THE ALBERT BARROW MEMORIAL ALL INDIA INTER SCHOOL

CREATIVE WRITING
COMPETITION-2019

DEMOCRACY

Pioneering Excellence in Education since 1958
Albert Barrow
1918-1990
The Albert Barrow Memorial All – India Inter - School Creative Writing Competition held every year by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, is testimony of its efforts to foster creativity, independent thinking and communicative ability among the students of the schools affiliated to the Council. The competition becomes the touchstone of the Council’s goals and efforts. We wish to create articulate, thinking individuals who are not merely bound by bookish knowledge, but are able to process the world that they find themselves in and develop their own values and attitudes.

It was with this aim in mind that the theme of this year’s competition was ‘Democracy’. The contributions of students from classes XI and XII in category 1 and classes X and below in category 2 reflect their maturity levels. Not only are today’s students alert and aware, but they are also able to voice their opinions with great clarity. Schools should take part in these competitions in greater number as in addition to giving their students much needed exposure, they are showcasing the talents being nurtured in the schools.

The range and variety of interpretation of the topics and the felicity of style revealed through the writings of the students have left the judges quite impressed. In some cases, the compositions show rare sensitivity to the burning topical issues. It was very difficult for the judges to come to a decision about the best writing.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Heads of Schools for encouraging their students to participate in this competition, as well as the teachers who motivated and trained them. I wish to commend all the participants for their effort and their clarity of thought. I take this opportunity to put on record my appreciation of the hard work put in by the team in the Council office in making this edition of the volume of essays of the Albert Barrow Memorial All - India Inter - School Creative Writing Competition 2019, possible.

(Gerry Arathoon)
Chief Executive & Secretary
"An educated, enlightened and informed population is one of the surest ways of promoting the health of a democracy."

-Nelson Mandela
St. Xavier’s School, Bokaro steel city was established by the Society of Jesus in 1966 at the invitation of the Bokaro steel plant. The School envisions the holistic growth of the students to become persons of Competence, Consciousness, Compassion and Commitment. It revamps its students into people, courageous enough to make mistakes and ingrains in them the humility to learn from these mistakes. The School accentuates on the idea, “In order for the pupils to liberate the energy of their strength, their weakness must have a chance to reveal itself”.

I HAVE THE POWER - I CAN VOTE

Generally a mother who gives birth to a new life is considered an incarnation of the Almighty and when the birth actually takes place, there is celebration all around. However, this was not the same in my case. A pall of gloom descended upon my family. My grandmother wept as if my mother had given birth to a still born child. My mother, instead of being congratulated and pampered, was cursed. The world regretted my existence from the moment I was born. No, I was not a physically challenged person, who might have given a family sleepless nights. From what I can make out from my baby pictures, I was outright beautiful and flawless. I had ten fingers and ten toes. What then was wrong you might ask? This universe does not have the habit of showering all the blessings that we seek on us. The cruel gods delight in withholding some of their favours. So my parents, traditional conformists, got a beautiful baby with some imperfections.

Of course they dealt with the problem in their own way. After contemplation and analysis, it was decided that my parents had borne a daughter and the school they admitted me to, remained completely clueless about my grievous imperfections. I grew up as the most captivating and accomplished girl of St. Mary’s School. It was in eighth grade that our teacher for Political Science, Mrs. Munroe, read these lines from our Civics text book:

‘Any person who is more than eighteen years of age will be allowed to vote without any
discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, sex or religion, according to the Universal Adult Franchise.’ A smile escaped my lips. I lived in a democracy, and my country would acknowledge me as I am. I could hardly wait to be eighteen.

The year I turned eighteen was also the year for fresh elections to the Lok Sabha. I got my name registered through the online portal and on the specified date, I joined the queue to cast my vote. After an hour and a half, my turn came. The officer asked me, “What is your name Madam?”


“What is your father’s name?”

“Chandan Mishra.”

The man gave me a paper with the details printed on it. Its top right corner stated: Sex- F

There was another man guarding the electronic voting machine. I approached him and said, “Sir, I am not a female.” Instantly the man’s head jerked up and he began staring at me. After a moment of astonished silence, he said,” Sorry Sir, You look so much like a lady.”

Without further interrogation, he struck off the ‘F’ and wrote an ‘M’ in its place.

I again stopped him. “Sir, please tick the ‘Others’ box. I am a transgender.

In the blink of an eye, the attitude of the man changed. He rose up and began shouting. “Who let you in? What are you doing here? Just get out.”

Abased and humiliated more than I had ever been, I cried out, “According to the Universal Adult Franchise, all the citizens of this democracy are permitted to vote without any discrimination, if they are at least eighteen years old. I have the power to vote!”

But not a single officer present, the protectors and upholders of the law and the Constitution, came to my rescue. I was pushed out of the room through the rear door to jeers and sniggering among all the people present. The doors were slammed shut. An inexpressible anger held me in its grip and I cursed long and loud. After all, supposedly, that is the only power that we possess. I felt defeated and outraged and as I picked myself up to leave, I felt a hand over my mouth. Before I could react, I was stripped, kicked and thrown into the bushes.

I do not remember what happened next. When I gained consciousness, I felt violated, humiliated and outraged. We feel so relieved when we wake up from a nightmare. But it seemed as though I had woken up into one. I realized that in a few minutes, the world had drained me of all that I had.

Suddenly all those seminars and talk shows that were meant to espouse and motivate our kind, felt hollow and meaningless. All the speeches that I had heard and which had buoyed me up during my moments of confusion and struggles with my identity seemed fake. The idea of a democracy with its high sounding ideals, its promise of equality and a voice for all, the words, ‘rights’ and ‘powers’ lost relevance. Suddenly, this life felt pointless.

Was it really my fault? Does a transgender not have a right to live, to decide who is going to represent him and his concerns? Weren’t we supposed to be the biggest democracy in the world? I had really thought I had the power- the power of the ballot. I had felt that my vote counted. Was I wrong?

Democracy doesn’t work if we constantly demonize each other … for progress to happen, we have to listen to each other, see ourselves in each other, fight for our principles but also fight to find common ground, no matter how elusive that may seem.”

Barack Obama
2016 Democratic National Convention
I HAVE THE POWER - I CAN VOTE

There are five of us. We look almost entirely alike but we could not be more different from each other. We are each unique in our own way, and despite our differences, we make a great team. We squabble - yes. Sometimes we do not cooperate with each other; but I suppose all siblings fight and quarrel. And yet, when we come together, I feel that we have the power to hold the whole world by ourselves. We have the power to achieve anything that we want. We have the power to form alliances, break bonds, to save people and to hurt. We have the power to effect change.

Somewhere along the line, I feel that a bit of one-upmanship has crept into our dealings with one another. Each of us thinks that he is the best and so must be accepted as the official leader of the pack - the alpha. We are accomplished in our own individual way so there is no clear favourite for the top post. That’s what the others think. I think differently and I will tell you why in a while.

Thumb has always been the distant, reserved one. He looks the most different as well. He is the shortest of us and arguably, the podgiest. He has an inflated air of importance and can go on and on for hours about how he is the reason that humankind has progressed so much. He likes to make his presence felt just by raising himself. We have to admit that he is the reason that we can hold on to anything and he never lets us forget this!

Ring, on the other hand, is quieter. She is more strategic and calculating and quite obsessed about her appearance. She tends to look down on the rest...
of us as she is of prime importance at weddings and helps to form a stable social unit. She is not fickle minded. In fact she is quite rigid and hard to move, both physically and mentally.

If Ring is the Queen, Middle is undoubtedly the King. He towers above us, arrogant, bossy and commanding. We are all supposed to do his bidding as he commands us, from his Olympian height. He loves to remind us that he is the most structurally developed and that he will always be the foremost among us. All this would have been tolerable if he had been nicer, but this is not the case. We jump to his bidding as he barks out commands. Personally, I find him the hardest to work with especially when he is at his tyrannical best.

In stark contrast to Middle, there is Pinkie, or as we like to call her, Little. She is the tiniest, a meek, insecure, little thing. She is great at making friends and you will often find her intertwined with another of her kind. That’s friendship, she says, and we don’t disagree with her. If you ask me, I feel she lacks a spine. She bends easily, and has no wish to be a leader. She’s just there - a true Type C personality, a carpet to be walked on.

That leaves me, Index. I am relatively easy to work with and I am the easy going one but all I do is point out what I feel is wrong. The others find me a little too accusatory, but all I do is point out what I feel is wrong. I like to teach others the ways of the world, and lead the way to what is right. To me, people are what make the world what it is. I am a natural leader, but I am also so much more.

Remember? I had told you earlier that I am different from the rest. Well let me prove it to you now. I have a special power, a power denied to the rest of my siblings. A power that can be equated with that of the Superheroes. After all, what do Superheroes do? They bring about change in the world. I too, possess this power. I can bring change, weed out all that is old and corrupt. I make and break Kings. I can see the smile tugging at the corner of your lips. ‘Megalomaniac’ you must be labelling me. Now let me tell you about my power. I am the finger that presses the button on the EVM. I choose the leader who will lead the country into the next millennium or hurtle the people into the abyss of chaos and confusion. I decide who wins and who loses, who leads and who follows. My power is therefore, supreme.

The mark that is inked on me every few years is a badge that I wear with pride, albeit for a small period. It shows that in an uncaring, indifferent, callous world, I care. I care what will happen to my country now and in the next five years. I care whether my country will go to war or opt for peace. I care whether there will be all round progress or the continuation of drought, disease, farmer suicides and scams. I was, am and will be, the power to choose. I represent the power to vote. So though all my siblings are equal and work together, I stand a little taller, knowing I have the power- I can vote.
The Courage to do what we know is morally correct is true democracy.

