EDITORIAL

Friends it has been an honour for the two of us to serve as Editors of the Martiniere Post. This effectively being our last Edition of the post for the year 2013, as class 12 students of La Martiniere College, obviously had to go out with a bang and so we present the much awaited November Staff Special Magazine, which will showcase exclusively staff related articles pictures and art presentations.

Special thanks to the group of guys whom we scolded and threatened (without which most probably nothing would have been done) due to which this has been possible, namely: Shivansh Tiwari, Bratish Poddar, Shashwat, Shashwat Chandra Srivastava, Rajveer Singh Bisht, Palash Jahauri, Aditya Jalan and Devang Shandilya.

We are also honored that our Staff Advisor Mr. A Clarke trusted us with this mammoth task which we have managed to deliver at last. Hope you enjoy reading it.

VIVE LA MARTINIERE!!!

Brandon Godin, Krish Chopra and Pulkit Melhotra

EDITORS
When Teresa hopped off the scooter, not sure which lane they had to enter, the women on Ram Kishore’s chabutra hardly noticed her. True, she was wearing a skirt that reached down to her shins, a buttoned blouse and simple, though well worn, sling-back shoes – alien enough to draw their attention. But they had no way of knowing that this ‘krischun’ would soon become a resident of 41 Kha Hamirpura.

Arnold, they barely looked at. There were enough men in their cramped house. Too many and too demanding - whether it was fetching water or complaining about the starch in their kurtas, which each woman assigned to each man by marriage, was obliged to wash and iron for them. Men, they knew all about. It was different with a woman. A woman in the locality had to be measured against the barometer of kind. She had to either be ‘like us’, ‘different from us’ or ‘against us’. And the slots which the women of the mohalla fitted into defined the level of their acceptance in the Kishori household.

But with Teresa it was different. Even on that first day when she came to inspect the rooms that Arnold’s mechanic acquaintance Lallan had told them about, Malti the middle brother’s wife briefly noticed a stranger walking with intense concentration on her face. She had deftly manoeuvred the potholes in the lane where the bricks were missing from the last time they had been excavated when someone had been able to afford a waterline directly into his home.

Arnold walked behind her. Tall, big-boned, broad jawed and very white. There was neither spring nor uncertainty in his step. It was just one more set of rooms they had come to see in Hamirpura - an area that they thought they could afford at a time when complicated documents requiring signatures on every page were not necessary when one took up residence. He didn’t hold out much hope, but then Teresa always chided that he could never see the bright side of things. Perhaps she was right; at least it made disappointment easier to bear.

And when they saw the rooms it was not difficult to think of disappointment. Agreed there was no electricity at the time, but the smell that hung heavily in the pokey rooms, a combination that seemed to emanate from raw mustard oil and blocks of khaki coloured washing soap which was sold in the bazaar by the kilo to the dhobis of the area. A smell that seemed impossible to exorcise.

There were two rooms which the previous tenants had used rather fully. It was difficult to imagine that a family had recently vacated the place. None of the familiar elements that make a dwelling place a home had survived, even though the place had been empty for just three days. Nails on the walls, marked where pictures of gods and goddesses must have been. A large hook on one wall with a corresponding hole in the surki plaster on the opposite side where, presumably a clothes line had once been slung, pointed forlornly to the ceiling. An area for cooking that doubled up as the place for laundry and a tiny compartment with a WC that you had to throw a bucket of water into to chase things down. But they were blessed as Ram Kishore had installed a waterline – a single tap which dripped all day into a bucket. It was an arrangement that tenants found convenient, for then there was always water available to splash their bottoms with or to hurriedly pour down the china bowl embedded in the floor, always getting brown and needing to be cleaned every week.

Strangely, there was a line of nails driven into the plain brick floor. Nails that seemed newer than those on the wall and whose purpose was unexplained: as if a child had, with adult precision, hammered them in while playing at ‘cobbler’s bench’. The cupboard set into the wall had one door panel hanging disjointedly by a single hinge. The wooden handle had been worn smooth by countless hands which in different degrees of urgency had left the marks of their grubby fingers on the dark cream enamel. This had formed a veritable patina that would probably bristle with life once the monsoon came and dampness made the furry fungi come alive.

The inner room was more dismal. A lone skylight with the two glass panes painted over with a single coat of brown paint, which cut the light but captured forever the hurried brush-strokes. Damp and inhospitable – but people had lived there before them, until three days ago.

Teresa’s face became more intense, her lips tightened but she did not look at Arnold to help her take their decision. Time was running out and no matter how poorly the place looked just then, any place could be called home if Arnold was there and Jude could come back from school not worrying his little mind whether Hari Lal had thrown their belongings on the street as he had been promising them he would.

“We’ll take it.”

“It’s not very clean.”

“I’ll do something.”

“You say.”

“We can start moving tomorrow.”

“I’ll tell Lallan.”

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Lallan, large, black and friendly, met them as they were locking up. “Bhai, we’ll be neighbours. Now we can go together to Nakhas on Sunday mornings.” Arnold smiled in Lallan’s direction and shook his head noncommittally. He was much sough after on Sunday mornings when motorcycle enthusiasts from different walks of life sifted through bits of metal junk at Nakhas, the weekly flea market, in the Mohammedan quarter of the old city. These would be brought dutifully to Arnold who, with a practised eye could tell if it corresponded to a required part in the old Enfield Sherpa 175 cc or Escorts Rajdoot the manufacture of which had been discontinued. Watching Teresa walking back to the scooter at the head of lane, he dimly wondered if it was alright to move into this area where these people might not understand his Terry. But she always knew better. If she had said “We’ll take it,” she must have known what she was talking about. Terry would be alright. He would be alright with Terry. Jude? They’d see about that later. Terry would think of something. Terry must already have thought about something.

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The first thing that Teresa did when they had paid Ram Kishore a token advance rent, was to change the lock on the front door and stick a holy picture of the infant Jesus in a crack of the cupboard door. It was a photograph of a statue of the infant in red and white robes, crowned and carrying a sceptre and an orb, that was placed in a niche in the church at Prague. She always had some sacred object with her – a statuette, a rosary and depending on the month, a novena card for prayers ranging from Mary in May, the sacred heart of Jesus in June to Saint Jude in October.

It would have been nice if she could examine the inner room more carefully, but the electricity had failed again and the darkness seemed to amplify their voices in the starkly bare room. Waiting for what would constitute their home to arrive atop two flat-board cycle rickshaws, Teresa looked around the rooms with a plan in mind of where their meagre furniture would be placed. The broad folding bed would go into the inner room along with the shelf where she kept the combs and cold cream and lipsticks and on whose lower shelves they stored their shoes. The bracket that served as the altar could go on the wall above the bed. She’d cut scallops on the edges of some wrapping paper to make the altar look special. The mirror would have to go into the bathroom, though it would be difficult for all three of them to use. Jude would have to stand tippy-toe, Arnold would have to stoop and she would be compelled to squat as she applied her lipstick with an experienced hand. The second-hand press that she had bought cheap from the Irish nuns when were winding up the boarding school where Teresa worked as an office assistant would take up an entire wall. But she gave thanks for the number of shelves it had, for it would accommodate all their clothes and the odds and ends that needed to be kept away from prying eyes.

This left the drawing room with its plain brick floor and pathetic lame cupboard door with layers of finger prints bearing remnants of vegetarian food. The sofa would fit in easily. It was for the sofa that this room was reserved. Here, they could sit and talk with those who came to visit them: teachers in the school where Teresa worked, who like her maintained a station in life supported by their regular salaries, often the only guaranteed income, supplemented by what their men received from the tenuous jobs that they feebly clung to. Sometimes, men like Lallan would occasionally drop in to consult Arnold about their motorbikes or take him along with them to examine second-hand parts of obsolete models that were sometimes available on the footpath in Nakhas on Sunday mornings. And later, when Jude and the neighbour’s son Devesh became buddies, they would settle down on the stuffed sofa with the game board between them with a book under it to maintain a level surface. They played ‘Snakes and Ladders’ or ‘Ludo’ and called out their moves in English and Hindi, freely borrowing from each others’ languages expressions of victory, despondency, excitement or defeat.

She had to make place for the doolie. No use getting one’s sleep disturbed by marauding nocturnal cats out to make a feast of scraps and the milk for the morning tea kept cool in the dekhi, placed in a thali of water. The doolie she could not do without. Every winter she would clear out the upper shelf to keep the hunk of beef marinating in limejuice, rock salt and saltpetre with a hint of jaggery bought from the bania at the corner who knew that it would be used for namkin gosth. The doolie was the centre of their gastronomy.

