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CIS SPEAKS

"Of the students, by the students, for everyone in CIS"



A Level Year 1



CIS SPEAKS

November Edition
Senior School

DESIGNED AND COMPILED BY A LEVELS YEAR 1

IAYP TRIP TO PANGARCHULA

by- Taneesha Datta

The International Award for Young People (IAYP) is a non-competitive program, which consists of four sections – voluntary social service, skills, physical recreation and adventurous journey. It is a program for teenagers to encourage perseverance, determination and a spirit of adventure.

The adventurous journey part is meant to provide participants with a unique, challenging and memorable experience. I recently went on one of these trips – trekking and camping in Uttarakhand!

My parents were very worried before I set off for the trip – they're doctors, so they prepared me for the trip the only way they knew how – by giving me enough medicines to take on the trip for an army, just in case anything should go wrong! A group of about 50 of us gathered at our school and took the

school bus to Sealdah Station. I had heard many things about the Rajdhani Express which goes to Delhi, and none of them were good things, so I was a bit apprehensive about what would be my first ever overnight train journey. But I was with my friends, and we talked and laughed late into the night, playing games like taboo and never-have-I-ever. Before we knew it, we were in Delhi. We were given pizza at the station before we boarded the train to Haridwar. In the chilly evening air, we boarded the eight jeeps hired for us which took us to the hotel where we stayed overnight. The next morning, we returned to the jeeps, for a 10 hour drive through Uttarakhand to Rishikesh. My parents had, of course, stocked me up with medicines for car sickness, but I enjoyed the ride through the beautiful valleys and mountains – the road was alongside the river. We put music on loud speakers rolled down the windows. It almost felt like we were in a music video. As the sun set over the surrounding mountains, turning the sky from blue to pink to orange to black, the air also got chillier. Listening to those romantic Bollywood songs, I felt infinite,

and I found myself wondering if I would ever feel so at peace again.

The hotel at Rishikesh was a shabby little place, and it was freezing cold as well, so we ate dinner as quickly as possible and huddled up in our rooms – I played cards with a large group of friends and then after curfew returned to a room with my two roommates – talking and laughing and feeling slightly dizzy from all the fun I had had that day.

The following day we were rudely awakened by the sound of sharp whistles. We were made to warm up with a variety of exercises and jogging around the area for half an hour. After breakfast, we were transferred to Dakh by jeep, and then we undertook a three kilometre long trek to Upper Guling. It started off as a wide mountain path wide enough for a jeep, and then narrowed until it was just a narrow sandy uphill trail. It was sunny, but we proceeded slowly, stopping intermittently to take long drags of water from our bottles. The walk offered beautiful views of the surrounding valley. At one point we passed through a village where the local people were sitting in

groups, washing their clothes and chatting. In two hours, we reached our campsite, where we stayed for the following three nights. The campsite was at 8500 feet above sea level – on one side, you could see the green valley below, with snow-capped peaks in the distance, and on the other you could see the surrounding mountain forests. The mountains were covered in trees of a dark rich green colour – as if they had pulled on a blanket of conifers. The clear skies offered view of Nanda Devi and surrounding peaks. The camp site itself consisted of a number of blue and green tents, plus two larger yellow ones – the kitchen and dining hall. After lunch, we attended a rope knot session, where we learnt to tie different knots – the thumb knot, the reef knot, the infinity knot and the clove hitch knot. We were taught the different applications of them too. We were taught the different whistle signals we would have to answer to over the next few days – the one people were most responsive to was two long sharp blows of the whistle (which meant “food is ready!”).

As evening fell, it got chillier. We watched the sunset while drinking warm soup. The sun’s beams fell on the mountains opposite us, so that the mountains were bathed in a warm pink light. After the sun set, the full moon and the stars came out, which made the snow on the peaks glow. It is rare that one comes across something so breath taking! We slept in groups in the tents, in sleeping bags wearing mittens and beanies and warm coats to deal with the cold. After sunset we had only torchlight. In the morning it was still cold. We had

three basins outside, where we brushed our teeth and washed our faces – the water was so cold that afterwards, we were pouring boiling hot water on to our hands just to get rid of the numbness!

