

Vasant Valley

January, 2015

T O D A Y

FIRST LADY: FAWZIA KOOFI

Imminent Afghani politician and female rights activist, Ms. Fawzia Koofi recently visited Vasant Valley School to share the turbulent yet successful story of her life in Afghanistan. Beginning with a brief account of her childhood through which she spoke about fleeing the clutches of the Taliban at the tender age of three, she drew instances from her life that struck the audience as unimaginable in today's context. Despite adversities that would have ordinarily hampered her growth and development, not just as an individual but also as a politician, Ms. Koofi prevailed as the first girl in her family to attend school, the first female deputy spokesperson of the Afghani parliament and is currently in the midst of a filial competition with her younger daughter to bag the title of Afghanistan's first female president! Through our short interaction with her, students and the VVS newsletter posed a couple of questions to Ms. Koofi.

Newsletter: How was it growing up as a school girl in Afghanistan?

Ms. Koofi: I grew up in Badakshan district of Afghanistan. My brothers were very protective of me and my family was conservative to the extent that I had to wear a long skirt to school. After the Taliban attack in our community, I shifted schools. In my new school, there was a uniform. Yet I was not allowed to wear it. Now while everyone wore skirts, I was forced to wear full 'pantaloons.' So through my school days I felt out of place. What I lacked in appearance I made up for in academics and was always given the respect of my peers. I was studying medical science but I found that the quality of education in Afghanistan wasn't very great and so I switched to Political Science Honours.

Audience: We have heard and read about the United States' involvement in Afghanistan, during and post the Cold War. In actuality, what took place?

Ms. Koofi: The Cold War saw Afghanistan as an international battlefield. The USSR supported Afghanistan by its involvement in infrastructural development. Soon, the USA, fearing the spread of USSR influenced communism, also got involved with Afghanistan and began funding of the Mujahideen through Pakistan. But the cheques they sent were often empty and it was a system devoid of checks and balances. The money was split between the Mujahideen and Radical forces. Funds even reached different radical groups in Pakistan. But none of the money was spent to ensure women and child rights, an essential element required in Afghanistan at that point of time, where rape was considered the same as adultery. I think the US in Afghanistan made two fundamental mistakes. First, they did not pay attention to and support security forces and second, they invested time and money in villages, not major cities where radicalism was on the rise.

Audience: How do you think India can help in the development of Afghanistan in the future?

Ms. Koofi: People in Afghanistan have a high level of respect for India. We think India can help with infrastructural development in Afghanistan. Further, security is a priority and we need to train Afghani forces against 21st century phenomena such as radicalism and extremism. Currently, the Taliban is better equipped than domestic security forces. So we would require India's assistance to support and train our forces in sustainable ways. It would also help Afghanistan, if Indians shared education in Afghanistan.



Audience: What is your agenda for Afghanistan, in the event that you were to be elected the President of Afghanistan?

Ms. Koofi: My agenda is three pronged. First, I want to establish Afghanistan as a connection of two parts of Asia, the South and Central, by utilizing its geographical location to reinstate Merchant travel and the Silk route. Second, I want there to be education for every citizen of Afghanistan and third, I want meaningful peace. I don't want peace to just be a means of political propaganda between regional powers, but genuine peace.

Newsletter: What is your message to the global population?

Ms. Koofi: My message to the global population would consist of two aspects. First, Islam is not a religion of fights and terrorism; it is extremism and radicalism spread in the world that has created a wrong image of Afghanistan. Also, violence against women is a global phenomenon. I am willing to sacrifice my life for the rights and life of my daughters and the thousands of other women in Afghanistan. Lastly, education is necessary for all. Through my experience with my country, I have seen that **genocide will not kill a nation, but removal of education will.**

The celebrated author of 'The Favourite Daughter,' and 'Letters to My Daughter,' concluded with a statement that left that audience riveted in their seats and riddled with goosebumps.

"WE FIGHT, WE SURVIVE, WE LIVE."

Serena Nanda, 12



"If you make life for a woman hard, it gives her more reason to try for rights."

