



# VASANT VALLEY



Today

Dear Manan,



I remember being pulled out of class in ninth grade to be told that I had been selected to be a part of the Editorial Board. I was apprehensive and reluctant to replace the time I would have spent cooking in the hobby lesson with writing articles. I didn't imagine then that I would be meeting a group of people; who over countless discussions, BuzzFeed quizzes and years of frantically folding supplement issues, would become my second family.

Over the years I saw the coveted title of Editor being passed on from person to person, but never thought that I would one day have the privilege (and misfortune) of being handed the "crown of thorns". As a warning, let me make it very clear: the task that has been bestowed upon you is not an easy one. The newsletter will push you, challenge you and keep you up the entire night. I did often

stay up till 4 am compiling, had to forgo social events to meet deadlines and had to spend hours and hours editing, feeling as if I were drowning in an endless sea of words (and punctuation errors!) Being the Editor will demand much of you, but you will come to realise that it will give you much more in terms of friends, lessons in leadership and personal growth. At the end of the year, you shall emerge battered and bruised, yes, but also victorious, for during this period of time in the newsletter's life, you would have had the honour of making it your own. Before you know it, those seemingly insurmountable hurdles will pass and the sense of accomplishment you will feel when you look at your collection of newsletters will be unparalleled.

**"It took some time for me to realise that the newsletter was not only about writing well, but about leadership, teamwork and delegation – a joint effort."**

There were times during this year where I found myself completely overwhelmed with academic pressure, friends, college applications, and exams. Ideating, editing and compiling a six page newsletter every two weeks seemed impossible. It was then I understood the value of the twenty brightest minds I had at my disposal: the Editorial Board. They will always have unwavering faith in you, even during the times you feel filled with self doubt. The vibrant, intelligent, ever-smiling (yes, even when they've exceeded their submission deadline by 3 days) faces who enter every Zoom meeting (however late) buzzing with ideas are going to be your pillars of strength, allow them, as well as others, to lighten your load.

The past year, I found solace in opening up the previous "Letter to the Editor" articles, knowing that others had made it through, just as you will. Being the Editor is a unique experience, one that will teach you much and shape you for years to come. Never lose the initial enthusiasm with which you embark on your journey, aim to push the newsletter to greater heights with every issue you publish. Believe in yourself and your abilities Manan, because you are fully capable. And as hard as it may seem at times, enjoy the journey, because soon all bitter feelings will give way to fond memories.

**"At the end of the day the newsletter is home- every font, every picture and article is a reflection of you."**

It feels strange that I will not have any more deadlines to meet, brainstorm sessions to schedule, and events to cover. But as odd as it feels to be saying goodbye to the newsletter and the Editorial Board, it feels immensely comforting to be leaving my most treasured accomplishment behind with you. Best of luck on your journey, Editor, I have full faith in your abilities.



Love, Reana

## School Watch

### Inter House Social Science (Preliminary Round)

#### 19th April, 2021

##### Red House

Class 9&10- Priyanshu Sen

Class 11&12- Ayzra Dang

##### Blue House

Class 9&10- Amaara Dalmia

Class 11&12- Vedant Singh

##### Yellow House

Class 9&10- Ranvir Singh Sandhar

Class 11&12- Udhay Aman Chopra

##### Green House

Class 9&10- Dhairya Veer Singh

Class 11 12- Arshya Gaur

### Impromptu Results

#### 19th April, 2021

##### Class 6

1st- Anahita Rene Ganeshan

2nd- Kushagra Thakur

3rd- Vivaan Tulshan

##### Class 7

1st- Abeer Datta & Ayaan Adeeb

2nd- Ayaan Agarwal

3rd- Veda Kalra

##### Class 8

1st- Kaavya Mukherjee Saha & Ajeya Deshpande

2nd- Nirvaan Manaktala & Amairaa Chawla

3rd- Meera Shukla

##### Class 9

1st- Aarush Kapur

2nd- Devangana Jain & Kyra Dhar

3rd- Kaasvee Kaur

##### Class 10

1st- Shubhkarmen Singh Sandhu

2nd- Anant Veer Bagrodia & Vivasvat Rastogi

3rd Chaitanya Sharma

##### Class 12

1st- Ayushman Aashish Kher & Anshuman Singh

2nd- Arshya Gaur and Nikita Gupta

# Meet Your Prefects

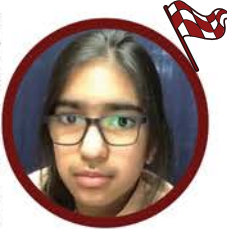
## Maedhavi Mahajan, Head Girl



The moment I saw my name show up on the slide as the Head Girl, I was filled to the brim with joy. It was as if time had frozen around me and I had to process everything in those few minuscule seconds. It was a moment taken straight out from a fairy tale, as if I had grabbed the perfect book and literally taken the perfect story from it. I knew all the responsibilities of a head girl and I felt more than ready to take them on. I was so happy at that moment that I decided to put all my worries aside for the day and celebrate my joy. I happily listened to all of the announcements and decided to call it a day

## Donna Chhatwal, Games Captain

Sports is my passion. I live sports and breathe sports and what more could have I asked for? My heart was beating fast as we were approaching the Games Captain's portfolio, I crossed my fingers and told myself now this is it... and there it was- my picture with my name and Ms. Krishnan congratulating me for being the Games Captain. The feeling was absolutely phenomenal. I was feeling so blessed and full of gratitude. I thanked my Principal and teachers for their confidence in me and promised to uphold all the responsibilities.