That day was the real tough trek. After breakfast, with a packed lunch of fried rice and boiled potatoes, we headed upwards towards the forests. We crossed a few streams, and all around us was green, green, green. It was beautiful and chilly, and the views were nothing short of spectacular. But it was a very steep journey, and so a few of us turned back after 1 km. The rest of us trekked upwards for 5 hours until finally we reached Tali Lake. Towards the end, I felt very out of breath. We were exhausted, but I can’t begin to express how satisfied we were feeling. We sat by the lake and munched on our lunch. Then we were given a choice – either climb up to the top of the mountain (which would take another 2.5 hours of hard, steep trekking) or stay down and wait. I took the former option – there was little point in coming so far and not seeing it through to the top. For climbing the summit, there was no trail or path, we were just walking through the rocks and dry grass – straight up, up, up to the top. And when we finally reached the top, it felt like we were on the edge of the universe. I was the first of us to reach the summit, at 14000 feet, and I can’t express the feeling of euphoria I felt. It felt like we had achieved so much, and also, in the face of those huge belittling mountains, like we would never achieve anything meaningful at all. We took, perhaps, an excessive number of pictures, and proudly stuck our school flag into the

ground. And then slowly we made our way back down. Evening was falling, it was getting cooler, but we reached camp by 5, welcomed by hot chocolate and pakoras and beautiful views of the sunset. It felt quiet and peaceful and magical and just like the mountains should feel.

After spending another night in the tents, we went on a shorter trek of only 2 hours (as compared to the 10 hour outing of the previous day). My friends were complaining of aching muscles and shoe bites, but everyone was happy and enjoying themselves. In the afternoon there was a tent pitching session, followed by a bonfire and singing and talking.

The following day we returned, on our way back to Kolkata. We spent time in Joshimath, Haridwar and Delhi.

One thing I noticed during this trip was that everyone was looking out for each other, continually asking people whether they were alright, whether they wanted more water, whether they had eaten properly. We offered to carry each other’s things and shared each other’s belongings without a second thought – with much more concern for each other’s well being than is normally seen. On one occasion, I decided I would rather not have dinner, but two of my friends on the trek wouldn’t let me be until I had eaten! I was very touched. The trip also helped me become more independent and confident in myself. I know that I shall cherish the memories I made forever.



The Story of Kali Pujo

by-Shuvayu Dasgupta and Padmaja Bose

Kali is a goddess, who is most often seen as a slayer of the forces of evil. In one of her most famous legends, Durga wounded the demon Raktabija with a variety of different weapons in an attempt to destroy him. However, she soon realized that she didn't make the situation better but only made it worse. That is because with every drop of blood she spilled, a fully-grown version of Raktabija formed out of it. There was a point where there were so many, that the battlefield was filled with clones of this demon.

However, just as things began to look bleak, Kali suddenly burst forth out of Durga's forehead and she was armed with both a sword and a noose. Kali then proceeded to slay all of the demon clones and when she was done, she danced on the corpses. Often regarded as one of the most powerful female deities in Hindu mythology, it comes as no surprise that Kali Puja is celebrated with enthusiasm and verve.

The festival is characterized by bright lights, flamboyant firework displays and hypnotic chants that illuminate the streets of Calcutta. A warm sense of bonhomie pervades the celebrations. The battle of good and evil is an eternal one – it is only fitting that we remember and uphold the former through a vibrant homage to the lights within and without.

DAAN UTSAV: THE BIG YELLOW BOX

BY- SALONI TODI

The Daan Utsav is an initiative taken by IB students every year as a part of the Service strand of CAS. It takes place right before the puja holidays so that the donations help brighten up the recipients' Pujas. This year we put up the requirement lists in every class and a large cardboard box outside our class and to fill up, but expectations are something that we're being forced to unlearn in IB. For an entire week, the box remained empty.

First term exams started and it became very difficult to make announcements and spread awareness as students were caught up with syllabi and past papers. We thought that this year, we would get no donations. In a desperate attempt, we printed posters and made an announcement in the assembly after the exams. There was less than a week of school left but with our CAS teacher, Mrs. Gupta's constant persuasion of people, the box gradually filled up. There were packets of dal, sugar, oil; packs of soaps, shampoos, detergents; rolls of tissue and sanitary pads and this came as a pleasant surprise to me.