There was a lot of commotion in the jungle after the sun had set. The rabbits were sitting around the tree. Concern was writ large on their faces. Gradually, the other animals of the jungle also gathered there. It was an important meeting and all the creatures of the jungle were supposed to meet under the grand old banyan tree. The birds, mainly the crows and pigeons, had started an animated conversation among themselves, chirping away. It took a lot to keep them quiet. As the sun dipped over the horizon, darkness seemed to envelop everybody. Strangely enough not a single creature yawned or felt sleepy. They were all excited and apprehensive at the same time. Only the cubs and the other offspring of the animals were missing at the spot. They had gone off to sleep.

The animals had gathered under the banyan tree for a very important reason. It was the first time that elections were going to be held in the jungle. The animals felt that they had reached the highest level of evolution and so they needed an election, so that they could vote independently and elect a leader for themselves. So long, certain animals had touted themselves as the leaders of the jungle, but that was largely on the basis of size and might. Surely as evolved creatures this was not correct? They needed a leader who would be elected by common consensus. Each creature, however small or insignificant, would have a say. Was this not the sign of evolution? However, there was one element that was lurking in the deepest recesses of every animal’s mind. It was Fear.

There were two animals contesting in the election.
One faction supported the Lion. One could not tell whether it was out of a genuine belief that the Lion would be good for them, or whether they knew that the Lion would reward them with privileges, such as the better part of the jungle, a greater share in the resources of the jungle, twisting the laws to suit them and other such scraps which would fall from his table. Also, the Lion was a formidable adversary. He had strong allies. The faction felt that it was easier to give in without being too particular about values. Moreover hadn’t he changed? He had spent a whole week meditating alone in the jungle and had sworn off meat. Look at his deeds of charity!

The Wise Owl listened to the animals. He had the wisdom to understand that the Lion was merely putting on a show. He could see through the façade of goodness put on by the Lion and see his actual plan. On the day of the election more than ninety percent of the animals voted in favour of their new saviour, the Lion. The "soft hearted, charitable Lion" won the election by an unprecedented majority. The Wise Owl retreated into the shady depths of the jungle and waited for the awful reality to occur. True enough, it did not take the Lion too long to reveal his real self. He declared that the animals must learn to sacrifice their comfort and safety for the 'greater good' of the jungle. As the animals became lean and hungry, they helplessly saw the Lion grow sleeker and well-nourished as he prospered. Nothing was heard of the kid any more. Some declared they had heard sounds of its bleating one night but no one dared to question. That would attract the severest punishment.

Meanwhile, by the light of the crescent moon, the owl wrote his message to his fellow creatures: "We mistook the meaning of wisdom. We had evolved no doubt, but only physically. This election shows this. Only when we have the courage to do what we know what is morally correct, will true democracy flourish. We thought that by holding an election we were being democratic. Democracy demands courage, values, understanding and the ability to distinguish right from wrong. As long as we don't have these qualities, we will continue to be exploited. We should be able to voice our opinions without fear. We must be heard". The owl in his wisdom had read many books and so he concluded with the words of Dante: "The darkest places in Hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis."
WAYs TO FOSTER DEMOCRACY IN SCHOOL

The first democratic institution that I was introduced to was my very own home. We are a small unit of four - my parents, my older sister and me. Perhaps it would do this piece some good to introduce you to my idea of a democracy. I was born into the kind of family that few people have the privilege of belonging to. Growing up, my mother would tell me that nobody has absolute knowledge of what is right or wrong. One could only truly rely on oneself - not even one’s parents - to sift through the black, white and grey of life. I admire my mother for having the courage to help me to cut through the glory and exaltation that we accord to our seniors. Thus within the four walls of my home I have always expressed my opinions (even my most controversial ones), frankly, and I have always been heard. This is what democracy means to me - the right to hold an opinion, a point of view, the right to express that point of view, and the right to be heard.

After our homes, our schools play the most significant role in shaping our perception of ourselves and the world. The account which is to follow is a personal dream, inspired initially by my fascination for sticks of chalk and the blackboard, and fuelled through the years by the agitation of a teenager trapped within the monotonous four walls of a class room for seven hours every day and bound by outmoded rules made by adults. I want to take you to the place that I often visit when I gaze into the distance, bored with a routine that I don’t need or understand.
Welcome to the school of which I am the Principal in this account - Daydreamers’ Academy.

My eyes gently sweep over the crowd under the big banyan tree. The sunlight filters through the leaves and dissolves in the laughter and conversation of the sea of students and teachers. The students in their many hued clothes are like bright flowers in the sunshine - quite unlike the uniform - clad regimented rows of children sitting in deathly silence as was the picture when I was a student many years ago. I remember the frowning face of the teacher, silently reprimanding me for whispering to my friend during assembly as either the Principal or a senior teacher, droned on and on about values and duties. Now the rows were more relaxed, the students and teachers were not segregated but formed a total unit. It wasn’t a “Them versus Us” situation at all. The students had wanted to bring about a change in the way the assembly was conducted. Since it was their assembly, their views were heard and the necessary changes made.

As I tapped the microphone, the voices gradually died down. No teacher or monitor walked up and down the lines enforcing discipline. The students used to hate assembly, deeming it a waste of time. A referendum was held and the students were encouraged to express their views on assemblies. Since they felt they had a say in what they would do, assembly was attended spontaneously and discipline was self-imposed. I made a few announcements and then the volunteers for the day took over. They spoke to their fellow students. The assembly came to life as they talked of diverse topics and causes close to their hearts. I took notes as they talked of a range of subjects from rain water harvesting to the dangers of online friends and social causes. I smiled to myself as I took notes. In my day, we didn’t even remember what was being talked about at assembly as nobody asked my opinion about what interested me. Their ideas about how the school should be run and their futuristic views would form part of my planning for the school activities.

The students dispersed and classes began. The classes were held all over the campus, under the trees, under the jungle gyms, in chemistry labs and beside the pool. In fact the whole school was humming with activity as the students used their iPads to conduct research. They made presentations, learned in groups and questioned each other. Every student was free to voice his view and agree or dissent in the learning process. The students had wanted it this way. What a far cry from the days when we were cooped up in classrooms meekly taking down whatever the teacher said. In one corner the middle school children had set up a shop and by buying and selling things, learnt about profit and loss. A Mathematics teacher was on the field teaching Mathematics through a game. A smile played on my lips when I saw the Economics teacher teaching students about market forms through basketballs on the court.

I climbed up the stairs to the conference room, where the Student Council members elected by the students were waiting for me with some teachers. A few blueprints were scattered on the long table. They outlined the changes in classes and curriculum that the students had asked for, I saw that they wanted classes in Soft Skills and Life Skills, Management of Personal Finance and Yoga. They wanted experts from the field of Business and Finance to talk to them. Glancing through their proposals, I asked for some time to make the logistical arrangements. As I did so, I remembered reluctantly reading my Physics book for the twenty third time, without any interest or understanding of how the matter studied would make a difference to my life.

As I walked over to the small hall at the end of the corridor, I could hear the Student Court in session. The students were discussing a discipline issue between two students. They would listen to both sides and come to a conclusion about a course of action. They would then come to me with their recommendation. Their faces were grave and intent but I knew they were responsible enough to deal with the matter fairly. A flashback brought to my mind the endless hours we would spend outside the Principal’s office being reprimanded, without a chance to present our side of the matter.

The pictures faded as I felt a sense of pride, I thought about the ways in which we were preparing our students to take on their roles as citizens of a free and fair democracy.
I have the power - I can vote. But they say that with great power comes great responsibility.

So I step out of my home to fulfill my responsibility. As soon as I start walking, numerous symbols greet me - a star, a rose, a book, a cycle, a bow and arrow..... I look at them in wonderment, amazed at the ingenuity of the human mind.

Now the representatives of the various symbols approach me. Their spiel begins. One of them says that their leader belongs to my community. I declare that I don’t believe in the concept of divisions along the lines of community. At this, another one perks up. This is his opportunity. His leader, he declares, supports the minorities and wants the majorities to be crushed. Irritated, I retort that that was not what I meant. I believe in equality. A third gets the perfect opportunity and uses it to his advantage. “All men are pigs,” he declares. Another immediately shouts, “Women should stay at home!” The argument rapidly escalates into a fight and I retreat from the spot in a hurry, only to run into another group of people.

“Madam would you like a temple to be built?” they ask.

“No thank you,” I answer.

“A mosque then?”

“A church?”

“A gurudwara?”

As I reel off my wish list, they walk away disinterested. Obviously I am not of any use to them.

“A little greenery? Less pollution?” I call after them hopefully.

As I walk ahead, they offer me money. I look at the notes - they look black. I see a bald man trying to convince a few people who look completely disinterested. I see a crowd following their leader who is haranguing them with tempting promises. Looking at the crowd I am reminded of Mahatma Gandhi’s three monkeys.

A group of serious looking intellectuals approach me. They are descendants of the artists who lost their lives fighting for freedom of speech and expression. But this group now markets its thoughts and ideas to the highest bidder. They teach the politicians how to mould public opinion and what will appeal and what will not. They write songs, poems and flood the social media with their insidious words. And behind it all, is the refrain, “Vote for him…. Vote for him… vote for him.”

By now, I am quite disheartened and confused. Just then I come across a group of ‘apolitical people’. They are dressed expensively and talk of foreign travel. They criticize the politicians, politics and the citizens of our nation, calling them sheep. For them Election Day is a holiday, a day of rest. I smile and point out that we are privileged to have the opportunity to choose our leader. The people of so many totalitarian countries cannot do so. As I talk about the blessings of democracy, I look up and find that no one is listening to me. They have headphones in their ears and they are listening to ‘Rap against Dictatorship,’ (A Thai group who are fighting for democracy) I almost laugh at their hypocrisy and walk off.

