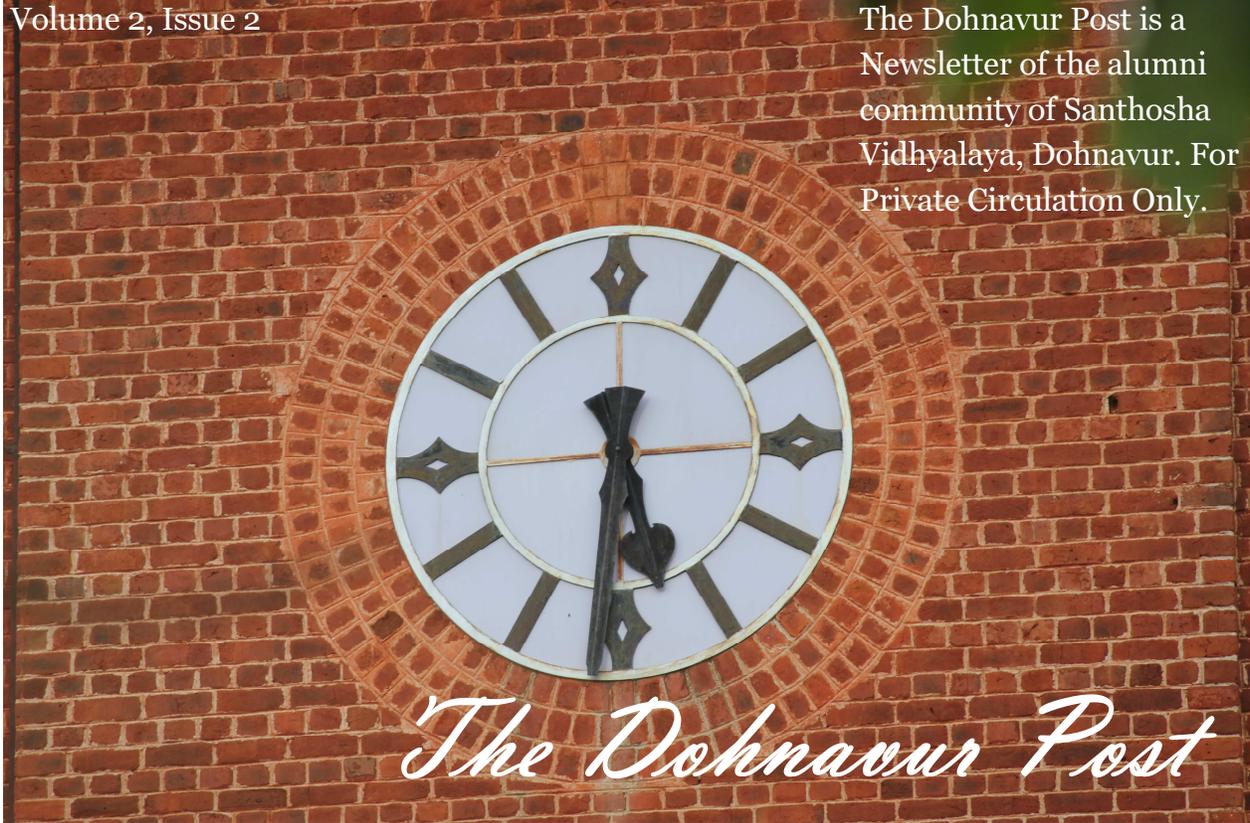


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The Dohnavur Post

From the scribbling desk!

Hi Everyone!

Its been some time since I put on my thinking cap, sat down on a wooden stool armed with a pencil in hand and a ration of inspiration in the mind, trying to twist words and turn phrases penning the editorial for The Post. Between the last issue and this, the editorial team has seen a whale of change - knots have been tied, rings exchanged and vows said!

In this issue, theblue501, the new kid on the block writes about the idiosyncrasies of a typical 'SV' boy just out of school and how he is totally out of context in the outside world. His piece comes with a fresh, boyish outlook accompanied by the "... or something" end to sentences. The spot light is on Samuel Manoharan, a jolly good fellow with a pony tail, who has just opened the newest café in the up-and-coming Kammanahalli area of Bangalore. If you are in the city drop in at Woogi Wawa – the football café!

