IIT MADRAS
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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MADRAS

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Message From The Director

Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthy
Director,
IIT Madras

One more academic year, 2011-2012, has gone by, the 53rd in the life our Institute. Before we know it, we will have become ancient, with a history to dig up and heritage buildings to protect. Some of us might have seen the first coffee-table book Campaschimes that was released in December to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of our Institute. If you haven't, I recommend you go out and find a copy from our bookstore. You will find that the first fifty years, and the first thirty in particular, have been vividly brought alive by weaving together excerpts from the campus magazines of the time, including the annual numbers. Thrown in for good measure are several fantastic cartoons from those issues.

Campus magazines and annual numbers are important not just for capturing the currents and moods of the time, but also because they are an archive we can visit later to view ourselves from the distance that the years will bring. I am glad T5E is putting together an annual compendium of literary pieces and reviews of the major events of the year at IITM.

"Campus magazines and annual numbers are important not just for capturing the currents and moods of the time, but also because they are an archive we can visit later to view ourselves from the distance that the years will bring"

The Internet and web technology are great enablers that open up unlimited possibilities for creative writing, drawing, photography, videography, and what have you. You have to talk to the editors of the campus magazines of the seventies to know how difficult it was for them to bring out an issue.

T5E has only just begun to explore the potential of the new media. I look forward to some awesome output from our students in the coming years. And I wait with bated breath for this year's Best of 2011-12 to have a laugh, turn a thought, and to try and form a mental picture of what we really are like.

Do you?

Acknowledgement

The teams that made the magazine happen:

Editorial Team The Fifth Estate 2011-12	Editorial Team The Fifth Estate 2012-13
Executive Editor Vinay *'Slicer'* Sridhar	Executive Editor Anand *'Lumberjack'* Rao
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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Anand Rao
Executive Editor
The Fifth Estate

"When intellectually charged youth from across the country gather over 2.5 sq km of what is a protected wildlife park, taught by a diverse group of accomplished faculty, and carry the weight of the brand created by their alumni, stories are bound to happen"

Another year, another distinguished set of graduands and another ever growing batch of incoming students. But for the first time in the glorious history of this premier institute, we present the IIT Madras Annual Magazine. Compiled by The Fifth Estate, IITM's campus news body, it attempts to capture not just the memorable moments of the year gone by but stories that cover all the aspects of 'insti life' as we know it – the experiences that have shaped us in our most impressionable years, the cherished memories that we will proudly recall every time we talk of our alma mater.

It's hard to pin down another year when the IITs (and IITM, in particular) have been so much in the news, and not always in positive light. Narayana Murthy's comments about the declining quality of students set the ball rolling. The much hyped 'security cum moral policing drive at IIT Madras' (as alleged by a leading daily), which in reality was purely to do with enforcing certain rules during hostel nights, took the social media by storm with #iitm trending in Indian Twitter circles. The 'hunger strike' outside the Himalaya mess during the summer vacation caused nothing more than a flutter. But it was the issues surrounding the restructuring of the JEE that took the cake, refusing to make anything less than headline news for a couple of months. Everybody on the street seemed to have an opinion on the matter, be it coaching centre moguls or prospective students. Here, we attempt to unearth the real issues behind all the hype, be it through a detailed report, a telling photograph or even a satire.

Despite the incessant media glare, life in 'insti' continues to thrive, by and large unaffected by the spotlight. When intellectually charged youth from across the country gather over 2.5 sq. km. of what is a protected wildlife park, taught by a diverse group of accomplished faculty, and carry the weight of the brand created by their alumni, stories are bound to happen - rich and varied in form, style and substance. As students, they face uphill tasks, seemingly impossible challenges and exceedingly difficult choices to make every single day of their lives here – but they get through it, with friend and foe, enjoying every moment to the fullest. Capturing all of their experiences in a single magazine is an impossible task in itself. But it is a valiant attempt by a dedicated team that we hope will be lauded, given the constraints of space and time.

We hope you enjoy browsing through our collection of photographs (Timeline 2011-12) interspersed in a compendium of creative pieces, editorials and personal experiences all contributed by students, faculty and alumni; we pray this sets the precedent for many more insightful editions in the years to come. In case you now wish you had been a part of this work, refer to the last few pages – they've been designed especially for you!

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The views expressed in the following articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of, and should not be attributed to, The Fifth Estate or IIT Madras.

Land Before LAN

- Sarvesh Agrawal (2006/Dual/CE)

An IITM Alumnus from the 2006 batch talks of the advent of LAN and Internet, now indispensable parts of insti life.

As recently as in the year 2005, Internet connectivity in hostel rooms felt like a distant dream, a privilege available to select other IITs (we were 4th or 5th among the then 7 sister IITs), and a major crib in students vs. admin discussions.

Something as basic as being able to Google information for an assignment meant a cycle trip all the way back to department / Computer Centre, downloading the required information in a Floppy ([flop-ee] – a square black plastic case, usually available at Gurunath for Rs. 10/-, containing a magnetic strip that could hold a whopping 1.44 MB of data), and cycling back to hostel. If by God's grace the floppy (what an appropriate name; when it came to reliability it was as good as the Indian bowling line-up), got corrupted, you'd need to brace yourself for the ordeal all over again.

The earliest attempt to bring Internet to Hostel zones was in 2001 when 30 Windows based desktops, aptly called 'Moon Lab' (in response to the Academic Zone Computer Centre (CC) which had SUN based systems), were set up in what is now the GG shop in Gurunath. Usage was rationed with auto-logout after 30 minutes. The overburdened (30 desktops served 3,000+ students), and over surfed (life education sites topping the chart), systems aged sooner than planned and the whole set up was discontinued in 2003.

With DCF & Library computers still being set up, Computer Centre (CC) in Academic zone was the lone saviour. It also served as a hub for India's biggest "slipper exchange program", where it was guaranteed that you would not walk out with the same pair that you walked in with! To curb the nuisance, there were lockers set up that one could use to save one's slippers from being stolen. I don't think that

arrangement worked, because in my 5 years on campus, I never had to buy another pair and I knew I was not alone!

With this background, it's not difficult to imagine that when, at the end of 2004, the plans to wire the entire campus with broadband connectivity were announced, it was welcomed with a big collective sigh of relief. With continuous push and support from admin and student body, one by one, all the rooms in all the hostels got wired and it changed many things forever.

Looking back, the story does not feel any different than the story for rest of the world, in terms of impact the Internet has had on people's lives (the obvious benefits -- convenience, access to information). As a result, better opportunities materialized for us as well. Information being available at one's fingertips meant students could do lot more research when it came to apping, job hunts or even BTPs/DDPs. The whole trend of foreign internships grew because of it.

On the other hand, we were not spared the adverse effects either. To put it plainly, the Internet trapped us inside our rooms and every interaction that used to take place outside took a beating. DC++, heralding a never-before seen availability of life education videos, became a norm; Yahoo chat & Orkut became omnipresent, and rivalries beyond Schroeter in the form of LAN gaming (AOE, QUAKE, Counter Strike were hot favourites), were born. The number of grand slams (bunking of all 4 slots in the morn-

> *"[The Computer Centre]... also served as a hub for India's biggest 'slipper exchange program' where it was guaranteed that you would not walk out with the same pair that you walked in with!"*

ing), rose alarmingly with rise in night long gaming sessions and surfing which later on brought restrictions on usage beyond midnight.

Personally, I feel there are two things that I would have loved to see preserved. The first one is the Saturday movie at OAT. Before 2005, it was a ritual that one rarely missed participating in. Most of us fell in love with OAT on the very first Saturday of being on campus as none of us had watched a big screen movie under the open sky before. To top that, there were areas earmarked for the junta of each hostel to sit and the verbal duels and sloganeering against other hostels that took place fuelled the hostel spirit and bonding even further. All of this used to happen in front of Profs and their families and that used to add to the adventure. The interval time was most eagerly awaited, as some slide or other on a Lit-Soc or Schroeter results would be projected by the winning hostel in not so modest language and the uproar that used to

follow was deafening! With advent of the Internet, movies reached our rooms before they reached OAT and this great tradition died a gradual death.

The second one is the after-dinner rant sessions on wing coats where some of the wittiest and the most intellectual discussions that I have ever attended took place. The topics ranged from general crib to international affairs, and to existential questions of human life. To hear junta speak about these so vividly and passionately in person was far more stimulating than engaging in same conversations on Orkut communities and groups!

On the positive side, we did not see a decline in interest in sports as we feared earlier, but that could be because by our 3rd/4th year all of us were inducted into the sports culture already and we made sure that freshies followed suit. I'm not sure if it has stayed on till today.

I think it's human to feel nostalgic about the past and hence this article may give a "old was gold" sort of feel. But at a rational level, I believe that change is an inevitable part of our lives and it did more good than harm. That is why, whenever I visit the campus, I watch my movies in OAT on Saturdays and in one of the hostel rooms during rest of the week! ∎

Sarvesh a.k.a JJ (2006/Dual/CE) was Hostel Affairs Secretary in 2004-05 and resided in Alakananda Hostel. He is an avid Squash player and blogger. After graduating, he has worked with Capital One, Barclays and is at present with Aviva. He is also founding partner of www.internshala.com (an Internship portal by IIT Madras, IIT Bombay and ISB Hyderabad alumni).

Bike (less) Years

- Naresh Ranvah (2006/Dual/EE)

An alumnus of the 2006 batch on the issues plaguing the day during his time - viewed from a different perspective altogether.

I never saw a purple cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you, anyhow
I'd rather see than be one.
--Gelett Burgess

The Desktopometer: the pre-Internet expression

I was a part of the erstwhile pre-Internet IIT. This was the time when different people had varying degrees of clothed women for their desktop wallpapers. Some had a saree clad plastic Aishwarya Rai, others had a dimpled Preity, and depending on their moral courage, others went for the exotic French models with little or nothing on them. Since most IITians are closet racist, only a few would venture as far as making a black supermodel as their wallpaper.