I come to a dusty path, a road less taken. As I wearily tread upon it, I meet a poet who has not been bought out yet, a teacher who still teaches about what is right, a journalist who is so tired of speaking the truth that his voice is almost lost, a student who has been jailed and labeled an anti-nationalist for voicing his dissent, a girl burned for dowry, a tiger cowering in the few bushes left. However the road ends abruptly. As I emerge, people surround me. Among them are wily god men and frightening goons. I am tempted and threatened. I will be cursed by the holy men and my life will not be safe at the hands of the goons. I almost march to the polling booth. Here the security forces take over, preventing the others from entering, and I heave a sigh of relief.

As I stand before the voting machine, weighing my options, various images flash before my eyes. Nehru’s speech on the eve of freedom, the sacrifices of our freedom fighters, the people fighting in so many countries across the world, for this one right. So I say to myself, “I have the power right now, right here. I will not be intimidated, bullied, threatened, and tempted. Let me make the best choice”. As I press the button, a soldier smiles in my mind. I realize that I have done what I knew was correct - using my power to give power to the person I thought was right. I am at peace.
Established in the year 1927, by Sheth Anandilal Podar, Podar Education Network has, from the inception been driven and motivated by the traditional Indian values of honesty, integrity and service.

Podar International School, Nerul was established in the year 2007. The school strongly believes in the holistic development of the child. Each student is encouraged to be innovative, committed and curious. The school believes in providing a conducive atmosphere for overall development of personality, with special emphasis on character building and ethics.

The mission of the school is to develop and equip the children of India for the challenges of the 21st Century.

I HAVE THE POWER - I CAN VOTE

With her head held high, arched back and long strides, Rhea walked down the narrow, crowded street, focusing on only one thing - the voting centre. After a few more steps, her eyes zeroed in on it. It was an old school building with faded paint flaking off the walls and pillars. To Rhea’s eyes, the walls and pillars were not mere aspects of a building. No, they represented democracy, a democratic process which they were upholding - the structure that kept the country from crumbling and disintegrating.

The possibilities of the next five years flashed in front of her eyes. Would the years ahead be marked again by poverty, unemployment, corruption, drought and hopelessness? Well, it all depended on the citizens of the country. Would they choose their representatives, wisely and fairly, without bias and petty personal considerations? Just a few months ago, she had become aware of a momentous event which was about to occur in her life. She would be turning eighteen. She would be officially considered an adult. And, she would gain the right to vote. She would be one of the millions who would have the power to decide the future of her country!

The day had finally dawned. Rhea’s friends were very excited. They had planned a grand party for her. Arriving at Rhea’s house early in the morning, they declared that they had made a lot of plans for the day - shopping, partying, merry making, and the works. Though Rhea went along with their plans, she had other thoughts occupying her mind. She would be entitled to the universal adult
franchise, to exercise her right as a free citizen of her country. She spent hours poring over the election manifestoes of the various political parties. What were they promising the citizens of the country if they came to power? How did they propose to make the lot of the common man better?

Rhea had always been the mature, responsible child at home and at school. She had unanimously been chosen the Head Girl of her school and had carried out her duties very well. No one had to tell her about her responsibilities. Her values and strong principles were easily visible in all her actions and the steps she took in running the Students’ Council of her school. After school hours she would devote time to some NGO or the other, working for the welfare of society. She often dreamt of the things that she would do if she became the Prime Minister of her country. She would definitely ensure equality, peace and economic growth. She wished to be the pioneer of a revolutionary change through which even the citizens of the country could actively participate in the development of the nation. Of course, all that was in the future. For now, she would have to do what was her duty.

The gentle breeze blowing on her face, reminded her of where she was going. Seeing a child fall, she rushed forward to help him. Apart from scraped knees, he had not sustained any injuries. The child reminded her of a young boy who lived in the slum near her house. A bright child, his eyes always twinkled with intelligence and hope - hope for a better future in which he could achieve great things. It was for children like this that she wanted a caring, concerned government. One that would give deserving children like him a chance in life. He should be given what was his right - a good education and equal opportunities to carve his future. There were no government schools in her locality. She wanted to change this.

The only way that she could ensure the change that she wanted to see was by voting for a government that would do these things and had the same ideology. As she reached the election centre, she saw a crowd who had come to cast their vote. There was eagerness in their eyes. Perhaps they too, had their dreams and hopes for the future. She walked up to one of the officials standing there. One look at her, and the official realized that here was someone who was voting for the first time. She directed Rhea to the booth. Rhea entered, completed the formalities and finally found herself before the all-important EVM. She took a deep breath and pressed her chosen button. She had finally exercised her power - her power to vote.

In each and every election, it’s your rights, it’s your freedoms, it’s your interests that are on the ballot.

Todd Young
As soon as I crossed the threshold of the house, my senses were overcome by the overpowering smell of wrongful ambition - the stench of ambition mingled with vice. Of course, he would be oblivious to it. Purposefully so, or should I say used to it? I placed the plastic bag of freshly picked marigolds and china roses on the table. My eyes involuntarily darted to the stubborn impression of the five fingers imprinted on my wrist. Once again, my mind rebelliously refused to shove the memory away so that the splinters of pain would not hurt me. I forced myself to banish the images of the previous night. Not that I could remember anything clearly. Everything was a blur of pain. My hand went unconsciously to the scar on my forehead, just above my left eyebrow - another memento of the previous night - the night that had refused to end as I screamed and screamed and begged..... until, mercifully, I lost consciousness.

Jerked into the present, I gulped down the tears of boiling hatred and self-pity that had sneaked their way to the corners of my eyes. My feet trembled as I stood at the doorway of the kitchen. My eyes did a quick, thorough survey of the small room. Had it been only yesterday when I was cooking a meal, basking in the aroma of the food wafting all over the room? I had hummed along with the catchy tune that I could hear being played just outside the window. Suddenly, almost rudely, my peaceful reverie was broken by the bang of the door of the room. It all happened in a heartbeat, - the rough uncouth voices of strange men, their hot breath all over me, suffocating me with the stench of cheap
liquor and their mad laughter. I shrank away and tried to escape, but those hands were already touching me, pulling at my cotton saree, those unfamiliar hands and among them, one familiar pair – my husband’s. Husband? Even through my terror and misery, I gagged at the word. Was that what I was supposed to call him? The man who vowed to protect me on our wedding day was the very one who had been the main perpetrator of my humiliation and pain.

The hiss of the boiling water made me jump. I brewed the tea till it was as dark and as bitter as the life before me, and pouring it out, I tiptoed into the dark room, trying not to breathe in the smell of depravity and corruption that emanated from the creature who lay in a heap on my bed. My foot struck the newspaper which was lying on the floor. Perhaps, like all the days, the newspaper man had slipped it through the little crack below the door. I bent to pick it up, every muscle, nerve and sinew protesting in pain as my body had endured a lot the previous day. My eyes fell on the front page which screamed, ‘ELECTION DAY!’ Sitting down on the cold unfeeling floor, I tried to understand the words written there. As I stared at it, a small thorny plant gradually straightened its spine in my heart.

Those men would be here again, but this time to wake up the creature lying in my bed muttering incoherent uncouth words in his drunken stupor. They would clean him up and take him to be presented to the gullible public. He would be put up on his pedestal of high honour and he would resume his role of the leader of the people asking for votes so that he could make their dreams come true. I would be discarded, forgotten, expected to lurk in the shadows till they needed to exploit me again. Did I have no power at all? My thoughts went back all those years to the words of my civics teacher who had explained to us the rights and responsibilities of a citizen in a democracy. In a democracy there could be no corruption as then the democratic ideals would be flawed. There could be no discrimination or exploitation. What was happening now? In my own home? The public did not know that their leader was corrupt or humble. But what could I do? I was too small, too insignificant. Again my teacher’s words came back to me. Perhaps I could not lead a rebellion, but I could register my dissent.

A new resolve filled me as I resolutely stepped out of the house. I walked straight towards the neighbourhood school which had been chosen as the polling station. I could almost feel the song of liberty, righteousness and democracy echo in my mind. I silently thanked my forefathers for reminding me of my rights and also to never give in to corruption and immorality. I could vote - that was my power. It might be one small step but small steps like these could herald a revolution. I set out to assert my right, my power. I knew what to do.

“The government, whether state or central, is elected. That means we have a responsibility to elect the right kind of leaders.”

— Abdul Kalam
I pressed my back against the cold wall as tears poured down my face. I gulped and swallowed to muffle the sound but to no avail. The giggling and whispering on the other side of the door only got louder. I stuffed my fist into my mouth hoping that it would stifle the animal-like cry escaping my throat. Finally, the voices died away as the group of girls left. I was alone in the washroom.

I could recall the hateful words pouring out of Vishal’s mouth and the taunts and abuses of his friends. His eyes had been red with anger and held deep hatred for me. This was surprising for he had only known me for a day. The words uttered by them had been crude and shocking. It was unimaginable that the refined twelfth graders of such a prestigious school even had such words in their vocabulary! The girls standing beside Vishal had tried to pull at my hijab. My name had been contorted, my identity pulled apart and my entire persona judged in a matter of seconds.

Vishal was the son of the leader of a major political party. The party was contesting in this year’s elections. Everyone knew Vishal’s father as an urbane scholarly gentleman with broadminded views and a philanthropic heart. But this was only a carefully constructed façade built up by his media managers and image consultants for the unsuspecting public. In reality, he was a despicable man who was corrupt to the core. His despicable deeds would receive a further fillip if he was voted into power.
Even though I was in twelfth grade, I had just turned eighteen. So I had the privilege that very few of my batchmates had - I had the right to cast my vote. I was the odd person out in school - just one of the economically challenged kids who had been taken into the school to preserve its inclusive image. Without feeling too bad about this, I had decided to take advantage of the excellent educational advantages that it offered.