It was a long summer getting their home into shape, made more maddening by the power-cuts that spoiled perfectly happy mornings or lazy afternoons. Then Jude and she would open the front door and sit in the shadow, listening to the leaves careening down the gali blown by the ‘loo’, the westerly wind, heated unbearably as it was sucked into the low pressure of northern India. The ‘loo’ never deterred the children who played in the shade of the neem tree while Malti and her sisters-in-law spoke in whispers on the chabutra, so as not to wake Daadi who slept through sun and hail every afternoon.

Before she returned to set up the office in school for the new term, Teresa was pleased by the hard work which they had collectively accomplished. Arnold had painted the walls with a pale blue dry distemper that was Teresa’s favourite colour. The doors would have to do with just a scrub, which Teresa and Arnold did together: he in shorts and vest splashing water off the soapy sponge onto the floor with a few drops sometimes falling on Teresa who giggled and forgave him. Then they applied a mixture of warm water and linseed oil that Teresa had been told as a child was useful to feed the old wood and bring out a shine.
But the shine was not bright enough to attract the attention of their neighbours who seeing the door open were drawn to glance into this krischun couple’s home and dismiss the view immediately. The drawing room with the sofa, the doolie and the coffee table that was used for meals, for study and for Arnold to put up his feet on, looked cool and aseptic. Deep green walls or bright pink would have been so much more colourful. If one was spending money on colour, surely one could get their money’s worth by getting the deepest pigment! Ram Kishore was also surprised when Arnold came to him with a request for permission to remove the panels of the wall cupboard in the front room! Most tenants had wanted more storage space and the cupboard, as far as he knew had been used by whoever had been there. But these krischuns were a little difficult to understand, though they made no noise and gave no trouble, so he agreed immediately on the condition that the panels be sent to his own quarters as soon as they were removed.

Teresa cleared out the dust and wood chips that had collected over the years. The wood itself was particularly seasoned and she had a fleeting doubt if she had done the right thing as it was being carried out. But Sister Caroline had promised her some large framed holy pictures for their home and she simply had to find a suitable place to enthrone them. Arnold had painted the niche with great care and they all agreed that it was where the pictures should be placed to consecrate their home.

It was on the first day of school that she brought home the pictures; three in all. Wrapped in brown paper and tied with plastic thread by Chandrika, the office peon who hoped that he would receive blessings from these gods by respectfully cleaning and packing the frames. There was a smaller picture of the Virgin as the Queen of Heaven which would have to be placed by itself above the other two. An image of Mary as she had appeared to Bernadette was embellished with pictures of the cave, the candelabra and the stream at Lourdes from which Teresa had earlier received holy water from Sister Agatha to whom she had been Secretary when the school office was still in the old building.

A picture of Saint Jude, in whose honour their son had been named was to Teresa the most special, even though she had to admit that the fluorescent halo and garish colours could have been toned down. It was to Saint Jude that they had taken their boy when he was just a few months old, coupling their visit to Uncle Bertie with a pilgrimage to the shrine at Jhansi. It was always a special memory: taking the day train, travelling in the second class compartment, meeting Uncle Bertie at the station who took them home in the tonga where they washed up before going for the evening service.

On that occasion Teresa had made a vow that she would save money every month for Jude, by sacrifices that they as parents could make. Though it sometimes worried her that she ought to have also promised money towards some public charitable cause, she was convinced that it was the effort of denying herself for the benefit of Jude that she had in mind when the promise had been made.

And in the years that followed, household money – drawn from her salary and the bits and pieces that Arnold gave her from the many odd jobs he undertook – all that money had been kept away in the press for Jude. It was for Jude and Jude alone she was sure. Even when Arnold, in jest, had occasionally asked for temporary loans to pay for ‘mo’bike parts’, she had stubbornly refused. When exactly Jude would reach the age to qualify for the use of that special fund had not been decided by her. She would know when the time came. Until then, they would conduct their lives within the limits established for them by necessity. Their dreams for Jude would be tempered by the reality that he would never be outstandingly successful. They hoped that he would do well enough to rise above the pressures of keeping up a good appearance in the face of genteel poverty to which his parents had been grafted.

“We’ll call Father Paul and have the house blessed” said Teresa.

“Does he know this place?”

“You can go and get him, na.”

Father Paul in his cassock and sacred kit did not seem to fit into the place. Malti and the other women kept a constant vigil outside as long as he was there, expecting chanting or noise or loud prayers. These krischuns were so sober. Even their gods were so quiet! And though the front door was open and they could have casually passed by to peep into the house, they knew that people with their gods should be left alone.

Devesh, Malti’s son and Jude’s best buddy, asked all the questions. Why had the priest come? Was someone unwell? Had the priest conducted a pooja? What clothes and money had he been given? Then why did he come at all when he wasn’t getting anything?

Jude tried to answer the questions in an ineffectual way, describing how the priest would come if you called him when people were sick or sometimes just to visit for a cup of tea.
What happened when krischun people died?

They were bathed and put on a bed in their best clothes. The bed clothes were then disposed of after the person had been put into a box and carried to the cemetery.

_Hai! On a bed! In a box!

Devesh told him how when his grandfather had died – Daadi’s husband, that is, he had immediately been placed on the plain brick floor and then quickly carried on a litter to the cremation ground to be burnt.

“Your grandfather was burnt!”

Where his body had been placed, on the floor of the rooms that Jude’s family now occupied, Devesh continued, his elder uncle had driven nails in a straight line into the floor.

“Why?”

“I don’t know.”

The mystery of the nails had been partially solved. Jude rushed home to tell his mother, who did not seem one bit alarmed that a dead body had been placed in their drawing room and the spot had been marked by a line of iron nails! Her eyes went involuntarily to the picture of the Queen of Heaven as she raised herself to soak the evening tea. For months to follow, Jude did his homework on the coffee table in silence, not allowing his attention to wander. The slightest lull would draw his eyes to the nails on the ground under the table. He never failed to look at the holy pictures immediately after to ward off the spell that might have been invoked by looking at the nails.

Winter was soon approaching and the smells and perfumes in the _gali_ were changing too. Wood fires warmed the chilly night for the rickshaw-men who parked their vehicles on the street and sheltered under the shop fronts. Sharp smelling _chuna_ or lime was left soaking for the night to be strained through fine cloth, before being applied with straw brushes on the outer walls of the houses of the Hindus who would soon usher in Diwali. All that morning at Ram Kishore’s house, two labourers had scraped away the dried slime that had disfigured the walls after the heavy rains of the monsoon, adding a scent of damp earth to the mixture that made up the smells of early winter.

Devesh and Jude had already entered into the spirit of the season with rolls of tick-tack crackers with which they imagined they were pounding the _mohalla_, loading the rolls in cheap tin toy guns. When the guns packed up, Jude got a hammer from his dad and they spent much of the late afternoons smiting each blister of gunpowder on the red paper tape, often coming dangerously close to hurting their fingers.

It was during afternoons like these that Devesh told Jude what to expect that year at Diwali. Like all other places, their home would be decorated with fairy lights and candles and _diyas_. Every entrance in the wall would have a lamp to light the way of Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity. New idols of Lakshmi, a queen of heaven, would be installed along with Ganesh, the Lord of beginnings. There would be new clothes and sweets and outings. Jude had to come for the _pooja_ just as the sun set. Daadi would relate the story of Ram’s triumphant return to Ayodhya after his fourteen year exile in the forest and victory over Ravana in Lanka. The children knew the story by heart, but Daadi set herself up as a great story-teller that evening, while the children sat near the household gods and looked longingly at the tiny heap of crackers that could only be ignited once the lamps were lit. Daadi would drone on, passing on the age old story to the next generations. She expected everyone to be attentive, commanding that every time she paused in her account, they had to collectively respond with ‘huh’ to indicate that they were following the narrative. Jude looked forward to adding to the chorus of ‘huhs’ that evening!

Dressed in his going-out clothes, Jude made his way to Devesh’s home. The preliminary motions of the _pooja_ had got underway and Daadi did not seem to be in the best of moods. She sprinkled puffed rice abundantly over the colourful idols and other terra cotta toys that her sons had bought for their children from the bazaar the previous night. A few silver coins and the new set of steel bowls bought two days previously were also presented to the gods for blessing. The eldest son marked the sacred signs in vermilion and fixed a spun sugar _batasha_ at the centre. Daadi kept mumbling instructions, watching that every member of the family was present.
Why the old woman staged the show that followed, the family would never know. The daughters-in-law decided later that Daadi had made it up on the spur of the moment as she was offended that they had spent too much time giggling and admiring their jewellery before the pooja. The traditional soop or reed winnower, a symbol of the harvest indicating full and plenty was filled with stalks of wheat and other cereals as an offering of thanksgiving to the gods. Daadi exploded in anger. “Leather! Leather strings! Leather from the body of an animal! Flesh! Near my sacrifice to the gods! Who brought this thing here?” And she slung the soop across the room leaving a horrified silence broken only by the sound of low decibel crackers exploding in apologetic bursts in the streets outside.