Another feature of this issue is Daniel Ponraj speaking of his struggles and eventual triumph as a boarding schooler connecting it to the movie The Hurricane. His piece comes packed with his trademark intensity and also gives us a glimpse of his everyday life as a missionary in the hinterlands of Bihar.

Steve recounts a simple incident in the boys dormitory to tear away the mask from the face of the real villain of the boarding school – The Routine. Daniel critiques Motor World, a book by Jeremy Clarkson while Peter takes you to another world, the ant world.

Have a good time reading!



ALIEN AT THE COFFEE TABLE

theblue501

I am crazy! Really. Not the kind of crazy that swears at jaywalkers or has saliva dribbling down one's beard. No. It's just that I have this weird Déjà vu about almost everything I see. Tamarinds hanging down from a tree, red soil, an MLTR song or even the soft sound of someone opening a plastic bag in the other end of the room... Everything makes me remember. Not the dictionary definition of crazy maybe, but when you start ALL your letters with 3 lines of formal Christian greetings, followed by the weather report or use the word 'thrash' everytime you see *Biryani*, people actually start associating you with that word crazy. Twelve long years is time enough to stamp some memory into one's skull. Memories are a funny thing, if you ask me. We don't choose what becomes our memory. It is the other way round. Memories choose us. Some memories decide to stay back with us. Some just don't. But the beautiful thing about memories is that you can tell stories with them. So it is quite natural that the normal SV kid is a good story teller in the "outside" world. You could just recite your daily routine at SV to someone in college and boy, are they fascinated. They have this look on their face like you grew up in Pluto or something.

"You didn't have a bathroom for 12 years? Really?"

If you ask my opinion, I think bathrooms are overrated. After all those years at SV, one is quite convinced that bathing is a sort of social event. To perform the ritual inside the four walls of a bathroom is not just suffocating and claustrophobic, it is downright lonesome, amounting to torture. Bathrooms can take time getting used to. The change is frustrating.

Once outside those red walls, the whole world is a different experience. Green gram doesn't taste as good anymore. The kind of people you meet and the things you talk, even things that seem relatively unaffected like, say train travel for instance, even that is not as it used to be.

At least in my head, train travels used to be a lot more fun back in the day. Like the summer after my 1st year at school, a whole bunch of us tore notebook paper into small rectangular strips, wrote 'Happy Holidays' on all of them, and stashed them away like a wad of cash or something in our bags. Then, when we got started homeward, we took them one by one and threw them out the window of the moving train. It was crazy. But fun. And I believe that April there was a whole bunch of happy 6 year olds travelling all the way from *Tirunelveli* to Chennai, Calcutta, Ahmedabad or New Delhi littering the railroads with a cheerful message.

These days train travel is *draggy*. You almost always have to share the cabin with a group of old men who are constantly whining about the deterioration of morale among the youth today. It is funny what old people like to talk about. And somehow inevitably one of them will ask you if you smoke, and no matter what answer you give him, he'll think you're lying. I think there is a



In school, bathing is a sort of social event. To perform the ritual inside the four walls of a bathroom is not just suffocating and claustrophobic, it is downright lonesome, amounting to torture. Bathrooms can take time getting used to.

grand design underlying this phenomenon. It is like organized crime. If you ask me, there is some agency that hires old men to travel around the country in Sleeper Class and pays them to take a survey on the growing number of smokers.

One other thing you notice is that, outside SV, you need to know the cricket language. For the normal SV kid this is almost like learning French. This other day, I was out with my friends and some Test match was on TV. I was the alien at the coffee table trying very hard to contribute to the conversation.

In a cricket intoxicated country, a sober SVian is out of context...



“How is the partnership?”

Using the word ‘partnership’ at regular intervals not only gets you through cricket talk but elevates you to that level of ‘cricket intellect’ that your friends start suspecting you are a distant cousin of Harsha Bhogle. Anyway, nobody knew how much I enjoyed watching the commercials that one evening.

I am crazy really. Or maybe I am just the normal SV guy. I am still learning to love the train rides again, and replacing ‘trash’ with more civilized words like ‘delicious’ or the commoner “burp”. But for someone who for over 10 years thought his ‘beef’ was ‘mutton’, I ‘m doing fairly well.



theblue501 is the *nom de plume* of an SV alumnus. The name is taken from the detergent brand that we used at school for our laundry.

