

# Vasant Valley

October, 2012

T O D A Y

## SCHOOL WATCH

### 14<sup>th</sup> Mark D'Souza Inter House Western Music Competition Results

#### Solo Category

- 1<sup>st</sup>- Rishabh Prakash (Green House)
- 2<sup>nd</sup>- Kimberly Ireland (Red House)
- 3<sup>rd</sup>- Aashraya Harish (Blue House)

#### Duet Category

- 1<sup>st</sup>-Haripriya Dalmia, Janavi Srinivasan (Yellow House)
- 2<sup>nd</sup>- Pia Chatterjee, Rishabh Prakash (Green House)
- 3<sup>rd</sup>-Faaiza Seyid, Kaamyia Yadav (Red House)

#### Instrumental Category

- 1<sup>st</sup>- Blue House
- 2<sup>nd</sup>-Red House
- 3<sup>rd</sup>- Green House

#### Group Song

- 1<sup>st</sup>- Yellow House
- 2<sup>nd</sup>-Green House
- 3<sup>rd</sup>- Red House

920-HAFCARZ00

## 14<sup>th</sup> Mark D'Souza Inter House Western Music Competition

*"So, what are you going to sing?"*

*"Umm...Wake Me Up When September Ends, by Greenday"*

*"Awesome. So come on, let me hear you..."*

So I took a deep breath and sang. And I sang the years that followed. Wow, this year I sang solo, didn't I? I guess I got a little better along the way. But for me, the Mark D'souza Western Music Competition never really changed at all. I'm still that class 6 kid fatally low on self-confidence, looking up at my seniors rip the stage apart with their powerful performances. They may not be standing there, but their legacies never leave. I guess it's these legacies which drive us, to match upto them, to outdo them, to leave a mark of our own. The 'Competition' really is so much bigger than 4 categories being judged by some mysterious judges. It isn't just that final performance on that final day. It's a tradition, bagpacked with the innumerable memories of the hundreds of performances past, the unfathomable talent that has come and gone, and the seeds that grow into the newfound flair each year. It's an opportunity to show those who have done and gone, that we will carry on the legacies they leave behind and do them proud. It's a chance to celebrate music in the most profound sense of togetherness. Not with only those who stand before us in group song practice, but with those who have left us, and those who hope one day to join us. It's a thread which holds all together, just as music always has, and always will. Sadly, I know I'll never get a chance to go up on that stage again. Maybe a few years later, I hope some junior's crazy group song antics, silly expressions upon making a mistake or penetratingly strong, yet subtly beautiful melody will give me a chance to appear on that stage again, only, for a moment. But mostly, ***I hope I've inspired someone younger than me, someone who is fatally low on self-confidence to take a breath, believe, get up and just sing.*** I hope I've helped someone, to believe, that some day, they too can leave their own mark behind on that stage.

*-Rishabh Prakash, 12*

## INTERACTION WITH ROMILA THAPAR

Romila Thapar is an impressive Indian with a formidable reputation as a historian who commands respect from all students of History. She is a Professor Emeritus at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and has a number of novels and laurels attached to her name. The students of History in classes 11 and 12 had the privilege of meeting and interacting with her on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012, as did students from five other schools.

The session was in the form of a group discussion and the floor was opened to questions after a brief introduction. The topics explored ranged from Ms. Thapar's interest in ancient History (despite having experienced the period of Indian independence firsthand) to the history and prevalence of homosexuality in Indian societies. The discussion took an interesting turn when one student raised a question as to why the social sciences were always attacked while the sciences were not. She felt that social scientists were often criticized and sometimes threatened, for proposing a hypothesis that was far removed from conventional belief, whereas scientists did not face such harassment. Ms. Thapar's concise response elicited a laugh from the audience:

***"This is because people who raise a hue and cry about these hypotheses don't understand them very well, but still let their opinions be heard. The same people understand even less of Science and so don't question what the scientists are saying!"***

On the question of precautions that needed to be taken while studying sources and writing history, Ms. Thapar spoke about the voices of history and the biases of historians. Translations often lead to the loss of essence of the text's meaning, and so it was imperative that historians should study



Group Discussion with Ms. Thapar

sources in the original language. However, due to the linguistic plurality prevalent in the subcontinent, sources are often written in different languages which make the reconstruction of history, and negotiation of different languages a difficult process. She explained this in the context of how she had to approach one of her colleagues for help while translating a source in Urdu in the process of writing her book, Somnath.