In those days, you could tell a man by his desktop wallpaper. The hardcore ambitious ones had some business giant or some 'famous quote' poster on their desktops, the nerds had some Linux penguin (whoever thought that was cool), the wannabe musicians had rock artists, pure northies had a pale ghost-like Madhubala, the quintessential Telugu had Chiranjeevi, the Mallus had their actresses, and the pretentious moralists had pictures of scenery for their desktop backgrounds. You could make friends based on their choice of a desktop wallpaper, so much was the power of the DESKTOPOMETER.

Those were the days of the Desktopometer, now replaced by Orkut of course, where everybody writes a ludicrously worded profile in a ridiculously fancy font not realising that they only drive away those whom they intend to attract through their profiles. The 'About me' description of IITian men often have some obscure rock song or worse, reference to "Rehna hai tere dil mein". The girls on the other hand somehow choose to ward people away with their caveats: "Don't add me if you are not my friend. I only exchange scraps with my next door neighbour who goes to the same class, bathroom and mess". Another thing, I don't know if you have heard the word going around, but it has now been accepted by all that using a misguiding picture of a cute baby, flowers, a celebrity or a cartoon character in place of your own picture on online forums, is a tell-tell sign of physical ugliness. Don't do it. Have we lost our dignity, people?

The no-bike brigade

When I was in IIT, I remember that one of the greatest cribs from us hostellers was that we were not allowed to ride bikes on the campus. Three years outside IIT and I realise that we had something wrong going with that whole "bike" nomenclature. To most of the world, a bike is a bicycle. A Motorbike is the appropriate word for what we were rooting for. I however don't want to get stuck on the semantics of what I think is merely a manner of expression.

In one of the SAC meetings, where we were arguing that it was unfair to ban bikes, the then dean was forced to explain his side:

1. He asked that if students meet with accidents, how could he face the parents? I could never agree with that. Universities cannot take responsibility for cognizant adults. It is not for them to save our lives in every possible way.

2. Then he said that we had signed a piece of paper before joining college that we would not drive powered vehicles. So we were to abide by a legal contract. The basic flaw in the argument was that a lot of us were under 18 when we signed that contract. So its validity did come into question.

> *…a junior came to him and asked for some advice on placements: "What do you think is the most sought after company among IITians?". Quick came a unanimous reply from the both of us: "Women, of course!".*

3. The dean however had a powerball left to throw. The IIT premise was theirs to enact laws for. So we could do anything outside, but inside we were not allowed to ride bikes. And that was that. We didn't have any good answers to that.

When Anita Pratap, Outlook and CNN journalist, came to IIT to give an extra-mural lecture, I had an opportunity to speak to her for a while. She told me that she had been to IIT in the 1970s as a student herself, for Mardi Gras (Saarang now). She further went on to compliment us for the no-power vehicle rule and commended us over the green interiors and safe roads. That was the first time I had doubts about whether we really needed motorbikes. Now, the doubts are bigger in my mind as I live a pedestrian-ed and public transport-ed life in the UK. A lot of alumni living in New York city will tell you the same. But there is an important difference. Chennai is much hotter than the UK and the US. So, it could be tougher and more draining to cycle around or walk across a vast campus. So, all in all I am still confused. IIT administration cannot afford the same state of confusion though. They should make their decision making more transparent so that the students feel that the decisions are taken for a greater good and are not based on the whims of the senate. They should advertise why a certain decision was

taken. On the bike front, they will have to ensure better bicycle security and bus services if they want the students to be satisfied.

Moral Policing

Moral police in India never had any law on their side. The same goes for moral policing at IIT. The men and women hostel rules do need some rethinking. The administration need not answer moral queries and should tell the parents that they can only act by laws, not morals, because morals are quite subjective. What the administration does right now is to further the age old tradition of making Indian men inept of handling feminine presence. It had become a joke to such an extent that after my friend Hari got a job in Schlumberger, one of the most sought after companies, a junior came to him and asked for some advice on placements: "What do you think is the most sought after company among IITians?". Quick came a unanimous reply from the both of us: "Women, of course!".

So much for good education: the question of merit

When I was in IIT, the dean had called a SAC meeting where he wanted to know the students' opinion on the abolition of JEE, making the board exam as an entrance criterion and starting more IITs. A lot of students thought that these ideas would lead to the dilution of quality. I even read a very funny comment scribbled on one of the IPs put up about the SAC meeting. It read: "Why not change the name to 'Institute of Indian Technology'?"

Most IITians believe that they have earned their place at the top of the pyramid and want to honour the principles of hard-work and meritocracy. On a second thought, some of their actions are quite to the contrary.

The case in question is elections. Every year the elections at IITM are run on regional, hostel and linguistic lines. I would not say that merit is not recog-

nised. Most of the people who get elected or get nominated to the positions of responsibility get there for good reasons. But there could be no argument about the fact that a lot of times merit is compromised. During the Institute student body elections, many people do not bother to find out who the best candidate for the post would be, and blindly vote for the person who is either from their hostel or for whom the influential seniors in their hostel ask them to vote for. The reason is very simple. If the candidate is from the voter's hostel, it is quite obvious that (s)he expects the benefits and a fair share of opportunities the upcoming year, accruing from the candidate's victory.

One sees all the filth of the national politics, that one condones, at a smaller scale at IIT. Thus it is sheer hypocrisy on the part of IITians to expect national elections to be run on the lines of the candidate's merit alone, when the stakes for power are much bigger in the latter case. I think we all need to seriously rethink our value system.

This has gone pretty long and I already have a feeling of being gripped by the George Bush syndrome: The more you speak, the less you are right.

So I will end with one last message that I would like to pass on to my fellow men at IIT: If you ever had any chance of getting any sort of feminine companionship whatsoever, you probably have ruined it already by calling the women 'females'. Add bad manners to sad demographics and there's no way back or forward for you. ∎

Naresh "Nalla" Ranvah completed his dual degree from the Department of Electrical Engineering, IITM in 2006. He was a resident of Ganga hostel. He obtained a PhD in Electrical Engineering from the University of Cardiff in 2010. He currently works at UBS.

IITIANS **A**GAINST **C**ORRUPTION**:** Students of IIT Madras demonstrate their support for the India Against Corruption movement through a 'silent' march on August 17th, 2011. The protest had a uniquely insti flavour to it, with some slogans reading 'Jan Lokpal, not Gen Lokpal'.

'OUTRUNNING **C**ANCER**':** The annual Terry Fox Run, a marathon held on 21st August, 2011, for raising cancer-awareness and in aid of cancer-research. More than 10,000 people participated.
Akash Dube, who initiated the Chennai chapter of the run in 2009, passed away thi syear after his battle with cancer.

In need and indeed for you: 'Mitr', formerly known as the IIT Madras Guidance and Council Unit (GCU) underwent a major image-change this year, and launched an fresh and enterprising campaign to help students in need of guidance.
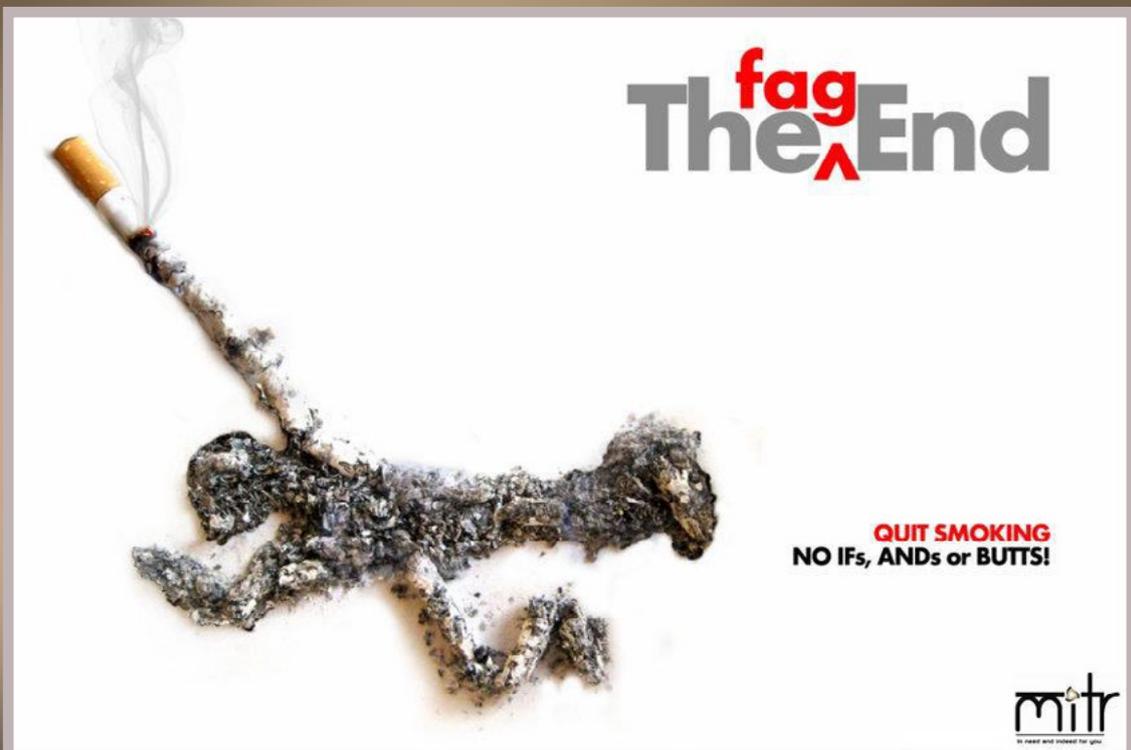
'No butts': One of the more aggressive campaigns launched by mitr, in an attempt to curb smoking habits among students, included some very strong-voiced, interesting posters, which have now become a part of the campus.
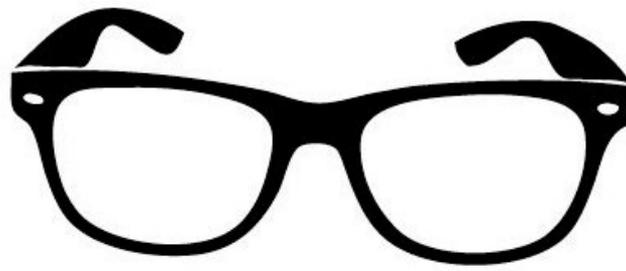
talk nerdy to me