Vishal had decided to dislike me from my very first day at school. Since I belonged to another community, and I could vote, he assumed that I would cast my vote in favour of the party belonging to my community. Incidentally, both of these parties were at daggers drawn! Today was the day when the votes would be cast. I had to make my decision by sunset. Would I counter hate with hate? As I rubbed my arms, I could feel the hateful words they had scribbled there. Mother would have a lot of questions about my missing hijab as well. I swallowed the panic, the pain and the anger, tied my hair into a neat bun and left the stall. Outside, they were still waiting for me, as they whispered hateful words to me coupled with threats if I voted for someone else, I panicked and pushing them aside with a sudden strength, I rushed home.

Even here, there was no peace. My parents were arguing and the topic of their argument was the elections. Father’s friend, Shahid uncle was standing for elections and Father was espousing his cause. Shahid uncle was a despicable man who had crept into my room one night. Mother had rushed in, her motherly instincts on the alert and prevented anything from happening. She would certainly not vote for him and would try her best to dissuade anyone to do likewise.

“I have not campaigned for him and I shall certainly not vote for him,” she declared. I was impressed for this was the first time that she had ever taken a stand.

“Why?” my father thundered.

I could not hear what she muttered but the next sound was a crash as someone or something toppled to the floor and then there was silence. I didn’t need anyone to tell me that male chauvinism had won again.

The next few moments passed by in a blur, as my sister suddenly took ill and had to be rushed to hospital. The exorbitant bills loomed large over us as my mother and I sat huddled outside the room. Suddenly I heard a gravelly voice telling my father not to worry, the bills would be paid. It was Shahid uncle again. I was more surprised to see my classmates there, Vishal among them. They looked concerned as they talked to my mother. Vishal was especially concerned and sympathetic. Everyone has a good side after all, I thought.

The day had not ended and I was reminded that I had not performed one important duty. Leaving my mother behind in the hospital, I walked to the polling booth. I had realized that the choice was not between black and white or black and black but between grey and the lesser grey. Who was the lesser evil? As I pondered, I did not know whether my choice was the correct one. It was my choice. At the end of the day that was what mattered. All I wanted was that my choice should be respected. The fact that I too have a say in the proceedings of my nation was important.

I stood before the EVM and looked at the names. My eyes fell on an independent candidate, a woman, a teacher. I had heard her name a few times. She used to teach the street children in the space under the bridge. I did not know what her manifesto was, but surely she must have some ideas in mind when she decided to fight the elections. She could not have had much money as her propaganda was low key. In her I saw myself in a few years’ time. Perhaps she too was fighting for change, for equality, for the underprivileged. I pressed the button.

As I walked home, I felt a sense of fulfillment. The blue mark on my finger filled me with a sense of pride, of achievement. I had done my duty. Notwithstanding my sister’s ill health and my mother’s bruise, the day had some good in it after all.

“Somewhere inside all of us is the power to change the world.”

-Roald Dahl
“The world has made me bitter,” Mr. Raja Tripathi always liked to say. He was a well-known character in the small town of Karvapur, Orissa. The spitting image of a middle-aged rundown, all-in-all exhausted of the system politician, Mr. Tripathi was the kind of unapproachable, feared man who hadn’t returned any of the seventy-eight cricket balls which had fallen in his fenced yard as the children played outside. However, despite finding pleasure in scolding children and adults alike, while ignoring every need of the community, the politician was well-respected, being a seventy-year-old retired Army doctor. Year after year, he was elected by the population of the town, partly due to lack of choice and partly due to Tripathi’s yearly door-to-door “visits” bearing gifts and envelopes containing small amounts of money.

He had not always been this way; the world had indeed made him bitter.

Tripathi had joined the world of politics an idealist, with a vision for a better future and the dream of changing the town which had made him what he was. It took three whole years for this idealism to fade away and cynicism to take its place. He put up a brave fight, but soon realized that one cannot beat the system. It was wiser to conform, so he abandoned his ideals and adopted the corrupt, self-serving lifestyle that his peers were following. No one knew what pushed him over the edge but late at night, he could be heard pacing up and down in his bedroom. Even though he was a doctor himself, there was no cure for his insomnia. Sometimes he thought back to the person he used to be. Very soon however, he would push the
thoughts back. They were uncomfortable, and soul searching got one nowhere.

When Meena Kumari opened the door to Tripathi’s scowling face, she felt disgust. Here was a man who did not care for the members of his constituency at all. While the town floundered in poverty and dilapidation, Tripathi lorded over everybody in his fancy bungalow, fancy cars and hordes of servants. He had completely forgotten all that the town had done for him. Meena Kumari thought of the hardships that she herself had to endure just to make ends meet. The system (and Tripathi) had done nothing to lessen her pain. A widowed mother of two, Meena was something of an ostracized activist. Her husband had died in a mining accident due, largely, to the lack of safety measures which Tripathi as the local MP should have ensured. She received no compensation, not even a meagre pension. She had resolutely decided that she would bring about change and her days were spent in espousing several causes often with little or no effect. The system was too powerful to beat. Disheartened, Meena would ask herself whether all this was worth it.

That day, as she opened the door to Tripathi, she felt disgust at how immoral a democracy can be. Out of the disgust arose a sudden resolve to fight the system. She decided to contest the elections. The small town was aghast. A new contender? That too a woman? And the woman, Meena Kumari? The amusement turned into reluctant admiration as Meena, with her limited means, and almost no support, campaigned relentlessly, distributed handwritten pamphlets (she could not afford printed ones), pointed out the evils that the people had endured for so long and cajoled and urged them to vote for change. Disregarding the ridicule and the veiled threats from Tripathi’s goons, she persevered.

Result Day rolled around. Quite predictably, Tripathi won by a resounding majority. Money power and muscle power won over truth and integrity. The only comfort was that Meena had not lost her deposit, some people had voted for her.

“I guess, democracy is often, even at its grassroots, a sham,” Meena muttered to herself as she walked home. Her thoughts were broken by a cry, “Meena!” She turned around. It was Tripathi.

“Probably, he is going to gloat over me,” She thought to herself.

Tripathi reached her. Surprisingly, he had tears in his eyes. Meena felt uncomfortable seeing the gritty old man sniffing and sobbing. “Thank you,” he declared. “I had forgotten what it was to be like you. To have dreams and ideals and work for the people. I don’t know when I let the system overtake me. But I assure you that from now on, things will change for the better.”

Within ten years, Karvapur had become one of the most developed towns in the state. Tripathi had kept his promise and now he was famous but for different reasons. He was still mean and cantankerous and often, downright blasphemous, but now he worked for the cause of his people. Often it takes one person, one voice or even one act to set democracy back on its rails.

“\[If you have selfish, ignorant citizens, you’re gonna get selfish, ignorant leaders.\]”

- George Carlin
The G. D. Birla Centre for Education School was established in the year 1973 in what is now, the bustling residential area of Ranikuthi, Tollygunge, at the southern fringes of Kolkata. The School prides itself on being an educational institution that has set its mark in academic fields as well as in co-curricular activities, emphasising the theme of value education. The School provides the necessary environment for the physical and mental development of the students. A sense of responsibility and independent thinking is inculcated in the minds of the students, enabling them to take up challenges in academic and co-curricular fields.

I HAVE THE POWER - I CAN VOTE

NOTA
None of the above

This four lettered word has given us a rare power. I can vote, I will vote, but I withhold the choice of any particular candidate. I have been eligible to vote ever since I turned eighteen in the year 2010. However, once the euphoria had evaporated (the power to vote is one of the things that marks one out as a responsible adult) the enormity of my responsibility struck me. It was not a mere matter of getting one’s finger inked or of pressing the button of the EVM. I had to choose a worthy representative who would present our concerns and needs to parliament and guide the country forward for the next five years.

When I looked around me, and investigated the candidates who were standing for election, I was horrified. How could I choose a corrupt person who, without any scruples whatever, would only use the opportunity to pursue his own agenda? Democracy today has become a veil behind which all kinds of corruption is flourishing. Patriotism is completely absent in most of the politicians. Those who declare that they love their country are merely paying lip service to patriotism. Most of the public is gullible and blindly believe their false promises and tall claims. Lack of education and awareness is also a contributing factor. The ordinary people are taken in by the sops given by the politicians and the lure of jobs and employment. Like sheep, they
are taken to the booths and obediently press the button that they are told to press.

The population feels that they have the power. This is because the politicians understand their psychology and cleverly make them feel powerful. They think that they are taking the decisions whereas they actually are manipulated by the politicians and their flunkeys. As a young educated adult, I feel I do have the power - the power to change things for the better. I have to help my fellow countrymen to understand what their vote actually means. They must be made to understand the reasons for choosing a particular individual or a particular political party. In the nine years since I became eligible to vote, I have regularly pressed the NOTA button, hoping that if enough of us do so, people will wake up and understand the message that is being conveyed through this.

What people should realize is that voting is not merely choosing a candidate or a part. It means choosing the thoughts, concerns, ideas as well as opinions that the person or party has regarding the present and future of his own motherland. The politician or his party is not merely about campaigns or processions or protests and ‘dharnas’. He is also about the welfare schemes, the job opportunities to be created; the welfare projects the economic concerns that will benefit the country. Very few politicians whom I have listened to, fulfill this criteria. Most of them are dream merchants, selling impossible dreams to the citizens before the elections. Once they win, the bubble bursts and we see them for what they actually are - manipulators and self-seekers.

I have a long list of who or what my representative should be. I have taken the decision that I will not cast my vote in favour of anyone till I find the proper person. Sometimes I think of the founding fathers of our nation. Was this the dream they dreamed or the country that they fought for, sacrificing their present so that the future of the country would be brilliant? Ours is a country of infinite possibilities. Instead of following the ideals of our founding fathers, we have played into the hands of the British and their agenda to divide us along the lines of caste, creed and region. So even today, we have a leader belonging to a particular caste or community asking the group to which he belongs, to vote for him. If voted into power what will such a person contribute to the country?