Mrs. Gupta saw it as normal but I was very happy with the outcome. Representatives of the Hope Foundation came and took the contents of the box on the last day of school, before the Puja break. I hope it contributed to making a more colourful Puja for the children it went to and gave them as much joy, excitement and surprise as I felt watching the box fill up.

A HALLOWEEN PLAY: ANONYMOUS CONFESSIONS

BY- AATREYI, PALAK, SHRIJA

Confession 1: Throughout the last four months I used to think that there was only one set of footprints following me. When I acknowledge them now, I know that my friends are right beside me ready to catch me when I fall.

Confession 2: No one bothered, except for us.

No one willed to participate, except for a few.

No one knew if the event was even happening, we didn't either.

We had lost hope, but we beat the odds.

Confession 3: What goes around comes around.

Week 1:

Anonymous 1: I was devastated with the prospect of not being able to celebrate Halloween like the good old days, so I ventured on to broach the idea of organizing a Halloween event at CIS to my classmates.

Anonymous 2: I was thrilled to contribute!

Anonymous 3: I was thrilled to celebrate it!

Week 2:

Anonymous 2: Having received the permission to conduct the event, it was time for us to declare the big news.

Anonymous 3: Do you want to participate? No? Will your friends participate? No? Is anyone going to participate? NO.

Anonymous 1: Introducing the concept of house points didn't sit well with the student council. Consequently, began the ignition of the volley of pursued but discarded solutions.

Week 3:

Anonymous 2: Problem – I was at the IAYP trip. Consequence 1 – Communication disaster. Consequence 2 – Chaos. Consequence 3 – contretemps. Problem to consequence. Problem to consequence. Problem to consequence.....

Anonymous 3: Two days until the 31st of October.

Anonymous 1: We improvised or we winged it... I don't remember.

Conclusion:

Confession 2: We had commitment, initiative, determination and perseverance - that was.... adequate. Success is no serendipity. It is the karma of hard work, perseverance, learning and sacrifice, and we all know the law of nature: what goes around comes around.

Confession 3: We beat the odds... Atta girl!

Confession 1: In the end, despite my perennial upheavals and frequent conflagrations between meagre self-assuredness and vacillation; despite my iridescent fear of failing miserably, albeit minuscule in the grand scheme of life; Despite the confabulated odds laughing mirthlessly at the futility of our efforts - the noise of our triumph was enough to send them slithering back to their cages.

IAYP Trip 2018

by- Sara Mutheduth

The IAYP (International Awards for Young People) trip of October 2018 took a group of approximately 50 students, including me, to a summit in Uttarakhand called the Cham Tang peak. The trip began on the 21st of October. We travelled for three days straight- from Calcutta to Delhi and Delhi to Haridwar via train, and then from Haridwar to Rishikesh, and Rishikesh to Joshimat via car. After a night in a hotel in Joshimat, we were ready to go. Mrs Patra and Mr Bagli warned us that from here on out there would be no internet, and no "roads." We set off enthusiastically, with four days worth of clothes and supplies stuffed into our backpacks.

The trek was moderate, if a little challenging towards the beginning. We walked through tiny villages, filling up our water bottles and interacting with the local children- saying "hi", and sharing with them the sweets that were given to us. As we got higher, the environment seemed less welcoming, but more beautiful. We were all able to reach the base camp in 5 hours, as we stumbled up the last few rocks; we were all giddy with excitement.

That day, we set up in our base camp, 8000 feet up, surrounded by trees and the sounds of a stream (which we found a few dozen feet up). We occupied our tents, some more flimsy than others, and prepared ourselves for the freezing night. Some of us were wearing more than 5 layers of clothing in the attempt to insulate ourselves, and we were all immensely grateful for the cook and the warm food he provided us with.

The next morning we were up at 6am. Having spent the night in our sleeping bags, it was startling to step out into the cold - but almost all of us were determined to go. We set off for the trek by around 7:30, ready to summit. We had to climb 4000ft to make it to the top. This trek proved to be rather difficult- we were getting much higher up in shorter periods of time- almost all of us were panting within the first half an hour- we had already begun to question our ability to finish the trek. After an hour, Mr Bagli informed us that we were at the point of no return. Once we went past this point, if one of us was to want to go back, all of us would have to accompany them.