JEE – The Nerd's Seductress

- Nirav Karani (2013/Dual/ED)

To a regular sixteen year old engineering aspirant, a JEE coaching class brochure can seem scarcely dissimilar from his fantasy buxom flaunting her seductive prowess. She playfully toys with the strip of her bra as she talks of the IITs being the mecca of technical education and tantalizingly sucks her finger on the mention of them admitting only the cream of the country. 'Wouldn't you want to be the cream?' She teases you, licking a drop off her thumb. The ubiquitous mention of fame and money leads one to picture oneself walking through family functions, brimming with pride and confidence – chin held up, shoulders held back – as distant relatives cast looks of awe and jealous cousins breathe abuses beneath fake smiles.

But alas! There are far too many nerds and the buxom can satisfy only so many. So she gets to pick and choose the ones that woo her best. And to say that she makes one work one's ass off, would be to put it mildly. While all stalkers knock on HC Verma's door for the basic know-how about her physical likes and dislikes, a few devoted ones conjure up enough courage to approach Irodov for special courting tricks. With a particular liking for finances, she makes you learn all tricks of the trade called math. As one goes through endless jargons of calculus, trigonometry, algebra, geometry and the like, she looks on with unbridled admiration. And like all girls who know they are in demand, she makes you do the rotten stuff as well. But such is her charm that one doesn't mind mindlessly memorising inorganic chemistry if only – to keep the metaphor going - to entice a wink.

She is very possessive as well. While the occasional flirting with a classmate may be tolerated, going out on a date or even talking on the phone for longer than necessary is strictly out of bounds. And just when one thinks that one is making some progress and starts feeling good about oneself, she pulls your All India percentile a trifle to remind you that you are not the only one trying to get into her pants. Eventually, however, the select few who do have coitus with the coveted mistress – if they know how to take the rough with the smooth – will tell you that it was completely worth the effort.

As noises for scrapping the JEE become louder, one genuinely mourns the imminent demise of the seductress one once successfully wooed. One can only feel sorry for the coming generations who are about to be robbed of the opportunity to showcase their ability to rise above mediocrity and will have to be content with a far lesser beauty that can never be The JEE. ∎

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The Origin Of Shaastra

- Anand Ranganathan (2000/B.Tech/CS), Academic Affairs Secretary (1999-2000)

*The first 'head' of Shaastra on how the inaugural edition of the fest came about.*

Shaastra, IITM's technical festival, was launched at the turn of the millennium and has grown rapidly to become one of the country's major technical fests. This article is a behind-the-scenes look at some of the events that led to the first Shaastra in 2000.

"IIT is a necessary evil between JEE and GRE," claimed one of the speakers during the orientation week at IITM in July 1996. The speaker clearly had a sarcastic undercurrent to his comment, but the group of 350 or so wide-eyed students quickly lapped it up for use as a motto in their lives in insti. And they proceeded to go through their courses with a feeling of sheer inevitability and mild cynicism.

All right, maybe that was probably a bit harsh. There were plenty of things that excited IITians and encouraged them to reach new creative, physical and organisational heights – Saarang, Lit-Soc, Schroeter, etc. However, in the technical aspect of life, there was nothing to excite the IITian. Even if the odd IITian got any spurts of scientific or engineering inspiration, there was no arena for him (or her) to channel that spurt. Besides, there was the risk of being named a geek or nerd by the rest of the junta.

It was the late 90s – the waves of economic change were just starting to hit India: the dot-com boom was starting to append 0s to everybody's dream salaries and retirement accounts. Suddenly, the whole population was having great ideas, looking for people with great ideas or thrusting great ideas upon everyone else. For a while, though, it seemed that the only attention IITians would give the economic revolution outside was a brief glance at the business page of the Indian Express, before flipping to the crossword. What we really lacked was an appropriate forum for exposing the outside world to the lay IITian and arousing his latent technical creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

So, in 1997 (if I remember right), the first 'Pragma' was held – Pragma being the first take at a technical festival on campus. However, as it turned out, the average IITian wasn't particularly aroused by that event and one could miss it in the blink of an eye, which I did. The idea of Pragma was noble though – it included various technical events including tech quizzes, demonstrations and paper presentations that attempted to get junta interested in applying their technical knowledge.
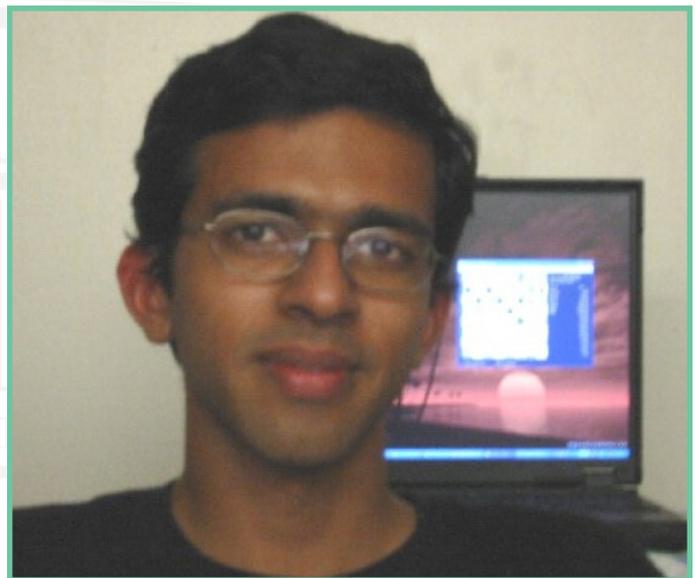
After another low key Pragma in 1999, a group of individuals decided to take the risk of staging a bigger technical festival and see how much interest it could garner among IITians - one with enough glamour and chutzpah to enthuse junta. They wanted a festival that made tech 'cool'. This group was a motley bunch of folks propelled by different motivations including honing organisational skills, adding nice lines to resumes and looking to do something interesting and different. This group also came to include me, Academic Affairs Secretary at the time, a post which, for some strange reasons, also carried the responsibility of organizing co-curricular activities. So, I became the head honcho for this brave

new idea, and the rest of the motley bunch became the self-styled "core group."

The first thing, of course, was to come up with a name for the festival. After veering between various names like Phantasmagoria, we finally landed upon "Shaastra." Next we needed to define what this event should contain. Ideas were coming in fast and furious. There should be different kinds of quizzes (after all, it was being held in IIT), other competitive events, demonstrations, lectures and some food, fun and frolic. We decided to have it in March, after the excitement of Saarang had died down, but before people started getting nervous about finals. After hammering out an approximate idea of what we wanted the festival to look like, we proceeded to the next big task of convincing the rest of the campus that this was worth their time and they should help in the organization.

Now everybody in IIT was already familiar with Saarang and the organization behind it. Every year people would make a beeline towards the cultural secretaries asking for "coord-ships" (or the posts of coordinators) for various kinds of tasks like sponsorship, publicity, catering, event organization, facilities, etc. So, there was a ready supply of IITians willing to slog it out for Saarang in exchange for a few food coupons and the chance to walk around with a backpack during Saarang looking important. But what was Shaastra and why should they do the same for it? We needed a grand opening. So, we got CLT for a whole evening and somehow managed to convince a whole bunch of students to come for an evening of publicity. I gave a presentation (on an LCD projector, no less, which was something surprisingly difficult to procure in IIT those days) about our vision of Shaastra and what we needed in terms of organisational manpower. Luckily, something clicked, and we got a whole bunch of requests for coordinator positions. This was prob-ably sometime in November.

After the different organisational posts were filled with able-bodied IITians, things started progressing at a rapid pace. The various event coordinators got busy coming up with new technical events. There were some very interesting tech-oriented competitions including a debugging contest, a sci-fi quiz, an IT quiz, a How-Things-Work quiz, a game programming contest and a tech crossword. There was also an engineering design contest with problems given by both the industry and professors at IIT. There was a stock market competition where people bought and sold stocks in a fictional market. There was also a series of online events (like brain games and crosswords) that allowed people from around the world to take part. Finally, as a salute to the times, there was a business plan competition. Then there were a bunch of demonstrations planned including a computer repair demo, an astronomy workshop and a robotics demo. We also attempted to get lectures by people in the US via video-conferencing, but weren't able to work out the technical details in time. I believe future Shaastras did manage to get video-conferences with people like Stephen Wolfram, Kevin Warwick and Martin Perl.

> *"..we proceeded to the next big task of convincing the rest of the campus that [Shaastra] was worth their time and they should help in the organization."*

Apart from the events, the other aspects of the festival were also moving along nicely. The publicity team targeted a whole set of colleges around the country and also came up with a plan for generating internal interest through posters around the campus. The sponsorship team, helped by the economic bubble, were able to raise a tidy sum. The hospitality crew started preparing to receive large numbers of outstation participants.