It is of prime importance that the reins of our country be in the hands of people who understand the ideals of democracy and think of the country as a whole in which every individual, group, community, religion and region has a voice. As a young person, I am optimistic, I have hope and I hope that such a day comes. When such a day comes I shall certainly exercise my power - I will cast my vote. This time it will not be NOTA, but the party who can reflect all the colours which together make up my country. I will then be proud that my contribution in the form of my vote will ensure the future of my country.

Till then I will wait in patience and I will withhold my power.

-Suzy Kassem
Democracy is a festival. It is a festival of creating our own future and the youth are at the centre of creating India's future.

-Narendra Modi
Over the last 22 years, Vidyashilp Academy has been recognized worldwide for its unique curriculum and teaching practices. We are an extended day school from Grade 1 to 12, with classes running from 8 am to 3.45 pm. Our curriculum lends itself to a smooth and structured transition, meeting the requirements of both the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (ICSE and ISC) and the University Of Cambridge International Examinations for the international general certificate of secondary education (IGCSE, AS and A-Level) course as a registered Cambridge International Centre.

SCENES ON ELECTION DAY

The day dawned bright and early for me as I was hung high to announce "Election Day is here!" My versatility allowed me to grace many occupations but this kind of job was my favourite one. You see, being a banner is something I enjoyed being, given the places I visit and sights I see. Today was especially wonderful as it was the day when thousands of people would have their voices heard, their opinions taken into account. As a banner I would get to see this, first hand.

Today I was stationed at a sleepy yet buzzing town which had recently been greeted by the rejuvenating rains. The ground of the polling station was slushy. I thanked my lucky stars for letting me fly much higher, with the pleasant breeze caressing me gently. Though I was at a distance, I felt nostalgic to see some familiar faces of the polling officers enter the building. I could tell this area may give them trouble because I saw the experienced faces had deep furrows between their brows. They trudged along to the lone periwinkle booth, EVMs in hand and a monstrous stack of top-secret government papers clamped under their arms. One simply had to appreciate the dedication with which these officers would travel from state to state, city to city, town to town. They toiled tirelessly to ensure everyone had a voice in choosing the next leader. Furthermore they had to stay alert, mentally and physically agile at all times. I wondered how they did it all.

Within an hour more banners were set up - some advocating honest voting, some, for the upcoming
elections and plenty for the candidates. Dozens of my brethren in the many-hued colours of saffron, emerald, pink and green greeted my humble black and white lettering as we acknowledged each other’s presence and willingness to battle anything the weather may throw at us. The polling booth was ready as well, with offices and authorities standing upright in their modest cotton shirts and khaki trousers. Their darting eyes looked out to see if voters were piling in and soon a string of citizens entered to exercise their right to adult franchise. They stepped in meekly, with their photo ID cards in hand, cautiously moving to the booth.

Slowly more voters began trickling in, all varying in ages and characteristics. There were old woman with antique nose pins and earrings, bangle on wrists. Everyone came out with a smear of navy on their index finger. Some were young adults, basking in exuberance who came out of booth with the satisfaction of being responsible for the nation. With a smile plastered on their faces they proudly clicked selfies showing off the stamp of indelible ink. Small shrieking children would cower behind their mothers on seeing the imposing camouflage-uniformed officers with the rifles. The mother would coax the child out of the booth and tell her not to be scared. This action made me realise that soon enough those little hands would weigh their opinion about the country’s future - how thought-provoking!

The day was stretching by amicably with the pitter-patter of feet and shouts of wonder at the polling process. However no sooner had I let my ends sway down a bit, than a throng of men jumped in. Their mouths were hidden by colourful bandanas, eyes streaked demonic red in anger, implied one thing - they were booth capturers. The rifles they swung on their shoulders were just an opening act to the threats they poured out in bombastic voices and terrifying looks. They proudly announced to everyone at the booth they were not leaving till they got their way. You could clearly see that they would stop at no obstacle to manipulate the town’s result. The voters had horror-stricken expressions painted on their faces as they attempted to slowly back away. Alas, it was futile, for the capturers had cornered virtually all possible exits. I was in panic too for it was going to be a miracle to get us safely out of the dire circumstance. Gaining no response, their leader fired two gunshots into the air when a miracle came in the form of the quick townsfolk watching from afar. Their stealthy actions brought a good dozen police officials who snaked their way in no time jumping on the terrorising capturers and holding them down with their might. The voters erupted in a unique blend of shock and relief as the booth capturers were taken away to the police van to be sent straight to jail. A riot of cheers rose for the prompt officers who had acted promptly and waited for the correct moment to pounce.

Eventually the hustle and bustle of Election Day was restored as everyone rushed back to their places in the queues. The relieved polling officers got back to their squeaky plastic chairs and assured everyone that everything was going to be fine. The townsfolk rapidly discussed the sudden detour of events and recalled every detail thanking God for their good fortune. It was fascinating to see how such an agonising event brought everyone together to continue with the elections. As the day progressed, so many more keen individuals came towards the bright blue booth to cast their vote and show off the indigo mark on their index finger. It was a matter of pride to many as they were voting for the first time.

By the lazy part of the afternoon coffee and tea was being passed around as the booth officers began to wind up for the day. They neatly packed up all the equipment, all the papers and finally helped me down from my post. The breeze picked up in a delightful speed and blew across an aura of peace and calm after the day. In celebration the townspeople took up their instruments and sang in euphoria. It was a miracle of that day which left everyone happy, singing in praise of their faith. Seeing their job done, the polling officials took me along on the tedious journey back to another state, another city, another town, to get the mandate of the people on the day of elections.
Hill Top School was started 43 years ago and is today, recognized as one of the premier institutions in the city. The school’s vision is to facilitate value based, holistic education that combines the spirit of enquiry with positive social attitudes to nurture sensitive human beings.

In the past decade, the school has had a string of achievers not only at the ICSE & ISC levels but also in all branches of extracurricular activities at national and international forums. The school’s Value Education programme is unique and its international collaborations for exchange of pedagogy have been outstandingly enriching.

**ARE WE HAPPY IN A DEMOCRACY?**

I was born out of agitation like a refulgent beacon of hope in our abyss of despondency. I was born to be the ultimate panacea in a world of failed homo sapiens writhing in pain, with their wounds from wars and oppressions galore, bleeding a malevolent red. From the crowded 'Tennis Court' to the sophisticated constitutions, from the bleeding hearts of men to the ones who dreamt of the impossible - I pervade the senses of millions. I am not an individual but known as Democracy.

Like a magnificent pearl I was admired by many and then I spread like wildfire from small dusty precincts to huge masses of nations and continents. My flame flickered regal yellow conquering everything, everywhere.

My counterparts - Dictatorship and Authoritarianism were facing their annihilation. They had tears of agony while I rejoiced. They were mute spectators to nothing but darkness while I was a frolicsome yet grave spectator to eternal glory.

Years passed by and then I started experiencing an apprehension which was unprecedented. While the people shouted 'freedom' I perceived 'slavery', when they shouted 'equality' my ears rang with the cacophony of oppression and when they saw 'light' I saw 'darkness'. I remembered what my counterparts had said an eternity ago, "You are going to meet your end." I weep now with tears trickling down my cheeks incessantly.
A journalist lying dead with his eyes closed and his broken body in a quagmire of disgusting red blood. Lying all frozen and oblivious to the heaven he lived in, the white snow covered him in his last moments on this exquisite planet. The shot him in the mouth silencing his dissenting voice once and for all. They killed a part of my existence, a part called right to speech and then on that stormy night amidst the snowcapped mountains I whispered "Are we Happy in a democracy?"

Not many miles away I came across another victim of their maddening rage. They called her "Gouri". She was writhing in pain as the blood drained from her body in the stillness of the night. Battered and bruised they killed another part of me, choking me to silence.

I wept but not a single soul listened as they continued to make this Paradise a battlefield again. I was like a feeble old man on the verge of annihilation nonplussed at what was happening around me while they continued to erase certain boundaries between Democracy and Dictatorship, between Humanity and Hatred.

While all this happened I saw a beacon of hope that I would finally be salvaged from my deplorable condition, from my eradication as I saw the flags of my favourite colour. The flags fluttered in everyone's houses and in everyone's hearts. Everyone sang praises and I too. But alas! There as a devil in all this glory behind the infinite promises. As soon as the colour was embraced by millions, a new era of hooliganism embarked.

Hindus brutally lynched the Muslims and Muslims attacked the Hindu counterparts. Party factions and religious bigotry ripped the country into shreds.

A widowed mother sat waiting at the door as dusk continued to engulf the world. She sat there waiting for her son. Little did she know that her son was being trampled to death only because of racial differences.

The barbarism intensified, with hatred in the veins of a particular faction. They continued to stab the womb from which they came into this world, with arrogance, greed and bigotry to kill me, Democracy.

In spite of the ravages which have left me in pain, like a lost psychotic, I find meanings and hope which meant nothing to them. I find meaning in this lost world when Section 377 is deemed invalid I try to connect my fragmented existence when I see a Muslim helping a Hindu, a Dalit and a Brahmin laughing together, a literate bringing light in the lives of countless ignorant people. I am on the way to find myself once again, rediscover my lost spark in the rarest moment at the remotest places.

At this juncture I asked myself, "Are we happy in a democracy?" I hear reverberating echoes of "Yes" and "No" and I whisper to myself once again, "Are we happy in a democracy?"

In a democracy, the well-being, individuality and happiness of every citizen is important for the overall prosperity, peace and happiness of the nation.