## Veer Ramchandani, Blue House Captain

When Mrs Krishnan said the words, "Veer Ramchandani, Blue House Captain", I couldn't believe my ears. I was absolutely thrilled as I had always wanted to take on the responsibility of becoming a Prefect. Now my dream had become a reality. My heart was filled with joy. I am thankful to Ms. Datta and all the teachers for giving me this opportunity. I am really excited to embark upon this journey where I will put my best foot forward and take Blue House to greater heights.



## Norra Chhatwal, Yellow House Captain

I always thought it was only Disneyland where 'Dreams come True'. But for me - Vasant Valley is the most magical place on earth which fulfils all your wishes! As Mrs. Krishnan began announcing, my heart was beating fast and at last, the moment that I had impatiently waited for arrived. She announced my name as the Yellow House Captain. I was on cloud nine and it was truly a magical moment for me! I felt so honoured and extended my sincerest thanks to all my teachers for choosing me for this position. I will try my best to make them proud and together make this year a truly memorable one.



## Ameir Sandhu, Head Boy



It was a moment when my heart skipped a beat and my brain froze. Our school Principal Ms. Krishnan was about to announce the student council of junior school. I was anxious and felt butterflies in my stomach! Suddenly my name was announced, I had become the Head Boy of Junior School! All my hard work had paid off in a truly magnificent way. I felt elated and tiny tears of utter glee rolled down my cheeks. A sense of immense pride and achievement whisked through my mind. I know I have to fulfil all my responsibilities with due diligence and utmost sincerity. I hope that I can make the most of such an outstanding opportunity and make everyone proud.

## Tara Yangchen RL Rana, Games Vice Captain

When the slide show popped up on the screen I was nervous, excited and jumpy. I told myself to be calm and humble. When the slide show popped up on the screen, I was nervous, excited and jumpy. While many of us were qualified for the various positions, only a few could be selected. Therefore, hearing my name being called for the Vice Sports Captain was a happy experience. Being a leader is a goal I have had for a long time. I will try to be a role model in Junior School and use sports to make all children feel happy. I look forward to giving back to the school that has given me so much since I was four. I am very lucky to have been guided by amazing teachers.



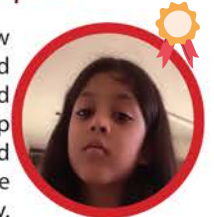
## Myeisha Sirohi, Green House Captain

I was so delighted and happy when Ms. Krishnan announced my name as the Green House Captain. I would like to thank my teachers for bringing me to this level. I am going to make Green House proud. I will give my best. Winning is important but it is more important to be kind, polite, respectful, disciplined and well mannered. Thank you everyone for bestowing me with this honour.



## Navya Modi, Red House Captain

Happy, joyous and excited are only a few emotions which I felt when I was declared Red House Captain. I felt responsible and motivated to take on the challenge and help Red House in many ways. I am privileged to be granted this opportunity and hope to make Red House better than it is today.



## Abhinav Mandal, Prefect for Five Areas of Development

The prefects were being announced, my heart started thumping. Ms. Krishnan started announcing the names. When she said, the prefect for Five Areas Of Development is "Abhinav Mandal" I was overjoyed. I couldn't believe my ears. It felt like a dream come true. At that moment I was a bit nervous but also happy and excited. It was a very special moment for me. I have got a really big task and I am looking forward to doing my duties responsibly.



**Ayushmaan Aashish Kher, Head Boy**

I am honored to have been given this opportunity, and I can't wait to get to work. My goal is to be a more approachable leader, so don't hesitate to reach out to me! And as Micheal Scott put it: "Would I rather be feared or loved? Easy. Both. I want people to be afraid of how much they love me."



**Arshya Gaur, Head Girl**

Saying that I'm honoured and grateful to receive this recognition is a gross understatement. The values and skills that have been instilled in me these past 13 years have culminated to make me worthy of this position. For a school that has given all that it has to make me the best version of myself, I hope to give it my all to see the school shine in all its glory.



**Manan Ahuja, Editor**

I am very grateful to have been given this post, looking forward to an endless tryst with Indesign, coffee and thousands of grammatical errors.



**Sabeer Singh Bhullar, Games Captain**

I'm honoured for having been appointed to this position.