Excitement was building up and finally, the event came. It was hectic, as expected. Most events and processes went off smoothly. External participation

was encouraging. Evidently the name of IIT and the curiosity of a technical festival was enough to pull some people to the event. Internal IIT participation was reasonable, but nothing to write to your grandmother about. In fact, a couple of talks required forceful intervention by coordinators to get people to sit in the auditoriums and listen. There were some scheduling snafus and equipment shortages. At the end of the day, though, everybody was reasonably happy – the faculty didn't at all mind a technical festival, the students enjoyed some of the events, or at least enjoyed the days off from college, and the organizers had the satisfaction of an event go through without too many glitches.

Shaastra was there to stay. The idea of a technical festival had caught the fancy of many students and interest was sky high for the next year. The spirit of co-curricular activity had taken hold and it was now cool to be a geek. Technical creativity and entrepreneurial spirits were the rage of the moment. I, being in my final year, migrated with the herds to the US and had to be content on getting accounts of the growth of Shaastra by email. Several of the core group and coordinators at Shaastra 2000, however, were not in their final years and they returned the next year and worked on improving and streamlining it.

Since the first Shaastra, there have been Shaastras almost every year, and by the enthusiastic reports I keep receiving, it's been growing from strength to shining strength. Here's wishing continued success to it, especially in what I believe is its main mission: providing a venue for students (both IITians and from other institutions) to let loose their technical creativity. ■

Anand Ranganathan is currently working in the IBM T.J. Watson Research Center in New York. He finished his PhD in Computer Science from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2005. When he is not doing research in stream data processing, he enjoys running marathons, travelling and languages. Anand headed the first Shaastra team.

# Shaastra and Saarang: Are they really worth it?

- Raymond Joseph (2014/B.Tech/EE)

Shaastra and Saarang are by far the two most important non-academic events in IITM's calendar every year. While each was started with specific objectives in mind, students and faculty do question if they've lost direction somewhere along the way.

Colloquium attempted to open a Pandora's Box of student related issues on the session it held on September 15th, 2011. The Cores of Shaastra and Saarang, Prof. Parag Ravindran from the Electrical Engineering Department, the Students General Secretary, two students from the Stella Maris College and a host of other IITians debated on the value-add effected by the two well-established fests of the campus.

THE COLLOQUIUM
BRINGING PERSPECTIVES TOGETHER

The offensive was begun by the lobby questioning the utility of the fests. They pointed out that several projects in CFI and other ongoing ventures like iitmsat offered better avenues for technical innovation compared to Shaastra. In response, the CoCAS pointed out that Shaastra was actually promoting these ventures. He mentioned that money of the order of 5 lakh rupees was siphoned off from the Shaastra main account towards these ventures.
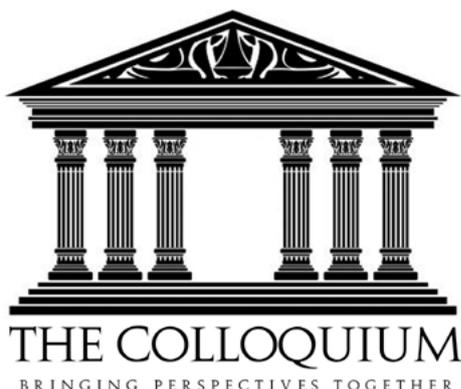
Then the question of coordships was discussed. It was pointed out that Shaastra and Saarang coordships were often taken by those who wanted a quick means to score resume points. This would undermine the quality of both fests, given that the applicants may not possess a predisposed interest towards the subject applied for. Such short term goals marked by personal interests was argued to make the fests inanimate. This was, however, fiercely contested. It was pointed out that the coords drawn in for the fests comprise generally of second and third years. Academic pressure is very high in these stag-

es. It was pointed out that one would not devote periods as long as six months to score a single resume point. The possible influence of Shaastra and Saarang adversely affecting the students' academic progress came to attention next. This was met with the rebuttal that academics must not be the only yardstick to judge a student. The claim that Shaastra and Saarang schedules have a substantial effect on academics was also challenged.

An interesting argument was brought forth by one of the Colloquium Coordinators. It spoke of the abysmal participation scenario in both Shaastra and Saarang. In quite a few events, just participating is tantamount to winning. This has necessitated the inclusion of school children. The Cul-Sec (lit) added, "We are certainly aware of this problem, which is why we have scored out the 'bigger' clause, we are making it 'better'." In this regard, the number of events in Saarang 2012 has been reduced from 65 last year to 50.

One of the students from Stella-Maris College enquired about the environmental impact that each of these fests have - "Shaastra or Saarang, for that matter, produces four tonnes of waste." She questioned how such an environmental drawback was being allayed by the organising mechanism. The unpleasant issues of inordinate politics and financial accountability ushered in by these two fests were also brought up. Pointed out by a previous Saarang Village Coordinator Arun, the mention of these issues evoked applause in the audience. He went on to cite references of how he was privy to a number of malpractices which seemed to unjustly profit some of the coords and cores. These, he pointed out, included inflating the financial costs by procuring fake bills and a host of other such practices. Favouritism and various other considerations in selecting coordinators were also brought to light. The core teams casually accepted that the system is subject to human flaws. Malpractices pertaining to finance cannot be totally eradicated. They added

that they will fight hard to minimise it as much as possible. The suggestion that the entire Shaastra and Saarang audit should be made public was met with a quick reply that it has already been made public and can be obtained at the Dean, Students office.

The core team dealt with inordinate politics in coord selections along similar lines. The Co-CAS pointed out that the viewpoint was fundamentally erroneous. According to him, this should not be viewed as politics but as trust. He said, "Even to move chairs, if there are two people – one of whom I trust much more than the other, whom will I entrust the job with?"

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A highly debated topic that acquired the spotlight for part of the discussion was GA and FR volships. It was pointed out how GA and FR volunteers in Shaastra and Saarang are given a load of menial tasks which they would otherwise not have been willing to do. When questioned on outsourcing these jobs, the Core team said that it makes the conceited IITian down-to-earth and that he/she tends to become independent and practical over time.

The session saw active participation from all quarters. For most of the time, the debate spanned evenly. Many interesting views and perspectives were brought forth. It ended with one of the Colloquium coordinators rendering an unbiased conclusion. ■

The IIT Madras Research Expo

- Suraj Shankar (2015/Dual/CH)

Shaastra 2011 marked the second year of the Research Expo, which showcased some of the cutting edge research at IIT Madras. Spanning Day 3 of the fest (October 1) and set up over a large area of 2500 sq ft, the event saw a footfall in excess of 4000 with students, professors, the general public and even industry executives showing up. The Research Expo was a joint effort of IIT-M and General Electric to present a platform primarily to post graduates to showcase their work, an attempt to do justice to the institute being declared and awarded the "Educational institution with most number of patents in five years" by the Government of India earlier in 2011. The event saw nearly 70 posters and 30 working models covering research done in the labs of several departments.

The Expo aimed to celebrate all the research that took place at IIT-M and consisted of research ventures and demonstrations from the various sectors of engineering. The experiments showcased some of the latest technological breakthroughs from dye sensitized solar cells, fuel cells and other novel devices to nanofluids, intelligent software and robots, and genetically altered bacteria. Given the fact that IIT Madras had received the aforementioned award for the maximum patents, it wasn't surprising that 3 of the experiments had already been patented. The titles of some of the projects on display were- Underwater robot, Tree climbing robot (by the Department of Engineering Design), Prototypes of off-

shore structures (Department of Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering), Micro Electro Mechanical Systems (MEMS): prototypes, models and biomedical applications, Optics: Laser Grafiiti, Nano Fibre spinning simulators, Carbon Nano tubes and many others. The students responsible for these projects were present at the stalls, to demonstrate and explain the details of their work.

GE made the Expo a bit more interesting by having Rs. 1 lakh in prize money up for grabs along with a trip to their research headquarters in Bangalore for the most innovative projects focusing on technology for India. The projects were judged by professors of IITM and technical experts from GE.

The IIT-M Research Expo 2011 has set the standard for the years to come, and is definitely one of the events in line with the original vision of Shaastra - letting loose one's technical creativity. ∎

'Think for Yourselves'

T5E talks with Prof. Nitin Chandrachoodan, one of this year's recipients of the Young Faculty Recognition Awards. Prof. Chandrachoodan is an associate professor in the department of Electrical Engineering and an alumnus of the 1996 batch. An interview by Raymond Joseph.

Your first reactions when you got to know that you were one of the recipients for the YFRA this year?

It was quite an honour to receive this, especially knowing the quality of the other faculty who were short-listed. Naturally I was very thrilled to hear I was one of the recipients.

Many people have expressed strong views in the context of the present system of technical education in India, something that was pointed out by Prof. Srinivasa Rao during the awards ceremony. Are you content with the present system or would you suggest changes to be incorporated into the system?

I do feel there are certain concerns with the system as it stands now. The fact that there are discussions on these topics is a good sign, but I don't think the solutions are simple. So I shall remain politically correct and duck this question for now.

Did you always want to join the teaching field considering the plethora of high paying jobs available? What was your inspiration to take up teaching?

Yes, I have always liked the idea of teaching. The idea of explaining difficult ideas in a way that makes them understandable has always appealed to me. An academic career also includes a healthy dose of research, not just teaching. And the freedom in terms of choosing what you want to specialize in is more in academia than in industry. What high paying jobs? How can any amount of money compare to the joy of seeing enlightenment on young eager faces?