Still, we went on- striving forward, stopping to look at the mountains and catch our breath every 15 minutes. The scenery kept getting more gorgeous, seemingly with every step we took. But, it was getting harder to breathe. We were stopping more frequently, and losing time - we had to be back at camp before the sunset, because after dark the wild animals would be out.

At one o'clock we spotted snow- the ground beneath us was suddenly sparking white, we were halfway to the summit. Half an hour or so later, we stopped for lunch at a lake- the summit looming behind us, as we looked at the clear view of the rest of the mountain range.

It was soon time to go- if we were going to climb the mountain, we'd have to do it in the next hour. We left our belongings with one of our guides, Mr. Ghoshal, and some others who felt too weak to continue. From this point forward, the trek was steep, almost vertical. All of us walked in a single file, in a zigzag manner- helping each other up, determined not to stop till we were at the summit. After what felt like hours, we did it. We reached the top of the mountain, and we were exhilarated. Mr. Bagli was almost in tears, he'd spent almost a year planning the trip, organising us and the schedule- the fact that more than 30 of us reached the top made it all worth it for him, so he told us.

We took the school flag out and let it wave- and all of us sat there, smiling, laughing, and in awe of what surrounded us. A clear 360° view of the Himalayas- it was astounding. For a moment, we stayed silent, simply observing the beauty.

We were up there for around 45 minutes, then, the descent took us around 2 hours. We reached the base camp and collapsed, but were up in time for hot chocolate in the evening!

The next day, a few of us went on an hour long trek to a spot close by, while the rest of us stayed at camp, playing instruments, games, and talking to each other and our teachers. At night, there was a bonfire that we sat around- singing atrociously, dancing, and playing instruments- acutely aware that we would be off the next day. The stars in the sky were more vivid than ever, it was hard to find a spot of 'plain' sky, we sat and star-gazed by the warm, glowing fire.

Diwali

By- Vandana Kothari

'Diwali' comes from the Sanskrit word 'Deepavali' meaning "row or series of lights". It is one the most popular Hindu festivals and is celebrated every year in the months of October or November. The festival symbolises the victory of good over evil or light over darkness.

"Preeti check on the lights honey!" exclaimed Sweetie aunty, our neighbour, as she lit a few diyas outside their house. Sitting on the window sill, I could smell the tantalising aroma of the fresh sweets from Chaddha uncle's store and chuckled like an infant at the thought of savouring them.

There was a nip in the air and a cool breeze is just what someone needed in the humid conditions of Kovalam, Kerala. All the verandas of our colony were lined with evenly spaced out diyas which invited guests that were not quite on the list: insects.

The courtyard was full of women in their elements who were carefully tracing their rangolis, while one couldn't miss notorious Aadil trying to step on his mother's rangoli. "Oh no! This isn't going to end well ", I thought to myself as I saw poor Aadil stumble and fall, face- front on the rangoli! " You wait and watch Aadil, you brat!" cried Sita aunty as she dashed after him.

Taata played his favourite Mohammed Rafi songs while he sat on his 'evening chair', sipping on his filter coffee, wearing shiny new clothes (something we do every Diwali) and complaining of a splitting headache. "All headaches will vanish into thin air once he gets to know that his other half has actually gone to the temple!" exclaimed Amma.

With the evening sky, chirping birds, colourful crackers and mouth-watering sweets, I found myself deep in thought when Aadil grabbed my hand and almost dragged me outside the house. The smell of brand new silk and jasmine flowers for the hair, wafted from above us and one could see endless smiles across the courtyard. In one corner, I saw naanamma and little Chutki talking away endlessly. Naanamma was probably narrating the story of Ramayana; her patent chore for every Diwali.

The faces around me were lit up brighter than the streets and houses and absolute purity and love resonated from the laughter of the children. It was this time of the year when the people of Kovalam got together, leaving aside all differences that barred their relationships and celebrate to their hearts content.

We all lit crackers and some blasted high up in the sky and the expressions of the people around me were priceless. The feeling of unity, love and compassion really worked its way into our hearts and in that very moment I hoped and prayed that the lives of everyone around me would continue to shine as bright as the highest cracker in the night sky.

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