By the alumni, for the alumni, to the alumni...

The Newsletter is run by a virtual team sitting in different places ranging from a plush office in Ohio, USA to a cramped one room apartment in suburban Bangalore. The writers range from a Missionary in Northern India to an International Trade specialist. The newsletter is by the alumni, for the alumni and to the alumni of Santhosha Vidhyalaya. The purpose of the newsletter is to create a literary culture around the school and its associations. Through the months many alumni have written from various batches and we have all enjoyed reading them. All alumni are welcome to write for the newsletter about their life, work and love. Write in to us on how you enjoyed reading newsletter and tell us how we can make it more interesting. Email: thedohnavurpost@gmail.com

The “Hurricane” Heart

My reason for sanity when life had run out!

Daniel Ponraj (daniel@engageindia.in)

I just got back from a 100 kilometre long travel in the countryside on my motorbike, visiting churches planted in remote villages. I was exhausted. I had decided that every time I get back from a long trip I would not sit down and groan “I am tired” or turn on the television and tell myself “I am resting”. I have realized that the best way to unwind physically is to do some work at home; it helps my tired body to go to sleep early at night.

But I was at it again, I turned on the television and my favourite movie was on, “The Hurricane.” It must be my third time watching it. Out of the hundreds of movies I have watched, it could be the only other movie that I have watched more than twice. The movie has always gripped me and spoken to me more than any other. It catches my undivided attention. It talks to my soul. It is a movie that takes me to the ends of the world - the impossible. It is the one thing that makes me believe that I am in it real time. I have tried to name that feeling but in vain. What is that feeling that grips my heart and that makes my senses go numb? This movie definitely wracks up the emotional side of me.

Hurricane Carter is this man who desires to live a normal life. A police officer had vented his anger on a young Hurricane Carter once. But Carter tries to forgive and forget the offence. Carter now is trying to live a normal life but the officer picks on him once again and sends him to jail – this time for life. There is something about a prison that would scare anybody. And that too the thought of spending a life time in jail would make anyone nervous and scared.

But for me it means more than that. I have spent 15 years - half my life - in institutions that worked like a prison cage. They were hostels with wardens, rules, uniforms and punishments. Walls were always around me. I was bound by time and the bell. Life was about the schedule. Fear was the only tool that helped the warden keep a check on the students. This fear was built by punishments that hurt, and it killed all hope of freedom.

Every time Carter gets held up by the Cop, I feel a rush in my spine. It brings back memories of being helpless and my eyes go wet. Perhaps, one key reason that keeps Carter sane and alive is the fact that he knows he doesn't deserve it. He did not do anything wrong to go to jail. I guess that is probably the reason he stays away from going rogue or giving up. That is probably the reason that kept me sane too.

Having watched the movie many times now, I have sat down every time and relived the story of Hurricane Carter. I have seen my life through the life of Hurricane. He came out victorious. Sometimes you want to ask was it worth the pain? Had life run out by then?

I look back and see that an unseen hand has dragged me along in my state of helplessness. I do not deserve to be alive or sane. The oxygen has been God. More than me clinging on to me, he has held my hand. I am sold out to God and His purpose, because in some ways my life had run out. Now I breathe the air that Jesus gives me every day. My story is like the woman in sin who could not stop weeping at Jesus' feet and anointing them with perfume. Jesus gave witness about her saying, “And I tell you that her many sins are forgiven. This is clear, because she showed great love. People who are forgiven only a little will love only a little” (Luke 7:47). Now I live each day of my life in awe of the grace of God, sucking at His strength and staying the course. My insanity has been redeemed and my inner being has been renewed and restored, because of Jesus. I chose to cling on to Jesus and be His passionate follower.

Daniel is a man with a mission. In short, he is a missionary. His enthusiasm for missions is contagious. Only a man as sold out to the cause as him can be so contagious. Below is a picture of his children. Jeremiah the eldest (Top left), Deborah, Elizabeth and the latest addition Moosa in red shorts. His blog - Engageindia.in





The Routine

Stephen Jothiraj

An excerpt from the book still in the making

Boarding school is a special place. A place where adventures are waiting to happen. A place where dreams are birthed and ambitions midwived. A place where ingenuity is forged on the anvil of monotony. It's a magical world. It's the land of the fresh and the young. It's a special place.