The leather string that Daadi had noticed had been used to hold the reeds firm to mould the winnower into the shape of an open-ended boat. Whether the thongs were indeed made of leather, no one chose to join argument with her. In matters of the kitchen and the prayer room she was the reigning deity who permitted or denied particular foods and sacrifices according to her station as the matriarch of the Kishori household.

“Who cares about our traditions anymore? When I am dead there won’t be anyone to light a diya in this house. These silver coins will be made into trinkets. Darkness will descend upon this household. Leather in the place of sacrifice,” she harrumphed.

And then she spied Jude - sitting gawkily near Devesh waiting for the ageless story to be told. Did she notice an expression of disappointment on his face? What was he looking so disappointed about? He didn’t even belong here anymore than the thongs of the offending soop. Eater of flesh! A krischun out to desecrate her sacred corner of devotion.

“Send him away from here!” she bellowed. “Let him not come within the pooja room. He can come later. Let the pooja be over.”

Malti was embarrassed for Devesh. “Come back soon son. You’ll only be bored with the droning. Dev will come and call you when we are over. But come back, eh! We’ll be waiting for you.”

“Can’t he stand at the door and listen, mummy?”

“I’ll see you later, Devesh.” He would feel more unwanted standing outside the doorframe than if he had not been there at all.

He knew he had unwittingly transgressed; too young to realise that sacred space was not just a physical area but permission to mingle at levels deeper than the superficiality of politeness would allow. Even shared stories that had contributed to understanding each other - stories about priests who came to tea or nails that were driven into the floor as a memorial - could not break down those invisible barriers, now starkly exposed by a termagant who didn’t have to bother about social niceties anymore. With disappointment surging up inside him he sauntered home, not failing to notice that an earthen lamp had already been placed in the entrance to the common drain that expelled rain water from both their houses. What if Lakshmi chose to come their way mistakenly, instead of going to Devesh’s house? Well, he couldn’t be blamed for that!

Teresa told him to light the candles on the door step when every house in the gali was similarly illuminated. While concentration of this unusual practice was beginning to mitigate the hurt that had welled up inside him, Malti came to their rooms with a stainless steel plate of sweets covered with a cloth with fraying edges. It was the first time she had expressly come to their doorway and Teresa was surprised and formal at once.

“Jude is Devesh’s best friend,” she said, choosing to say ‘best friend’ in English. Much of her conversation was similarly peppered with common phrases in English that city folk used without noticing.

“Happy Diwali to you and Jude and him,” she gestured in the direction of the inner room, even though she had seen Arnold leave the house a while ago.

“Jude came to our house a little while ago, but Daadi thought he might disturb her pooja. She’s an old woman you know. Not like us city ladies who know how to behave. I studied in a convent school till fifth. When my father was transferred, I was admitted into a local school. I forgot English speaking. Daadi chose me for Devesh’s father because I was partially convented. She doesn’t know anything about how nice the krischun school is. I still remember many things from my school. We used to sing a song every morning:

“Jesus love me this I know, for Bible tell me so.’
“I toh still sing it sometimes. Hai, a picture of Mother Mary.” She exclaimed, looking at the alcove where the cupboard had once been. “Jude beta, bring one candle, I too will put one candle in front of Mother Mary.”

And she rambled on in what Teresa and Jude at their own levels of comprehension realised was a desperate attempt to repair the ill will that had been created and to ease the genuine hurt that her son had felt when his friend had been turned away. Teresa went to the kitchen to transfer the sweets into a dish of their own. Malti smiled at Jude and said “Go light some crackers in the gali with Dev. But be careful you don’t burn yourselves.” She watched the flame eat away the cheap wax of the candle that she had just lit in honour of Mary. It would be extinguished long before the diya, fed with desi ghee, in front of the idol of Lakshmi on her great day, which would burn right through the night after Daadi had fed the lamp with a cooking spoon of ghee before going to sleep, leaving a charred wick in the earthen container for them to clear out before the morning rituals were resumed. They were both Queens of Heaven, she supposed. She and Teresa were their daughters. A complex web of family considerations and breeding, religious persuasion and tradition had driven them apart.

There was an awkward silence when Teresa returned with the cloth neatly folded on the plate. “Please come at Christmas. We always decorate a tree. Arnold puts up a crib, you know, a jhaki, depicting the story of the birth of Christ. We’ll place a surprise gift for Devesh under the tree!” Two mothers, two grown women, confined to two different traditions.

They walked to the front door to watch the boys at play, while Malti looked anxiously in the direction of their home wondering if Daadi had noticed her absence.

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It was already November. Arnold had to take Jude on Thursday evenings for choir practice for the Christmas cantata where the children’s choir would also sing. It was something to look forward to. The singing itself was lovely. Aunty Sylvia always brought muffins for them, which they ate during the short break while the adults drank coffee in Styrofoam glasses, or later in December, supped hot soup which the pastor of the garrison church would provide from his kitchen. The children were drawn from different churches in the city and generally met each other during this season alone. Their parents wanted them to take pleasure in the culture they had inherited. At the beginning and at the end of the practice, they would bow their heads in prayer, the children sitting in the first pew looking furtively at each other, trying to signal mischief while keeping a straight face to match the solemnity of devotion.

The story of Christmas was proclaimed every year in song, with different levels of competence. All the shortcomings in the musical talent were completely forgiven in the season of common goodwill. Though the children’s choir had just three songs to sing, they knew most of the music that the adult choir sang as well, sometimes piping in at the wrong time. Then Noreen, the lead alto would glare at them over her glasses attached to a string of beads around her neck while their song hung paralysed on a crochet before it petered into silence for as long as the memory of the glare remained. Jude loved the cadence of one of the pieces and every week looked forward to when it would be sung:

“On that Christmas night so long ago,  
When our Lord was born on earth below,  
There was not a place to lay His head,  
He was cradled in a manger bed …”

The lilting voices brought to mind the pictures of Mary in this home. Why was there no room for them, he wondered? Why were there no lamps to light her way, no drains illuminated to avoid her missing the place? Yet she was called the Queen of Heaven. Living in a gali where he was always having to explain to his friends why his family did things the way they did, they too were misunderstood. Maybe one day, Mummy might also become a queen. Until then there was singing and muffins and prayers and candles and Christmas.

Arnold had just returned home after dropping Jude for choir practice when they heard Malti scream. Devesh had fallen from the roof, where in the excitement of manoeuvring a sortie with a kite he had moved backwards with no boundary wall to protect him. The day after Diwali too! Jamghat – the festival of kites. With only the women in the Kishori household at home, Malti screamed for Arnold to rush him to hospital. Devesh was unconscious – stunned or injured?

With her reserves of maternal energy surfacing, Teresa in her house-clothes – skirt up to the shin, buttoned blouse and velveteen slippers rushed into the gali as Arnold kick-started the scooter with the intention of fetching a rickshaw. “Just wait a minute”, she told him, “I’ll be back in a just now.” She rushed into their rooms and dragged open the door of the press, her hand moving deftly and surely towards her little cache that she was saving for Jude. Then, grabbing a scapular off the picture of Saint Jude in the drawing-room she rushed out again. She knew the time had come for the money to be spent on Jude.
There was confusion in the gali. Not a rickshaw was available in the area, it being the holiday after Diwali when labour was prohibited by faith. Arnold was waiting with the engine of the scooter still running. “Give the child to me,” she ordered Malti as she hopped onto Arnold’s scooter. “Join us at the hospital as soon as you can. We’ll be there for as long as it takes.”

Placing the inert child between them, his legs dangling precariously over her lap, Arnold dextrously carried them surely and carefully to the hospital.

Later that evening Sylvia came to their home for the first time, to drop Jude home from choir practice. It had never happened before that Arnold had not come to fetch the child and she guessed that something had gone wrong. Jude’s parents had still not returned from the hospital. Daadi told them what had happened and even invited Sylvia into their house. The younger women had all gone to the hospital and she presumed the men had been informed by that time. Alone in the house with Aunty Sylvia and himself, Jude watched the old lady cry in the uncertainty generated by ignorance about the child’s condition.

“Jude beta, he’ll be alright, won’t he?” Desperately seeking reassurance from a child.

He offered the comfort he could. “Malti Aunty lit a candle to Our Lady yesterday … Malti Aunty knows a krischun song … Devesh will return like Bhagwan Ram from hospital.” Just phrases. Unconnected. With interminable pauses in between. The clock ticked away and Devesh regained consciousness in hospital.

