which towers at approximately 6200 meters above the sea level.



Manas Pant (sitting third from left) at the summit of Stok-Kangri at 6200 meters

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

Fourteen students and three teachers, namely, Mr Dharendra Sharma, Ms Raksha Siriah and Ms Divya Verma, went for the cycling expedition from Shimla to Kaza from 25th May to 7th June 2018. During their expedition, they cycled past the following places - Spillow, Kuppah, Nako, Tabo, Kaza, Losar and finally Manali, covering 455 Kilometers in total. They also crossed the Kunzum pass and cycled at the height of 4500 meters above the sea level.

Shri P.M. Khar prize for the year 2018 given for excellence in Science, was awarded to Suryansh Goyal.

07 students, namely, Siddhartha Agarwal, Aadarsh Gupta, Sunil Kumar, Rishabh Modi, Janmajey Pargaein, Prakhar Jain and Kunal Tyagi participated in the 'Ladakh Venture 2018' which saw participation of 33 delegates from 08 prominent schools of India and 01 from a school in Kenya. The venture, from 24th June - 9th July 2018 was led by Mr Vishesh Sahai. Delegates helped construct two classrooms for the younger children of the Lamdon Model School situated in Thiksey. They also trekked through the Ladakh Mountains and camped for two nights at Rumbak and Yurutse and saw the famous Pangong lake and the Nubra valley.

19 students along with 3 teachers, namely Mr Anil Pathania, Mr Vishesh Sahai and Mr Jagdish Joshi trekked deep inside the Pirpanjal range of the Himalayas for the Jagatsukh Peak mountaineering expedition from 25th May - 9th June 2018. The expedition was successful and 11 boys made it to the summit.

Five students, namely, Mohit Asrani, Arnav Mehra, Shashank Khilore, Gaurav Agarwal and Keshav Agarwal went to the Spiti valley, escorted by Mr Nitin Chand and Ms Preethi Chand from 8th to 23rd June 2018. They assisted the local community of the Spiti Valley, located in Himachal Pradesh, in the construction of a Greenhouse. They also went trekking and sight seeing.

Nine students along with Mr Ritendra Dwivedi went for the Manali Adventure course from 20th - 29th of May 2018. The adventure course had all the ingredients of a leadership course. They learnt Rock Climbing, Rappelling and went for several tough treks in the region.

Garvit Thakur, Dev Moorjani, Adhish Sharma, Toshan Agarwal, Ketan Singhal and Sidh Agarwal attended a fortnight long adventure course from 26th June - 9th July 2018 at Nehru Institute of mountaineering - Uttarkashi. They learnt

the basics of rock-climbing, rappelling, trekking, rope-activities, wall climbing, knots etc.

A number of our students have been awarded with scholarships in Indian and foreign universities. A summary is as follows. New York University - Abu Dhabi - Pavan Jaini - 100% Scholarship; Queen Mary University, London - Astitva Jindal - 100% Scholarship; Queen Mary University, London - Yatharth Garg - 100% Scholarship; Michigan State University, USA - Saksham Kalra, Supply Chain Management - 60% scholarship and University of Wisconsin - Parkside Madhav Agarwal - 25% Scholarship. Following students have gone abroad for higher studies - University of Wisconsin - Parkside, Aditya Gupta; Whistling Woods International, Mumbai - Jayant Kishnani, BBA Media and Communication; Whistling Woods International, Mumbai - Satyam Singh Gurjar, BA Acting; University of British Columbia, Canada - Yohen Thounaojam; Worcester Polytechnic Institute, USA - Suryansh Goyal; Hartpury College, U.K. - Yuvraj Bhatia; The State University of New York at Buffalo, NY, USA - Prasoon Naithani and Harshit Bhargava; George Mason University, USA - Archit Bharadwaj.

Nitya Mehra attended the German Youth Camp in Germany in May 2018. Abhey Khanna and Ishan Gangwani returned from their summer Cricket Exchange to Ellesmere College, U.K. Jai Sharma, Harshvardhan Jadon and Daksh Gupta participated in the Regional German Youth Camp held in Sri Lanka in June, 2018.

Arpit Mittal, Shorya Agarwal, Yuvraj Jain, Tushar Saini, Sirish Mehra and Anuj Pratap Singh Rajput went to Japan on an educational trip with Mr Mustak Khan Choudhary from 21st - 28th June 2018. They visited Tokyo, Hiroshima, Osaka and Koyoto. Their travel informed them about Japanese food and culture; more specifically they attended their famous traditional tea ceremony, visited a school and interacted with Japanese students. The boys also enjoyed their ride in the bullet train.