It's also a stifling place. It is designed to keep imaginations inhibited and creativity crammed. It is the land of the routine. You knew your every move of the day in advance. Its where Chance is a nobody and Fate a bystander. It runs like clockwork. It never strikes thirteen.

*Every boarding school has a routine. We had one too. The wake up whistle at 5.00AM is a rude interruption. It goes off just as every little boy is boarding his rocketship in his dreamland. Once up, you sleep-walk to the box room and collect your brush and go to the hand pump for the shower. You don't wake up till the first splash of the cold water on your body. The cold water does the trick. After 'that' harsh awakening everything else seem to happen in a fast-forward mode. There is an hour-long study time that follows shower. The study hour seamlessly flows into the morning prayer time. The singing is half-hearted (except during Christmas) and stops when the first sounds of the *bandi* interrupts the stomach growls. Breakfast arrives in the good old *Bandi*. *Bandi* is one of the few surviving members of the twentieth century transportation system used in the school. The *Bandi* is a push cart that is used to bring food to the Boys dormitory from the kitchen.*

Breakfast is a hushed up affair. There's nothing to be cheered about. The energies of the kids are still sedate from the long night. School starts immediately after breakfast. The boys leave the dorms for the class rooms just like trains leaving the terminus in the Thomas cartoon.

The class rooms are not far off and will be reached in about 5 minutes. Schoolwork wakes up the kids and soon the campus comes alive. There's a buzz about the place now. Each class hour went for about 45 minutes and a bell indicated the break of a class hour. The break time is full of activity. It's a short 15 minute break that usually turns into the paper bullet war time or Tarzan-esque swinging competition under the banyan tree. The most sedate kids have also woken up by now and there's a glint of mischief about their eyes. Lunch is a whole different ball game to breakfast. There's activity everywhere now. The grace before food is said with gusto. Tummies get filled faster and burps are quicker.

The post lunch class hours are a full fledged battle against sleep. Fortunately the post lunch class work usually would be either crafts or singing or physical education or something like that. By now the little boys and girls are all charged up. Energies are pent up waiting to explode. As the final bell goes the kids scurry towards the dorms to get into the playground clothes. This is the hour the kids were waiting for the whole day. But just before you get to the play ground you had some chores to do. Usually it is watering a set of plants allotted for you and collecting your clothes from the clothesline etc.... Some kids don't bother with such domestic ventures and rush off to the playground little knowing what awaited their neglect of such critical points in the routine. Well the games time is where all the pent up energy is spent. It's the high point of a kid's day. The games time is followed by a study time (usually for 2 hours) and then the supper. Supper is the most awaited meal of the day. Meat was part of the supper. The kids ate with a relish and supper time flows into the evening prayer. The kids are in high spirits and it shows in the singing and the battery of guitarists strumming wildly in the evening prayer. The prayer time is also the time when the warden holds court. This is usually when the day's heroes and villains are identified and rewarded. People

who failed to take their clothes from clothesline are the nervous lot. The truants who failed to water their plants are biting their nails wondering what punishment awaited them. Such petty non-compliance to the routine was a heinous act equal to treason. Some times this hour resembled the guillotine scene from the Tale of Two Cities. When others sit and watch, the villains of the routine are bandied up and served their punishment. The routine was the king. You could not bypass it. It ruled the whole system.

One such evening, the warden held court as the wards sat in silence awaiting the day's announcement of heroes and villains. It was a wet evening and the boys couldn't spend their energy reserves in the playground as it was raining cats and dogs. So with a slight discomfort of not getting their play time the boys in the junior dormitory sat at the senate. The warden as usual holds the floor and announces – "those who didn't water their plants come out for the punishment". This puzzled the boys as none of them had watered since it had rained cats and dogs. But logic never stood a chance with routine. Routine is the king. Such fanatic adherence to the routine is what keeps the whole boarding school world going. Slight non-compliance had to be rewarded with the two cane whacks in the back side.

If you had to survive the tyranny of the ruthless routine, then you needed imagination. You needed ingenuity otherwise the monotony could get to you. That's why every little boy needed some of it to go through the mundane madness of boarding school.