With his collar bone fractured, the lad was in great pain. The doctors had strapped his shoulder and Teresa placed the black scapular for the sick around his neck. She had brought from the shrine in Jhansi. Saint Jude, patron saint of the hopeless. Then she became aware that she had grabbed the money from the press on an impulse, not for her own son, but for the Forgotten Saint whose veneration was avoided. Only people in the most desperate circumstances called upon him. Saint Jude had stood by her steadfastly.

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The Christmas cantata was to be held on Saturday evening and Jude had told Devesh all about it. The children’s choir would wear a special uniform. Black trousers, white shirts and a red bow which he had not yet seen, as Aunty Sylvia would bring them to the Church. She had also told them to wear plenty of woollen padding under their shirts and to remind their mothers to bring something warm for them to wear on the way home. Would Devesh like to come?

Malti casually suggested that Devesh accompany Jude and his parents when they went to hear the singing in which Jude was taking part. She suggested it over the evening meal when she was assured of the presence of the men to step in if Daadi went on a rampage at her grandson going to the krischun temple. Devesh’s father immediately said “han” in affirmation, quickly stuffing his mouth with a morsel of food to avoid elaboration of his decision. The women seemed to nod, looking in the direction of Daadi, who continued to munch stoically. Deep silence followed and the decision seemed to hang in limbo. None of those present, including Malti, had actually entered a krischun house of prayer. Daadi poured some water into her mouth from a lipped stainless steel glass. She never allowed the vessel to touch her lips for fear of contamination. She then surprised them:

“Don’t send him without some money as chanda for their baby god. I am told the poor mother did not have any place to stay. Poor thing. It was a difficult time that I had when these boys were born. Our own Yashoda had to give birth on the jail floor. It is through the suffering of the mothers that saints are born.”

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Arnold had already taken Jude for the programme. Devesh, his shoulder still strapped was squeezed in between Arnold and Teresa on the scooter as his mother waved him goodbye. At least her son would hear about the krischun story. She hummed ‘Jesus love me’ and had fleeting thoughts about the way they, as girls, had played on the swings in the convent school and rushed back to class after the break, hot and sweaty. Then they were made to fold their hands and give thanks for the food and play in the name of Jesus.

The church looked cavernous to Devesh. It was filled with men who barely spoke above a whisper and women whose presence was announced by clicking heels along the central aisle. The silence seemed filled with conspiracy, like the afternoons shared by his mother and aunts on the chabutra when they spoke in hushed whispers while Daadi was asleep. There seemed to be some excitement up in front. Every now and then a figure would emerge from a side room to pick up a book or place a paper on one of the benches arranged to face the people gathered there.
There were flowers all over. Not flower heads broken from their stalks and strewn about as in the temples. Nor were the flowers strung together on thread to adorn the idols. The flower stalks, cut in different sizes were arranged in vases and placed in windows and on the table that was up in front, in the main part of the church. Flowers, artistically arranged with an eye to detail.

He remembered the way he had torn petals of marigold and roses as he had sat on the duree in the temple that Daadi had taken him to, to listen to the chanting of the events in the Ramayana that bellowed from loudspeakers placed on the temple roof for the benefit of even those who did not want to hear. Did the Christian god prefer flowers to stand in water, silently losing their colour, to droop and be cleared away before the next Sunday when a fresh harvest would replace them? Would the Hindu god be offended if flowers were placed in water before a sacred image for a week, to putrefy? Was it better to vandalise the flowers and shower them with loud calls of ‘jai’ or ‘swaha’ that he had been taught to do?

But now some more lights were switched on and the sound system crackled to life. Expectancy, like a current, electrified the crowded church.

In the hour that followed, the story of Christmas was told in song, in verse, in stories; by children and adults, some in the white robes similar to what the Father who had come to Jude’s house had worn. He understood some of it and developed a nascent observation that nothing really spectacular had happened in the Christian story, but for a great star that had appeared in the sky. But the music, the warmth of the church, crowded with human bodies and glowing with candles seemed so comfortable.

Jude’s choir in their red bows was special. Teresa Aunty told him he could stand up on the extended platform in front of the benches which he noticed men and women kneeled on before they sank into the comfort of their seats of woven cane. With his head above the rest of the crowd, he could see Jude clearly, as he looked at his friend from the mohalla, smiling self-consciously as he sang with the others:

“What can I give Him as small as I am?
If I were a shepherd I’d give him a lamb,
If I were a wise man, I’d do my part …
I know what I’ll give Him,
I’ll give him my heart.”

Devesh knew the words by heart learnt from the time spent together with Jude in the gali. Like his mother, he too could sing one krischun song.

Later, when the programme was over and the adults had drunk their coffee and Jude had shared his muffins with him, Teresa herded them into a rickshaw which Arnold had hailed from the corner, put-putting his way on the scooter, ahead of the rickshaw driver who like the shepherds that the choir had sung about, was swathed in shawls. Teresa stood at the gate of the churchyard looking quite forlorn in the semi-darkness, waiting to take the two boys home.

Daadi had finished her evening meal by the time they returned and was warming herself by the coal fire which one of the women had fanned outside till the coals were glowing and the smoke was gone. It was the best part of the day for her when she had her entire family within the confines of the home, knowing that her slightest order would be immediately fulfilled. Devesh, fresh from a strange and exhilarating evening, seemed still wrapt in the wonder of it all.

“Come sit here, daughter,” she told a bewildered Teresa. “Warm your hands a little. Tell us, how was Jude’s programme?”

Devesh offered descriptions of the singing, the coffee, the pastor who shook hands with everyone at the door at the conclusion of the programme, the recessional song while the choir filed out with candles and the muffins that Jude and he had shared in the shadow of the church. He wished he could also tell them about the story of Christmas with the sheep and the ass, but was uncertain of how Daadi would react to the direct reference to events related to the birth of another god.

“Next year, Jude must come and listen to the story of Ramchandraji’s return to Ayodhya. I’ll have to tell it myself as these girls will leave out something I’m sure. That is, if God wills that I see another Diwali.”

And on that happy evening, both Jude and Devesh were sure that Daadi would live to tell the tale. They would share stories about saints and mix them up, creating a mythology of their own. They would differ on whether a child had been left in a basket among the reeds or had been carried aloft in a basket above the flood. Whether the world had been churned into creation from the seas or had taken seven days to make in the great choreography of creation. And the water of Lourdes would mingle with the streams feeding the Ganga and petals would shower as a monstrance was raised which they would see through a haze of incense and joss sticks.

Tainted leather thongs to tighten reed winnowers were as remote from their minds that night as the lashing of leather whips that would bind a man to a cross.

Mr C. McFarland.
A Healthy Living Endeavour

Today we live in a highly competitive world, where opportunities are rare but expectations are plenty! Finally, you are only known, by your achievements, successes, be it academic, extra-curricular, financial or material. It is good for it gives you a sense of competition, but in this rat race you tend to achieve stress, succeed in physical-mental imbalance and lose the ‘quint-essential’ of your health!

The first wealth is Health – Emerson.

Healthy living ensues from a balanced diet. A balanced diet comprises of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, minerals and vitamins and lots of water. You should have 5-6 meals containing carbohydrates, proteins and fat in the ratio 3:2:1, respectively.

Breakfast for the 1st four periods and 2nd meal for the next four periods should be heavy keeping in mind the ratio. It should also be coupled up with fruit and green vegetables. Fruits and green vegetables are good source of minerals, vitamins and also provides roughage.

Scientists have established that the main reason behind most of the diseases is the damage caused by free radicals. It is said that every day, every cell has approximately 10,000 attacks by free radicals, which not just destruct the cell wall but also disrupt the DNA! Hopefully, we have vitamin C and E, which are rich in anti-oxidants and serve as antidote against free radicals. Hence, it is advisable to take at least one capsule of each of these vitamins, after breakfast, to keep us disease-free, all along our lives.

Water is an essential requisite to healthy living as it provides hydration to various liquids within our body does not regulate, detoxifies, our body etc. It is recommended to have at least 4.5 litres of water everyday. However, you should avoid drinking water half an hour before and after meals, as otherwise it dilutes the juices, acids, in our intestines, which can cause digestive maladies. One should have one to one and a half litres of water in the morning after sleep and before brushing. This detoxifies your body and helps to cleanse your interstines, known as water therapy.

The last meal should essentially contain salads, green leafy vegetables and some citrus whole fruits. You should remember to have your last meal at least two to two and a half hours before sleep as it helps in digestion and controls fat accumulation.

Good sleep is paramount to good health! You should have 6 and a half to 7 hours of sleep at night and 45 minutes to 1 hour of sleep during noon, to ensure lively living. Research has established that one hour of sleep before mid-night serves as two hours of sleep, after mid-night, which reaffirms the old saying –

Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise!

