

Dear Readers,

Here we present to you, the second edition of 2019 Circle Times which is full of experiences that have been brought to life by the writers of XI and XII.

We begin with an informative article on the Intra-School Hindi Debate where we are guided through the oratory event step by step, followed by a report on the Inter-School Declamation Competition which elucidates on the experience of reliving famous speeches by our role models.

The article written on the Frank Anthony Inter-School Debate, gives insight into the process of personal improvement and details about the spirit of thinking, analysing and creating in a world full of blind acceptance.

Further we look into the Path Ahead yearly workshop conducted by various educational institutes. This edition of the newsletter ends with the tale of a Butterfly Count organised within school.

We sincerely hope you enjoy this carefully curated edition of the newsletter, which represents the experience of learning in Shikshantar at its best !

Mehar Arora and Niveditha Mahendra (XI)

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The intra-school Hindi debate was organized on 26th July 2019, comprising students from classes IX to XI. The debate gave us an opportunity to demonstrate and hone our Hindi oratory skills.

The participants sat in *Vajah-Bewajah* where the air was saturated with anxiety. While some were cramming their speeches last-minute, others indulged in conversations with their friends, and few sat with a calm demeanor.

After the roll call, the first topic introduced was whether government programmes have improved the condition of the farmers in India. Unique points both for and against the motion were debated upon. The most famous programme 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana' was thoroughly mentioned by most of the participants who were 'for' the motion. The participants 'against' the motion spoke in an eloquent manner expressing the deplorable condition of the farmers and the undeterred rate of farmer suicides. The lack of proper execution of government programmes was also emphasized upon.

In the second pool, the topic debated was whether the lack of punishment has resulted in the decline of education standards. The proposition elucidated how children have now become audacious to misbehave with their teachers due to the lack of fear of punishment and further compromise on the benefits of a smooth education, much like the cops who do not wear a helmet due to their casual behavior towards punishment! The opposition



spoke about negative psychological impacts as a consequence of punishment which could demotivate the students.

A total of 12 participants moved onto the second round. The topic debated upon was whether parents make appropriate choices for their children. This topic was rather an emotional one, in contrast to the previous topics which were more objective in nature. The participants who spoke 'for' the motion shed light on these emotional aspects, conveying that parents are the first teachers who take appropriate decisions for their child's upbringing and education. Those 'against' the motion highlighted that the widening generation gap is a cause for the parents' orthodox thinking, which can be a dampener in a child's education and career.

The participants proposed meaningful arguments, presenting their facts exuberantly while showing resilience in answering the interjections. The audience asked insightful questions making the deliberations even more interesting. The debate showcased the relevance and impact of Hindi as a language and an effective medium of communication.

- Shreyas Chaudhary, Vyom (XI)



A Day To Remember

I believe that one of my life's best experiences was the regional level declamation competition that I participated in at St. Kabirs school, Hisar. It was a speech competition, in which we had to prepare any famous speech, which came to be the most difficult part of the preparation process as there were so many speeches to choose from! With the help of my teachers, I finally shortlisted two speeches – 'Black is Beautiful' by Lupita Nyong'o and 'Me Too' by Oprah Winfrey. Considering the fact that the Me Too movement had changed so many lives internationally, I decided that it would be apt for me to do that speech.

And so began rehearsals – memorize and repeat! I imagined that I was Oprah Winfrey and was delivering an inspiring speech to every woman in the world. As part of the competition, we also had to dress up according to the person whose speech we were delivering. I wore a black dress, just like Oprah, imagining myself slipping into her shoes as I prepared for the competition.

The competition included schools from Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh and I was representing Shikshantar in the senior category. On reaching St Kabirs, I was taken to a hall where there were about 8 participants in my category. Everywhere I looked, children were frantically muttering their speeches to themselves. Everyone in the hall was nervous – and that included me!

When they started calling on the participants one by one, I listened to every participant patiently. The speeches ranged from speeches of Martin Luther King Junior to speeches of Abdul Kalam and Malala. Every speech got huge rounds of applause from the audience.

When they announced my name, I crossed my fingers and walked onto the podium. I started my speech and could feel all eyes looking at me. I felt strong, and in that moment I wasn't Ishita speaking to a school hall, but Oprah, herself, speaking to women all over the world who wanted to be heard. When all the speeches ended, the school prepared a short play on bullying while the judges decided the result. I ended up winning the 2nd prize and a trophy for the first time in my life, post which I realized that nothing tastes sweeter than success!

- Ishita Chakrabarty, Ciel (XI)

: An Insider's View

The library of Scottish High International School, Gurugram was abuzz with participants and teachers from various schools across North India at the Frank Anthony Memorial All-India Inter-School Debate. Parth Jhunhunwala (XI) and Romit Aggarwal (XII) represented the school in Category-I at Stage I of the debate held on July 11 2019. After much excitement and nervousness, the topic was finally revealed to the participants by opening a sealed envelope entitled, “*Effective democracy can only be possible with effective citizenship*”.