SCHOOL WATCH

Speed Math 1 - Class 12

15th January, 2015

Students who did well-

Shankar Salwan, Mallika

Oak and Akarsh Hemrajani

Winner- Rishabh Chatterjee

Je Suis Charlie

CHARLIE HEBDO

On the icy winter morning of 7th January 2015 time froze as humanity was attacked again when two-masked gunman stormed into the Charlie Hebdo headquarters in Paris with AK-47s, grenades and other forms of firearms and assault rifles. They opened fire on the workers, firing more than 50 shots, killing 12 people and injuring many others, while chanting "Allahu Akbar" at the top of their lungs. With that, the world lost some of the finest journalists and cartoonists of the industry. This was a direct attack on freedom of speech and expression. Brothers Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, part of the Al-Qaeda, demanded revenge for insulting Prophet Muhammad. Charlie Hebdo is a satirical French magazine, known to include cartoons, reports, polemics, and jokes. The recent terror attacks were in response to a number of controversial Prophet Muhammad cartoons it had published in the past. Post the attacks, the phrase *Je Suis Charlie*, French for "I am Charlie", was adopted by supporters out of support for those who were killed at the Charlie Hebdo shooting, and in turn, for freedom of speech & expression.

The attack on Charlie Hebdo was not only an act of cowardice, but also an unsuccessful attempt to paralyze and destruct the 4th estate of democracy- media. Such attacks haven't dampened people's spirit of freedom of speech in the past, but made it even stronger; this was proved again when the same cartoons were republished in various countries. The riots & mass demonstration against the attacks and showcase of support for the victims just went to show that no such terrorist attacks could weaken the freedom of expression. The quote, "A pen is mightier than a sword," has been given more meaning by the turn of events that have taken place. However, with great power comes great responsibility and we shouldn't abuse or take advantage of the powers vested within us. While it's understood that all is written and drawn in good humour, we need to draw a line, so people's sentiments are not hurt. As a budding journalist, I give my support to the freedom of speech and expression in general and to the victims in particular. We will not and cannot give in to the tyrannical acts of terrorism and extremism. Je Suis Charlie.



Jahnvi Arvika Nagpal, 10

A Chat With the Newbies

The excitement of entering senior school is unimaginable in the new class six alcove. Asking some of them how they felt, we got myriad responses!

"I felt good and very responsible. I was very eager to meet my new teachers. I liked all of them a lot. I really want to do well this year. I feel it will be a great experience."

Arjun Vaish, 6-B

"When I first walked in to Senior School, I did not know where my class was. When I finally reached, I saw that the alcove was much smaller and the desks, chairs and lockers were all very different from Junior School."

Ishita Gupta, 6-C

"It felt good to finally be in Senior School, however, I do not like the amount of freedom we have here!"

Suryavir Vaidyanathan, 6-B

"I had a heavy bag, and had already started feeling the pressure build up. I really want to go back to Junior School. In spite of all this, I am enjoying the freedom."

Khusi Lohia, 6-C

"I am enjoying Senior School, but I hate the uniform. I also have to make an impression on the new teachers."

Sairah Mamik, 6-B; Arshya Gaur, 6-C

"I enjoy Senior School, but miss the Play Room and the Jhoola Bari."

Myra Kapur, 6-B; Samara Mohan, 6-B

"I am loving Senior School. I like the fact that we have a new and different variety of hobbies to choose from and we can also choose our own visual and performing arts specialization."