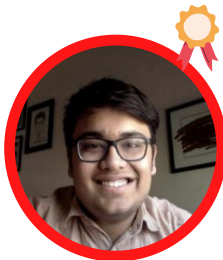
**Ansh Mehta, Games Vice Captain**

My heart was in my mouth during the assembly and when I heard my name it was a huge relief. Felt that all my hours representing school had paid off.



**Praneel Midha, Red House Captain**

As Spider-Man once said, "With great power comes great responsibility", being the Red House captain has been truly rewarding. I still can't believe the one position I always wanted is finally mine. Ab toh red house ko jeetana hi hai.



**Ayzra Dang, Red House Prefect**

I still can't believe it getting this position feels absolutely surreal! Can't wait to hear the whole school scream " jeetega bhai jeetega - Red House Jeetayga!



**Anshuman Singh, Blue House Captain**

Very grateful to be blue house's captain. I am excited to build upon my houses pre existing legacy and take the house to new heights. Go Blue!



**Kavyini Garodia, Blue House Prefect**

"I can do this"  
\*she could not do this\*



**Tishya Kasliwal, Green House Captain**

The feeling still hasn't sunk in. It's an absolute honour. Also, no I can't help you bunk lessons in the name of The Inter House Western Music Competition. Hopefully I'll get to see faces painted green and hear everyone in school soon scream "shalalalalalalala!"



**Aarush Shah, Green House Prefect**

I am extremely happy, proud and grateful to have been chosen as a prefect. I look forward to taking on this responsibility with sincerity and enthusiasm.



**Mahika Dalmia, Yellow House Captain**

I have always looked up to my Yellow House captains and feel proud to say that there will be many students looking up to me. I would like to thank the school for giving me this responsibility. I am overjoyed and will do everything I can to carry forward Yellow House's legacy. Yell what?



**Prithvi Mehta, Yellow House Prefect**

Being selected as the yellow house prefect reminds me of all the hard work the captains and prefects of the past have done to make yellow house the great house it is today. I have a massive amount of respect for all of them and hope to build on the foundation they have laid.



**Jayaditya Bargodia, Head of Cerebral Development**

I take this responsibility with great pride and will be doing my best to better the Vasant Valley experience for every student.



**Dhairya Kataria, Head of Social Emotional Development**

I am very honoured and excited to be appointed to my position and hope to inspire positive change in the entire school's social and emotional well-being.



**Vir Jain, Head of Social Emotional Development**

I hope to make the most of this opportunity.



**Shiveka Bakshi, Head of Spiritual Development**

I'm very grateful to have been given this position. I hope I am able to effect some kind of positive change :)





**Suhana Chopra, Head of Physical Development**  
It's really fulfilling to know that my hard work on the field has paid off. I am definitely going to do my best to help everyone achieve much more in the physical area.



**Bani Narag, Head of Creative Development**  
Super honoured and happy to be the first Creative Head! Can't wait to fulfil my responsibilities.



**Shaurya Chandna, Prefect for Outreach Council**  
Super honoured and I'm extremely grateful to be given such a responsibility and will try my best to reach out to those in need despite the current circumstances.

**Vedika Shrikhande, Prefect for Environment Council**

I just hope you don't see me as a glorified gardener now.



**Kavin Bhatia, Prefect for Library Council**

"Very nice, WAWAWEEWA" - Borat



**Ayush Bhatia, Prefect for Technology Council**

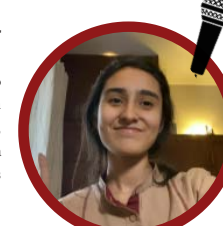
I'm really grateful for this opportunity and I look forward to everything this position brings.



**Suryavir Vaidyanathan, Prefect for Technology Council**  
Looking forward to spending all my free time working with the teachers and the prefect council to have a great year!



**Nikita Gupta, Prefect for Visual Arts Council**  
Art is a breath released to explore the unknown. I'm grateful for this opportunity. Let's take Visual Arts to a whole new level and make this year the best it can be!



**Devashii Sahu, Prefect for Performing Arts Council**  
I was grateful and excited at receiving this responsibility. I guess the six years of constantly singing in my classes paid off.

## जीवन बनाम धर्म



कुम्भ मेला हिन्दू धर्म का एक महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा है, जो नदियों के किनारे तीर्थ यात्रा का रूप लेता है। इलाहाबाद, नासिक, हरिद्वार और उज्जैन में मनाए जाने वाले इस मेले का आयोजन हर १२ साल के बाद होता है। ऐसा माना जाता है कि जब कोई भक्त कुम्भ मेले