I found Ms. Thapar to be a truly inspiring woman. She became successful in her chosen field without compromising on her morals. Being an avid detractor of state awards, she refused the Padma Bhushan twice on grounds that she wanted to be respected by her peers on the basis of her work rather than the awards given to her. I would consider myself fortunate if I could achieve her level of success and have the strength to stick to my beliefs like her.

-Aditi Banerjee, 12



## EVE TEASING

Living in a city like New Delhi, women are at high risks of being subjected to eve teasing, molestation and rape. Women throw accusations at the government and police for not doing enough to ensure their safety, while the government retorts by claiming that there isn't much they can do anyway. In reality, the blame rests solely on the shoulders of the Indian mindset. Take, for example, the phrase 'eve teasing' itself. It is used primarily in the subcontinent, and refers to acts of sexual harassment of women by men. The origin of the phrase is the biblical 'Eve', giving special emphasis to her temptress nature and consequently suggesting that women are responsible for the behavior that they are subjected to because of their nature as 'teases'. One can delve deep into the 'whys' and 'hows' of eve teasing, but what's more important for girls and women of today is how to deal with it.

**Always be alert.** Be it at your neighborhood park, a crowded marketplace or public transport, make sure to keep your eyes and ears open at all times. If you notice any suspicious behavior, take action. Always keep your cell phone handy in case of an emergency.

If you sense a group of men ogling you or making inappropriate comments about you from afar, **ignore them**. Studies have shown that this itself wards off more than half of them. Avoid eye contact, and pretend you didn't notice them in the first place. If their behavior intensifies and you begin to feel at risk, do not hesitate to **raise alarm**. Scream, shout, yell, cry out; do whatever it takes to get the attention of anyone nearby who can help you. Do not feel shy, for prevention is better than cure. Here comes the obvious: **do not walk the streets of Delhi alone**, ever. By this, I do not mean main roads and community guarded streets. I mean the dimly lit alleys, the isolated lanes and the 'galis' full of idle young men. No matter how strong and brave you think you are, there's absolutely no reason to be stupid. To eve teasers, a girl walking alone in a dark alley is the equivalent to what an injured mouse is to a cat: easy prey.

Finally, I am going to have to point out what will probably subject me to plenty of criticism from feminists: **do not wear revealing clothes in public!** We currently live in a modern world where there is absolute freedom of choice. You are free to wear what you like, when you like. However, don't be foolish. Restrict it to private areas! The cat and mouse analogy I used previously is applicable here as well. Why willingly put yourself in danger? Even little things like wearing a jacket over a halter top as soon as you step into a public area will do the trick. It requires little effort.

I want to clarify that I don't believe that eve teasing is in any way a woman's fault, but that of the eve teasers and the culture that has allowed them to think that their behavior is acceptable. While I believe that something must be done to change this culture, I understand that this is an immensely difficult task that will take decades to be accomplished. Thus, I feel that the need of the hour is to educate women in the city about dealing with it. What must be understood is that blaming the police is not going to change anything. Take control of your own fate, and make sure you don't put yourself in dangerous situations in misguided attempts to prove a point or show defiance to norms.

-Simrat Khera, 12



## I HAVE THE RIGHT

The world today has its shortcomings. In this era of realpolitik and business, the worth of an individual has suddenly catapulted into the limelight and nations are slowly seeing their bargaining power erode away. All throughout the course of human history, the single most binding factor in battles, movements, conflicts and even power, has lurked as the grossly misunderstood significance of our rights. Call it a natural bestowment or a birth right, the interpretation of our rights find themselves at the genesis of major issues that threaten the world today. Here I question those very 'Rights'.

Through the various conversations that I have had with renowned personalities, I have noticed the stark reminder of the insecurity regarding our 'rights. With Nobel Laureate, Dr. R. K. Pachauri two years ago, it was about how man has considered it his 'right' to ravage and claim the resources of Gaia. The result? Climate Change. With His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shanker, it was about our rights taking precedence over those of others. The result? Greed and Crime. With Dr. Kiran Bedi, it was about how a poor man has the right to vote for his preferred party, yet in the face of election gifts and vote bank creations; this too is a major hindrance to the rightful exercise of his right. Does the 'right' to choose then, exist?

The name of Middle Eastern countries resounds with violence and brutality. It is interesting to note that what initially gave birth to the Arab Spring was the subjugation or the infringement on the Right to Freedom under ruthless dictatorships. In view of the unrestrained power and the rise of extremism, the motive seems to have dimmed under the greedy benevolence of rebel turned rapists. Does the Right to Freedom then exist?