यह तो घर है प्रेम का

जीवन में अनेक दौर होते हैं जिसमें आप विभिन्न अनुभवों से होकर गुजरते हैं। ये खट्टे-मीठे अनुभव जीवन-पथ के पाथेय होते हैं और आपके जीवन-इतिहास के साथी होते हैं। ऐसे ही मेरे जीवन का एक अनुभव माधव हाउस के हाउस मास्टर के रूप में हुआ। हाउस मास्टर के रूप में मेरा दस वर्षों का कार्यकाल न सिर्फ मेरे लिए बल्कि मेरे परिवार के लिए लाभप्रद रहा क्योंकि एक छोटे से परिवार से हम एक बड़े परिवार में आ गए थे। सर्वप्रथम जुलाई 2006 में मुझे जूनियर हाउस में कनेरखेड़ हाउस का उत्तरदायित्व मिला। छोटे बच्चों के बीच रहने का एक अलग ही अनुभव होता है। छोटे बच्चों की एक अलग ही दुनिया होती है-

‘क्षण-क्षण में परिवर्तित होता हृद-स्पंदन, चंचल पाखी-सा न मानता बाधा बंधन ।

स्वच्छ-हृदय का हास, पास इनके सम्मोहन, जय हे बचपन, जय हे बचपन, जय हे बचपन।’

ऐसी दुनिया में रहने का अवसर तीन महिने ही मिला। फिर मुझे तत्कालीन प्राचार्य ने माधव हाउस का कार्य भार सौंप दिया। वरिष्ठ छात्रावास की चुनौतियों पर विजय प्राप्त करने के लिए ही मुझे यह कार्य दिया गया था। जूनियर हाउस की सुरक्षित चारदीवारी से मैं बाहर नहीं आना चाहता था। परंतु चुनौती मिली थी तो इसे स्वीकार न करना अपने कर्तव्य से भागना होता, अतः अक्टूबर 2006 में मैं माधव हाउस में स्थानांतरित हो गया। दूसरे दिन सभी वरिष्ठ छात्रों से बातचीत करने के पश्चात् उन्हीं के द्वारा मैंने छात्रावास के नियम बनवाए। मेरे लिए और छात्रों के लिए भी बहुत कुछ नया था। जूनियर हाउस की दुनिया से सीनियर हाउस की दुनिया बिल्कुल भिन्न थी। यहाँ छात्र अपनी मर्जी से काम करना चाहते थे जिसे मैं एक सीमा के बाद अनुमति नहीं दे सकता था आपसी खींचतान प्रारंभ में बहुत रही। छात्रावास में बार-बार मेरा ‘राउंड लेना’ उन्हें अखरता था। ऊपर जब मैगी बनाई जाती तो गार्ड रखे जाते जो मेरे आने की त्वरित सूचना दे देते थे। फिर मुझे फुसलाकर किसी अन्य दिशा में ले जाकर, किसी बल्ब के फ्यूज होने की सूचना दी जाती या फिर मुझे नल के चूड़ी की खराबी को दिखाने ले जाते, तब तक चलते-फिरते किचन में अपने ‘परफ्यूम’ की शीशी खाली कर दी जाती थी। इस प्रकार की शरारतें जब-तब देखने को मिलतीं। विद्यालय की आखिरी रात में नींद न आने की शिकायत लेकर आने वाले विद्यार्थी द्वारा रात 2 बजे तक लगातार बातें करते रहने का जुड़ाव भी था ।

हाउस मास्टर के साथ उनकी पत्नी की भी हाउस संचालन में अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका होती है। मैंने कई बार ममता से पौरुष को

हारते देखा है। यदि कोई छात्र भूखा रह गया या कोई बीमार है तो ममता पूर्ण छाया देकर मेरी धर्म-पत्नी ने उसे संभाला। इसीलिए जब भी कोई छात्र संपर्क करता है तो सबके विषय में अवश्य पूछता है या यदि कोई विद्यालय आता है तो मिले बिना नहीं जाता।

बढ़ते हुए बच्चों को कई बार एक सीमा तक आज़ादी देनी पड़ती है। दूर खड़े रहकर बस उनकी शरारत पर नज़र रखिए और जहाँ शरारत बढ़ती है तो तुरंत दखल दीजिए। इसी सिद्धांत को आधार बनाकर मैंने बच्चों को कुछ सीमा तक छूट दी और उनमें छिपी ऊर्जा को जानना चाहा क्योंकि ऊर्जास्वित्त व्यक्ति को दिशा देने पर ही वह समाज में एक स्थान पाता है, जिनमें ऊर्जा नहीं है उनमें ऊर्जा का संचार करना हमारा परम कर्तव्य बन जाता है। बच्चों में पारिवारिक और सामाजिक जीवन के कर्तव्यों का ज्ञान कराना, कभी समूह में तो कभी एकांत में उनको समझाना, उन्हें यह बताना कि ‘का चुप साध रहा बलवाना’ अर्थात् उनमें उनकी शक्ति का बोध कराना हमारा कर्तव्य बन जाता है। प्रत्येक छात्र अपने आप में अद्वितीय होता है इसलिए हमारे पास इन सभी को समझाने की ताकत होनी चाहिए। हमें संवेदनाओं के रसायन को समझना होगा। छात्रों के आपसी व्यवहार व उनमें निरंतर परिवर्तन को भीतर तक समझाना होगा। छात्रों का क्रियाकलाप उनकी पृष्ठभूमि है, शेष कार्य हमारा है कि किस दशा और किस दिशा में हम कार्य करते हैं।