Back in the library, the participants were all preparing their speeches, stitching their arguments, and rehearsing with their partners. When the allotted one hour of preparation time had elapsed, the excitement of the participants could not be hidden. They headed to the auditorium, eagerly awaiting their chance to display their debating skills.

The event began with speeches by the faculty of the school who introduced themselves as well as the school. What followed was a display of the hardwork and the brilliant oratorical skills of all the participants. The debaters tried to overcome their nervousness and show their best, and the arguments presented by the debaters resonated with the three judges and the audience alike. Varying interpretations of the topic were evident in the diverse arguments made by the different debaters. While the ones in support of the topic simply denied the very existence of a democracy without effective citizenship, those against it stated that democracy can thrive even in the absence of effective citizenship. Even the judges appreciated the awareness displayed by the various participants regarding the essence of democracy and political rights and duties of the citizens.

The process of presentation of one's views and the rebuttal by the other debaters culminated with the announcement of the results, which made all our hearts skip a beat. The judges had some valuable feedback for the participants, who gained insight about their speeches after reflecting on them. Apart from being an engaging experience, the event helped the participants understand varying viewpoints and enhance their debating skills.

- Parth Junhunwala, Vyom (XI)

Shikshantar Hosts The Frank Anthony Debate 2019

- Rehan Mathur, Ciel (XI)

The participants from various schools clung to each word coming out of their opponent's mouth as they waited for their chance to make heads turn and wake the sleeping audience from their stupor. Soon, all the participants presented their arguments while the results were calculated. But that's too far ahead into the future.

It all started that morning when the debaters reached Shikshantar from as far as Noida and Hisar to take part in and try to win the coveted junior level of the ICSE Frank Anthony debate.



These participants, in teams of two, got to know the top-secret topic of the debate; 'Education helps foster a better Democracy' which tested their improvisational and on-the-spot thinking. Each team chose one person to speak 'for' and one 'against' the topic.

The debaters were given only an hour to prepare their argument and access to a library where only books and magazines kept them company. This hour slipped by like sand through one's fingers and the debaters found themselves standing in front of a huge audience that was ready to be stimulated by authoritative assertions, piercing propositions and scandalous statements.

The speeches started, some long and some short, both trying to prove themselves to the judges, the audience, and even themselves. Each sides saw interesting examples and cold logic with those against the statement giving examples of the modern-day United States and Nazi Germany, where many educated people chose despotic, hateful and irrational leaders. They claimed that education in today's day, being heavily influenced by the state, did not affect the efficiency of a democracy.

The other side opposed these claims and affirmed that education made people aware of their rights and duties, and ensured much more accountability which would help the democracy's functioning. All the debaters were kept on their feet by the questions of their counterparts which aimed at finding chinks in their armour.

Like all things, the debate came to an end with the last speaker concluding their arguments while the judges tallied the results. The mood was lightened by some music while the debaters waited with bated breath for the results.

The results were declared, some were elated while some were disappointed but the main purpose of the debate had been achieved. It was not held for some petty certificate or a shiny medal, though they were very tempting to many. It was held to celebrate the spirit of thinking, analyzing and critiquing in a world full of blind acceptance.



The Beginning Of Our Path Ahead!

Every September, our school hosts “Path Ahead”, a two-day interactive session conducted by colleges and educational institutes from all over the world, exclusively for students of classes IX to XII. This year, like the ones before it, we learned about and interacted with representatives from various leading international colleges and institutes, and organizations that are solely dedicated to college applications.

All of us have dreams that we want to achieve, and “Path Ahead” brings us closer to them. Events like these are crucial in a high-school student’s life, and “Path Ahead” acts as a reality check, reminding us of what we have accomplished and all that is yet to be done before we start college.

On the first day, we interacted with three leading organizations that informed us about how to build our CVs, write essays and apply for scholarships and financial aid: EducationUSA, SI-UK and the University of Depauw. EducationUSA is a U.S. Department of State network with over 400 international student advising centers in more than 170 countries. After them, we had a presentation given by SI-UK, a specialist UK-application service that specializes in Foundation, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Oxbridge, Medicine and Ph.D. applications.

We then interacted with representatives of the University of Depauw, the top college of liberal arts in Indiana, U.S. The representatives of these institutions shed light and gave us valuable tips on how to make the admissions process easier.

On the second day, we were visited by representatives from various colleges, including Trinity College, Ireland; University of Warwick; King’s College, London and the University of Vancouver. Amongst Indian colleges, there were counselling sessions by representatives from universities like Ashoka, Indian Institute of Art and Design, Shiv Nadar, KREA, FLAME, OP Jindal etc. These sessions were student driven need based interactions about specific courses that the students were interested in. The participating universities advertised their various college programs and summer school opportunities and explained the requirements for application.