के दौरान पवित्र नदियों में स्नान करता है, वह अपने सभी पिछले पापों से मुक्त हो जाता है। कुम्भ मेला पिछली बार २०१० में मनाया गया था, ११ साल पहले, १२ नहीं- परंतु ज्योतिषियों के अनुसार, कुम्भ मेला २०२१ में मनाया भी धर्म द्वारा उचित है। विवाद की बात यह है कि त्योहार धर्म द्वारा तो सही है, लेकिन ऐसी कठिन घड़ी में क्या इसका आयोजन देश के लिए सही है? कोविड-१९ की दूसरी लहर के दौरान, ऐसे बड़े-बड़े उत्सव बिलकुल निरापद है। कुम्भ मेला ने जल्द ही एक 'सुपर स्प्रेडर' का रूप ले लिया है- ५००० से ज्यादा लोग इसके कारण कोरोना वायरस से संक्रमित हुए हैं, और अब तो ७० से ज्यादा स्वास्थ्यकर्मी और ८० से ज्यादा साधु भी रुग्ण हो गए हैं। जहाँ पूरे देश में ऑक्सीजन और अस्पताल बिस्तरों की कमियों के कारण लोग संघर्ष में हैं, वहाँ उत्तराखंड में बिना मास्क, बिना एहतियात और बिना डर के जश्न मनाए जा रहे हैं। नई दिल्ली में तब्लीगी जमात के निजामुद्दीन मरकज की तुलना कुम्भ मेले से करते समय, केवल ३५०० लोग ही मरकज में शामिल हुए, जो कुम्भ मेले में आने वालों से बहुत कम है। संख्या के निरपेक्ष, ऐसे झुण्ड में मिलना गलत है- यह धर्म और अनुष्ठान की बात नहीं है, जीवन की बात है। घातक महामारी के बीचों-बीच अगर सरकार ऑक्सीजन प्लांट्स की जगह त्योहारों के आयोजन पर ध्यान देगी, तो टीकाकरण, क्वारंटाइन और लॉकडाउन की सारी व्यवस्था, स्वास्थ्यकर्मी के सारे प्रयास और बलिदान मिट्टी में मिल जायेंगे। शमशान में लाशें बढ़ती जाएँगी, चिताएँ जलती जाएँगी, भारत में कोरोना का यह संकट दूर करना कठिन से कठिनतर होता जाएगा।  
-सुमाया बेरी और त्विशा जेरथ, १०

## A Positive Anticlimax?

When the headlines suddenly blared "CBSE Class 10 Board Exams cancelled", a very unorthodox and slightly oxymoronic feeling took over me. It was as though, we, the batch of 2023 had been running a marathon this entire year and right when it was my time to sprint across the last 100m stretch, it was called off. Many of us did feel relieved, but some were also a little disappointed, since so much of our preparation lead up to nothing. Class 10 came to an abrupt end, leaving me with a feeling of aimlessness.

Some people heaved a sigh of relief at the news because they were underprepared and did not want to give another set of exams. But some believed, that after working hard throughout the year, a good result would have provided validation and a sense of achievement, conquering this unfamiliar arena. These examinations also kindle a sense of healthy competition, and third party assessment would have helped analyse where one stands beyond the four walls of school. However, looking at the upsurge in Covid cases, cancellation was the right step forward instead of repeated rescheduling which would have prolonged our stress..

Our batch might be a little scared of the fact that we have no experience in sitting for competitive examinations before the major ones at the end of Grade 12, however, we must try to be grateful about the small blessing we have received for now. Let us hope that the entire run will not go waste, and the mysterious objective criteria, adopted by the board will benefit all those who worked hard through the year.

We should try to make use of this time to unwind and resume other hobbies that hit a pause during board preparation, while (not so) eagerly awaiting the result.

- Advaita Sehgal, 11

## Israel Eases Lockdown Restrictions



While India is advancing towards a coronavirus catastrophe, the government of Israel has eased several lockdown restrictions. Videos of Israeli citizens symbolically removing their masks, owing to new rules, have surfaced all over social media. This is attributable to the new Pfizer vaccine, that is 95.8 percent effective in reducing the transmission of the virus and controlling the pandemic. The Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu anticipates that 95 percent of Israelis over the age of fifty will be vaccinated in the next two weeks.

During the peak of covid cases, Israel adopted an aggressive approach with standardised services for its citizens only. Whereas India endorsed diplomacy, as it focused on declaring “the biggest vaccination campaign in the world” and helping countries that couldn’t afford the vaccine. The past three lockdowns in Israel have completely crippled the economy and driven unemployment rates to over 20 percent. Now most establishments like businesses, libraries, schools, hotels and museums have reopened with masks as a necessity.

Despite a return to normalcy, several health specialists deduced that the population of Israel has attained herd immunity. I believe this can be detrimental if Israel overcompensates its vaccine progress, especially at such a vulnerable stage. It is predominant that the majority of the youth is vaccinated before minimising restrictions. The country must be opened in steady phases rather than in entirety to ensure that the virus doesn’t creep in again.