‘हाउस मास्टर’ के लिए अत्यंत सटीक दोहा है कि -

यह तो घर है प्रेम का, खाला का घर नाहिं।

सीस उतारे भुईं घरै, तब पैठे इन माहि ।।

क्योंकि छात्रों का दिशा-निर्देशन करते हुए सर्वप्रथम आपमें त्याग की भावना होनी चाहिए क्योंकि आप एक या दो बच्चों के पिता नहीं साठ बच्चों के पालक व दिशा-निर्देशक हैं इसीलिए सर्वप्रथम तो क्रोध को ताक पर रख दीजिए, बच्चे को हमेशा बच्चा समझिए, यह जान लीजिए कि उससे निश्चित रूप से गलतियाँ होंगी ही इसलिए गलतियों और बदमाशियों में फर्क समझें, जितना अधिक हो सके उन्हें समय दें। घर से दूर एक घर की आशा में आए छात्रों को निराश न करें, उनकी गलतियों को कभी अनदेखा न करें, जहाँ आवश्यकता हो थोड़े सरल हो जाएँ या सख्त हो जाएँ लेकिन ध्यान रखें कि छात्र के हृदय पर चोट न हो। कबीर की इस वाणी को सत्य करें -

गुरु कुम्हार सिस कुंभ है, दै दै काढ़े खोट।

भीतर हाथ सँवारि कै, बाहर दै दै चोट।।

यहाँ चोट का अर्थ मारपीट बिल्कुल नहीं है बल्कि उसकी आत्मा पर चोट हो ताकि उसे आत्म-ज्ञान की प्राप्ति हो।

खेल का मैदान हो, या हो प्रेक्षागृह अथवा मुक्ताकाशी रंगमंच, प्रत्येक स्थान पर आपकी उपस्थिति दर्ज़ की जाती है। बच्चों की नज़रे बहुत तेज़ होती हैं आपके लगाव से ही उनका जुड़ाव जुड़ा होता है। हाउस मास्टर की प्रेरणा बच्चों में ऊर्जा का संचार करती है और वे पूरे जोश के साथ किसी भी कार्य में अपना शत-प्रतिशत सहयोग देते हैं।

‘हाउस मास्टर’ के रूप में मेरे आदर्श रहे ‘ज्योतिबा हाउस’ के हाउस मास्टर श्री जोरावर सिंह। जब 1997 में मैं उस हाउस से जुड़ा तो मेरी शिक्षा प्रारंभ हुई। किस प्रकार साम, दाम, दण्ड और

भेद की नीतियों की अग्नि में पकाकर बच्चों को खरा सोना बनाया जाता है, किस प्रकार एक हाउस को ज़मीन से उठाकर फ़लक पर बिठाया जाता है इससे मैं धीरे-धीरे परिचित हो रहा था। कक्षा सात और आठ के साथ भोजनालय में भोजन करने के कर्तव्य से लेकर, कॉमनरूम की चाभी के लिए वरिष्ठ छात्रों का मेरे घर तक पहुँचना और श्री सिंह से विनती कर उनकी ओर से क्षमा माँगकर दस चैनल वाले केबल टी.वी. का आनंद उठाना वास्तव में गुरु-शिष्य संबंधों की एक महत्वपूर्ण कड़ी है। 2004 में जब ज्योतिबा हाउस का विलय अन्य छात्रावासों में हो गया तब मुझे ‘महादजी हाउस’ के सहायक के रूप में स्थान दिया गया। जहाँ दो वर्षों तक हाउस के बाहर रहते हुए भी मैं उनसे जुड़ा रहा। यही थी हमारी पृष्ठभूमि जिसके प्रकाश में 2006 में मुझे कनेरखेड़ में ‘हाउस मास्टर’ की जिम्मेदारी दी गई ।