Overall, it was a very interesting and informative experience that all senior students learned a lot from. Knowing further about the colleges one wants to apply to and the courses they want to pursue makes high school a relaxed, less stressful and enjoyable experience. Like every year, the colleges we learned about opened new doors and options for the Path we want to choose Ahead.

A new component that was introduced this year was the session on writing Statements of Purpose. An expert from the admission panel had been invited from Ashoka University to explain how to approach college essays. The session was of immediate relevance for the entire student audience and kept the students interested throughout.

In conclusion, the senior students could not have spent these two days more fruitfully. It was a wonderful learning experience and gives us so much clarity with every passing year. We are very grateful to all the college representatives that took out time to meet, interact make the daunting admissions process a little more comprehensive for us.



A Butterfly Count

These winged creatures, of the order *Lepidoptera* and suborder *Rhopalocera*, have fascinated mankind with their transforming lives, vibrant colours and patterns since time immemorial. The Butterfly count held in our school on 19th September proved that this beauty is appreciated even today, even in the middle of a city such as ours.

We all see butterflies around us occasionally; in school, our backyards, parks etc. But very few of us actually observe them. If asked to describe the last butterfly they have seen, the most vivid description an average person would give would probably be “green/orange/yellow and pretty”



However the butterfly count allowed students of class 7, and a few volunteers from classes 11 and 12, to actually look at them. Under the guidance of Mr. Abhishek, a noted environmentalist and our guide for the day, details like the pale lemon green tinged with white wings of the Common Emigrant, the soft brown wings and orange rimmed ‘eyes’ of the Small Cupid and the small dark spots scattered on the Pale Grass Blue became obvious and visible.

The count itself was preceded by an orientation, in which Abhishek took us through the absolute basics of lepidopterology – including the life cycle of a butterfly, the different types of butterflies found in Delhi NCR, the kind of plants these butterflies are usually found around and other kinds of interesting trivia. I learnt that cocoons are a misnomer and that caterpillars actually form ‘Chrysalises’.

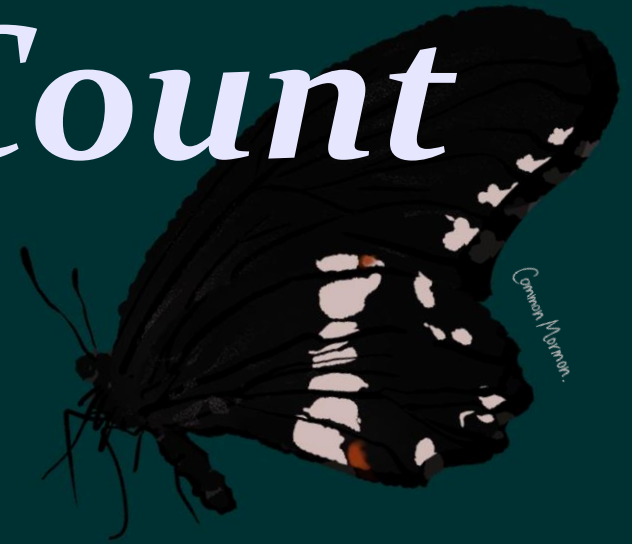
The count took us through all three blocks of school. We started off in J Block, looking around the front lawns and “*vanar vatika*”. We spotted two Common Emigrants and a Pale Grass Blue fluttering around the flowers of the front lawns.

Next we explored looking through the plants and trees of I Block. Near the front lawns we got to inspect the false eyes on the tiny wings of the Small Cupid, whose purpose, we learned, was to draw the attention of predators to the non-vital organs of the butterfly, like the edges of the wings. One Mottled Emigrant was also spotted here.

However the real highlight of the count was seen near I Block’s basketball court. Just as we were walking dejectedly, as we had not seen as many butterflies as we had expected, back towards K Block an almost 4 inch long, dark brown winged, female Common Mormon floated onto a plant near the court. We all rushed to see its brown forewings lined with patterns of darker brown and vibrant orange, and black and white hind wings. The butterfly was missing one of its hind wings, but it looked glorious nonetheless.

Lastly we walked around K Block’s vegetable and butterfly garden. The latter, as expected, yielded better results. More Small Cupids, more Emigrants, one Plain Tiger and one Dark Grass Blue were spotted in the pebbled butterfly garden.

Even though we were unable to spot too many butterflies due to the weather being cloudy, the count was a fun and educative experience, allowing us to appreciate these beautifully patterned creatures that we usually pay little attention to.



- Soham Dey, Ignis (XII)
Art by Hiromi Takauchi, Empyrean (XI)



01
Common Emigrant



02
Small Cupid



03
Common Mormon



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