While Israel continues to vaccinate its non-vulnerable groups, Palestine and the Gaza Strip severely lag behind. Israelis and Palestinians have failed to achieve a peace agreement leading to severe hostility between the communities despite innumerable attempts of resolution. For purely political motives, several vaccines have allegedly been exported to countries that previously opened up embassies in Jerusalem, rather than providing assistance to these territories. Local media applauded Israel’s post pandemic future, unabashedly disregarding the unresolved controversy between the communities.

While the virus surely did not discriminate across communities, it highlighted the manipulative ideologies ingrained in several states of the world. It continues to remind us that someday, the global attention on vaccines might dissipate, but the disparities among us will always prevail.

- Kareena Grewal, 12

## Daunte Wright’s Life Mattered

“These two are hurting, our family is hurting, our blood has been spilled!” exclaimed Naisha Wright in a heartrending address to the press two weeks ago.

Only a few days before that, her 20-year-old nephew Daunte Wright – a Black man – had been fatally shot by a white police officer in the state of Minnesota, not too far away from where Derek Chauvin had subjected George Floyd to cold-blooded suffocation. Wright and his girlfriend were pulled over by a police officer – Anthony Luckey – on 11th April for an expired car registration tag. A background check revealed that Wright had a warrant for his arrest for a misdemeanour charge. Luckey tried to handcuff him, but Wright resisted that and attempted to re-enter his Buick. His training officer, Kim Potter, soon intervened and threatened to use her Taser on Wright. Potter took out her handgun and pointed it at him. At 2:02 pm, she pulled the trigger, and a bullet hit his chest.

“---, I shot him!”, she cried out after. Daunte Wright died at 2:18.

Brooklyn Center Police Chief. Tim Gannon claimed that Potter intended to deploy a Taser instead of a gun that day, they have both resigned from their positions now, and Potter has been charged with second-degree manslaughter. One cannot help but wonder how a 26-year veteran in the police force could mistake a jet-black Glock for a neon-yellow Taser.

Soon, protests erupted, spreading from state to state. Wright was one among many who have reeled under the brutality and racism enshrined within the policing system, where prosecutions are rare and convictions are difficult. Experts agree that defunding the police (despite vigorous opposition from police unions) is the most comprehensive solution to this national crisis. The Black community has been historically marginalised by segregated housing, unemployment, redlining, and quiet relegation to crumbling schools. Massive investments need to be made for its deserved amelioration. Emma Lazarus’s Mother of Exiles must outstretch her arms in welcome – for all her children.

-Shiveka Bakshi, 12

## VVS Comics



A surprise summer break may have been sprung on us, but we all are keeping our spirits high and anxiously awaiting our return to school!

- Sara Jayakumar, 10

## मेरा जीवन:तुमको अर्पण

मैं एक नन्हा-सा बीज,

जो माँग रहा था बस,

इस धरा पर अपने हिस्से का कुछ अंश।

हा, मनुष्य! तूने छीना मुझसे मेरा प्रांगण।

प्रकृति के सब उपादानों को तूने समझा बस अपना धन,

इस धरती ने दिया हमें जल, भोजन और जीवन, स्वार्थी बनकर करते रहे, तुम बस इस धरती का दोहन, प्रतिदान कुछ तो देना है, अतः प्राणवायु ही मेरा अर्पण

हा, मनुष्य! तूने स्वयं ही नष्ट किए सब अपने जीवन साधन।

मेरे पुरखों ने सदियों से किया तुम्हारा पालन-पोषण, निस्वार्थ भाव से किया अपना सब कुछ तुम्हें समर्पण।

यह काल का है विकराल प्रहार,

जिन वृक्षों को तुमने काटकर बनाए आकर्षण भवन, आज उन्हीं में बंद पड़े तुम माँग रहे अपना जीवन, कैसे भूल गए तुम मेरा निश्चल प्रेम और यह अर्पण।

जिस प्राणवायु को मैं यँ देता रहा हर-पल,

आज उसी का कतरा-कतरा ढूँढ रहे तुम होकर विकल।

हा, मनुष्य! अब बस बंद कर यह कातर क्रंदन, जो बोया था वो काटा है, यही सीख देता है भगवन!

मुझे चाहिए मेरी धरती, मेरा प्रांगण हा, मनुष्य! कृत्रिम वस्तु पर जो करता था इतना घमंड न दे सका वह आज किसी को एक नया जीवन।

मैं जो थोड़ी से धरती लेकर, देता तुमको शुद्ध पवन, पुनः करो यह मंथन, पुनः करो यह चिंतन।

मेरा जीवन-तुमको अर्पण।

- निरुपमा सिंह

## WORLD TODAY

*The easiest way to ace a GK quiz!*

Delhi reports fewer cases in 24 hours, now at 1,600 and the positivity rate has fallen to 2.5%. There were allegedly days in April where the cases had reached 28,000 in 24 hours and the positivity rate was at 36%.

Around 8000 families have been displaced amidst the violence between Afganistani forces and the Taliban. The country is working in alliance with NGOs from abroad to settle and take care of the needs of the displaced families.