— Abdul Kalam —
Mayukhi Khan
Class X
Calcutta Girls’ High School
Kolkata
West Bengal

Set up under the patronage of Lord Canning in 1856, Calcutta Girls’ High School remains under the aegis of the Methodist Church of India. Throughout its glorious history of 163 years, this premier institution has remained true to its objectives in not only imparting knowledge, but also imbibing in educands skills to survive a world outside the protective shield of the school. Taking its role in nation building seriously, the school provides for an all-round development of the girl child, honing talents and tapping potential, to create ideal citizens who flourish in the cultural and spiritual heritage of this great nation.

Are We Happy in a Democracy?

“Hey, hear me out!” spoke a feeble, shaky voice. Citizen couldn’t be bothered. He had his own business to dutifully attend to, his own tiring work to be compulsorily completed, and his own hopeful children to feed. So he continued walking, his back turned to the speaker.

“Stop!” the voice pleaded, “Please listen to me!”

Out of the faint but sure sense of politeness in his conscience, he turned – and saw it was Democracy; tired, weary, grief-stricken and suffering from the unbearable guilt of failure.

“Alright”, Citizen said, “Go on”.

Democracy let out a long melancholy sigh. “Are you even happy with me?” she questioned with desperate eyes, “Have I failed completely?”

Citizen couldn’t provide an immediate response. He stood there – words forming a lump in his throat but was unable to find their way out.

Democracy continued. Her pitiful voice could be heard again. “I feel strongly that I have lost my purpose. I have let go of the very essence with which I had come into existence. My precious identity is nowhere to be found and cherished.” She hung her head down in shame and shook her head with an air of burning, excruciating sadness. “I’m defeated – lost in a dark abyss of desolation, self-doubt and utter contempt for myself.”

Citizen could not find the words to console her.
“You’re not wrong”, he spoke in a hushed, muted voice. A grim, heavy blanket of seriousness enveloped them.

“I have had to suffer through innumerable evil problems. Trauma and Fear have overthrown me,” said Citizen. “I have been cheated, lied to and put through the dark shadows of doubt and contemplation. I have worried, again and again, for your survival and well-being”, he consoled Democracy, who looked up at him with innocent eyes.

Citizen opened his thirsty, parched throat again, “I watched with helpless, tear-filled eyes as you slowly became polluted with selfish motives, dirty politics, greed for money and total dishonesty and disregard for your values. You were ruthlessly disrespected, Dem.”

Democracy stared up at the open sky, brilliantly painted pink and azure with the setting sun’s ambitious rays.

“How can I be content with myself when I’m fully aware of the hated that you are unhappy about? I failed to provide you the joy and satisfaction that you so rightly deserve.”

Citizen put his hand on her shoulder and looked down at his feet. He was feeling disturbingly uneasy.

“Every day, the newspapers carry gigantic headlines. The news reporters keep on straining their voices with boredom – filled eyes, the screens of your smart phones fill up with hundreds of news notifications”, Dem said while shaking her head. “But is there one piece of good news? No. Another person being cruelly deprived of his hard-earned wealth with yet another minister, sitting on a majestic throne of utmost and indestructible power ruining my transparency by a snap of his fingers. Families at their dinner table converse about my sad state, about the country’s inevitable ruin. Is that what I want to hear?” She finally released her breath that she had been holding on as long as she had spoken these words. She sighed again – in utter desolation.

“How can your heart, soul and mind ever permit you to be happy and contented if you know, with a heavy heart, that you have no importance in this vast plethora of selfish power of the chosen few?”

Citizen stepped forward. “I cannot deny what you have spoken, for it is – as terrible as it sounds – the truth. But have you acknowledged the comforting fact, that without you, I would have no choice at all? I would be an ignored, lost soul, an unimportant pebble on the dusty roadside of a busy city. But it is not so.”

Citizen smiled and Democracy looked up to meet his eyes. His soothing, warm expression restored a tiny piece of her lost confidence.

“Even in these evil times – when politicians do nothing but cherish the art of destruction – can I be stopped from going out to vote on a sunny summer morning, with the sweet chirping of birds reaching our ears? Who can stop the valuable drop of dark indelible ink being marked on our forefingers? For I, as a citizen, still hold power. Some voices remain unheard and unanswered; some tear filled eyes have been harshly turned away like a stray dog from your threshold. But not all! I, as a citizen, shall make use of the full authority I have been gifted valuable importance from our Constitution. For our happiness in you, Democracy, lies in our own hands, who we choose to elect, who we bestow the power to guide us. If we decide correctly what is important, educate ourselves and nurture the hope of progress, if we do not let our minds sway to the cursed boundaries of religion, caste and communalism, who has the power to stop us from being happy with what we gift ourselves?”

Democracy sighed again, but this time, with a slight sweet smile breaking out from the corner of her lips. She looked up again at the vast infinite sky now filled with sparkling luminous tiny dots. For, the faith and trust at the bottom of Pandora’s Box is what truly symbolizes Human Nature.

Still with a heavy heart, Democracy smiled joyfully, evidently displaying the glorious glimmer, the ever burning lamp, the beautiful blessed sparkle of Hope in her eye.
The Bishop’s Co-Ed School, Undri, Pune

The Bishop’s Co-Ed School Undri is amongst the leading schools in the city of Pune. It is the sister school of The Bishops’ School, Camp which has a history of 155 years. The Bishop’s Co-Ed School, Undri commenced in 2006 with a mere 1280 students, this number has now grown to 5000+ students in 2019. Besides academics, physical and emotional development of the children, a lot of stress is laid on moral development and spirituality. The school is renowned for its various activities such as Art & Craft, Music, Dramatics, Quiz, Elocution, Debates and a plethora of sporting activities.

Harini Vijayakumar
Class X
The Bishop’s Co-Ed. School
Undri, Pune
Maharashtra

The pulsing of their war-cry grew steadily stronger, inching closer with the ferocity of a vivacious animal. Orange-clad supporters thronged the streets, marching straight to the polling station, their number large enough to induce a parting in the crowd, the scene veering a strange resemblance to when Moses parted seas.

As their slogans grew fiercer, passers – by watched with awe, praying intensely for the future of the country, should the government fall into the hands of these savages, in the disguise of party campaigners. While they made their way around the constituency, promoting their campaign’s benefits and interests, they left nothing behind but a distasteful sight of banners, flags and other paraphernalia strewn across the streets, and loads of anguish for the commuters.

This fear - deriving procession was however diverted at the sight of a school bus, painted with a certain artistic flair. The mere sight of vehicle enraged the mob to such an extent, that they took it upon themselves to deface the school, which dared to commit such a heinous act.

Anger fueling their hatred, one of the supporters marched up to the parked school bus, and grabbed the conductor by the collar “Who dares to go to school today?” he spat, casting angry stares at the students within the bus. “You think schooling is more important than the government, don’t you? Pathetic fools like you should be locked up.”

The conductor writhed under his grasp, trying to shut the man out of the bus, but all it took was a slight wave of the campaigner’s hand, and ten
furious supporters appeared by his side. The conductor was then thrown down onto the ground, and an incomprehensible number of fists went flying at him.

The bus driver seized this opportunity, and sped off, not caring if the door was left unattended, grateful that the children were still inside, albeit, frightened beyond words.

Later that afternoon, a young boy, clutching tightly onto his mother’s arm, let out a yelp of pain when he was amidst the crowd. He fell to the ground, clasping his foot fervently, looking around for the offender. He looked up at his mother with a plea of help, but it was soon clear to him, that she was already swept away by the crowd.

He turned to his injured foot, finding a two-inch long shard of glass, embedded deeply into his foot. The blood which seeped out left him horrorstruck. He limped to the closest person he could make amidst the growing crowd, and approached the only individual standing outside.

“Uncle, please let me go in. My foot is hurt.” He said, trying to hold back the tears that were so close to spilling. The guard who stood outside, looked at him with apparent distaste, as if not wanting to converse with the boy. “You won’t get much help here. It is the lunch break, and thereshan’t be anyone inside.” Each word pierced the boy’s heart like a dagger. Just then a mob of people who appeared to campaigning for a certain local party arrived at the polling station. However, in stark contrast to the boy’s interaction with the guard, it only took three five-hundred rupee notes, before the party supporters were granted access by the guard.

The boy watched in disbelief, before losing consciousness due to the steady loss of blood from his system, after which he laid there, on the side of the street, layers of dust piling up onto him, in nature’s way of fashioning a coffin.

Not much occurred post the above event, but the newspapers of the day after, reported ghastly details of the previous night.

A young woman was walking down the street, casting wary glances at the obsidian sky above her. The wind whipped around her coat, the only protection she had against Mother Nature’s pent-up anguish. She contemplated hailing a taxi, but the deserted streets left her with no options, other than what she feared to use—public transport.

She walked to the nearby station, clutching tightly at the purse in her hands, and in the blink of an eye was swarmed by a mob of party campaigners. They leered at her as she made her way across the street, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. But the men drew closer, their cat calls and lewd comments multiplying in their number of obscenities.

But when she felt a hand grab her waist, she knew her time was over. The next morning, once the last polling station in the country was closed, the journalists of a leading newspaper held a conference. “Which of these events should be suppressed?” asked a timid journalist.

“The country should be made to believe that nothing but voting took place yesterday night”, said the party chief in a definitive tone. No one dared to demand justice for the fallen souls. The chief’s words were final and binding.

Thus, while the country heard no more of these fallen souls, only a few shall remember these ghastly scenes which took place on Election Day.

“The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.”
Mr. Jones walked into 'Del Monte' cafeteria in a dingy building in the heart of Mumbai. He found an empty table and sat on a chair. After ordering an 'Expresso' and a garlic toast, the old man wondered, "Why hasn't Frederick come yet? He's extremely punctual and it is a rarity for him to reach late for an appointment. Something must be wrong." He had to wait for another thirty minutes after which Frederick Peters came hobbling in. He said "Sorry, for being late old boy. I had to take a bus as the taxi drivers have gone on strike. People going off on a demonstration at the drop of a hat are paralyzing the traffic. This new government is simply rotten. Well, anyway I apologize for causing so much inconvenience to you. After muttering an expletive, he sat down.