How can you have a balanced diet and good sleep benefit you, unless you have an exercise programme? An exercise programme is tailor-made to suit your targets and your limitations. However, half an hour of brisk walk, jog cycling or random gym-work with light weights are recommended for all ages to provide robust health.

Hence, Wendell Philips has rightly said –

Health lies in labour and there is no royal road to it, but through toil!

Mr S. Dutt

Kids These Days

When the publications’ representative approached me regarding this staff special edition of the ever loved Martiniere Post and started explaining me all possible ways of giving him a piece, I wondered “are these young men groomed by glamour and economic ecstasies still so keen on giving us teachers such importance?”

I remembered the boys I used to teach during my initial years at La Martiniere and always thought that this new generation does not care about much stuff. Tough the moral values have still discipline that is expected, without the fear of punishment, is scarcely visible. I remember the boys of the late 90’s and the early millennium aiming point blank at a particularly suited subject, with a strong career clarity and focus. They used to be more result oriented. The responsibility is seriously lacking in these boys today. Work given → work has to be done. This characteristic is seldom seen now.

The amount of coaching that is being attended by boys today causes them to neglect school now. I’m not contradicting the fact that additional help should be allowed, but these umpteen coaching’s hardly seems to help. We did use to have private tuitions often at home where the student used to study a particular subject, ALONE.

The economic expressions and the cyber accessories are heavy force, set to distract the breed of students, and I can bet that this is the easiest bait to get into.

But as I know, eventually these very boys are going to read this piece so I should rather stop criticizing their lifestyle now. Yes, this lack of focus somehow positively affected their intelligence quotient. The number of activities they are into, the number of competitions they take part in, it is the just the best way for them to meet the outside world. Their cyber knowledge is the best help and doing everything around the globe does make them jacks of all trades. But they do necessarily need to be a master of at least one.

This is where goal clarity makes a point. They are not sure of their career divisions and they usually get down for everything, hoping to get one.

To conclude this here, I would want to say that I do not compare you with your older counterparts but all I want is to see my students being successful.

Remember, no matter how good you may think you are, there is always room for improvements.

Mr A. Seymour
A WORD OF ADVICE

Being busy is perhaps the easiest and most popular excuse for everything we don’t do—a workout, a meal, a
telephone call...the list is endless. But if we really think about it, we don’t require awful lot of time to get any or
all of these things done. As a matter of fact, a lot can be achieved in not more than 20 minutes. Take a break
from work and get one of these things done. Chances are we return to work, a more efficient person. Try to shut
down our machine and take a walk. Being passive is one of the greatest curses of our times. So there’s
probably no greater favor we can do to ourselves than to get off that chair and go for a work.

ABC........... OF “SATISFACTION”

Dear Friends,
please the following A,B,C.......
and trust me that all of you will understand the real meaning of the term
“SATISFACTION”

A lways spare out time for the loved ones
B e good to others
C hoose your words correctly before you say something
D e-activate negative feel the moment they come in your in mind
E at in peace and chew your food
F orgive others for their mistakes as far as possible
G ive out your not so essential belongings to the needy people around you
H onesty is the best policy, exercise it on daily basis
I m pulsive behavior is harmful
J ust do the right thing at the right time
K now your priorities
L ove everyone around you
M ake the most of each moment you get to live
N ever give up
O ut going calls made must be short, to the point and sweet
P ut others before self and Pray with faith
Q uality in the quantity of work that one does is always looked upon
R est is must above everything else when you need it the most
S ilence is golden and its time tested
T ry and you shall succeed even if you are doing it for the first time
U se your time wisely
V ersitality is praised in all walks of life
W atch your behavior and body language whenever you are in public
X factor is all that counts
Y es I can do it.... Is the golden rule to maintain a positive attitude
Z eal is must to achieve you Goal

...............

YOU’RE NOT ALONE FRED
(A Short Story)

The door creaked open and a rather tousled head poked itself hesitantly into the opening. Miss Rachel
registered the rather forlorn look in the brown eyes that usually were stormy and defiant. Fred Jones, whom the
Staff and children had dubbed ‘Trouble Personified’, now stood there with a curiously vulnerable expression on
his far from clean face. The middle aged teacher’s hand hovered over the notebook she was appraising and
then she dropped the pen onto the book and said with a smile, “Come in Fred. You’ve come at the right time,
like an answer to a prayer! Do you suppose you could help me sort out these books roll number wise?

The boy gulped, the conflicting emotions warring with themselves showing on his face, and then he nodded
cautiously. It wasn’t very often people entrusted Fred with a job these days. A couple of years ago things had
been so different though. He silently sorted through the books, while Rachel continued her correction of the
notebook she had been going through. A curious bond of comradeship seemed to spring up between the two
while they silently continued with the task on hand. Surruptiously glancing at the thirteen year old, under the
fringes of her eyelashes, Rachel realized that the boy was undergoing some traumatic experience and had
turned to her for help. What could she do to help him confide in her, without forcing the shutters of defiance and
indifference slam down again?
She need not have worried. Fred was desperate enough to volunteer information. “Miss Rachel,” he began, without preamble, “I don’t know what to do. I need your advice.” Rachel gulped and then said gently, “Yes, Fred, something seems to be worrying you. What can I do to help?” For a long minute the boy kept quiet. Then with a half sob he said huskily, “Miss Rachel, I think my mother is dying and I just don’t know what to do.” Rachel gasped in shocked surprise. Never in her wildest dreams had she thought that this would be Fred’s problem.

“Dying? What makes you say so, Fred?” Fred hung his head down and said almost inaudibly, “She hasn’t eaten for the past eight days…. And for the past three days she hasn’t even let me give her any water! She does not want me near her! Oh Miss Rachel, I don’t know what to do.”

Rachel hugged the scrawny body of the child as he broke down completely. Great heart rending sobs tore the silence of the room into shreds. Outside the sounds of children calling out to each other in glorious abandon seemed to mock the agony Fred was undergoing. “What does your father say?” Rachel asked at length, once the tears had stopped falling. “Father died in an accident two years ago,” hiccupped the boy. “Mother’s never been the same after that. Last month she fell ill with typhoid and there was no money for anything. She needed to eat so I… I…” Here Fred’s voice faltered to a halt as he hung his head down again. Rachel sat bolt upright as certain pieces of jigsaw fell into place.

She gently lifted his chin to look into his tear filled eyes. “Fred,” she said, “Last week when you were punished for robbing two boys’ tiffin boxes, was it because you were hungry? Your mother was too ill to cook for you was it not?”

Fred turned a tortured face up to meet the teacher’s without flinching. “No Miss Rachel,” he said, “I took the food… but not for myself. It was for my mother. She had not had a morsel for days. I’d spent the last bit of money she had in her bag to buy her the medicines the doctor had prescribed. But without food, she was getting weak. So… So….” Rachel closed her eyes in horror remembering the ugly scene a few days ago, when Fred had been accused of stealing food and had silently, if sullenly, accepted the scolding and flogging in the public corridor by an irate senior master, amidst the snickers of passing pupils. She too had passed by that day, but dismissed the storminess of his face as ‘nothing unusual’. Fred was in just another scrape as usual.

“You were punished weren’t you?” she remembered.

He looked up fiercely, “I didn’t mind Mr. Roberts caning me Miss, but he also stopped by at our place and told my Ma. She was so weak and sick… I think it broke her heart to be told I was a thief. She just stopped eating since then… I think I might be the cause for her death very soon. Oh Miss Rachel what can I do? Please help me. I don’t have money for the doctor anymore!”

Rachel blinked rapidly to clear the tears of sympathy from her eyes. She gave Fred another comforting hug and said, “This is not the time for tears, Fred. This is the time for action. Let’s go to your place and see what we can do to help your Mother. Let me speak to the Principal first and then you can show me the way to your house.” Incredulous hope sprung into the poor child’s eyes as he nodded eagerly if diffidently.

A noise at the door made him look up as he wiped his tear stained cheeks with his knuckles. It was Donald, one of the boys, whose tiffin he had helped himself to. Donald was looking rather shaken and white and as Rachel left the room, she heard him say, “Fred, I overheard the last part of your conversation with Miss Rachel. I’m sorry I made a fuss about the food you took. Can I help you in any way?”

Fred’s composure threatened to crumble before the sincere regret in Donald’s voice. “No. Thanks all the same.” Fred prepared to pick up his bag and walk away. He felt an arm slip around his shoulders and Donald’s voice say, “I’ll walk home with you. I’d like to be your friend. I’d like to learn how to look after my mother like you look after yours. And Fred, if I had been in your place, without a Dad to turn to, I’d have done the same, I reckon.”