The Bihar and Uttarakhand governments, among others, have declared the outburst of Mucormycosis (black fungus) as an epidemic disease under the EDA (Epidemic Diseases Act) and have declared that all those suffering from the same will receive free treatment.

Mount Nyiragongo in Congo erupted for the first time in nineteen years and as a result of the same, the night sky turned red, sending lava onto a major highway. The residents situated next to the volcano fled, carrying mainly mattresses and other belongings.

In a 100km ultramarathon held in the Gansu province in China, 21 people were killed and others suffered minor injuries due to extreme weather conditions ,including hail, freezing rain and gale.

Thousands of British residents marched in protest through the streets of London and other cities against the Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza strip amidst conflict between Israel and Hamas with banners in support of the Palestinian people.

Princess Latifa, daughter of Sheikh Mohammed al-Makhtoum, Dubai ruler, was seen after remaining untraced for a long time. She had previously accused her father of holding her hostage, this picture came after the UN asked for proof of life.

- Sara Jayakumar, 10



## Cuba: The End of the Castro

April 16th, 2021, is a day that will definitely go down in Cuban History as a revolutionary one. Raúl Castro formally stepped down as the leader of the Communist Party of Cuba, thereby ending more than six decades of Castro rule over the Cuban island.

In 1953, the Castro brothers – Fidel Castro and Raúl Castro – led the Cuban revolution against Spanish dictator Fulgencio Batista. After Batista's defeat in 1959, Fidel Castro took over as the dictator of Cuba. He brought about communist ideologies in Cuba. However, all of these reforms were at the cost of freedom of the press and free elections. Cuba became increasingly associated with the USSR and lost all its ties with the US. In 2008, Fidel stepped down due to health problems and his brother Raúl took over. Raúl Castro supported

communism, yet he opened up Cuba's economy to private enterprise. He also tried to normalize relations with the US.

During Fidel Castro's regime, thousands of Cubans tried to flee from their homeland. Cuba's economy was in shambles, yet Castro was more interested in spending money on turning countries into communist nations. Huge famines spread and desperate Cubans resorted to eating cats and dogs! Even Fidel's own daughter, Alina, tried to escape but didn't make it past her father's clutches.

Raúl Castro has now appointed President Miguel Díaz-Canel, his protégé, as the new leader of the Communist Party of Cuba. The President will most probably not bring in many drastic changes in the country, but with the Castros gone some things can change more easily. The older generation was there at the time of the Cuban revolution, so they have high regard for the Castros. However, the younger generations have only seen economic crises and so they are fighting for change. The new government will have to enforce more freedoms for the people as the opposition continues to grow stronger. With the introduction of free use of social media in Cuba, Cuban voices are being heard. As the Castro regime has come to an end, a new light of hope shines for Democracy in Cuba.

- Shyla Upadhyay, 11

## The Troops Went Marching Out...

The process of replacing the saga of 'forever wars' with stability commenced when President Biden announced that the United States would withdraw all its remaining troops from Afghanistan by September 11th, 2021 – a good twenty years after the 9/11 attacks. Unlike the Trump administration's conditional withdrawal, the Biden plan is unconditional.

The withdrawal threatens to propel Afghanistan into civil war – and also lead to Talibani domination, a fallen democratic Ghani government, and different forms of annihilation. What will ensue will also have a ripple effect on Afghanistan's neighbours, who have expressed concern about refugees, regional stability, economic corridors, and the idea that the country will become home to terrorist organisations again.

While others may rejoice in freedom from foreign presence, the Afghani National Army will have to face the enemy with a more robust morale now, as they run out of logistical support and proper equipment. I believe that the concomitant focus should be primarily the Afghani people who are inadvertently stuck in the whirlwind of chaos (would they be forced to follow the fundamentalists again, or would the current arrangement between the Taliban and the government lead to some kind of stability and peace?). While discussing the war casualties, President Biden did not mention civilian deaths; I could not help but wonder, if instead of carrying on the war, the US had focussed on strengthening infrastructure and investing in schools and hospitals, maybe today, a rainbow would be seen in the skies of the Graveyard of Empires!

As a young observer, I can only hope that the withdrawal of the troops ushers in an era in which the grim pallor of bombings and attacks does not loom over the people of Afghanistan every day, as they attempt to lead more normal lives.

- Dakshayani Chandra, 11



## Fans and Football

Football is all about drama. It's what makes the sport appealing. The European Super League, however, was different. It was something we had never witnessed so far. It certainly shocked us, but also served as a robust reminder of the powerful force that fans are. It all began on a normal day, but the events that would unfold would be groundbreaking. The notion of the ESL had stemmed in the 1980s, but during this month, it began to progressively materialise. It beguiled me at first – seeing the foremost teams in the world compete for one coveted trophy. The idea was that there would be 15 permanent clubs, and 5 ever-changing ones, who would take part in a midweek competition. It would be a knockout format – with two groups of ten teams each, out of which the top three from both groups would qualify. The fourth and fifth teams would then play to book the remaining places in the quarter finals.