What is your idea of a good teacher? Were you inspired by one of your teachers?
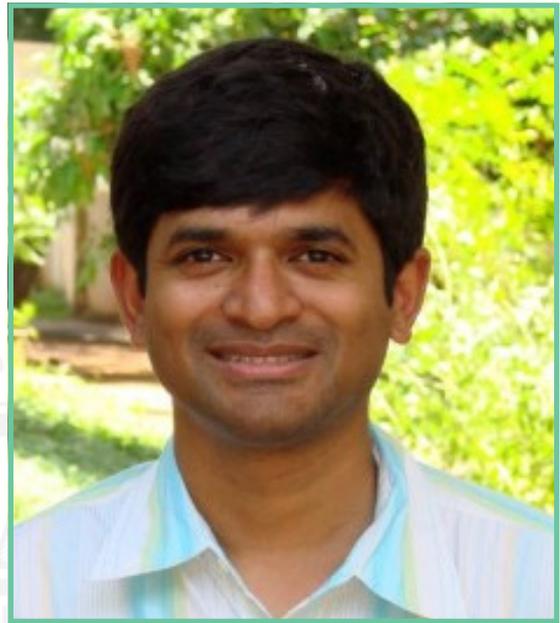
There are many different ways a teacher can be inspiring – there are some who are extremely systematic, constructing the course like a cathedral, while others are hands on and intuitive. I have definitely been inspired by people who taught me (both here at IIT and later in grad school), and different teachers have shown how different approaches can work. The one common factor would have to be their own love for the subject matter, but there are many good ways in which that can be conveyed to the students.

What according to you might be the reason for young graduates' reluctance in joining the teaching field?

The "plethora of high paying jobs" you mentioned earlier has got to be one of the bigger reasons. That said, there are many companies today doing excellent research with access to cutting edge technologies. The ideal situation in my opinion would be for people to gain some experience in industry and then bring that back to academia – it would reflect

well in their approach to teaching and research. So I don't think there is a problem with young graduates not going for teaching immediately, as long as they keep their options open. I also feel that if we are able to use our teaching assistants more effectively and give graduate students teaching experience while they study here, many more of them would discover their own teaching potential.

In the awards ceremony, you spoke strongly in the matter of the increased role being played by the Internet in student's lives. Kindly elaborate on this.

All the immediately obvious outcomes are negative – students using the Net as a shortcut for assignment solutions, plagiarism in term papers and reports, time spent playing LAN games, watching videos, and general lack of any kind of physical exercise. That said, the sheer access to information is something we couldn't dream of 10 years ago. There is a lot of ongoing discussion on how to adapt teaching techniques to harness this, but at present the Internet is definitely more of a problem than a solution. I think this is a teething problem and we will find ways to absorb it into the teaching process in time, but meanwhile, the best advice I can give you lot is to install alarms on your computers that scare you away from the Net at regular intervals.

The recent hullabaloo on the research being carried out in the IITs not being credible, quality and quantity-wise saw many faculty and alumni seeing red. Your take on this?

This is one of those topics (similar to "is Tendulkar the greatest batsman of all time") that will generate a lot of heated debate without any reasonable conclusion. We need better publicity for our real achievements, of which there are many; perhaps outreach programs to schools, like the Open House, are one way towards this.

What returns in terms of quality improvement have you got from working in IITM?

Interacting with very high quality researchers both within the institute and at the various companies that interact closely with us has been very rewarding. I have also been involved in designing some complete electronic systems, which has been a very good experience in terms of what can be done by students given the accessibility of resources and technology today.

Your take on the apparent decrease in the quality of IITs and the IIT brand in general and IITM in particular.

What do you mean, "apparent"? In my day, students were 10 times as smart, 10 times as hard working, and 10 times more physically fit. We walked 10 km to class, uphill both ways, and wrote exams with one eye closed and one hand tied behind our backs. You young whippersnappers… Oh wait a minute, I am still "young", am I not? Personally, I find the term "brand IIT" a bit silly – makes it sound like you are cattle or sheep. That apart, is there a decrease in quality? I definitely feel there is a drop in student motivation levels – it seems to me that too many of them are burnt out by the coaching classes, there are many distractions once they get here, and so on. I don't know the solution, but yes, there is a problem.

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Being awarded the YFRA is certainly a considerable feat. Any specific future goals that you would like to pursue?

I would prefer not to think in terms of specific goals to pursue; right now, I am enjoying my work and teaching. As long as I can convert this into tangible outputs, things are going well.

Any particular advice to the IITM student community that you would like to render, given you are also a graduate from IITM?

No. Learn to think for yourselves (smiles). ∎

Praise for the Periphery

- Rihan Najib (2013/MA/HSS)

I have an elderly aunt who is of the opinion that prolonged education shrinks the heart. In addition to a shriveled heart, she prophesies that such an education also makes jelly out of one's bones and reduces one's teeth to cotton. Whenever I visit her, she inquires with a persistent regularity how long I have left until graduation. Upon hearing my answer, her face becomes limp with anxiety; and I know that to her, my heart must seem a pinched, atrophied organ of disuse. She would then take my hands into hers and examine them, exclaiming, "Look at these hands! Just look! What can you do with these hands except mash boiled bananas?"

As is the case with many people in their advanced years, this aunt of mine is habitually preposterous. So the sting of her caustic remarks has always been mellowed by the possibility of her senility. Moreover, I thought I was saving breath for the last laugh when I only smiled politely when I could have been debating with a righteous rage. But the other day, I found myself staring nervously at my rather unimpressive CV and noted that perhaps the only place I was going was an immediate nowhere. It doesn't help that the end of this academic year brings placements and a flurry of applications to various grad schools; things are to acquire form and finitude; and then again, there is that deafening inner scream of not being ready for anything. I felt a spine turn to jelly and words get tangled in a jaw full of cotton. The worst was a vision of my aunt sitting on her porch, laughing raucously.

To be fair, nowhere could be a good place to go to. I don't mean this in a shifty "look-at-the-big-picture" sort of way. Nor do I seek to address the endless loop of the rat-race rhetoric here. When the measurement of the self is settled persistently as the sum of our deeds, we are judged on the basis of all that we have done. If that wasn't quite enough, we have slipped into a measurement of omissions. The things we haven't done are exhumed and placed before us in the process of evaluation, a question mark lingering in the foreground. So now you are additionally reduced to what you don't know, what you haven't done, what you are not doing and what you ought to be. There is no rebellion allowed for such states of being. You are asked to get on with it, to be pragmatic, to shrug and accept that such severe winnowing is inevitable. Most of all, you are asked to stop bringing up excuses for a life on the periphery.

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What is overlooked is the comical, yet awkward existential aspect of any path to progress. The extraction of the grain from the chaff often charts a ruthless advance; the training is extensive and the appraisal harsh, yet no aggregate of academic degrees or promotions in the profession aims to attend to what the acclaimed novelist Orhan Pamuk called 'humanity's basic fears' in his Nobel lecture:

"the fears of being left outside and the fear of counting for nothing, and the feelings of worthlessness that comes with such fears, the collective humiliations, vulnerabilities, slights, grievances, sensitivities and imagined insults…"

How can any formal training be complete without an eye to such germane concerns? Here we are, herding ourselves into the middle; wanting no truck with the periphery- that despairing realm of those with no direction. But I have found that even the middle offers no lasting solace, because when one is part of an institution for too long, one inherits its limitations. The periphery, it
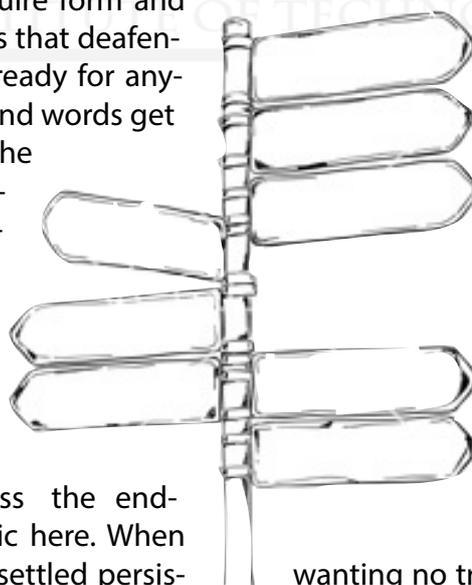
should be clarified, is not an external position, but a personal space to which one can withdraw. For that reason, the periphery is a gentle place to locate one's whereabouts. It allows for some room to reconsider, to make amends, to want in again or to want out; to have a bit of you always looking elsewhere.

The paucity, as it were, is one of time. As a character dejectedly notes in Arvind Adiga's book 'Between the Assassinations', "to want things from life is to acknowledge that one's time is limited". There is this frenzied morass of things we do to feel justified about where we are at the moment and where we are headed. We do much, so much for this lifetime. I know it might be a ridiculous thought, but while we still can, how do we account for all those lifetimes we will not live beyond this one? There is a leaning towards ends, targets, destinations and conclusions, and one can't argue with the merits of that. But then there is a sort of beauty in acquiring incompletions, to acknowledge that one will forever be an unfinished product; to know that the contours of the self is limitless and worthy of being stretched into the range of impossibilities.

And so I concede that my cranky aunt is right about prolonged education, and in fact, prolonged anything. My sole defense against a jellied spinal column, cottony teeth and a lousy heart is a faint nebulousness in the head that resists clarity and form. You should see the 'let-me-be-buried' face I wear when someone asks about where I'm interning over the summer. But I mean more than just the word when I tell them, "Nowhere". ■

Precipitation

- T. P. Kurian (2014/MA/HSS)

The sun is warlike in its anger, raging fierce upon the world
The crescent moon slumbers softly, in foetal circumstance curled
And wind from every corner warns of rain and hurricane
It whisks the leaves off empty streets and drives the trees insane
Black fills the sky. Now whistling winds descend like Yahweh's wrath
Now like whirling dervishes entranced, they sweep the winding path
Hark! I hear frogs croaking, rain men dancing out their wishes
Mother, fearful of a soaking, a silken parasol brandishes...