दस वर्षों के इतिहास को चंद पन्नों में समेटना संभव नहीं है और अधिक पन्नों में उनको बिखेरना आत्मश्लाघा से अधिक कुछ नहीं। इस दौरान की कुछ घटनाएँ भूल जाने लायक हैं और कुछ हैं जिन्हें मैं मात्र महसूस कर सकता हूँ भावनाओं को शब्दों का जामा चढ़ाकर मैं उनके महत्व को कम नहीं करना चाहता हूँ । जो सम्मान, ज्ञान, अभिमान, प्राण, उत्थान, आवेश, देश, वेश, मंच, पंच दिया, सिर माथा, धोया, घुमाया इन सबके लिए मैं आभारी हूँ - हमारे प्राचार्य श्री अमरनाथ दर, श्री निर्मल कुमार तेवाड़ी, श्री शमीक घोष और डॉ. माधवदेव सारस्वत जी का जिन्होंने मुझे इस योग्य समझा और इस महत्वपूर्ण कार्य के लिए चुना।

श्री मनोज मिश्रा

विभागाध्यक्ष - हिन्दी विभाग



Mr Manoj Mishra with family in front of Madhav House

INTERVIEW

Mr Sanjeev Kathpalia (Ex-Ja, 1969) in conversation with Staff Editor Qila Quotes, Mr Vishesh Sahai

You have been an achiever in the line that you chose to pursue. That must have meant constantly challenging yourself / disrupting your status quo. What are some of the biggest risks that you took; and what did you learn from them?

The most important lesson learnt is that moving beyond the comfort zone, taking risks and striving to do newer things in different ways is a great way to live a life that's satisfying, joyful and adventurous, all at the same time.

Leaving Unilever after a long innings was tough but an early lesson in getting out of the comfort zone.

Later, quitting a company with several hundred engineers and multiple manufacturing units reporting to me, and to start afresh with one & half people in a one room office in Turkey was the biggest risk. It almost ruined my career when the Turkish Lira lost 50% value literally overnight and our business went bankrupt. It's like waking up tomorrow morning to find that the US Dollar is Rs.130 and all the payables to the bank are in US Dollars and the receivables in INR!

To claw back from there and end up running the investment bank that hired me was an unexpected success and gave immense satisfaction. That led to other interesting experiences such as the privilege of being invited by the President of Turkey to accompany him on many state visits, to the banquets at the presidential palace etc. These are memories I cherish. And finally being head hunted to become the India Advisor at the Turkish Prime Ministry brought us back to India and I reconnected with Scindia School in 2014.

It is believed that travel is the best teacher. Having travelled so extensively, what have been some of your most profound lessons - personally and professionally?

First lesson: The path less taken is always the most promising.

Travel is an experience, it's a journey and each one of us has our own interpretation and understanding of it.

An open mind without any preconceived notions has helped me engage with the world as I travelled to places unknown, to meet people unmet, to start new conversations, listen to fresh ideas and so on. It has shown me that there are alternative approaches to life's circumstances and that we have a choice more often than we realize - That each of us impacts the lives of others and makes a difference.

I've experienced that 99% of the time if I start a conversation with my co-passenger on a flight, the other person enjoys the conversation and I become the richer for it, but rarely does the fellow passenger initiate a conversation! It's a strange realization and a commentary on our times.

Travel has made me introspect, helped me to become adaptive and above all, the exchanges keep the mind younger and more open to new ideas and I am able to better deal with uncertainty, ambiguity and unpredictability of life.

What's your take on cross-cultural sensitivity & innovation?

The more one travels, the more one appreciates the differences. This is as true within India as outside of it. We were fortunate to have worked and lived in every part of India - North, South, East and West. Each region with its own language, cultural beliefs and rituals taught us to appreciate the common linkages and celebrate the differences.

We are more spiritual than religious. We accept rather than protest. And use new cultural experiences and exposures to learn and absorb.

On a lighter note, each time you've visited the Fort, many boys have commented that you look like Steve Jobs. How many times have you heard this before? Your response on this please.

It's rather embarrassing, each time it happens. To resemble one of the marketing geniuses and technology gurus of all time, best known for his 'reality distorting' field effect does not sit easy. Wish I also had a fraction of his genius or a fraction of his impact on my surroundings and those I come in touch with.

In a completely US, Europe centric world, what were your first thoughts on the Turkish assignment?

Ha Ha! That's a great question. When I first said 'Yes' to the rather strange assignment, well-meaning friends & family asked why we were going to the 'Registan' (a desert) and a country that had little to recommend itself, being known as the 'Old man of Europe' for decades. We soon learnt that Istanbul now a city of 15 million had only 200 Indians (men, women & children) and that proved it was a good decision

What would you attribute your abiding love for Turkey to?