Steve Jothiraj and a few others are supposedly writing a book on their boarding school experience. The above is a sneak-peak of their still-to-be-written book. Right now he is enjoying Anthony Buckeridge, an author known for his stories set in boarding schools. Apart from thinking up interesting ventures that never take off, Steve plays striker for the local team in Banaswadi, Bangalore. Below he's seen relaxing after a game on a Saturday morning.



Some pictures from the Saturday morning football that attracts the SVians from nearby in Banaswadi, Bangalore.



Vinoth (2001 batch) and Arun (2005 batch) vie for the ball



Zudson (2005 batch) strikes a balance!



Koshy (2001 batch) and Arnold (2006 batch) hang around after the game



Motor World by Jeremy Clarkson

(a book review by Daniel Balasingh)

Caution: Strong Opinions, Strong sense of humor required

“Speed has never killed anyone, suddenly becoming stationary... that’s what gets you.” – Jeremy Clarkson

A statement which best describes Jeremy Clarkson, the obnoxious, irritating, politically incorrect and yet humorous and sometimes surprisingly insightful Motoring Writer and columnist. A need for speed, a hunger for big cars, a passion for gas guzzlers are traits that set apart Jeremy Clarkson, a man in complete denial about Global Warming, the effects of Automobiles on the environment and the pollution caused by cars worldwide. He now brings his irreverent brand of humor to Travel Writing in his book “Motor World”.

In Motor World, he travels around the world, looking at various cultures (11 countries) through the windscreens of the cars they make or drive. There is appropriate praise for Italian Styling, though he wonders why, in Italy, looking good is more important than looking where you’re going. Japan – a country where you shouldn’t buy a car because you have nowhere to go because of the traffic jams. Monaco, the world’s first wildlife reserve for Human beings, because everyone there is on show, including the drivers and their cars. Iceland is a great country, Clarkson calls it God’s finest hour, apparently because the people are quite crazy, drive ridiculously fast cars, have dangerously souped up vehicles and road rules are non-existent or exist only in the rule books.

There is a chapter dedicated to India. This book was written around 1996 when the ubiquitous Ambassador ruled the Indian Road. According to him, “Every single car on the road is a Hindustan (Ambassador or Contessa) of indeterminate age and condition. Some have brakes. Some have steering. Some have suspension. Some have none of these things and are therefore a bit worrying”. We Indians are notoriously thin skinned when criticized and have had many controversies with Jeremy Clarkson but he strikes a nerve here. Clarkson seems genuinely perturbed by our disregard for rules, our corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency which leads to so many deaths (around 130,000 currently, the population of a small town) though he ends up professing his love for India and wondering why he likes this country.

As the blurb on the book says, “There are ways and means of getting about that does not involve four wheels, but in this slice of vintage Clarkson, Jeremy isn’t much interested in them”. Well, love him or hate him, Jeremy Clarkson makes for fascinating reading. He may be opinionated, he may be obnoxious, he may be riding

the thin line between humour and racism, but, he loves cars and is not ashamed of it. A must read for anyone who loves cars.

Some quotes from Jeremy Clarkson (not from the book),

“We all know that small cars are good for us. But so is cod liver oil. And jogging.”

“Whenever I’m suffering from insomnia, I just look at a picture of a Toyota Camry and I’m straight off.”

[On a bright green Lamborghini Murcielago] “Now we’ve been told in this new series, we’ve got to feature more green cars. So here’s one. It’s really the greenest car we could find, really.”

[On the Porsche Cayenne] “I’ve seen gangrenous wounds better looking than this!”

“A turbo: exhaust gases go into the turbocharger and spin it, witchcraft happens and you go faster.”

“Telling people at a dinner party you drive a Nissan Almera is like telling them you’ve got the ebola virus and you’re about to sneeze.”

[On the GT-R], “The GT-R is designed to examine carefully the scientific laws that govern movement and then systematically to break them. It is designed to go faster than you ever thought possible, possess more grip than is physically allowed, change gear more quickly than you can blink and stop with such ferocity that you can actually feel your face coming off. No style. Just engineering.”