Light filters 'tween the clouds now, last vain attempt at shining
But darkness wins and sun becomes a futile silver lining
Such drama, such exquisite grace to announce that she comes
Such hallowed winds usher her in, the beat of silent drums
It begins now, it will not cease, it pours torrentially
It beats a pitter-patter tattoo urging the sun to flee
And ground is won, and golden sun beats a chastened, cowed retreat
With sidelong glance, it quits the dance floor, returns to its seat
Hesitant drops and cocksure sleet descend, the earth to meet
Like regent queens, rain reigns upon the ground beneath her feet...

Quite vain she is, and generous; and wild, headstrong and free
She does not heed no weathermen and sneers at a brolly
Hurling the tears of cherub hosts like arrows through the sky
She drowns the crops in big wet drops, mosquitoes multiply
A harsh mistress, exacting, tough, she calls your every bluff
And inundates the everglades with old newspapers and stuff
Billowing in wide blankets, she rids the streets of grime
Promising all under the sun, reneging half the time,

But when the promises are kept, like salvation she is
She soothes and calms with whisperings, she liberates with a kiss
Such bliss as we can only know between a lover's thighs
Such hope as we encounter but in loving mothers' eyes
Such pregnant, heavy silentness after the thunder sighs
Such are the kinds of thoughts in minds when darkened heaven cries
It cleanses, frees, it heals, it feels like rebirth; life anew
We who've truly felt what rain feels like feel like the chosen few
At night we dream of thundershowers, dawn brings but morning dew
If we had known she'd leave so soon… but ah… who knew, who knew?

The sun rejoins battle now, after a soaked night's rest
A clash of titans; climactic. The horizon to the best!
They fight, fall back, rebound, attack and parry thrust for thrust
Like sex-crazed lovers in the sack, with insatiable lust
At last a compromise is reached, glad clouds smile in the glow
And like Joseph's coat, stratus clouds sport a multicoloured bow. ■

STANDARD DEVIATION

This is a true story of a student currently studying at IIT Madras. It has been read and re-read across the globe, from Canada to Australia, Hungary to Brazil. It was translated and published in a Malayalam magazine. It was studied by doctoral students of the HSS Dept., IITM. It currently stands as the most read post on T5E. This is a story of acceptance.

Hello. You do not know me. Even the people around me don't really know me. Because I have a secret, something I've kept to my world for a very long time; something I wish to reveal. But not confess; that makes it sound criminal. I need closure and for that, I must be true to myself. So here goes.

I'm gay.

Yes, you read that right. I am a homosexual. And everything else you said to pull your friends' legs when they deviated from unspoken social norms – one does not watch Twilight; one does not stand on adjacent urinals. But I, in contrast to the liberal usage of the word, am gay. Literally. "A person who is sexually attracted to people of their own gender."

Yes, gay people exist in IITM, not to mention in every other educational institution, in every walk of life. Which shouldn't be surprising, considering we're normal folk. But we are insti folk, aren't we, and we're all very witty. Homosexuality in college is purely an outlet of comic relief. You call someone gay, you say you'll be 'cool' with it, because you're oh-so-progressive, and you tease him with another guy (In fact homosexuality has become indispensable in today's interaction sessions), but deep down you know he's straight. Then, twenty years down the lane, at the reunion you'll tell his wife he's gay and laugh. And I'm still talking about our nation's pride – IIT.

The idea of homosexuality is confusing, even for us. It can be a horrid experience. Sometimes, its like being convicted for a crime you didn't commit, and people pretend to not notice you afterwards. You have a built-in secret, courtesy the Man Upstairs.

There is no a priori rule for morality in this matter; you assume it's evil because of the prejudices of the modern Indian patriarch. The internet, your only friend in these matters, is abuzz with forums of support and, rather unfortunately, Christian ministries. I recall this time when I was particularly upset about my 'handicap' and had sent a mail to one of these ministries, expecting some sort of rational explanation. Their reply, strewn with quotes from scripture, was an advice to feel guilty for and repent my transgression. I was thirteen. The feeling of shame and disappointment, forced into us for no fault of ours, is something straight people can thank themselves for never having to face. It took me a while (three years I think) to realize that I'm normal, but when I did, it was unimaginable relief. But only for a brief, vivid moment.

Now, this was when we were all busy cramming for JEE. Yes, those two years when, possibly only when, even straight people are stressed for reasons they shouldn't be blamed for. Being, shall we say, different, does not allay the situation one bit. I'm here having fallen in love with a heterosexual (Can you see how different it sounds when you refer to 'ordinary' people this way?). And the rush you get whenever he calls for questions in Trigonometry is something I'm not sure even my JEE rank brought. The hours you spend contemplating the possibility of a straight man falling in love with you is a distraction, especially when it happens a month before a draconian exam. You eventually learn you deserve better.

Then you arrive at IIT – I'm sorry, the IIT. Excitement is a drab word to describe the sense of achievement and hope for a better 'intellectual' life you ex-

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pect to bask in. All around you are these smart people. The orientation lectures keep reminding you of the amazing life you'll have. However, the truth dawns very soon. I'm not talking about how I discovered slumber in the classroom – that's a whole different tale. There are no openly gay people, even in IIT. No, not even a mention of LGBT counseling, in an institute with 5000 teenage boys. The much-hyped GCU is a group of people who, for the most part, just want to add another 'Position of Responsibility' to their resumés. As if that was not enough, you have seniors put you through tasks where you learn about the unspoken aspects of society, and more importantly, homosexual hate – vital to being a part of the fraternity. As it happens, a GCU representative proclaimed in self satisfaction, "We want a healthy bro atmosphere in here. Gays can clear off", to much acclamation from the audience. Me included.

My wingmates exercise hypocrisy when they shriek "Look at those dudes holding hands. Yuck!", when in contrast, they are far from objectionable to the concept of gay women. Gah – IIT, an institute that claims to house the future leaders of the globalized world, is remarkably like the rest of India. And India has much to thank homosexuality for. For starters, we're the only ones who have been able to put all religious groups on the same side of a debate.

IIT may not teach you engineering (yes, Jairam Ramesh), but it teaches you independence very well. In less than a year I turned from "Yay, IIT will support the desolate gay teen that I am!" to "I'm queer and I'm very much here." I knew it was time. In the cliched voice of a celestial being from a mythological story, I heard myself wanting to come out of the allegorical closet. I couldn't take any more of these double standards – I had to tell my family, and for this I rehearsed my speech a million times. My sister – she studies Medicine – I knew she'd understand. I phoned her one night and came clean. She was traumatized. She scolded me and said IIT was tampering my head. She 'advised' me never to talk about it again, to anyone. Sadly, logic can only take one so far, even for 'educated' people. Faith ultimately answers the call whether to believe or not. Back into the shell, little turtle, that's where you belong. When you hear yourself saying aloud you're gay however, it changes you. The years you spent reading teenage magazines praying for a reaction, the sleepless nights you spent crying in vain for God to set you straight, the indignity of being branded as the one who let down his parents, brutally dashing their dream of seeing their only son's biological baby playing in their laps. You grow stronger. But, I tried again, confident in my naivete.

Although, this time with lesser hesitance. I told my closest female friend and, to my relief, she understood. She said she'd support me no matter who I was. Not a man would have loved a woman the way I loved that girl that day.

I was soon becoming bolder, and I began to take a stand. For instance, I no longer shut my windows while watching Desperate Housewives. One night, I even debated with my mother on how I thought Hindus were sexist when they wouldn't permit women into the Sabarimala temple. I must have crossed a line, for my mother asked "You have extremely radical views. What next, you're going to tell me you're gay?" Caught unawares, I blurted that it was a normal phenomenon and changed the topic to how nice it was of the neighbor to offer her a lift to office that day. That semester ended sooner than expected, like life was seated in a theatre with popcorn, watching me keenly. My parents, my life-givers, my unconditional lovers. They deserved to

know and I just had to tell them. I sat them down one night and said that I've been meaning to tell them something. I said I really missed playing cards with them. They laughed and brought in a pack. I wasn't concentrating. Bad jokes about how bad II-Tians are at Rummy. We ended the game, with Dad concluding he's capable of thulping (forgive me) the JEE. Laughing, he went to sleep.

It was my Mom and me. Always the observant parent, she asked what the matter was. I lost my calm, saying I had problems and life in IIT is not as happily-ever-after as you'd expect. Blood rushed through my head. She asked for me to elaborate, so she can 'help.' I said she couldn't. She pleaded. She said she wanted to know what was bothering her child. That was when I did it. Just like that, I told her. Watching your mother weep is something, but when she bursts out about how she doesn't understand what went 'wrong' with her perfect upbringing, that I should have 'this disease', and what happened at IIT that makes the 'good boy' with the perfect record in school talk this way – you wonder if you're made of stone to survive. I told her I'd give her all the time she needs. I'd even let her take me to the doctors just so she's assured I'm all right. My mother did her groundwork – she told my Dad, (Thank god it didn't have to be me) she called up a few doctors and set up an appointment.

We went to his office. The office of an andrologist. What?! I didn't protest though, it was too important for me to act cooperative. A portrait of a prominent God-man hung by. A chill down my spine. We entered his office. I let them speak to him. They spoke about how shocking and embarrassing they find the whole situation, how they think the internet is corrupting society and how they really want him to fix me. The doctor laughed "These days, kids are being exposed to too much of this nonsense. They think it's a fashion. Kali Yuga, I tell you!" and beckoned me inside. I went. He followed. He made a weird, inappropriate gesture. I stared blankly. There was a physical exam, his method of testing if there was something anatomically amiss. I passed; and that led him to the conclusion it was a mental issue. He told my parents "He's normal! Don't worry at all. This is a passing phase, he'll get over it. Get him to see a psychiatrist. He's a bright boy, see, he's

even willing to change!" I was silent from the shock of having been strip searched just a few moments back. Not a word from me for the rest of the day. The next morning, I mustered as much dignity as I could and asked to be taken to the best psychologist in town, the absolute best. We went to an extremely posh clinic, I was glad. Momentarily that is. Three sessions. Three hours of me at my debating best, three hours of me explaining how it's just like heterochromia, how there's a reason I'd been collected shirtless Salman Khan pictures from when I was ten, how the society thought of left-handedness as evil too but later encouraged it. He agreed with me on everything. "That's right, but you have to make the right choice. Listen to your parents," he ended. Three thousand bucks from my Dad's pocket spent talking to one of the best psychologists in India, and what did we conclude? I shouldn't read too much on the internet; I should concentrate on my studies.