In that moment Fred knew that things would get better. His mother would be seen to. Once she was better, he would explain why he had done what he did and that Donald had not only forgiven him but was his friend now. He looked at the sky and past the sunny clouds. Somewhere up there, he fancied, his Dad was smiling down at him for doing his best to look after His Mother and himself. He had a huge responsibility on his very young shoulders but he was not alone.

Mrs S.Godin
20th of June, 2013. 05:30 pm. Back to home, back to the crowded city (Lucknow), back to routine, physically at least. This was the day when I returned from a 4000 Km trip from Lucknow to Leh-Laddakh. Mentally, to be honest, I was lost- drifting, searching myself. My mind was occupied with too many thoughts- get back into the groove, focus on work (College to open after 10 days) and the yearning to go out in the open and to find out the elusive meaning.

Next morning, I got up feeling lost and disoriented. I had to be reminded that I was back in Lucknow. I could barely recognize my face in the mirror (courtesy-frost bite). When I left for this trip, everyone around me thought that I would/should change. Though the trip nothing really changed me drastically but I now find myself a changed man definitely in many small ways. I am going to try and pen down on paper what exactly I thought during the ride and after.

First of all why did I do it? I was the guy who never got a chance to ride any bike before I got my bullet. Leave aside, I never got a chance to ride a two-wheeler in my school/college days (not that I did not know how to ride a two-wheeler) because I had a cycle till my graduation days (which in fact I say with pride). In the last year of my graduation, I was gifted a scooter (a Bajaj Chetak and once again no motorcycle) by my father as he is always protective about me and his logic was that a scooter is safer than a bike in terms of speed. I bought my Black Royal Enfield Electra 350 (Bullet) in November 2010. Did some local rides and Lucknow-Mussorie ride(last year) but that really did not leave me any sense of achievement or belonging. But I really loved everything about my bike. The Question which really bugged me was that was I a tough rider, do I have the fitness and temperament to complete successfully and safely one of the toughest ride on one of the toughest terrain both in terms of altitude as well as the variety of obstacles on offer. I am talking about the terrain of Leh-Laddakh commonly known as Biker’s Mecca or Biker’s Paradise among the riders. It has it all- sand, gravel, murk, water and of course ice compounded with sudden unpredictable weather changes and vast stretches where one has to do off-roading. The following local Laddakh saying explains it all-

“The land is so barren and the passes are so high that only the best of friends and the fiercest of enemies would want to visit us.”

So what did I do? I discussed with the local riders who also happens to be one of my school friend (Mr Somendra Banerjee) and decided to go on a trip to the top of the world- Khardung La. 6 riders started the trip on 6th of June 2013 from Lucknow. But instead of going though the more common rider route of Delhi-Chandigarh-Manali, we took more adventurous and less traversed route that took us from Lucknow-Haridwar-Dehradun-Chakrata-Rohru-Narkanda-Kullu-Manali-Tandi-Keylong-Jispa-Sarchu-Rumtsé-Leh-Pangong Lake-Kargil-Drass-Sonmarg-Srinagar-Udhampur-Jammu-Ludhiana-Ambala-Panipat-Sonipat-Delhi-Agra-Leh-Pangong. That’s just the headlines-how can one forget the mountain passes-Jalori (not well known among the tourists and the toughest of this ride for its steep slopes) Rohtang (pass for tourists, traffic jams and dirt). Baralacha La(tough for some but not for us), Tanglang La(World’s second highest motorable pass at 17800 ft), Khardung La(World’s highest motorable pass at 18380 ft) Fotula(the most beautiful and photographic), Zoolla(called by us as Godzilla Pass and the one mothers will use to put bad riders to sleep- “so ja nhi to Zoolla Pass bhej dung”. And the small stops in between from nowhere with just dhabas(meaning hot water/tea and shelter from the icy winds for 30 minutes) at Bharatpur, Pang, Upshi, Losar amongst others. The ride took us from plains of Uttar Pradesh to the beautiful green mountains of Kashmir and back to the sweltering heat of Lucknow. The ride that gave an opportunity to enjoy some of the delicacies of Laddakh, the famous Laddakh tea, to enjoy Kebabs near Dul lake in Srinagar.

It is difficult to express what we went through both mentally and physically. There were times of exhilaration when we were able to complete a day’s task set aside by us and the feeling of extreme looseness when we realized that we are not the riders we thought we were. The feeling of insignificance- when faced with the beauty and the size of the landscape we were riding through. When a rider completes a ride to Leh-Laddakh, only a handful that shared the adventure would truly understand what it takes to endure an escapade like that-feeling the elements fighting against you and manipulating your bike to overcome the obstacles set before you. For those like us who like to ride off the beaten tracks, a common occurrence is the battle is between enjoying the ride and the scenery at the same time. For us transportation is only a secondary function. A motorcycle is a joy machine. But one thing on which we never compromised was safety. We always followed the basics of riding which eventually helped us in completing the riding safely.

After this ride I totally agree with two tag-lines of Royal Enfield about the ride to Leh-Laddakh- “Tiring-Testing-Tempting” and the second-“The road to heaven is never a straight line” and that’s literally and figuratively bang on. It is said that promises are made in heaven and I made a promise to myself in Leh-Laddakh that I will be back here again next year with my joy machine.

Mr M .Tiwari
Although literature is basically defined as any imaginative prose or verse, it is that rare story or poem which has earned the distinction of containing permanent value that most readers consider Literature. These are the works that best mirror life, no matter when they were written.

That is why news reporting contains weirder events than fiction. A reader who declares, “I can’t believe that,” doesn’t throw down his/her newspaper and cancel his/her subscription. A novel, however, that jars its reader’s sense of possibility is often put down and never picked up again.

The literature of an age, and its social setup keeping and reacting one over the other. Literature influences the society; society is reflected in Literature and in this way, in all languages and at all times there has been a close interaction between the two.

Literature of any age cannot escape the influence of the social scene and therefore is found reflecting the society of the age when it is created.

The poet, the dramatist, the novelist, the essayist are all the product of their age openly and clearly gets imaged in their compositions. That cannot be helped, it so seems. Take the example of two literatures – English and Hindi.

For all intents and purposes, the creative writer is a liar, must be a believable spinner of falsehoods as well. As he/she delves into him/herself, rearranging facts, he/she makes them conform to his/her intent. Where the writer finds this material is from experience. Only God creates from nothing. Therefore, since life is the source of human beings’ knowledge, the prose and poetry endangered by the imagination is a carefully plotted view of life. The mirror Literature holds up to the world is more along the lines of the fun house variety. It enlarges, shrinks, and distorts reality to suit its own needs. The reality of the image remains recognizable, but affects the reader more sharply than actual life itself.

Whatever happens in society is penned down as a piece of literature. Once analyzed, examined and re-examined, it possess the capability to ink its impact on the readers’ mind, who undoubtedly are, the society.

Their truths endure because they provide the reader with a deeper, broader understanding of human condition. It is a characteristic which has kept people reading throughout the centuries.

As for India, Chanakya who wrote the Arthashastra, an ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy of his time. All of these were a part of the existing society.

Machiavelli, the great political writer of Italy wrote, The Prince which served as a guide for the rulers during the middle age.

Petrarch, a great scholar and a sonneteer, also known as The Father of Humanism dealt with the economic, social and political aspect of man’s life. He collected the classics of Rome and roused the interest of people in the writings of Livy, Virgil and Cicero. This clearly states that literature can sway away people and influence them greatly.

Chaucer, the father of English poetry, and Thomas More who penned down ‘The Canterbury Tales’ and ‘Utopia’ respectively were prominent figures of the Renaissance era.

Another eminent personality, William Shakespeare emerged as the most influential author of that time. He illuminated human experience through his great stories and compelling characters, and had the ability to turn the phase.

France also excelled in the literary world with Montaique who revolted against authority and the tyranny of the past and earned the title of the First Modern Man. His works greatly reflect his interest in himself and his philanthropic approach.

The French Revolution – a very significant political and social event of Europe had as its basic tenets – Equality, Fraternity and Liberty – and these tenets and the revolution did cast its spell all over Europe and England and the English poets could not escape that influence.

The Holy Bible read by Germans was translated in the vernacular language by Martin Luther and hence the citizens could connect with the culture and religion.

When Gustav Flaubert, during his trial, exclaimed, “I am Madame Bovary,” he did not mean he was a female spendthrift. As he was building her story, word by word, he lived her life in his imagination. He suffused himself with her motivations so that he could describe them. If he had not, his readers would never have understood her. Because he did so, and with such artistry, his masterpiece is read, admired and experienced to this day. However briefly, his readers can feel that they, too, are Emma Bovary, or, at least certain aspects of her.