The newspapers stand witness to the countless tales of 'honest warriors' and many more untold ones that gather a dignified dust. These have been heroic women and men who have blown the lid of some massive scams. Their life, in the end was not even worth a miniscule that they helped save. Whistle-blowers are the chosen few, who break away from the monotony of our bread-butter seeking lives and exercise their right to speak in the true sense. In a great irony, they are silenced by our 'progressive modernist' societies. Fear mars our inner voices and consequences are enough to silence us. Do we really have the Right to speak?

I have really wondered, propelled as I am, by ideas on individualism, as to why the word 'I' have to be written in capital letters? Is it the egocentric workings of societal conventions? If the individual has worth, then there should exist- the Right to Be. I wish to live as I want to, eat what I want to, and do as I want to. Consider these not as anarchist ramblings of a disgruntled being but questions that bring to light our boundaries. Our aspirations and ambitions are in the end, overtly influenced by external stimuli. Do we really then, have the Right to Be?

Grim as it may sound, superficiality supersedes truth today. **Yes, I have the right to decide my passion, choose my leader, speak fearlessly, live as I want to, but delve deeper and the same questions lurks in the corner, strengthened by scepticism and nurtured by reasoning – Do I really have the 'Right'?**



*Riddhima Yadav, 12*

*(Winner of English Essay Writing Competition)*

*(Look out for Aditya Srinivasan's winning entry to the Essay Writing Competition in the next issue!)*

## STRATO-FALL

Human endurance rose to a new high when Felix Baumgartner jumped from the Stratosphere, a distance of 39,045 meters towards the Earth's surface on 14th October 2012. The 43 year old landed in New Mexico after an exhilarating freefall at a speed of 1,342 kilometers per hour.

The Austrian daredevil set three world records with his BASE jump- that of the highest altitude of a manned balloon flight, a parachute jump from the highest altitude and the greatest freefall velocity ever clocked! He touched down after 4 minutes and 19 seconds of freefall, beating Joseph Kittinger's 1960 record of 4 minutes and 36 seconds.



Throughout his life, Felix Baumgartner attempted seemingly impossible stunts, having jumped off the Petronas Towers in Malaysia in 1999, BASE jumping from the Millau Viaduct in France in 2004 as well as the 91<sup>st</sup> floor of the observation deck of the former tallest building in the world, the Taipei 101 in Taipei, Taiwan. After successfully completing these superhuman feats, he is known worldwide as

**Fearless Felix!**



*Felix's Fearless Fall*

**-Serena Nanda, 9**

## INDIA: A NATION DIVIDED

What is sub regionalism? It is the division of a state into another state for the benefit of the people. However, I question whether this division of our country helps us or holds us back in terms of the development of the nation.

India is filled with diverse cultures, and this diversity can be used to our advantage by celebrating this culture, and promoting unity in diversity. However, **further subdividing states into smaller fragmented states not only results in a difficult administrative process, but it also propagates the very principle of our former colonizers: Divide and Rule.**

One of the main elements of Indian culture is Language. Over 29 different languages are spoken in India. While the British ruled, Nehru and Gandhi agreed with them on dividing states on linguistic grounds, so, we can say that India pre independence agreed with states being formed on language. However after independence Nehru saw fit to not create new states through language as he saw it as a threat to the unity, integrity and honor of India. At one point one man started a hunger strike unto death demanding that a new state should be formed for Telegu speaking people. After the man died there was a violent reaction causing Nehru to yield and form the state of Andhra, divided between Madras and Hyderabad.

There are 2 main reasons why smaller states are formed from one main parent state. The first would be when a certain region of a state was underdeveloped, and so was divided to make the situation better. The second however would be when a certain caste or a certain group of people want the division of a state based on their political aspirations like higher status, revenue etc. Let us take a simple example of Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand. Chhattisgarh had a predominant tribal population and was perceived as underdeveloped in its parent state and so a beneficial division took place. However Uttarakhand once a part of Uttar Pradesh, unlike its parent state had a majority of upper castes and so a division took place, but this time, dividing people as well as land and threatening our unity.

Not every state that has been divided from its parent state is successful. Haryana was a success story while Jharkhand was a failed experiment. So is sub regionalism advantageous? We cannot really say for we have no concrete proof. There are states being divided for economic integration and there are divisions being made for our own political desires. If the state Telengana (a case going on for years) is formed now, then there will be an argument for further more divisions leading India to be no longer standing as one solid unified nation but as a union of several small states. You can't really tell if it will be the next Jharkhand or the next Haryana.