But I didn't care anymore. I didn't need anyone, professional or otherwise, to tell me what I'm doing is right. I shot off mails to a bunch of friends in IIT, those who had always expressed open curiosity about my sexual orientation, but whom I hoped would understand. They were very supportive. And then I told more people. And more people. I got a wide range of reactions, from disbelief to respect, rejection to awe. Yes, there are homophobes in IIT but, more importantly, there are progressive people too. Which brings me hope. Sure, IIT isn't what I wanted it to be, but then, nothing's perfect, right? I am here, after all, with the privilege of being able to recount my tale on the voice of the student body. I've had classmates tell me how wonderful they think being gay is. I've had professors express their support for homosexuality. That is how I retire to bed each day, knowing I will sleep in peace. I may have been through a lot – depression, guilt, shame. Evangelism, medical examinations, social ostracization. But when I read another mail calling my story 'inspiring,' I know there will be a time when the freshman gay will admit himself freely during his introduction sessions, when he will sheepishly grin and talk about his crush on the young actor in his favourite TV Show with his roommates listening, without cringing. And with this vision of the future, I rest. ■

The Mission

- Ardra Manasi (2012/MA/HSS)

How will you instantly prove that you are civilised?

Dialectically prove that there exists a primitive world

Mark your territories, voyage into the idyllic terrains of Andaman

You may find there half naked human beings

Call them the hostile, barbaric tribes

Establish their dark skinned African ancestry from your moth eaten records

Stare at them more intensely; their crudeness and nudity

Toss them scraps of food and show them the pity that a caged animal deserves

Command their naked women to dance before you; derive your orgasmic pleasure

The uneven plank of her body, her heaving breasts

It is time for your civilising mission

It is time to sell your brand of 'development'

Collude and build 'Grand' roads that penetrate the impregnable silence of the virgin woods

Rejoice for you have finally reached the zenith of civilisation! ∎

Ardra Manasi graduated from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2012, with an MA in Development Studies. An accomplished dancer, she recently published an anthology of poems titled 'Harbouring Silences'.

'Not Me, Not You, But We.': The NSS, IIT Madras also underwent a major re-design, which included the introduction of a credit-based course system, and re-organisation of goals to emphasise the focus on social impact. Pictured is Dr. Srinivasa Chakravarthy, faculty advisor, speaking to students about the long-term NSS goal of increasing literacy rates in Chennai.
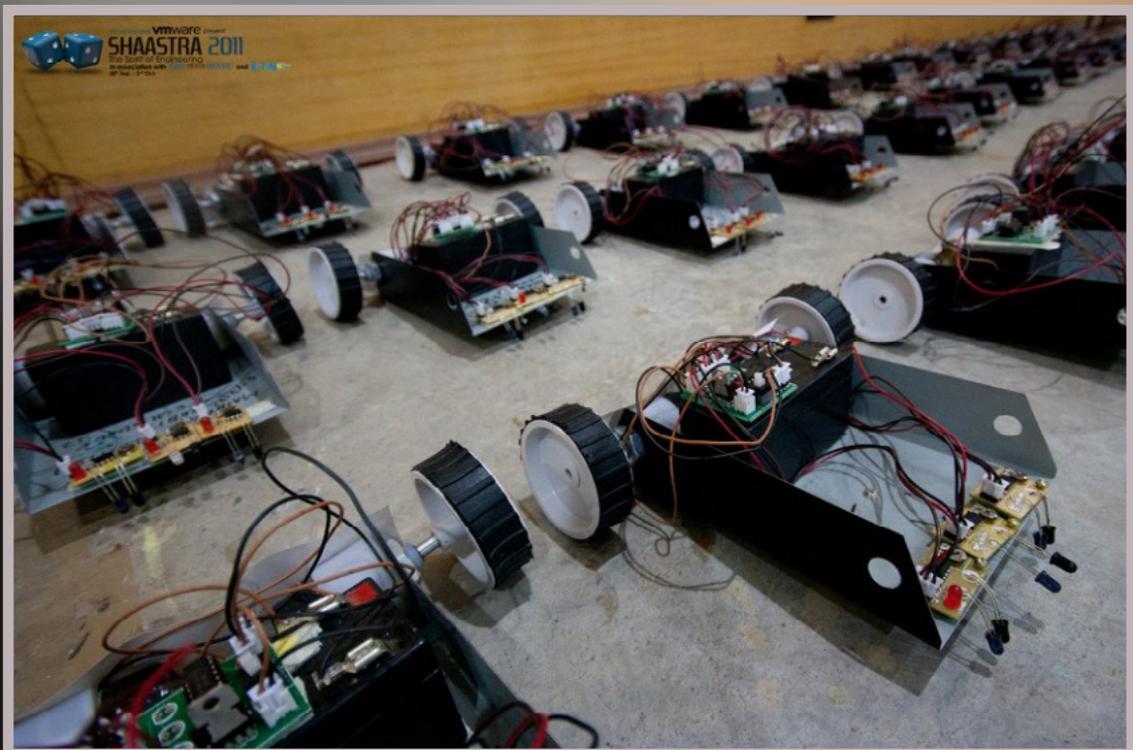
'Tech is in the Air': Shaastra 2011 was bigger than ever, and was dubbed a huge success. The post-Shaastra discussions regarding a possible change in the schedule were also worthy of note.

SANTOOR, CAPTIVATION AND BLISS: The Santoor Concert by Padma Vibhushan Pandit Shivkumar Sharma accompanied by Pandit Ram Kumar Mishra on Tabla, on Wednesday, the 19th of October 2010.
Organized by SPIC MACAY (Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth)

THE ROAD TO INTER-IIT: At Inter-IIT Sports Meet, held at IIT Kharagpur in October. IIT Madras went on to win the General Championship, thus retaining last year's crown.

The IIT Braindrain

- Jayant Thatte (2014/Dual/EE)

Should we rue the fact that some of the best engineers in the country never actually pursue a career in the field? Is it market forces at play, over-burdening course structures or just student attitudes? Jayant Thatte examines how academic life at IITs correlate to students taking up engineering as a career after graduation. The article features extensive inputs from the faculty of his department and from current undergraduates.

Last year, there was an article in The New York Times analysing why many science major students lose interest in the field by the time they graduate. The situation here in India isn't very different. N. R. Narayana Murthy's comments on the falling quality of students aside, today a great many IIT graduates go for non-engineering jobs in management, investment banking and civil services. This might indicate that present students may not be as enthusiastic about engineering as expected.

Prof. Nitin Chandrachoodan of the EE department suggests that students taking 'non-core' options is not necessarily a bad thing: it is always beneficial if someone with a good knowledge of engineering takes up management or government roles, where they can use their domain knowledge to better understand technical problems. Nonetheless, given the advantage enjoyed by non-core firms in placements, a question commonly voiced is: Why can't the current system ignite a passion among its students for the engineering they learn in their four or five years in college?

Today, a vast number of students write the JEE after 12th irrespective of their interest. This has led to a boom in the number of coaching centres, which start training students for the 'JEE hurdle' from as early as middle school. Therefore, entrants into IIT undergraduate programs are not necessarily those with the greatest interest in engineering.

On the other hand, the placement scenario is tipped in favour of the non-core sector, which pays much more than any core company or research institute. They say money is the only thing that drives mankind - then why not IITians? Given the question it may not be surprising that CAT is a very popular option among today's students.

Exam Fever

Interviews of several students, from freshmen to final years, have revealed that on an average, the enthusiasm towards the core courses drops as the student climbs into higher semesters. Inputs by students suggest that over-burdening and inefficient course structure may be contributing to this ubiquitous phenomenon.

"Every third year student of my department writes over three dozen exams per semester (counting weekly tests), which contribute to the final grades. Considering that the number of working days per semester is about 75, I feel that the exam frequency is too high," expressed a student.

However, many students and faculty members are of the opinion that periodic evaluation is, in fact, required since it helps the students to keep up with the class. "We all know that we all need to be pushed to do work, otherwise we will only laze about. For the same reason, I feel that continuous evaluation is necessary." another student claims.
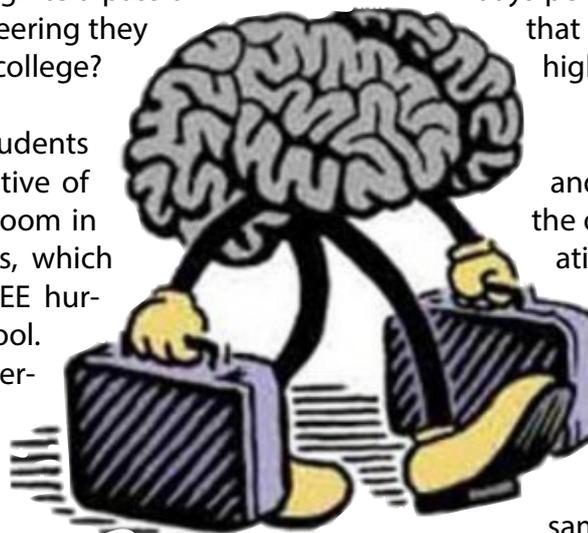
Prof. Chandrachoodan remarks: "I think a major problem is that students here don't really understand the kind of load students in universities in, say, the US undergo. A look at the final year projects at a university like Purdue indicates that undergraduates there are under a considerably heavier load than over here. The whole idea of continuous assessment is not something unique here, it is a standard practice in most foreign universities."