Sabeer Bhullar, 6-B; Tarika Lowe, 6-B
(Interviewed by Rabiya Gupta, 9)

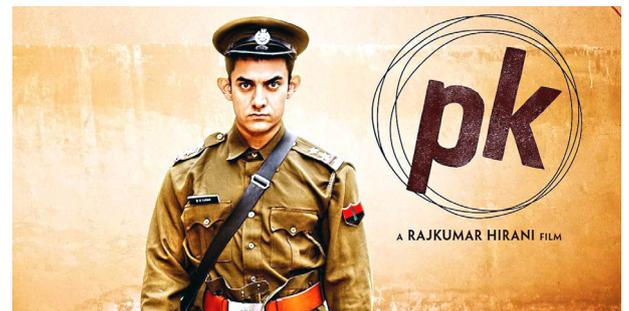
पीके - फिल्म दिख्यु

कई फिल्मों ने पिछाड़ों का भ्रमना किया है किन्तु पीके की बात ही कोई ख़ोर है। लेकिन इस फिल्म में है क्या की कई लोग इस पर प्रतिबंध लगाना चा रहे हैं।

धर्मअंध और अहंकार में मची लूटपाट और दंगों से भरी घटनाओं के इस देश में दूर यह से एक अंतर्दिक्ष यात्री आता है और यहाँ के माहौल में कंप्यूज के साथ हैरान हो जाता है। वह जिज्ञास यह से आया है, वहाँ भाषा का आचरण नहीं है, पत्रों का आचरण नहीं है और झूठ तो खिलकूल नहीं है। इसके व्यवहार के कारण धरतीवासी मान बैठते हैं कि वह हमेशा पिए रहता है, वह पीके है।

धर्म के नाम पर चल रही राजनीति और आस्थाओं में अटे इस समाज में भटकते हुए पीके के ज़रिए हम उन सारी कुशीतियों के भ्रमने खड़े मिलते हैं, जिन्हें हमने अपनी रोजमर्रा जिंदगी का हिस्सा बना लिया है और हमें इसकी आदत हो गई है व इसी वजह से हम आवाज़ नहीं उठाते हैं। इस फिल्म का संदेश हास्य व्यंग के माध्यम से दिया गया है न कि भाषण की तरह। इस फिल्म की इसी गुणवत्ता के कारण फिल्म की शोभा बढ़ती है।

अनीस कौर 9



Yeh Dilli Hai, Meri Jaan



Have you ever been stuck between the cross-fires of a Mumbaikar and a Delhiite, arguing over whether the Marine Drive is better than Connaught Place or whether *Mumbai's 'vada pao'* is better than the *Chandni Chowk's 'paranthe wali gali'*? I have and while this debate can never come to a consensus, I have realized that this city holds a special place in my heart. Having been born and brought up in Delhi, I've always been familiar with the sights and sounds around me. We may be

one of the most polluted, most congested and most unsafe cities in the world but we are also unparalleled in our cultural and historical heritage, in our love for the trends. Our Sarojini Nagar market gives competition to even the best. I mean come on; it's cheap, there's variety and as Indians, what more do we want? Delhi is like the melting pot of cuisines, pan India and the world. You want South Indian food? We give you Sagar Ratna. You want classic Punjabi butter chicken? We give you Moti Mahal. You want the finger-licking, insanely delicious street food? Well, that's everywhere. Literally.

Sure, my city has its flaws. You'll hear every Delhiite complain about the weather. Summers are too hot and winters are too cold. You wake up in the morning, look outside your window and you see... NOTHING! The fog in Delhi is a menace, delaying flights (and school), causing massive traffic jams and accidents. But then, the delight of having hot coffee from the roadside or Maggi on a cold Sunday morning, is unfathomable. People from other cities criticize the way we talk and use acronyms (Saying *by the way* instead of 'btw' is so LS!) but to ourselves we are perfect. You'll find people from Delhi who'll crib and cry endlessly about its many short comings but secretly there is a little corner in their heart which loves every bit of it. To others, this city not be the best place to live in. To them, it may be tainted with the worst crimes, the worst traffic, the worst weather. But for us Delhiites, **there s no place we d rather be.**

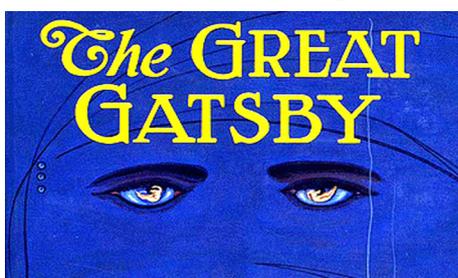
"We may be one of the most polluted cities in the world but we are also unparalleled in our cultural and historical heritage."