-Zoya Hassan, 7

### जागो फिर एक बार

अपनी गतिविधि एवं उत्तेजना से पूर्ण जिंदगी  
में एक क्षण रुकने की आपसे है विन्ति  
इतने साल सोते रहे अपने, कर्तव्य की उपेक्षा करते रहे  
पृथ्वी को अपनी ललाम व अभीराम से लूटा हमने  
नभचर व पशु के निकेतन को उजाड़ दिया  
बन गए इस समीर वारिधि उज्जल के अरि  
जिस पृथ्वी पर जन्म लिया, जिसका समीर पीया  
उनको हराना है, क्या उद्देश्य इस जीवन का ?  
कदापि नहीं। यह सोच है अगली पीढ़ी की वयथा  
हमें जागना होगा, मानव के कर्तव्य को पूरा करना होगा  
नहीं है जग हमारे भृत्य, है हमारी पीढ़ी का तौफा  
तमिस्त्र से जागकर, पृथ्वी को बचाकर, चमत्कार होगा।।

ःशिविका स्याल 12

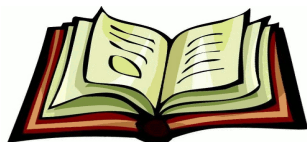


### आत्मकथा

रात को नींद नहीं आती  
घूम घूमकर एक ही खयाल आता  
लिखूँ तो लिखूँ क्या?  
इतनी यादें, इतनी बातें  
हर महत्वपूर्ण, हर सुंदर।  
क्या लिखूँ अपने बचपन की पाठशाला के बारे में  
या जब राधा बनी थी मैं नाटक में  
या जब मेरा पैर टूटा  
और पहला फाऊंडर्स डे करते करते छूटा।  
क्या लिखूँ तीन मूवी वाला दिन  
या प्रिय सहेली का जन्मदिन  
पर सरप्राईस पार्टी देने वाला दिन  
या अमरीका में छुट्टियाँ  
नहीं तो वहाँ पर बिताए हर पल के बारे में।

हर यह कहानी, हर यह कथा  
हर यह पल, हर यह याद  
है मेरे दिल के बहुत पास  
लिखना चाहूँ तो भर दूँ एक-दो  
किताब।।

ः वेदिका सिंघी 12



### The Bus Ride

The little white girl sat near the window sill,  
Her everyday routine, her mood tranquil,  
Out she stared at the hustle bustle everyday,  
Every honk and shout seemed to take her breath away.

On came an old man when the bus did draw a break,  
He was thin, frail; his hands did shake,  
He collapsed with a huff by the little girl,  
Then leaned back; a newspaper he unfurled.

Another lady climbed aboard,  
Pale white, eyes sharp as swords,  
She reached the back of the bus looking for a place,  
With something she saw, anger clouded her face.

She opened her mouth and screamed 'My daughter!  
'Our families reputation you just did slaughter!'  
She yanked up the little girl to her feet,  
And dragged her away from her former seat.

The old man stood up, hurt in his eyes,  
'Wait!' the poor little girl cried,  
The offended man walked off the bus,  
The girl was left confused by her mothers fuss.

Behind him she ran and grabbed his hand,  
There was a sharp intake of breath at the bus stand,  
'Negro' and 'black' were whispered words,  
She did not comprehend what she heard.

To the bus she led him back,  
And apologised for her mothers attack  
Then sat with him, a friendship they did start,  
As everyone marvelled at a pure heart.

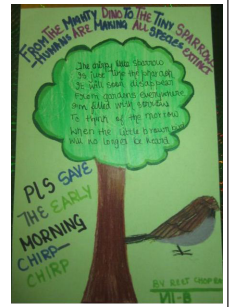
-Ananya Gupta, 9



(Left and Right: Artwork done by Class 7; Ananya Dalmia and Reet Chopra)

## Sparrow: Our state bird, Our pride!

Sparrow our sparrow  
 The states dwindling pride  
 Save this birdie  
 It is endangered and will soon die  
 But if we act now together we can  
 Make this mission possible  
 We will succeed I guarantee  
 In saving our state bird our pride & glory  
 I believe....



Just a few weeks back the humble house sparrow was declared Delhi's state bird. This small feathery creature which till some years back was seen flying around freely all over the urban areas of Delhi has now more or less vanished. The usual image that would come to any Delhi- ites mind when thinking of a bird has now changed from a sparrow to the over populated flocks of pigeons. "Rise for the Sparrows" is a project aimed at empowering and inspiring citizens, corporate and educational institutions to actively get involved in sparrow conservation. The whole of the subcontinent is making an effort in saving this endangered bird I think we all can do our bit too.