Dan Balasingh an avid reader from his school days, usually devours anything that has printed words from fine print manuals to old newspaper. He works for Nissan Motors, which explains his fascination for Mr. Clarkson’s book. He actively involves himself in a book club in Chennai where he lives. Apart from this, come saturday morning, he gets into some football shoes and frightens the local boys with his football skills.



The Orissa Incident

...as recounted by its only survivor

Dayanand Peter

We ants don't worry much, mostly because our lives are a routine. The terrain we live in may change from time to time, but our lives remain untouched. Every morning we wake up to do the same tasks we did the previous day and every other day before that. Our lives run like clockwork. I've even heard that the humans have built systems and management principles based on our lifestyle and work ethics and it hardly comes as a surprise to me.

We are what the French call *main-d'œuvre parfait* i.e. "The Perfect workforce", impeccable in every sense. So it did come as a surprise when two of our antlets had gone missing from the pack. It was just two out of some 50 odd ants! But it had never happened before and the Council intended to see that it never did happen again.

Truancy had never been a problem among our antlets. Yes, they did have a tendency to take the long road around when they encountered obstacles but as a rule, they never left the pack. They would stray away once in a while but would always come back to the fold once their head got cleared. The Council had heard that truancy had wrecked the human race and were in no mood to give it a thumbs-up here in the underworld. The colony was assembled and the parents of the antlets were brought forth. The mother pleaded to the Council that she had brought up her children in good faith and they would never have done anything wrong. The father's head hung low; he couldn't understand why this would happen to his family.

The Council had decided, they would alter course and follow the tracks of the antlets. A gatherer ant had seen the general direction the antlets had taken on their way to school. The colony would march with the parents of the antlets at the lead, the queen and her chosen ones would form the tail. The march was hard on the parents more than the others. They were conscious of the caustic remarks whispered just loud enough for them to hear as they marched in search of the little truants. We had been on the march for two days now and the scent had almost grown cold. We camped for the night when behold one of them came across a stale pair of antlets track leading into a black room.

The colony was awakened; we knew we were within arm's reach of the truants. Once inside the black room, they realized that the terrain had changed and with it the atmosphere too. What had been a cold night now had become a warm, sultry dawn. The hard marble floor that we tread had turned into green plastic. There was something strange about that floor; it had some strange kind of mysterious drawings on it. The topography had also changed, we had been marching under an open sky till the moment we entered the black room and now all of a sudden the skies went black. To further complicate things there were huge black buildings held by steel structures all around. It was like no other place we had seen before.

As we moved with guarded steps towards the source of the heat, someone could vaguely make out a figure on the dark floor. Before we realized what was happening, the parents ran towards the fallen figure which were their antlets. At that very instant out of the blue, a bright light engulfed the parents in flames. The fire had come from one of the buildings near the fallen antlets. There was panic all around; the colony broke loose. Every ant tried to work his way out, but alas the flames now started coming from all around the floor. All around me there were flames, flames of my colleagues, my friends and my family. I was star struck as one last bright flame leapt in the air and then everything went blank. The floor had turned black and the night air had become cold once again.

I lay there till I felt the warmth of the morning sun and only then did I walk out of the black room into the embrace of familiar terrain. I had never witnessed a massacre like the one I had just seen. We were caught totally unawares, we were pitted with an enemy whose face we never knew and I had been lucky enough to walk out of it unharmed but without a colony.

P.S: Innocent though the story may seem, the green floor was the board of my laptop adapter and what was recounted as flames engulfing innocent ants were the flashes from my board being short circuited by ants. God bless their souls, but they cost me Rs. 1500/- on a new laptop adapter.

Dayanand Peter is the star writer in the Newsletter team. He churns out articles with élan and ease like Virender Sehwag dispatching a good length ball to the boundary. He earns his bread as a professor in the Food Technology dept. of Karunya, Coimbatore.

Spotlight on Samuel Manoharan

Sammy passed out of school in 2000 and graduated from Madras Christian College, boarding at the famed Selaiyur Hall of the institute. He recently opened a new café in Kammanahalli, Bangalore fulfilling one of his dreams. He takes life as it comes and is very popular for his interesting facebook status messages. If you are in Bangalore, you should drop in at OOGY WAWA for the experience.

Below are some pictures of OOGY WAWA.