Turkey is unique in its yin and yang of religions, continents, culture and history. Istanbul is a majestic city of great



charm and beauty with history at every footstep. We found this exciting and rejuvenating. We took to its hospitable people and the language with ease. Such was the blending that the Turks were often surprised to find out that we were not one of them.

Turkey offers a blend of western thought and eastern philosophy, of western systems and Asian workarounds. A country that truly sits at the cross roads of civilizations where east continues to meet the west in a continuous stream of discoveries of the past and progress that takes us onwards.

The simplest of activities are conducted in the sincerest of ways with skill. Even today I can vouch for my friendly and skilful 'Terzi' of Istanbul (tailor), the friends made over Turkish coffee, the extracts of rose from Isparta, the cream from poppy seeds of Afyon, the carpets of Hereke and I could go on and on. Turkey truly permeates our spirit and made a difference to our lives and that of our children in more ways than we can count.

What has been the highest point of your professional Journey?

The entire journey has been a celebration. Each step prepared me for the next. Just when I thought it was a high point, another door opened leading yet higher. Each of which would not have been possible without the earlier and yet there was no grand plan. The global assignment in the 80s at Unilever was exceptional for the times and it gave me exposure to Turkey. The Turkey experience of the 80s made the otherwise unthinkable move from manufacturing to Investment banking a reality. I still ponder over it !This in turn led to the India Advisor assignment at the Turkish Prime Ministry, a position that I wasn't even aware of. And the dots kept connecting. During the investment banking years, we did a good amount of work in the IT sector. And now I find myself running an exciting Technology business surrounded by AI, data analytics, IoT solutions etc.; yet another undreamt dream come true!

If it is not too intrusive, then please share with us your bucket list, both personal and professional?

I really don't have a bucket list. In fact I don't believe in having one. Bucket lists are fad or at best, marketing gimmick. Places less travelled are often not on bucket lists.

That having been said, I have always been open to new experiences, new cultures, new approaches. I could perhaps make a bucket list recommendation for others

Your Batch celebrates its Golden Jubilee reunion next year. How are the preparations been so far?

Our batch is truly unique. We represent the ultimate merger of batches if there's such a concept. Included among us are those who did Senior Cambridge in December '68, Higher Secondary in March '69 and the first batch of Class-12 in March '69. Never before and never after will there be such a batch. The preparations are going well and the long lost friends have been found in the farthest corners of the world even as we have belatedly learnt of some that are no

more. We will be at Scindia in full force, come January '19.

Any Scindian confessions that you'd like to make?

Scindia is such an integral part of me, that it's difficult to think of anything like a confession....I only have experiences!

The raid on the House master's house to clean up the goodies deposited for safe-keeping by some unsuspecting Jayajians probably stands out ;) Niraj Lal was our Coordinator-in-chief ...and to this day when we meet, we remember the episode and the tastes

What message would you like to convey to the boys in the school?

It's been always a pleasure to interact with them and I marvel at the immense confidence that they have compared to what most of us I suspect, felt in our times.

The one thought I'd like them to mull over is the idea of a 'planned career'. I grew up only to discover it is a mirage. Everything interesting that happened to me was by luck or happenstance. I wanted to do Chemistry (Hons) at St. Stephen's college but went down with jaundice in December '69. I was forced to take the exams from the sick bed and did not get the best results. This forced me to sit for the competitive exams that took me to IIT, Delhi and changed the course of my life and career. It's said that opportunity comes knocking on the door but once. And when it does you must be ready and sitting on your desk to grab it. Never be diffident to say 'Yes' or afraid to say 'No'. Compete with yourself and do better next time.



Mr Sanjeev Kathpalia - Taking it easy

MEMORIES OF SCINDIA 70 YEARS ON....

First of all I would like to thank my alma mater and all my teachers there for making me largely what I am today. Unconsciously, I stand out and above my friends, colleagues and even some members of my family. I do not say this arrogantly but with a degree of gratitude. I joined the School in 1949 aged just ten and graduated in 1956 and proud to say was appointed as one of the School Prefects during my senior years, an honor bestowed on just a few boys every year.

When I joined, I knew no Hindi but was proficient in English, having been a prior boarding school student where all the boys except me and my brother were the only Indians among English, Scottish and Irish boys. However thanks to my teachers, my friends and my own young age, I picked up our national language quickly and became fluent in less than a few months. I was placed in Mahadji House which at that time had a cosmopolitan atmosphere with boys from many family backgrounds. I was uncomfortable early on and wondered why Shuklaji did not place me with such strong English background in Jayaji which we all jokingly believed was for the psuedo English. Mahadjians had a predominant number of Rajput and Maratha boys with whom I, a Tamilian, became quite close.