According to Stephen King, “Good fiction shows the inside of above the even things….great fiction shows all these things working together; it lifts us briefly above the event horizon of our day-to-day existence and gives us dreamlike and godlike sense of understanding of what life is about.”
Wordsworth was moved by the humanist aspect of the revolution in the earlier phase but later its bloodlines and violence disillusioned him and all this is reflected in his poetry- ‘poet of man’ and in his later poems. Shelley was moved by the revolution’s ‘spirit’ of revolution and Byron by its fighting spirit.

Tennyson was a true representative of the Victorian age and sang of the glories of the Empire while his nature poetry gets influenced by the advancement of science in the later 19th century. He did not remain a ‘priest of nature’ as Wordsworth was because where science advances religion declines.

Charles Dickens saw the backside of industrialization - the poor getting poorer and the rich richer – the sufferings of the poor are ignored and his novels reflect all this.

The First World War created a group who sang of the glories of war, of chivalry and Sacrifice for the nation and then there is the post poetry and post-war drama- Bernard Shaw dramatist known for his pungent satire, pricking the balloon of romanticism associated with war heroism and love in his ‘Arms and the Man’. Eliot comes on the literary stage to deal with the utter disillusionment of the age in his ‘Wasteland’ all this about English Literature.

Similarly in Hindi Literature, when Prithvi Raj Chauhan was fighting valiantly with Mahmud Ghori, Chandrabardai- the warrior poet was singing of the glories of war and his hero in his ‘Prithvi Raj Raso’. Then came the Bhakti Kal- the period of Bhakti- the country and the nation had fallen under the Muslim yoke and there were class conflicts on the basis of faith and religion.

There came on the literary scene, Kabir, who preached anti-fanaticism; pricked the bloated balloon of superstitions and blind faiths and admonished both ‘mullahs’ and ‘Pandits’ and showed the path of God. Tulsidas found the Hindu society divided into factions ‘Shaivas’ and ‘Vaishnavas’ and showed the path of love, brotherhood and mutual respect for all Gods and presented the ideals of a son, a brother, a wife, and a devotee. The triumph of Ram- the incarnation of the good over Ravan, the symbol of evil, is an eternal lesson given by him to the society- whose lessons remain revered even today.

The period of comparative social peace created a set of poets who indulged in pleasing their patrons- the Kings- as their courtiers and songsters. Their poetry is full of amorous sports in which they make Krishna, Radha, and the Gopis their sensuous and sensual kings. This is how the social scene was reflecting itself in literature.

Then, comes the modern age. The British were ruling India and there were classes close to the ruler and classes suffering at the hands of the officials and at the hands of the so called elite of society. There were classes created- the superior, the downtrodden- the imperialists and the nationalists. Prem Chand- the great novelist unravels this class fight in his novels and thereby, not only reflects the society of his times but gives a lesson too. His novels, his short stories- all have a lesson to give.

There was Bhartendu Harischandra- the poet the harbinger of the modern age and thought, who successfully caricatured the classes- social and religious-thus reflecting the social scene with a point to reform it.

Thus goes on the scene. Maithili Saran Gupta- the Gandhian poet sings of the glory of Ram, of the glory of Lord Buddha, of the glory of other mythological heroes his thrust throughout being to awaken the masses and enlighten them into cordial social contacts. The national fervor reverberated through the veins of the Psyche under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and poets after poets, writers after writers sand of the ancient land and its culture. Jai Sanker rasad, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, the poets; Dharmvir Shrilal Shukla- the novelists brought into focus the inequalities and imbalances that plagued the social scene and through their thoughtful and sometimes highly satirical way brought to the fore the social and political malaise through which our present generation passing. This true presentation has been with a purpose- to awaken the social conscience to the problems that dog the people.

Even if the action of a story takes place on a faraway planet, or occurs in the distant past or future, if it is Literature it will touch the reader, draw him/her in and make him/her see things within him/her in a clearer light.

The writer, having put a part of his/her honest self into a work, whether intentionally or not, strikes a chord in his/her audience by his/her choice of words, which resonate inside his/her readers. A tenuous connection is established between minds. Both reader and author have thought, sensed or felt the same thing, each in a different life. Still, that silver of life they share remains the human on Earth.

Literature thus has been holding the mirror up to Nature on one hand; reflecting all traditions, trends and tendencies while rising up the finger of caution too to guard against all that goes against the basic values of life.

Literature and Society have remained and shall remain ever intertwined and the more they so remain, the more solid they share remains the human on Earth.

Mrs A . Shah
A GLANCE AT OUR CAMPUS.

La Martiniere College is unique in every aspect, it is this uniqueness which makes us stand apart from the rest and which leaves a lasting impression on all those who visit our campus. Through this article I wish to be able to present a portion of our unique heritage and shall share with you my knowledge of the estate.

Major General Claude Martin, our founder owned around 1400 acres of land in the province of Oudh, which was entrusted to a trust by a decree of the erstwhile Supreme Court at Calcutta ‘Lucknow Martin Charities’. In 1845 a portion of this land measuring 700 acres was used to establish La Martiniere College in accordance with his will by the same decree. Over a period of time the College has leased out portions of this estate for public utilities/public interest to - the Prince of Wales Zoological Gardens (Lucknow Zoo), the Lucknow Golf Club, the UPPTCL for setting up a 132 KV substation, the U.P. Jal Nigam for sewage pumping stations and the Tennis Academy. Besides this a portion of the estate has been acquired by the government for setting up an embankment (bundh) to protect the city from the fury of the floods and the establishment of the ring road which is now known as Lohia Path.

The boundaries of our estate on the Northern side is a village called ‘Jiya Mau’, on the southern side are the railway tracks. Vikramaditya marg and Kalidas Marg are on the Eastern side a few hundred meters beyond the river Gomti and on the Western side the road running parallel to the Lucknow Museum. The Haider Canal flows through our estate.

Martin Purwa was established to house faithful and loyal servants of our founder for generations to come, while Dairy and Balda were set up to house the servants employed by the College. While Dairy and Balda have maintained their boundaries, Martin Purwa has developed into a village due to encroachments by land sharks. Roughly speaking around 2 to 3 acres of Martin Purwa is covered with encroachment. In a similar manner 4 to 5 acres of land has been encroached upon by a new colony between Jiya Mau and our estate, and 2 to 3 acres between the railway tracks and our estate.

Besides the regular infrastructure of the College, we have on our estate 106 quarters for college workers of various categories and another 34 quarters for teaching and office staff. In all the College houses 140 families on the estate.

La Martiniere College has the single largest infrastructure for games and sports in the world. Currently we have 3 basketball courts, 2 indoor swimming pools, 4 cricket pitches, 5 football fields, 4 hockey fields, besides this we have badminton, volleyball, boxing, skating and athletics facilities. Almost 50 acres of our estate is dedicated to sports facilities. This is besides the land leased out for the golf and tennis facilities.

The uniqueness of our facilities lies not only in size and numbers but in their names. The college open air stadium spread out on 7 acres is called ‘Polo Ground’, the Junior football fields – ‘Bachelors Mess Field’, the Hockey facility – ‘Bakers Field’ the Cricket arena – ‘Fairlydale’ the junior hockey field – ‘Skyes field’ the camping ground – ‘Park House field’

In a similar fashion the residential accommodations also have names – Staff quarters are Park House No 1 to 7, their annexes and the Mews. The Park Houses also have nick names, for example Park House No 4 is called ‘The Bachelors Mess’ as it was accommodated by the unmarried male members of the teaching staff for several decades. The Servants colonies are names Dairy, Balda and Mission compounds. Likewise each building, demarcated areas and road have names which we can take up. That’s all for now. Got to check the masons and labourours working across the estate.

Vive La Martiniere.

Mr A. Michael.
MEMORIES
I stand mesmerized.
The bird had flown
Leaving behind a trail of memories,
That soared with its fluttering wings.
My eyes followed the tiny Ave,
A link to the distant past.
The rickety cart ride
Over a long winding road
Had deposited me to my destination.
Entranced, I had watched
The setting sun lay its caressing hand
Over the quivering meadow.
The swaying reeds, blooming fields
Whispered to me.
I had smiled in answer.
Like a clever conspirator.
All around sugarcane stems,
Bribed me with their sweetness.
Never heads like so many faces,
Nodded at me, eager for company.
Soon night threw its shadows,
Stars clustered around,
Enfolding me in their brilliance,
When sleep overtook me, I did not know.
Only the sweet murmur,
Of a few faceless companions,
Had lulled me into oblivion.
Once again I raised my eyes skyward,
My omen of joy
Was lost to sight.