A few steps you as an individual can take:

1. Build a small bird house with a hole only big enough for the sparrow to get in and hang this on a tree, in your balcony or on any window.
2. Always keep some food and water in terracotta pots outside for the sparrows to drink

I think if all of us make a conscious effort our state bird will soon come back to its home.

Donald G. Mitchell once said: *'The sparrow that is twittering on the edge of my balcony is calling up to me this moment a world of memories that reach over half my lifetime, and a world of hope that stretches farther than any flight of sparrows.'*

So bring the sparrows back, let the sparrows tweet.



-Ananya Jain, 7

## “Judge not, that ye be not judged”

Newspaper editors who prefer to make news or pronounce judgments rather than simply reporting it should understand this quote from the Bible.

**Nowadays, if you don't read the newspaper, you are uninformed but if you do read the newspaper, you are misinformed.**

People deserve and demand the truth and nothing but the truth from newspapers. If journalists start taking on responsibilities they are not meant to, then a situation will be created that creates conflict and eventually erodes the value of newspapers. Newspapers should be completely unbiased and be news carriers. This creates a level of trust between the reader and the journalist. However, newspapers are also business entities and are therefore not free from undue influence of their owners and in some cases the malicious interests of the journalist in question. Thus printing selective information or reporting views instead of news vitiates the atmosphere and takes focus away from critical issues facing the public.

Taking Anna Hazare's movement against corruption as an example, no one can argue that the issue itself is very important and corruption is one of the biggest problems the country faces. However, is his way the right way? If you believe the press, then not only is his way the right one, but is the best one and in fact the only one. And if you disagree, then you are a corrupt person and something is seriously amiss with your thought processes. The cult of Anna was promoted to an unreasonable extent such that many believed that his word should become law. Parliament's power to make laws and act as representatives of the people of India was believed to be somehow subservient to Anna's wishes, or more specifically Team Anna.

Newspapers and media at large have become tools for projecting half-truths. Media management has become an integral part of every campaign, every activity and practically everything concerning every strata of society, transcending class, caste or creed. One of the primary reasons why Anna became an overnight hero was not his 'heroics', but because most media houses decided to make a hero out of him; the reasons best known to themselves. What met the eye was very different from what actually should have transpired and did not. Newspapers without being concerned with future course of actions, dipped hands in a domain which ideally should have been left untouched. Such actions don't just trick readers into believing what is probably not the complete truth, but also eventually lead to loss of faith.

Team Anna, intentionally or unintentionally hit the right cords with the media and once that was done, there was no stopping their juggernaut. News, relevant and important took a backseat and Anna's campaign became by no shadow of a doubt, the most important thing in the country. Whether that was right or wrong, doesn't fall in the realm of this discussion, but whether media played a part in blowing the juggernaut out of proportion, definitely is debatable here. Not only was it blown out of proportion, it was done so without an understanding of the implications or the precedents it would set for coming times. In such a surreal atmosphere, hype takes over and truth takes a backseat. It grants power without responsibility to people who are not accountable. Printing one sided opinions, outright fabrications or other forms of bias can create public opinion in favour or against a particular

**"The world suffers a lot. Not because of the violence of bad people, but because of the silence of good people" -Napoleon.**

position. At the height of the movement in New Delhi, people were expressing opinions on the possible fall of the central government. A democratically elected government should be allowed to function in a lawful manner. If mob action is encouraged and becomes successful, what does it say about our institutions? Many people who disagreed with his movement were literally forced to remain quiet. **Where first the role of the media pre and post-independence was to spread knowledge and information about the government's working and developmental programmes, now all media channels, good or bad, are using 'infotainment.'** Each media channel is more interested in increasing readership and TRP's rather than dissemination of correct and accurate information. The role of a journalist is to unravel the truth, not delve into matters that are private and don't 'merit' being showcased publically. Journalists not only need to learn their boundaries, they also need a lesson on what the true role of a journalist is. Journalists form the framework of the fourth estate of a democracy; it is not only their role but their duty to constructively contribute towards nation building by bringing out the truth and only the truth in front of people. Tweaking the truth for selfish motives is something that will initially dilute and eventually pull shutters on the role and importance of modern media. To conclude, "Break not the shackles of tradition and orthodoxy, for the orthodoxy of truth is what binds your reader to you."