I so fondly remember watching Hollywood movies sitting on the floor spread with sheets in the Madhav Hall closely packed with boys. We were all so close to our Housemates that most of had close friends belonging to the same House. That was strange but true. Sixty years later whoever I am in contact with from Scindia are all Mahadjians. I also vividly remember our sports events, big and small, where all of us would loudly and raucously cheered our Housemates during tournaments.

What a wonderful school it was, where we trained in all three sports football, hockey and cricket plus track and field events, horse riding, swimming and gymnastics. Scindia School truly made us all well rounded in academics and sports. We were trained in debating and elocution and some were truly experts in these and other fields. Music instruction was also included along with craftsmanship. My fondest memories are of our daily sessions at Astachal and my walks with friends among the great ruins of Teli-ki-Lat and Saas-Bahu Temples and the ramparts of the world Heritage site, Man Mandir. How wonderful that our Founder the senior Madhavrao Scindia conceived and built our School on top of a magnificent plateau overlooking the ancient city of Gwalior. It has lived and grown for over 100 years and it will live forever. God bless my alma mater.

Byravan Viswanathan.

(Ex-Mj, 1956)

Adieu, Ms Puja Pant



Ms Puja Pant

The School fraternity bid a heart - warming farewell to **Ms Puja Pant**, one of the most graceful and energetic teachers on the fort, who bid us adieu after more than a decade at The Scindia School. In the course of her fruitful tenure, she served as the Head of Publications and was the Founder-Editor of the School's premier magazine - Qila Quotes, which she looked after for about ten years. She also served as the Staff-Editor of the School Review for almost 8 years, undoubtedly making her the Guru of publications. It is heartening to mention, that several students who worked with her in the editorial board of these publications eventually became superb editors, writers, proof-readers, illustrators and designers. Ms. Pant was a top-notch event-manager who got into every minute detail to offer a splendid experience to every participant. She was the pioneer of the Editors' Conference, one-of-its-kind in India. Ms Pant loves adventure and is an avid cyclist. She participated in three cycling expeditions in the past three years.

Last but foremost, she served as the HOD of the English Department and was a much sought-after language teacher herself. She constantly kept herself updated with developments in English language and education field in general. Her son, Manas Pant studied at The Scindia School and graduated in 2015. He is currently studying at the NYU-AD on full scholarship. On behalf of the Scindian fraternity, QQ wishes her luck for all her future endeavours.

SOBA LUCKNOW INVADES AGRA

The second scorching day in June saw a convoy leave Lucknow in the early morning with the air conditioning battling against the weather. The convoy consisted of nine vehicles crammed full of Scindians, Scindians-by-marriage, and wannabe Scindians. Behind the pilot car sat the inspiration for the sortie, the Rt. Hon'ble Justice Sanjay Mishra (Ch 69), Lok Ayukta of Uttar Pradesh, who had judged that the weekend would be the ideal time to catch SOBA Agra napping, and invade the city of love! The journey, one that normally takes three hours, took a tad over six hours, as the cortege needed to stop for spiritual enlightenment several times to strengthen its resolve and to fortify its resources for the carefully planned assault. Napoleon once said that "An army marches on its stomach" and with this noble adage in mind, Lucknow SOBA continued to eat, drink and make its merry way to Agra. Eventually, the walls of the city were spied, and hot and exhausted (though not hungry or thirsty) they shambled their weary way to their various habitations in the hostelry they had chosen. After a much needed rest after their exertions, they assembled to meet the vanquished foe.

The Grey House Café was the battle field, and despite the steep climb up several mountainous stairs they breached the solid teak doors of the arena. They could have taken the lift but it was and is the world's smallest lift, with space for about three people holding their breath, or two rather well-upholstered Lucknowi Scindians. Mr. G.S. Bakshi, Director Alumni Affairs, managed to squeeze in with two others, while the lift wheezed up the two floors where already the hall was being defended by a gentleman who was asking everyone for their names, ranks and serial numbers.

He battled on, poor hapless fellow and managed to write down three names before being overwhelmed by the superior force and press of our Awadhi heroes on a stair landing that had been designed for three people but was at that time being occupied by around a dozen.

Eventually, the massive teak doors were opened and the front line faltered at the barrage of sound that blasted out at them. However, Awadh is made of sterner stuff and they charged in to be met by the wide open arms of the Agra SOBA which had turned up in force to meet them. The war turned into a melee of warmth (not least because of the weather) and bonhomie. Yelling over the sound of the music (??) they made the Awadh is welcome, with

libations and gustation enough to cause cholesterol to shoot through the roof.

Batchmates caught up with batchmates, seniors bonded with their juniors and vice versa, and the company was made delightful by the influx of OBs from Hathras and other not-so-nearby cities. Once the greetings and welcomes were exchanged, some of the very senior Scindians spoke of the natural bonding between Scindians regardless of vintage, youth or antiquity.