Mr. Jones started "Oh Fred, no need to be sorry about it. This is not your fault after all. The new form of government after the British rule is not as horrible as it seems whatever you may say," Mr. Peter said rather impatiently, "Well, why do you think so?" Mr. Jones said "It's much better than the British rule. You needn't be ashamed of belonging to your country. One does not have to behave in a subservient manner with any foreigners. We do not need to worry about achieving independence in our own country. People can express their dissatisfaction with any policy of the government without worrying about being beheaded. We can raise our heads with pride when we proclaim our nationality. Reservations ensure that the minorities get their rights. I think the present form of government is really good."
Mr. Jones stopped for breath and Mr. Peter said sarcastically, "Well Sir, do you have any more praises to shower on the new form of government?"

Mr. Jones firmly reiterated, "You have to accept that the present government is really praiseworthy as they elect their own leaders according to the wishes of the people. Opposition parties help to keep a check on the policies and programs of the government. Once the party becomes unpopular, a 'No - confidence motion' is passed and the party resigns. The government is run in such a way that it is 'for the people, by the people and of the people,' as said by Abraham Lincoln.

Mr. Peters refuted by saying "Sometimes the opposition parties are greatly involved in their internal conflicts and the ruling parties take advantage of this. Different sections have strikes arbitrarily only to serve their own selfish ends.

Demonstrations and roadblocks cause inconvenience to citizens in their daily life putting traffic to halt. Red tapism, corruption, religious bigotry and heavy taxation for the salaried people have been detrimental for the country. Reservation, even after seventy years of independence has deprived the deserving candidates from entering prestigious institutions. Many a time, mob lynching is ignored by the police. Instead they themselves join hands with the mafia to get some money under the table.

Mr. Jones finally agreed with his friend, feeling good he had spoken the harsh truth.

A father and his son seated nearby heard most of the conversation. The boy asked, "What kind of government do we have, dad?"

His father laughed, "Oh, it's called democracy."
Ananya Mukerji
Class X
Dhirubhai Ambani International School
Mumbai
Maharashtra

Dhirubhai Ambani International School is a K-12 Co-educational International Day School established in 2003, with a view to offer world-class educational opportunities. The School provides a safe and stimulating learning environment, with state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities to cater to the evolving educational needs of children to prepare them for the future and ensure their well-being and holistic development. Mrs Nita Ambani who is an educationist, philanthropist, businesswoman and a strong proponent of sports, is the Founder & Chairperson of the School.

SCENES ON ELECTION DAY

An excerpt from the transcript of a live airing of the most reputed Indian politics TV channel - Zee propaganda on Election day in the year 2097.

Host: Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen! Today is the day that we have all been waiting for - It is Election Day! I am absolutely thrilled to introduce our guests for today’s show. Please welcome Ranvir Chauhan, representative of the Supreme Seva Party, Arun Dalal, representative of the Brilliant Janta party and Jash Singh, representative of the Adbhut Aadmi Party and of course I am Rohan Bhatt, your host.

(Sonorous and resounding applause emanates from the audience)

Ranvir: Thank you, dear Rohan! The Supreme Seva Party has been preparing for this day for months with the latest avant-garde never seen before technology! Our scientists have come up with special blinkers that will be hammered into the heads of everyone we can find, to make sure that they look straight at our faces on the television set! There is a chip that we will meticulously inset into the cerebrum in the brain, so that they do nothing but shower us with praise!

Arun: Brilliant Ranvir, Simply Brilliant.

Jash (looking horrified): What!? I have always known you were all scum... but this? This is abhorrent! This is atrocious, terrible, evil (he is lost

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for words) This is egregious! Absolutely egregious!
Arun (with a demure smile); Oh Jash. You are so naive. We must trust Ranvir. The Supreme Seva knows what is right; they have always done what is best for the country.

Jash: Naïve? You are calling me naïve? Look, I know that we must try and win as many seats as we can but there is a limit to everything! What will you do if this ends badly? What if your Supreme party is left in tatters, writhing on the ground?

Ranvir (chucking): I appreciate the concern Jash. Why not test it to clear your doubts? I have brought a sample of the blinkers and the microchip that can be inserted.

Jash: Test it on whom? Who would be willing to be subjected to this type of torture?

Ranvir (Now laughing uncontrollably): Who says we needed their permission? We will employ a time machine.

Jash: First you come up with these horrific ideas now you defy the laws of Physics. Ranvir Chauhan, I will never...

(It is too late. There is a loud whirring noise as Ranvir presses the button of the time machine. A poor farmer from 2019 is whisked away from his field by a blinding kaleidoscope of bright colour and deafening sound. He is still clutching the rope tied to the cow’s neck)

Farmer (immediately jumping to his feet): Where am I? Who are you? Why have you interrupted my work? I must go back to the crops.

Ranvir: Quiet down, you peasant! Sit still.

(The farmer sees the blinkers and microchip in Ranvir’s pale hands as he approached him. The farmer breaks down in a fit of panic and rage)

Farmer: Stay away from me! Stay away! I say.

(Meanwhile the cow continues to chew the grass in its mouth, completely and blissfully oblivious to the events unfolding around him rapidly.)

Jash: (Getting up): Stop it Ranvir, you can’t do this.

Ranvir: Of course I can.

(The host sits in his chair absolutely stunned)

(Ranvir uses a big hammer to nail blinkers into the farmer’s head. As he screams, blood drips onto the opulent, luxurious carpet. A microchip is then pushed into the back of his head)

Farmer (a little dazed and nearly unconscious): I bow down to you, Ranvir Chauhan. (His voice is robotic and he can only look straight at him) You are my saviour. I will tell everyone to vote for you.

(The time machine takes him back to his village, where his wife faints upon seeing him. However, the time machine did a perfunctory job as there was still one unwelcome guest in the room)

Ranvir (looking at the cow which was covered in blood): What are we to do with him?

"May your choices reflect your Hopes, not your fears."
-Nelson Mandela
St. Mary’s Convent College, Nainital, perched on the top of a hill, surrounded by serene beauty, overlooking the enchanting Naini lake was established in 1878 by Mother Salesia Reiner. It is one of the premier girls’ institutions in the country, administered by the sisters of the Congregation of Jesus. Following the footsteps of Mother Mary Ward it encourages holistic development in its pupils and gives equal importance to values, co-curricular activities and academics to ensure that its students are successful in all spheres of life. Informally called Ramnee, the much loved institution aims to form thoroughly educated Indians, whose goal is not only self-realization but liberation of others’ sufferings.

DEMOCRACY WITHOUT EDUCATION IS NO DEMOCRACY

‘Inseperable’, ‘Best Of Friends’, ‘Soul mates’ were some of the many titles which Democracy and Education as a pair have been bestowed upon with. They have been neighbours and best friends for centuries.

They had played together on a park named ‘Justice’ with their crushes Election and Holistic Development, respectively. They had gone through their lives in each other’s company and they never planned to part. After all they had been termed brothers. They existed side by side and you knew that they simply couldn’t live without one another. Some even claimed that Education had helped in Democracy’s birth.

Democracy married Election. On their wedding day, she had even gifted him a promise, strangely that was to be free and fair forever. Education was obviously the ‘Best man’. Democracy insisted that Education be present to seal Election’s promise. Education happily agreed.

When it came to Education, he chose of course, his longtime crush Holistic Development. Election complimented him that day saying that wherever he is, Democracy shall always be present. A huge compliment thought Education; his only wish was to be with his friend, always.

When Education and Holistic Development had children, no one was happier than Democracy. Democracy became Curiosity’s and Learning’s best Uncle. With time this blossomed into friendship. The girls couldn’t survive without their uncle Democracy by their side. Curiosity encouraged
learning. Whenever they went along with their parents, Democracy also went along. The house was always full of pictures of people along with the happy family who wished to benefit from their knowledge. People from the United Kingdom, The United States Of America, along with India to name a few, invited them over to their countries and they happily accepted Elections too arrived at those places.

All was perfect, absolutely perfect. Curiosity and Learning along with their friend Literacy prepared gifts for Uncle Democracy - little ballot papers and told people about their wonderful Uncle making him more famous than he already was. Democracy reciprocated this love and wherever he went, people had the urge to meet Education and his lovely wife and daughters. This is of course for the people who hadn’t yet met the family. They were by now quite famous and preceded Democracy wherever they went.

A single problem in their happy lives was the hatred that Education’s stepmother Poverty and Misery had for all of them. When Education was born they were ostracized by the society. People went as far as to say that all of them could not survive under the same roof. Wherever Education went they were defeated and could not go there, ever again. Their jealousy drove them into kidnapping Education and taking him into a heavily guarded jail called ‘Privilege’ from where it was impossible for him to escape.

Meanwhile Democracy had agony chewing away at him. He could never recover truly from the trauma with Death taking him away.

The next morning, all the countries which had rejoiced under Democracy and Education were visited by a man, an imposter to be precise, pretending to be Democracy. Very few could understand that he was Dictatorship. Very few could understand that along with Democracy, Election too had perished and through her, they could no longer control how they were governed. Very few could understand that they would not have reason to rejoice anymore, to have a chance to govern them.

Education’s family was brutally murdered and Misery, Poverty and their friend Illiteracy controlled the State now, by controlling the Dictator.

The world was driven to darkness, but people lived on in the illusion that they were still with Democracy after Education’s death, that the Democracy that they were living with was truly him.

Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.

-Franklin D. Roosevelt
Don Bosco Academy Patna, founded in the year 1973, is an Anglo-Indian, private, unaided, minority institution situated in the heart of Patna. The Mission at Don Bosco is to nurture children—to make them enlightened, educated individuals who are fearlessly articulate, caring and humane; who can seize every opportunity to learn, seeking to serve not just the community, but also the nation and the world.