-Rishabh Periwal, 9



### HOW TO MAKE A 5x5 SPECIAL MAGIC SQUARE:

- 1) Ask someone to choose any number (65 or above if you want all numbers in the magic square to be positive)
- 2) Draw a 5x5 grid
- 3) Find the number that goes in the centre of the grid (A) using the following formula:

The largest integer not greater than  $[(\text{Chosen number} - 60)/5]$

- 4) Fill up the rest of the numbers as shown in the grid below taking

$B = A + 1$

$C = A + 2$

$D = A + 3$  and so on

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | B | S | F |   |
| P | H |   | L | D |
|   | N | A | R | J |
| C | T | G |   | K |
| I |   | M | E | Q |

- 5) Pick the last 5 numbers such that the rows and columns they lie in total up to the chosen number.

You now have a special kind of magic square where not only do all rows, columns and both diagonals add up to the chosen number, but all 8 cross diagonals, and the 4 plusses on the 4 corners and all 4 crosses on the 4 corners add up to the same number



See how many ways you can figure out of adding numbers to obtain the same answer, and see whether you can figure out why the numbers are placed in this particular manner (Hint: trace the numbers in increasing order to see what pattern two consecutive numbers form).

**-Gyan Pratap Singh, 12**

### Happy Diwali!

Deepavali is here, Deepavali is here  
That grand festival of Lights  
That ends evil after a protracted fight  
When good with all its might  
Leads us from darkness to Light.

Deepavali is here, Deepavali is here  
That great festival of sound  
When crackers and laughter abound  
When crackers and sparklers light up the sky  
When delighted children jump with joy.

Deepavali is here, Deepavali is here  
The gorgeous festival of snacks & sweets  
Where everyone enjoys a royal feast  
When old and young with delight meet  
With love and affection all hearts beat.

Diwali is here, Diwali is here  
That gracious festival celebrating victory  
The ancient festival of myth and mystery  
Mentioned in mythology and history  
The festival that signals  
Triumph over Tragedy.

**-Subiya Asad, 6**



### TWO MONTHS TIL' DOOMSDAY?

If you believe it, then humanity can expect a mere two months left of existence before the Mayan apocalypse hits Dec. 21. On Dec. 21, 2012, the Mayan Calendar will display the equivalent of a string of zeros, like the odometer turning over on your car, close to a millennium. In Maya calendrics, however, it's not the end of a thousand years. It's the end of bak'tun 13. Two ancient texts confirm the end date of the Mayan Long Count calendar on the winter solstice of this year, which is Dec. 21, 2012. Ancient Maya would have seen the end of the 13th bak'tun as the end of a full cycle of creation. However, experts in Mayan history say the end of the Long Count calendar is the equivalent of needing to buy a new calendar every year in December — not a harbinger of doomsday. Not all apocalypse believers think the Mayan Apocalypse will bring fire and brimstone, or extinguish life on Earth. According to John Hoopes, many believers see the day as a time of spiritual transformation. Some believe that a black hole would be the cause of this destruction. There is widespread paranoia that the world's largest particle smasher, the Large Hadron Collider, will generate planet-gobbling black holes. Still, even if these don't evaporate immediately, as theory says they would, they would be so minute that it would take one of them about 100 hours to gobble up one proton. At that rate, the life sucker would take more than the age of the universe to consume even a milligram of matter. On the other hand, infectious diseases have devastated humanity throughout our history. The Black Death killed nearly half the people in each of the regions it touched, and malaria, AIDS and other diseases continue to ravage the world today. An even greater threat might come from "superbugs," multidrug-resistant strains that might defeat our best attempts to stop them. Some say our overuse of antibiotics is driving an increase in these superbugs. Others on the Web, confused about the supposed alignment of the winter-solstice sun with the Milky Way's centre, have declared that the Sun is now plummeting to the Milky Way's centre and dragging Earth with it. The predicted result? Earth's polar axis will shift. Most of what's claimed for 2012 relies on wishful thinking, wild pseudoscientific folly, ignorance of astronomy, and a level of paranoia worthy of Night of the Living Dead. So what if the Maya were on to us after all? The clock is ticking.



The India Today Cup English Debate organized by Vasant Valley School is a prestigious Inter-school debate inviting school from Delhi and all over India. Marking its presence in the debating calendar, the debate is going to be held on the **1st and 2nd of November, 2012**, with more than 20 schools participating in the Conventional and Parliamentary format of debating. Look out for a special supplement giving out details of the debate!

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