Mementos were presented by the invading force to the hosts, and vice versa and a convivial time was had by all. Directioning was provided by Director, Alumni Affairs, who asked that more such cross-city get togethers be arranged so that the Scindia 'connect' be maintained. Other OBs suggested that SOBAs be used as a platform for helping present and just graduated Scindians into careers of their choice, and to provide them with support, in terms of employment opportunities and direction as applicable. There was also a suggestion to make SOBAs more socially relevant, by becoming contributors to the societies they lived in. It was important for the general public to see that Scindia School is one that trains boys to become men that are socially conscious, giving back to Society, society's due. With that, the main item on the agenda was assayed,

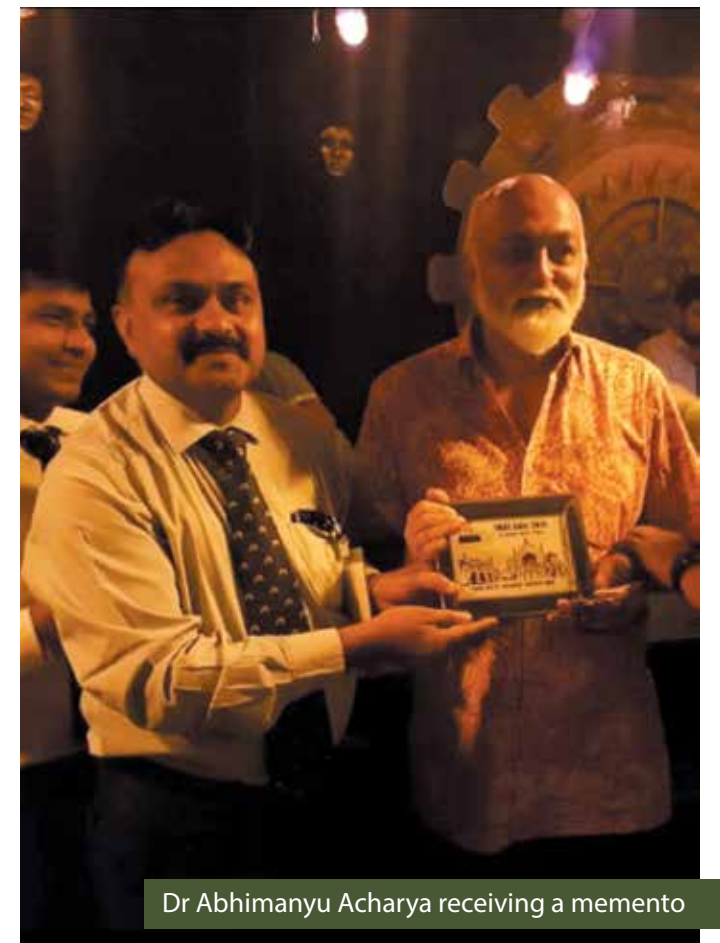
and a tired but happy group of Scindians returned to their hotel in the early hours of the morning.

The following day saw the intrepid Lucknavis gear up to brave the heat and visit the tomb of the mystic Salim Chisti at Fatehpur Sikri. The convoy started out and were treated to a personal guided tour by the very knowledgeable descendent of Salim Chisti who educated all present with the nuances of construction and vignettes of history not found in the books Scindians are forced to cram throughout their school career.

Returning there after to Agra, a slap-up lunch was laid on at Café Mocha where everyone fell on the food as they used to while at school. The evening saw another example of late night revelry and musical jollity, with Scindians and wives, and children outdoing each other in their display of talent. It must be noted however, that Scindians-by-marriage wiped the floor with Scindians with their talent and skill.

Thanks and congratulations must go to the vibrant SOBA team from Lucknow and all its members to have made this innovative SOBA meet happen in another city. It is to be hoped that SOBAs everywhere will venture forth, (where no man has gone before) and take the Spirit of Scindia wherever they go!

Dr Abhimanyu Acharya
(Ex-Ja, 1969)



Dr Abhimanyu Acharya receiving a memento



The Lucknow SOBA invading the tomb of Salim Chisti at Fatehpur Sikri

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

A service project in Thiksey Lamdon Model School – “what do you mean by that”, most of my friends asked me, “Are you going to educate? (Yes – myself) Come back and tell us all about it!” (Of course I will – captive audience is hard to find). “Can you write about your experience in a thousand words or so” – The Editor asked me? (He’s serious!) How do you encapsulate such myriad images, emotions, feelings, and experiences into a thousand words? So when did this experience actually begin? Was it the first time I heard about it? When I started preparing for it? After everyone I know got tired of me enthusing about it? The endless telephone conversations on how to best prep with ex Ladakhis? Was it my kitting trips to Decathlon? (where I made a nervous wreck of the sales person with my endless questions about how to pack my sleeping bag on the rucksack, which by the way, I still don’t know and the darn thing continues to hang around like an unwieldy extra digit). I would say all of it is part of my experience.