Kamya Yadav, 10

25 Books You Must Read Before You Graduate

1. The Catcher in the Rye- J.D. Salinger
2. Pride and Prejudice- Jane Austen
3. Jane Eyre- Charlotte Bronte
4. The Scarlett Letter- Nathaniel Hawthorne
5. Animal Farm- George Orwell
6. The Great Gatsby- F. Scott Fitzgerald
7. The Odyssey- Homer
8. A Tale of Two Cities- Charles Dickens
9. 1984-George Orwell
10. Great Expectations- Charles Dickens
11. The Iliad- Homer
12. To Kill a Mockingbird- Harper Lee



Modern School Barakhamba Road, Quiz

Anav Sawhney, Ricky T. George, Raghav Gupta and Aditya Vikram of class 12 participated in the Unquestioningly Modern Quiz held at Modern School, Barakhamba Road. Among 145 participating schools, they placed first. The quiz was conducted by renowned quiz master and debater Parnab Mukherjee. The team received certificates and individual trophies for this achievement. Congratulations!



A LUMINARY

At twenty-eight, she became the first author to have ever won the Man Booker Prize for her novel, *The Luminaries*, at such a young age. An inspiration for writers around the globe, Ms. Catton's bestselling novel is a reflection of her sheer brilliance and talent. On her maiden trip to India to attend various literary festivals, she took some time out of her busy schedule and graced our school with her delightful presence on the 19th of January. Accompanied by the Deputy High Commissioner of New Zealand and her mother, her visit was the subject of excitement all around the school. With buoyant faces, we gathered around and listened attentively as she began the workshop. Her interactive session with us was delightful and animated and learning about creative writing from an author of such stature was a true honor.



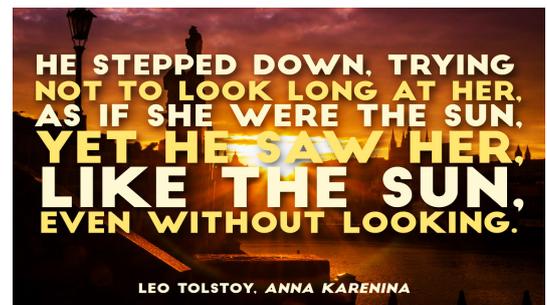
The workshop itself was systematically planned, building up from the very basics. A frisson eagerness and excitement could be felt in the Vasant Manch, which fueled the birth of new ideas from creative thinkers. Extremely well informed in her art, Ms. Eleanor Catton's advice fell nothing short of valuable. By weaving an intricate tale in the session, we were able to understand how to develop complications and thrill in the plot of a story. Upon being asked how she balanced the fine line between giving into what she knew readers wanted from her story, and remaining true to herself, her poignant reply left many inspired. She quoted David Foster Wallace, and said, "Write from the part of your heart that loves, not that wants to be loved."

It is not often that we are given opportunities such as this. Therefore, it's safe to say that Ms. Eleanor Catton's visit to our school was a privilege like no other, and will forever be treasured by us lucky students and teachers. Thank you, Ms. Catton. It really was an experience to be cherished forever.

Sarina Mittal, 10

25 Books To Be Read Contd..

14. Harry Potter Series- J.K. Rowling
15. The Da Vinci Code- Dan Brown
16. Catch 22- Joseph Heller
17. The Bell Jar- Sylvia Plath
18. The Giver- Lois Lowry
19. The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas- John Boyne
20. The Book Thief- Markus Zusak
21. A Thousand Splendid Suns- Khaled Hosseini
22. The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time- Mark Haddon
23. The Secret Life of Bees- Sue Monk Kidd
24. The God of Small Things- Arundhati Roy
25. The Shiva Trilogy- Amish



Three Times Lucky

Cristiano Ronaldo once again proved that he is the best by winning the Ballon D'Or 2014, his second in a row and third in total. Others nominated with him were German goal-keeper, Manuel Neuer and Argentinian legend, Lionel Messi. With an inspiring record of 61 goals last year for club and country and a Champions League season record with 17, it did not come as a surprise that this Portuguese heart throb won the coveted award. Along with the trophy, he also won many awards when he was quoted saying, "I want to become one of the greatest players of all time but of course, this requires a lot of effort and I hope to get there." The question that many now ask is, will there be a fourth time?