The 12 elite clubs who had initially signed up were all heavily criticised. It was the definition of turmoil. Everyone had been infuriated by the clubs' preference to pursue their own interests rather than work towards the betterment of football. Players themselves were against the idea and made their feelings clear through social media.

Let's imagine a world where this breakaway tournament had taken place. These players would be unable to participate in international tournaments because of the UEFA President's ban on their doing so. There would be no competition in the game, thus taking the suspense out of it – the best pitted against the best would lead to similar outcomes from every match, with no room left for less well-known clubs to make their way to the top. Because the CEOs of many clubs had entered the tournament without their players' consent, there would be frequent internal clashes. The number of fans who form the essence of football, would be substantially reduced. Clearly, the positives have overwhelmingly outnumbered the negatives in this situation.

To our satisfaction, the league was soon disbanded, as nine of the teams withdrew from it, with most apologising to their fans. Fans deserve all the credit for saving 152 years of hard work and keeping the game's honour and pride intact. It is living proof of the impact they have on any game, and just how much they have been missed during these unprecedented times. This incident has brought the community of fans closer together and exemplified the power it holds – and will always hold – on football. To the saviours!

- Anivartini Daga, 10

## SOCIAL SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

Vasant Valley School held its first online version and the 17th edition of the Social Science Symposium on the topic, 'Art must disturb the comforted and comfort the disturbed. Several speakers helped to put this interesting theme into perspective, with their wonderful anecdotes, advice and insights.

### Mr. Vinnet KKN Panchhi

“हवा की ये खासियत है की वो जब बहना चाहे, कैसे बहना चाहे, वो उसकी इजाज़त है।”

Mr Vineet K. Kamal Nain 'Panchhi' gave each and every one of us in the audience a more extensive meaning of art, diving into the deep waters of the wide ocean of the artistic world. Mr Panchhi justified the theme of the symposium, 'Art Should Disturb the Comforted and Comfort the Disturbed'. By talking about how no one can truly define art, he personified wind to compare it to the essence of art. Just like wind blows freely, without being contained, art is within all of us. Artists aren't limited to those who proclaim themselves to be artists; rather, art is universal and a combination of those who produce and consume art. His encouraging words about how art should give a push to those who're comfortable and should help those who require it, moved us all and gave us a new perspective on the true purpose of art.

### Ms. Nandita Das

“Good art should not be didactic; it should not tell us what to do. Good art is absolutely experiential.”

Ms. Das shared that her experiences with art highlight her growth as a person. She said she uses art to express herself, shares her work with her audience, and learns to evolve her own writing. As a consumer of the arts, Ms. Das says she is deeply impacted by it. It has helped her understand herself in a newer light. She put forth her views on how our education system must incorporate art and values like empathy and compassion for the growth and betterment of society. Ms. Das explained how creativity broadens our perspective and frees our mind from the barriers of prejudice by introducing us to different forms of artwork. She emphasised that every human being is different and so, there is no right and wrong in art. Through art, we have the power to show ourselves, in our truest forms, to the rest of the world.



### Ms. Sonia Puar

“Anybody who has anything to express is an artist, art is a form of expression.”

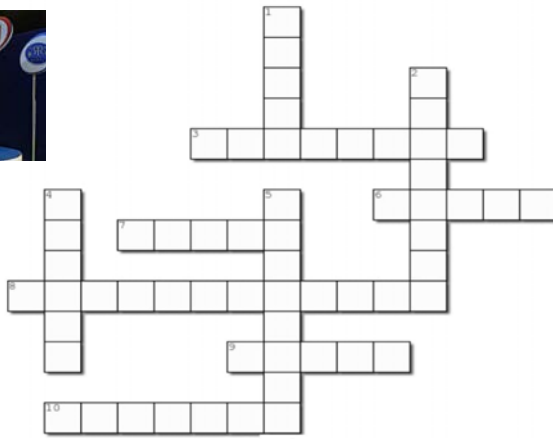
Ms. Sonia Puar works in the field of therapy and for her patients, art is a comforting medium. Going into the session, she asked the audience whether they believed themselves to be an Artist. With a swift response from the audience, Ms. Puar went on to tell the audience that each one of them is an artist. Their opinions are clouded because of subliminal judgement. Quoting Carl Jung, Ms. Puar explained how the idea of art helps us calm ourselves down and thus, becomes a potent aspect of therapy. Art is a beautiful medium that can seem messy, but the mess is what makes it beautiful. Art helps us release pent up tension that affects our mental health. Talking can be powerful, but visual mediums impact us more than anything. She ended the session by saying that the process of making art helps people understand what they're going through and eventually allows them to build a layer of resistance.