Don Bosco has several major strengths—a solid academic programme, a child-centered approach, a technology driven curriculum and an unbeatable ambience. The school continues to build upon its rich legacy of 45 years.

In one of the endless streets on the outskirts of Mumbai, lay a decrepit school. A school for hardly fifty students - the entire world seemed oblivious to its being until that day. It was, of course, the election day, the aegis of democracy.

Abdul stood outside the gates of the school in the sweltering heat. His dirty shirt, one of the only two he owned, proved no barrier to the scorching sunrays. He was drenched in his own perspiration as he stood amongst the unruly crowd. It was the lunch break in the pencil factory. Along with his fellow workers, he had rushed out only to find a man just outside the gates beckoning to them. Gathering around a peepal tree, the man swiftly forced into their hands a five hundred rupee note and showed them his party symbol and said “You all know what you have to do.”

All the labourers ran up to the voting booth where as they waited in the queue, a man clad in saffron served them water. They were astounded, subject to such treatment only once in every five years. But Abdul was numb. Numb, to the man, numb to the crowd, numb to everything except his own imbroglio.

As he wiped his brow with his greasy hands, Abdul couldn’t help but sink into the haunted boulevards of his own memories. Abdul remembered his decrepit shack in one of the countless slums of Mumbai. Life for him had been difficult, but at least he and his family were alive. Starving, famished, miserable... yet alive. His wife had never been alright since their fifth child. The untrained government nurses had probably messed
up the surgery, he had concluded. His first two sons had died in their second month, credits once again to the so-called saviour of the poor.

His eldest son, into his twentieth year, was already an alcoholic. He did a few odd jobs and wasted the money on liquor. His other son ran away when he was thirteen, unable to put up with his elder brother's torture. His only daughter, twenty-one, had high hopes but wasn't able to go college for the lack of money.

A few weeks earlier, his eldest son strutted into their house, brandishing in each hand, bottles of branded liquor. His drunk self-cried out praises to the minister's son who had gifted it to him and the other alcoholics of the slum. A couple of days later, his daughter barged into the shack, holding a B.Ed. degree. She told everyone in the slum about how the party workers had arranged it for her, on the condition that she would vote for their party. Abdul had been approached too. In exchange for free food and Rs. 2000 notes, he had attended a number of rallies. It was simple actually - he just was supposed to wait for the TV cameras and cheer when one approached. What made him sick were the speeches at the rallies.

First, it had been the saffron party. They had been appealing to members of his community to vote for them. As the ruling party, they listed their achievements and promised better living conditions and reservation in jobs for their community.

Next had been the opposition party. They blasted the ruling party for their communalistic ideology while in the same breath, asked Abdul and his community to vote for them. The next day, the party workers of the parties clashed and the media houses branded it a communal riot.

Then, of course, came another party, exclusively for his community. They promised that should they come to power, they would restore his religion to its past glory and wreak havoc on the other religions. Throughout the leader's speech Abdul thought about the Brahmin who lived beside his hut and prepared food for his family when his wife was too unwell to cook.

All these thoughts surged through his mind as Abdul shuffled in the voting queue. He felt like a piece of timber drifting on the surface of a sea in full fury, as he held on with sheer will and determination. He felt like a crescendo in a world of deafening cacophony, like a kite with its strings cut, a tired human among Greek deities.

As he entered the voting booth, Abdul became aware that somewhere along the its way to the present, Indian democracy had lost its way. It was no longer a government with the power in the hands of citizens. It was merely a government with the power in the hands of people who dictated to the public as a shepherd dictates over his dumb hapless flock.

Looking down at the EVM, he saw a neat column of buttons and party symbols. He thought about the Rs. 500 note in his pocket, his drunkard son, his invalid wife, his aspiring daughter, his neighbouring Brahmin and all those political parties who had slaughtered democracy.

Abdul sought the NOTA button and pressed it. For all he knew, none deserved an honest man's vote. For all he knew, democracy didn't deserve an honest man's vote.

As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy.

- Abraham Lincoln -
St. George’s College, Mussoorie

St. George’s College, Mussoorie, is a premier all boys’ boarding school affiliated to the CISCE New Delhi. The school is managed and run by the society of the brothers of St. Patrick, India. Spread over 400 acres of pristine landscape, this campus is an aesthetic blend of old world buildings and new state of the art academic, sports and co-curricular infrastructure which enable delivery of holistic 21st century education. The school features on the list of the best schools in nationwide rankings. St. George’s College holds pride of place in the hearts of all who have passed through manor house.

ARE WE HAPPY IN A DEMOCRACY?

In a land of a perfectly imperfect government
Where corrupt politicians never do repent
Where the rich man is hardly content
And the poor is treated with contempt.
The rules and statutes of governance are bent
The mafia in nexus with men in power never relent
The master has often become the servant
With the grass of democracy unkempt.
Believe me, it’s a shame to present
The flaws of a democratic government.

It's not a pretty story, mind you,
Just one full of despair and pain.

For the value of the word 'true'
Has been lost for monetary gain.
Today, with corrosion of values in me and you,
Society has broken down, reservations are still a bane.
About power play, the common man has no clue,
Besides the disillusioned young lot has resorted to brain drain.

The judicial system with its eyes all stern,
Looks out only for the minor crimes.
As in these hapless times,
Nabbing the big fraudsters, is what they need to learn.
One cannot deny that under the hues of orange and lime
Famous entrepreneurs and politicians dine.
They move freely in foreign lands,
For the politicians no longer deal in nickles and dime.
And the courts will overlook the flaws of men so fine
I can merely watch the antics silently and condemn.

The politicians are all corrupt
But the common masses have to accept them with glee.
For all that they care is not 'we' but 'I' and 'me'.
But the people are not to be blamed here,
It's our fault that we face difficulty,
We were the people, blind and naive,
Who invited the terrible predicament which was to be,
While the common man face havoc and destruction,
In air - conditioned rooms, the leaders are sipping cups of cinnamon tea.

Political parties incessantly make propaganda
Just to exhibit their might
Till the end of my last stanza,
I shall analyse what is right.
In order to have a winner,
We need to have a fair fight.
So, come along whether you are a priest or sinner,
And behold in glaring light,
The flaws and benefits of democracy
In plain black and white.

Little Ram went to attend a big school,
The day was nice and the breeze was cool,
The children of the ignorant remained a fool
With child labour, in spite of the government's rule.
Shane Rebelo  
Class X  
Wisdom World School  
Wakad, Pune  
Maharashtra

Wisdom World School, Wakad was established in 2010 by Vishwakarma Purple Education Trust. Under the dynamic leadership of its Principal, Ms. Justine Simoes, an educationist of thirty-nine years, recipient of the prestigious National Award to Teachers, 2013 and The Derozio Award, 2016, the objective of the school is to provide value-based education and develop global citizens and good human beings.

The School motto – Courage, Compassion and Commitment is strengthened by a Value-based House System, aptly named - Fortitude, Integrity, Noble, and Prudence.

A wide spectrum of extra-curricular activities and special emphasis on Communication and English Language Skills are the hallmarks of Wisdom World School.

DEMONCRACY WITHOUT EDUCATION IS NO DEMOCRACY

I am but a cog in the twenty - first century machine, an infinitesimal lumen wreathed in a whirling crescendo of sheer blinding darkness, a hapless human being without cause and no sight of a future. My only hope, my only salvation is education, without which I have no meaning.

Education is arguably the most essential prerequisite for a smooth functioning democracy. It is the composite life of countless people bound together in the most quintessential manner. Democracy - the voice of the people and the very life blood for government is only contingent upon education. Education is a spark that ignites minds fuels the everlasting fire of curiosity and fosters an acute sense of responsibility. It is this spark, this fire that will propel a burgeoning democracy like India. It is a veritable force to be reckoned with. It gives wings to the flightless, a mind to the mindless, a heart to the heartless, limbs to the limitless and a voice to the speechless. Education is and forever shall be, the torch - bearer of democracy guiding it along a long winding path rife with obstacles finally to reach unfathomable heights.

In this cruel and utterly unforgiving world, the people need a voice and it is education that promises this voice that they covet. It is an instrument of the Gods who make themselves manifest through education. It is the very piece the resistance of the Gods which they have bestowed
upon mankind. It is our duty therefore not just as a democracy but as creations of the Almighty, to utilize this gift with which we have been furnished, to the fullest.

Education is the lighted candle which vanquishes the darkness of ignorance and breathes life into the inanimate. It purges the benighted and uncouth souls of their ignorance and renders them anew, instilling in them a zeal, a drive, to garner knowledge. However there are millions of people still in India itself, who pine for this gift but cannot receive it. This is the very bitter truth of India's democracy. People continue to languish in poverty, chained by the fetters of financial incapacity failing to realize that education can break them free from the vicious cycle of poverty and ignorance. Education can and will most certainly help them attain salvation. However people do not know how to use this gift of life and willingly resign themselves to the bondage of mankind. This only slackens the eventuality of democracy.

Hark! What is the sound I hear? It is a host of educated people returning home after just having voted. They are relishing the freedom that they have been granted by education. They feel a sense of satisfaction and they are fully conscious that they have contributed to the future of their country even though it may be as small an act as voting. Thus education has impelled democracy. Education renders democracy effectual. Like a gnarled oak tree that has stood the testament of time education shall forever continue to inspire and engender self-sufficient, knowledgeable and farsighted individuals and it is their education that will see them and their country rise as gloriously and majestically as a Phoenix from its ashes. It is nothing but education which is like a beacon of light enlightening and empowering the people to choose the right path of life.

Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development.

-Kofi Annan
DEMOCRACY IS THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE. 

– Abraham Lincoln
Democracy is an objective. Democratization is a process. Democratization serves the cause of peace because it offers the possibility of justice and of progressive change without force.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali
DEMOCRACY...
for a stable nation

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