Excitement, nerves and a spirit of adventure had me in its grip from the time I signed up. Did the real thing live up to the expectations - A hundred fold. I have fleeting images of Leh; it’s young, happening and happy vibes reminded me of Hampi. The tiny market square is a cute copy of the European market squares, eclectic mix of food, handicrafts, ubiquitous tourists and gentle town folks.

The fact that I have any memories other than splitting headaches and keeping my roommate awake with my moans and groans is a miracle. The dreaded AMS struck and whoa I was flat out spinning on an unknown axis. I consoled myself thinking that since I can’t eat a morsel, hopefully I will go back home slim and svelte (if I’m alive). I lived to tell the tale and we haven’t even begun our adventure!

Thiksey, a village surrounded by mountains bare, harsh and silent other than the banshee like whooshing of winds. I was awed by the absolute stillness and lack of sound. It’s steeped in innocence, happiness, and absolute contentment. How do you give so much when you have so little?

The school held a special assembly for us, we all felt so honoured. The Lamdon school kids are absolutely delightful and without inhibitions. These kids are the cutest babies ever in my opinion. They are friendly, eager

to learn and play. They love Football and Bollywood! What a connection! Their spirit of sharing and community humbled me.

The monastery stands like a sentinel dominating the skyline, all pervading, visible wherever you go. There’s gravity to the place, which attracts a sense of calm when you step inside the ancient chambers. Old statues, beautiful tapestry and scriptures greet you as you enter the main prayer hall.

To my surprise the morning prayers, the little monks scurrying about doling butter tea and the 600 year old Manjushree Buddha, were a balm to my weary soul. I visit the protector’s temple (whose face is of such fierce beauty that it has to be covered at all times, lest it blinds you or consumes you). I prayed for all of our safety and looked around at all the ancient frescoes in wonder. I drank it all with my eyes and stored it away in my mind’s treasure chest.

Moving on, we fell into our 7 am to 5 pm routine fairly quickly. There was a method in our madness. We formed human chains to ferry anywhere between 200 – 500 bricks a day (each weighing about 8 kgs)! Laughter-filled, bumpy tractor rides to load the bricks are counted as blessings. We learnt the art of counting and loading 430 bricks in one load. We carried 6-7 feet long Talus on our backs from

about a kilometre away and ensured that we went from the left of the Stupas, as was the local practice, was no mean feat, I can tell you that!

The locals derived much amusement from us city folks with our masks, gloves, and reflector glairs. We used shovels to fill the trays with cement. Some of us learnt how to mix mud with water and make the local cement, and there were some who became master masons. The strong ones lift the heavy Dumas to the roof and voila! We could see the fruits of our efforts taking shape. Of course I’m bragging. I earned it, didn’t I?

The students worked at such an amazing pace with boundless energy and adapted quickly to changing scenarios. I think I have figured-out their secret; they have perfected the skill of whine-n-whinge to an art and can literally scale any mountain with this secret weapon! Jokes apart, each one of them brought a unique flavour and strength to ensure that we built the two classrooms before we left. I loved every minute of my time with them.

Lessons learnt for an eternity - The terrifying exhilaration of crossing my first narrow-muddy, pebble filled pathway, (turn your back to the sheer drop, and therefore keep your face towards the cliff) all the while keeping a brave smile for the kids in my group was my first lesson. Mules have the right of way, my second; and you follow mule droppings if you lose sight of your group, my third!

Before we trekked or drove past those scary, undulating, breath - taking, mule-proof paths: Rumbak, Pangong, Yurutse, Nubra, Changla and Khardungla were just words. Now I have a stream of pictures and feelings attached to each – the cold, the rain, frightening narrow crossings, death defying ibex leaps, the swooping yellow chaps, sand dunes on river beds, sad faced bactrian camels, and shops in the middle of nowhere. Not to forget the notorious Ladakhi toilets! Majestic mountains tall, multi-hued, wind-weathered and so poignantly lonely- sighing every time the wind touches them.

Such harsh and terrible beauty can only bring about deep and lasting changes. I witnessed blooming friendships, emerging leaders, and a complete change in mental and emotional grit. I have come back with a stash of stories, memories, life lessons and gratitude- Really a service project for my soul.

Pratibha Panth

(Adult Participant in The Ladakh Venture 2018)



Mission accomplished in Ladakh



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