Mrs K. Raza

PHYSICAL TRAINING
Students of today treat PT more as a punishment given to them by the college authorities, rather than a means of improving their health and personality. This attitude is mainly due to the fact that some parents feel that academics is more important than sports and games. Parents should not encourage their children to stay away from PT classes, especially when they have to practice for the Annual PT Display by sending applications along with medical certificates asking for exemption from these classes on the slightest pretext. If a child is genuinely ill, the PT Incharge will excuse him from the class.

Physical Training is a ‘must’ in every school and college throughout the world. Therefore, children must be made to realize the importance of Physical Training which results in the development of both body and mind.

Mr N. Shukla

Teaching-learning process
Teaching can be explained as a process where one person imparts the knowledge he has to one or many people. Whereas learning is the process of receiving the knowledge being imparted.

The world is moving at a fast pace and it is definitely essential to catch up with the pace of the fast moving world. Parents are busy with their official as well as personal work and hence do not have much time to spend with their children. The children learn whatever they can from their teachers in school. They spend most of their time in school and hence they have the maximum interaction with their teachers and friends.

A teacher is considered as a very responsible person as the future of the country depends on his or her behavior and ways of interaction with the students. The responsibility of the teacher does not include only completing lessons and giving assignments however it is definitely more than that. A child usually looks up to a teacher and often tries to imitate her in many ways. It is thus the responsibility of the teacher to create a good example for the students. A teacher should make a class or lecture interesting so that even the students or children who generally do not like paying attention are attentive. This can be done by interactive teaching, quizzes and also field trips. It is more important to create interest in the minds of the students for the subjects they are studying so to make them understand better. Teaching is very simple but responsible job. It is a teacher who moulds the young human being.

The process of teaching brings about change in the life of any student. If a teacher has created an atmosphere of love and affection in the classroom and is easily approachable to all the students and treats them with equality then the learning process is definitely faster and better. It has been seen as a worldwide phenomenon that students generally tend to have favorite teachers. They usually do well in the subjects who are being taught by their favorite teachers hence it is the duty of all the teacher to become favorites of all the students as it will accelerate the process of learning and will make the society by and large a progressive and literate society.

Mrs S.B. Hasan
RENDEZVOUS WITH MR DERRICK CLARKE
SECOND ASSISTANT AND HOUSE MASTER, MARTIN HOUSE.

- As a senior member of the staff, what do you feel about the changes taken place during your tenure?

Change is inevitable. Sometimes changes are for the better and sometimes they may serve as obstacles. All the changes that have taken place have been for the better because the results have been quite spectacular.

- According to you, what should be the relationship between a teacher and a student?

All students should know that no student is greater than his teacher. A student-Teacher relation should be one based upon respect. Students must always show affection and respect in the way they approach their educators.

- If you weren’t a teacher, which career would you opt for?

I have always wanted to be a teacher and started at a very early age. As a young man I found it quite fascinating that one man imparting his knowledge could give rise to geniuses.

- Which was the most memorable moment during your years of service at La Martiniere College?

Each moment is memorable. When one works and studies in such a place for over 32 years, you tend to remember many of those moments spent along with your classmates as well as students and as you move on in life you keep those memorable moments really close to your heart.

- What are your plans after retirement?

A teacher never retires. My students will always be my students no matter where they are or who they are.

- What are your views about the culture and tradition at La Martiniere College?

Tradition & Culture are everything as they define society and help to mould and shape individual behavior and nature. They must never be eroded.

Krish Chopra and Bradon Godin

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE THAT OUR COUNTRY IS FACING IS POVERTY

Even after independence, there are certain problems that our country is facing like corruption, terrorism, violence against women and above all poverty. I feel that poverty is a big problem. Improving the condition of our poor is the biggest challenge that our country is facing today.

The government is corrupt and is misusing the people’s money, instead of using it to provide education and development to the poor people. As a result, poor people are not aware about the grave danger of having a big family consisting of 6-7 children. This unawareness is becoming a serious threat for India.

The government is not doing anything for empowering the poor. The tax we give is supposed to be spent on the poor. They telecast advertisements to show what they have done, but it is just a wasteful expenditure.

As for corruption, people’s faith in the government becomes weak, law and order issues become urgent as people have no fear or faith in justice. Media and mass communication-radio, television, press etc. are trying their best to bring awareness to the people.

To solve this problem I think we should have a stronger government or we could build a new, honest and hardworking government which ensures that the taxpayer’s money is spent on the development and benefit of the people.

Mrs S. Dhall
“The haze of time shimmer before my eyes, and as I stand here on the horizon, my mind a chaotic vortex of emotions, I am chained by the manacles of fear that target the very existence of my being.” The old man stopped and stared blankly at the peeling wall paper in his dilapidated mansion, that once knew splendor and grandeur, the old man stood gathering his thoughts, His eyes like the burning flaming coals followed the candle flames dancing… prancing. I being completely drenched was regretting my decision to ask the creepy old man for shelter and for imposing upon his hospitality.

This man with his weathered wooden look and sunken cheeks was the epitome of gloom. His eyes, the most striking part of his countenance, flickered towards a life size portrait of himself over the mantelpiece, his jaw quivered and his lips broke into a lopsided grin exposing his yellow teeth and joie de vivre burst forth like sunshine through clouds on his face. There was a sudden bursting of tears and a cold breeze stole over us. He suddenly addressed me and said “Mr. Andrew my friends have arrived” I was nonplussed at his nonchalant remark as I felt we were quite alone.

The old man suddenly arose shuffled across the floor and stared vacantly into thin air, and said “Meet my friends Mr. Andrew” his voice was silky soft. He confidently introduced me to Hank, Smith and Jones. He placidly asked me for a cup of tea and proceeded to make seven cups assuredly declaring that two more people would join him. He comfortably reclined on the chair by the hearth and started recounting a story from his past. He started in an ominous tone his voice punctuated by the howling of a hound from the ramparts. Gazing upon his portrait he started, “Once upon a time a time, Mr. Andrew I chanced upon an eerie and grizzly sight. It was a cool evening in October with a pleasant balmy breeze blowing; night was creeping like a shadow, casting intriguing silhouettes along the cobbled pathways. I was returning from a marriage of a dear friend whistling the happy notes that were danced to at the reception, my ears still ringing with the peals of laughter and gaiety….. the aftermath of the party” I was passing by a deserted and unused cemetery barely focusing on my surroundings contemplating the proceedings of the marriage when suddenly through the corner of my eye I noticed a group of people about six or seven in number barely out of their teens huddled together in one distant corner of the graveyard…… discussing something? Maybe… I thought.

Through the ethereal air I heard the feeble notes of some devilish tune. I was transfixed and intrigued by this group’s sinister activity I strained my ears to hear and try to decipher the words of the diabolical chant, which by that time had picked up in rhythm and tempo” At this time I was absolutely exasperated at the old man’s cavalier attitude towards fear, I inquired “Sir, were you afraid of the goings-on in the graveyard that night.” The old man put down his cup, malevolently gazed at me and continued in his almost fiendish tone “As I listened Mr. Andrew, the abominable chanting suddenly ceased and a small fire was lit in the centre of the group. Amid the sparks that rose up like shooting stars into the night I heard the faint bleating of a lamb, suddenly there was a glint of silver and a spurt of scarlet and even in the distance I saw the ground peppered with drops of blood. Aaagh……. I screamed at the top of my voice, my inability to move vividly etched in my mind. I stood paralyzed as one of the seven proceeded to head my way. I could not move, scream, shout or protect myself….. a helpless baby in the den of lions. The pockmarked man approached me… reeking of blood, dripping… the consequence of the damnable act. He laughed, an insane satanic laugh…

The old man’s voice choked in his throat and soon trailed off. Silently he ever so silently he stood up “And….sir”, I enquired eagerly waiting to know the ending of the old man’s story.

His eyes….his eyes, the most expressive part of his anatomy glanced over the supposedly occupied chair and soon fixed themselves on mine. Reticent as ever he beckoned me to come close to him. For the first time standing close to him I felt an odd cold chill emanating from him, fear engulfed me….. my hair stood on end. He said “Mr. Andrew, two of my friends have not arrived and the remaining have got dreary and tired and unfortunately I have to retire and leave with them” I was shocked at the lackadasical anti-climax to his story, I opened my mouth in protest but got the scare of my life when the old man said, “I must go join my friends” and without saying anything the old man melted into nothingness. In cannot begin to describe how shocked I was and in that confounded, stunned and deplorable state I bolted from the house…that devilish house. Running I stole a cursory glance at the old house, the lights of the room near the roof were switched on and simultaneously the drapes were parted… revealing a shadowy silhouette and in a twinkling nobody was there…..
Major-General Claude Martin who died on 13 September, 1800

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