The day I would like to abolish

I have been thinking about this important question for quite some time. After all it is not easy to abolish a day, so when you get a chance you should do it carefully. I would like to abolish Monday because, we have to get up early in the morning after two days rest. And to make matters worse I don't have football practice on Monday. I would like to double Saturday because it is a holiday! But will it be easier to wake up after three days rest.

Rayyan E. Kidwai IV - A

I would like to abolish Thursday and have two Fridays. Thursday is like getting stuck in the middle of the week. It is like getting stuck in the Sahara Desert with no oasis. It is also difficult to do Sanskrit on Thursday. I like my Drama class but unfortunately there is no Drama class on Thursday. I like Fridays because there is a Class Act and I can stay up late. I can go to my friend's house and don't have to go to sleep early. I get to eat pizza and play games or watch movies. I hope one day India will be a Thursday less country.

Arhaan Mukherjee Saha IV - A

Winter Woes

Winter is extremely cold and magnanimous

For some it means fun and is stupendous

To some it means accidents and is dangerous.

Slippery roads and unseen roads due to snow

Heavy snow laden and fallen trees due to snow

Dark quiet and lonely streets due to snow.

Taking a bath in winters is dreadful

Driving long distances is awful

Working long hours in the dark is fretful.

For poor people on the road nights are scary

For sick people cold wintry nights are weary

For people in the quilt nights are cosy.

Fog in the air makes visibility poor delaying transport

Long endless queues and crowded stations and airports

Unfortunate tired and poorly clad people snort.

Frostbites, cold and death is common in winters

Hills and streets covered with snow is common in winters

Accidents and destruction is common in winters.

Bonfire parties and get together for some

Long untiring energetic hours for some

Winter is beautiful, snowy and frosty for some.

Gurmay S. Malvai V - C



Ishrat Singh Jhingran



Ranveer Singh, 3-B

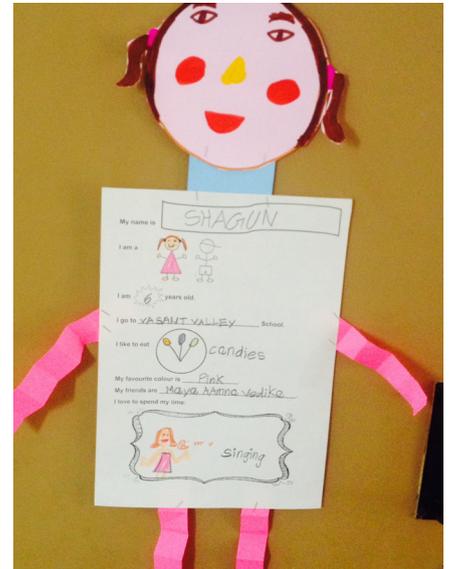
All About Amara

Hello everybody! My name is Aveer and I will tell you all about Amara. She is seven years old and is a smart girl. Her birthday is on 11th October. She likes to drink Seven-Up and eat fruits. Her favourite colour is red. She likes to read Rainbow Magic. She

enjoys playing tennis. Her hero is her father. She wants to be a painter when she grows up.

She enjoys reading with her father. I am happy to have a new friend in class three.

Aveer Pahwa, 3-C



Shagun Singh 1-c

I like India because:

• It has the Taj Mahal

• It has the colourful Metro

• It is independent-

• It has many different dances-

Sahira Sarin,

Arjun Goenka, Meera Shukjla,

Shiuli Ghosh II - C



Horrorscopes

Aeries: Have you been feeling lonely? Well you're lucky, because it's time for you to meet the love of your life. The only downside is that none of the teachers are going to let you spend time together and in the end you'll forget about each other and end up with people completely wrong for you. Then you'll deteriorate into a downward spiral focused around hair loss and weight gain.