### Mr. Abish Mathew

“There will always be a fog of clarity but it is in this fog that we need to create”

Mr. Matthew commenced his session by talking about his first brush with art. It was a randomly carved piece of chalk which received appreciation. In school, he often made people laugh, totally clueless about its transformation into his future calling. When confronted with the pressure to create, he used 'heart-break' as his muse. Pertinently, he highlighted that performing was hardly considered an art until recently. His personal journey was one of being imprisoned in his comfort zone until he was shaken out of it on being called a 'social media influencer'. He then transcended the need for commercial acknowledgement only and put a fresh foot forward. The positive feedback he received from people gave him further impetus and satisfaction. He shared that he believes we should make our art so powerful that it becomes immortal and is remembered much after we are gone.

## IPL Crossword



### Across

3. Kuldeep Yadav's bowling style.
6. The highest run scorer in the history of IPL.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ has taken the most catches in the history of IPL.
8. The IPL team with the longest winning streak.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ has scored the most sixes so far.
10. The team with the most IPL title wins.

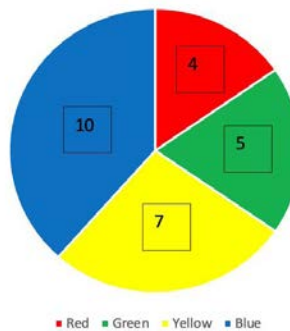
### Down

1. The captain with the highest winning percentage.
2. The top 4 teams at the end of the league progress to the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. He holds the highest number of orange caps so far.
5. The only team that has not played an IPL final so far.

## A Fascinating Fortnight

Welcome to the first inaugural newsletter recap. To start off with our biggest story, our school started once more and then promptly closed in two weeks under the decree of the mystic powers that be. However we did manage to complete an incredible amount in the short time we had. To start off, the prefects for the year have been inducted and are raring to go. With the announcement, house spirits have already intensified, waiting for our new leaders to lead us to victory. Blue house has already claimed an impressive number of prefect positions with Yellow not too far behind. These prefect positions range from the venerable head boy and head girl to the heads of development.

Number of prefects from each house

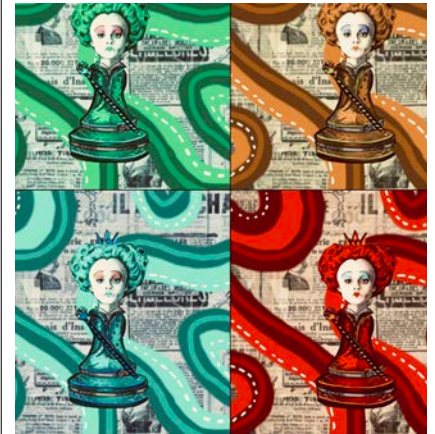


Meanwhile, the eleventh graders have been saved from the temporal limbo they were trapped in as their sections have finally been announced. Though our newly eleventh graders were only blessed with a single day of school, the rest of the student body has been hard at work. With syllabi already being covered in classes across the school and Mark D Souza has been keeping the school's spirits up and acting as a beacon of hope in a particularly blue time.

To end our first recap of the newsletter, I just have a small observation. The situation in India is only growing more dire as an even more intense second wave rocks the country. We, as students of this institution, must remember the privilege we possess that allows us to continue to live reasonably normal lives, even when we see so much suffering around us. During these summer holidays develop yourselves but, most importantly, in times like these make sure to help others.

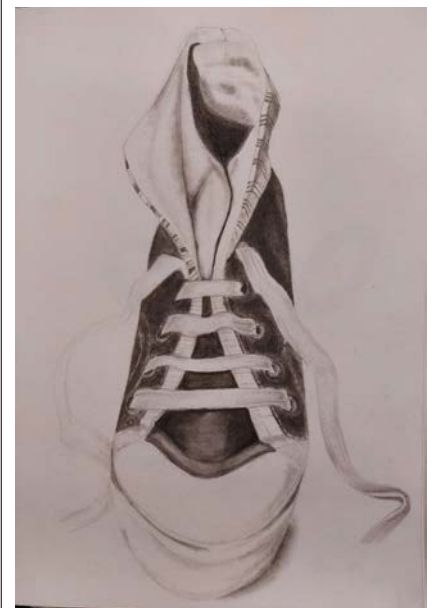
- Siddhant Nagrath, 11

## The Art Column



The Queen of Hearts was always a strong feminine figure in the classic 'Alice in Wonderland', drawing a stark contrast to what we see as an overly emotional character in Alice, who perpetuates gender norms. Keeping the game of chess in mind, where the queen is the most powerful, I decided to merge the two, creating my own piece.

- Lavanya Agarwal, 10



Every day, they were angry at school. They wished to escape from home. They wanted to do away with the forced smile, wanted to be happy again. But they wore their shoes and walked out, same as yesterday.

-Nikita Gupta 12

(Caption by Sara Jayakumar)

Please email your artwork to newsletter@vasantvalley.org to get it featured here.

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