Taurus: This is the year you scale new heights. You're going to achieve things you never have before and do everything you've ever wanted to. Your grades will go up and you'll lose all that weight you gained during the winter break. One thing to keep in mind, though, is that your achievements are completely inconsequential to anyone else's life and you will receive absolutely no recognition, because no one cares.

Scorpio: Good on you, Scorpio! You're going to change this year, and in a good way. You're suddenly going to get super intellectual and bury yourself in your private journal. Everyone will wonder about your sudden pretentiousness, but you won't care. Be careful, though. Or you might find yourself with no friends at the end of the year (except your journal).

Gemini: All the trouble that you've been having with your friends is going to subside. Those petty fights, that silly drama? It's all going to stop, and here's why. Your friends are going to be so fed up with you that they'll ditch you all together. No friends = no drama! Do the math, its simple enough.

Libra: This is your year, Libra. You're known to be the scale, balancing everything - and that's exactly what you'll do. Studies, sports - everything will go great. Except on the relationship front. You're still going to be lonely as ever. Keep looking for that prince or princess, maybe they'll come someday (probably not in this lifetime). Sorry darling, you can't have everything!

Sagittarius: You're our little wanderer, aren't you, Sagittarius. Well, this year you'll certainly travel - to Ms Krishnan's office! You're going to get into trouble for things that you weren't even involved in, and all you'll be able to do will be to cry your eyes out. So make sure you stock up on your tissues! Chocolate isn't such a bad idea either, I hear it's very good for the skin (trust me, you need it).



Cancer: In your upcoming Class Act, you're going to be undeniably excited. You'll be inspired to put on a great show, and you're going to put on the most memorable performance of the year. However, it'll be remembered for all the wrong reasons.

Capricorn: We know, 2014 wasn't so good for you, Capricorn. But don't worry! 2015 will be even worse. You'll find yourself making mistakes at every corner, disappointing everyone around you. You won't get anything right, and you'll find a friend in Aquarius as you both sit in sister's room and cry about your problems.

Leo: You're finally breaking out of your shell, coming out of the period of isolation that you put yourself into, meeting new people and making new friends. The only thing to keep in mind is that everyone will find you incredibly annoying, so socialize at your own risk.

Aquarius: Let's get right to it, Aquarius. 2015 ain't your year. You'll try to do everything to the best of your abilities, but nothing is going to go your way. Humiliation and defeat are going to be your two best friends this year. But hey, don't worry! You'll find a place to confide, a place where you can forget your problems; your refuge. Too bad, the place is sister's room, and all she offers to you is Digene.

Virgo: If you've been having vivid dreams, then that's great, because this is the year all your dreams will come true. Problem is that you're going to be blessed with nightmares, and you'll end up being chased by a demonically possessed doll. Annabel, anyone?

Pisces: Hope you're ready for this year, Pisces! You're going to transform, and everyone is going to notice. Puberty will actually go your way! All the boys and girls won't be able to get their eyes off you. Enjoy the attention while it lasts, because once the summer comes, so will acne town, and you'll be back to the person no one even glances at (except when you have certain atrocities on your forehead).

Kaamya Sharma and Riya Kothari, 10

Online issue: <http://www.vasantvalley.org/vasantvalley/archives/newsletterarc>

Please send all articles to : newsletter@vasantvalley.org



Editorial Board

Rabiya Gupta, Aryan Sadh, Armaan Kumar, Arushi Bhutani, Aditi Singh, Aditya Kapur, Asees Kaur, Devika Vir, Ishita Malhotra, Zoya Hassan, Jahnvi Arvika Nagpal, Kaamya Sharma, Kamyada Yadav, Riya Kothari, Sarina Mittal, Ananya Gupta, Arman Puri, Noor Dhingra, Rishabh Chatterjee, Serena Nanda.