Prof. Anjan Chakravorty of the same department expressed that there is a need to strike the right balance. "An effective solution would be to increase the number of quizzes in the academic calendar, but at the same time ensure that no professor takes exams other than the scheduled ones." He also added: "In today's system, everyone concentrates on getting the highest level of performance, and push students through too many hurdles. This deteriorates the enjoyment factor in education. Students should be allowed to learn at their own pace, directing more effort towards learning fundamentals.

"The issue with the current system is that placements depend heavily on CGPA. Hence, the students are in a race to get good grades in every course. Most of the students before coming here are used to being exceptionally good in all subjects in their schools. They try to replicate the same here, which leads to over-burdening." he adds.

Attendance Rules

The education at IITs has gone from an informal system with personal attention to a stricter, more rigorous system. Attendance rules in several IITs highlight this aspect. In Madras, for instance, the minimum attendance rule has consistently increased, beginning with no attendance restrictions and then going to 55, 75 and since last few years, 85%. Stricter rules don't necessarily imply a boost in sincerity or enthusiasm, students claim.

"I feel that the courses should be made more interesting rather than imposing stricter attendance rules. Currently, several students attend classes just

"Most of what is taught in a course is taught for a reason. At that point, the students may not find the connection with the industry, but they should trust the teacher."

to meet attendance requirements," says a student. Several faculty members have complaints regarding the lack of enthusiasm and attention of students during the lectures. "Students no longer seem to be interested in what is going on in the class. This was not the case until a few years ago and the situation is getting worse. It is an issue of concern and we are working on how to improve courses and teaching methods so that they appeal to the students," quips Prof. Devendra Jalihal of the EE department.

An article was published in The Fifth Estate in 2011 concerning the life of foreign exchange students in the campus. This articles quotes exchange students, with similar views: "Courses are quite tough to handle", "Continuous evaluation is a deterrent, and the competitive atmosphere only worsens it", "Students don't get enough time to indulge in their interests and passions".

What's Taught In Courses

A fourth year integrated M.Sc. Physics student from IIT Kanpur points out some issues directly related to his courses: "They are mostly theoretical in nature with hardly any practical applications introduced. So students cannot relate the course with its possible uses, and they may eventually lose interest."

"Mech department in IIT-B has a number of projects going on at all times. So students always find something related to their department to invest time in," says a second year student of mech department, IIT Bombay. This practical experience, he claims, has helped the Mech students to sustain interest in their field.

Prof. Jalihal suggests that redundancy and repetitions can be eliminated if a single professor takes all related courses in successive semesters, for a particular class. He also complained that many times faculty do not get adequate feedback from the students. Prof. Chakravorty responds regarding the theoretical nature of courses by noting that "Theory may not always be fascinating, but is essential to become a good engineer. If theory is not taught in

educational institutes, students won't get a chance to learn it anywhere else."

"Most of what is taught in a course is taught for a reason. At that point, the students may not find the connection with the industry, but they should trust the teacher. Or, they can just search the net to find out how the topic fits into the bigger picture," says Prof. Shanthi Pavan, of the EE department.

Active Learning

Most of the IITs are already probing into the causes of declining academic motivation among students, taking measures and introducing reforms for the better. Many faculty members are now stressing on active learning as a means to keep up the students' attention in courses.

Prof. Chakravorty elucidates a particular idea: "The professor teaches fundamentals for about half a semester. For the remaining part, students are divided into groups and assigned particular topics on which they are expected to do research and read up for about a month. After this, new groups of four each are formed by taking one member from each of the original groups. Within a group, one each member has mastered a different topic. They spend the last month of the semester teaching these to each other. In this method, since students actively participate in the learning as well as teaching process, their fundamentals become clear."

The Placement Soup

The system in IITs that governs placements, particularly sequential slotting preference, has also been placed under a scanner. The first couple of days are allocated mostly to non-core companies including investment banks which offer very high pay packages, while the core companies usually start only on the second or third day.

As a result, core companies which come on later days get a lower quality of students than what they expect, leading to an impression that the quality of engineers graduating from IITs is not up to the mark. Prof. Jalihal suggested that the system should be modified so that each department is able to suggest two or three core companies that should come on the first couple of days of the placement season, in addition to the regular non-core ones.

Prof. Shanthi Pavan summed it from the student's perspective: "There are just too many job positions being offered that require no engineering expertise at all. A student who acquires more knowledge in his field most often ends up with a lower salary core job as against his friend, who may not have learned anything at all in his department, but is doing a non-core job. So, what motivation do the students have to learn engineering?"

We have not attempted to give a bottom-line solution to systemic problems in IITs today. The observations above suggest that streamlining education for bettering the student experience is a topical subject, deserving careful planning from the administration and inputs from the students. At the same time it is reassuring to note that alumni continue to do remarkably well in the non-engineering fields that they have entered, leaving a question of whether the IITs could be platform for a broader social role than they were originally intended to be. ∎

The Spam Candidate

- Deepak Sahoo (2013/B.Tech/CH)

Every year, he looks at these candidates, and smirks at them, thinking they're up to no good. He finds flaws in their points, questions their motives, and ridicules them in his mind. Nothing much has changed this year. Same positions, same procedures, same old politics; only the faces are different. That night, lost in introspection, he wondered what drove those people and their friends into spending so much energy on electoral ventures. He wondered how it feels to be an aspiring secretary, his perception being fogged by prejudice. The only way he could get a clear picture was by being a candidate himself.

So he decided to stand for the election, posing as a serious candidate just to experience the highs and lows of the process, to see how things work behind the scenes, to study the mindsets of the people involved. A little bit of election spam for the sake of infotainment.

> *"Northie, Telugu, or Tam candidate?*
> *None, sir, I am a spam candidate."*

He chose to contest for Hostel Affairs Secretary (HAS) – a position that doesn't really figure in many people's dreams. "There's nothing to lose", he felt. At best, he'd win the election and try to bring the change he always wanted to see around him. Otherwise, he'd be humiliated by defeat, but then he'd learn a lot in the process anyway.

Without wasting much time, he began this little experiment. He started approaching people for their feedback about the state of affairs in the institute. In simpler words, he started campaigning by making his presence felt. He smiled at every person he knows even remotely, befriended strangers on Facebook, and toned down his (allegedly) temperamental behaviour.

Looking at people's reactions, he could pick up some clear trends – friends would encourage him a bit too much and foes try to show him that he doesn't stand a chance. Strangers would say that they'd vote for the best manifesto, which implies, euphemistically: "I don't know you, I won't vote for you." Close friends were a different problem altogether – they saw through everything, and asked him to stop kidding about the candidature. Then, there were ubiquitous enthu-juniors, who were so happy they started hugging him, with promises of tremendous campaign support.

To make his manifesto, he starts reading the institute constitution from the students' portal. It did not help much. He got hold of previous manifestos, scanned them for interesting points, and built on them. He met some people who could tell him what a HAS had to do. Gradually, as he learnt more, he realized how difficult the job was. In fact, it was a thankless one. Monitoring shrewd caterers, meeting quality standards three times a day throughout the semester, dealing with huge number of complaints and criticism without any appreciation for any of the effort put in – and most importantly, keeping one's cool in such adverse conditions – it was all part of the work. He remembered all the times he cursed the HAS and his team for being inefficient. He now respected the HAS more than any other secretary.

> *"So he decided to stand for the election, posing as a serious candidate just to experience the highs and lows of the process, to see how things work behind the scenes, to study the mindsets of the people involved."*

As he retired to sleep after a day of exhaustive running-around, he heard people outside in the corridor discussing the elections. The status of various Cul-sec candidates was all they talked about. It appeared to him that Saarang mattered more to most students than the state of their own mess. "Why do we need two Cul-secs, when they put in much lesser work than one HAS? Surely, people can live without a fest, but not without proper food and facilities. To them, the gen-sec and HAS candidates should matter more – these are the people who will actually improve hostel life, and who need to be chosen with utmost scrutiny."

At that moment, he decided to step down; having had enough of fooling around. There were good lessons to be learnt from the misadventure, but that's as far as it would go.

Of course, the subject didn't really close there. The embarrassment that followed, the guilt of letting down all the people who had started secretly campaigning for him, and the same annoying question everyone asked him, over and over again; they left him upset. But he snapped out of it. It was, after all, an elaborate joke, but even so, the joke ended up changing his outlook; one could say it made him serious. It was a soul cleansing experi-ence, totally worth all the bother.

And yes, he still does smirk at all the people who keep their eyes fixed on the Cul-sec elections, and those in the vote-banks who baselessly blame their secretaries for all their problems. A great man once said that an ignorant democracy is worse than a dictator-ship.

(If you are curious to know, he quietly with-drew his candidature in the morning, without telling anyone. Later in the afternoon, a senior goes running to his room and says, "Dude, please withdraw. It's affecting our Cul-sec candidate.") ∎

Open Discussion with Director, Dean (Students)

- Midhun P. Unnikrishnan (2012/B.Tech/EP)

Issues surrounding the alleged 'security cum moral-policing drive' (as hyped by the media) were cleared in this landmark session.

An open discussion between the institute administration and the student body was held at 8 pm, April 18th, in CLT to address issues relating to hostel regulations and women's security in campus. With no clear statement having been given by the administration, students were unable to distinguish between fact and fiction in the face of numerous newspaper articles on the topic. The Institute Director, Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthy, and Dean of Students Prof. L.S. Ganesh, were present to answer questions about a range of issues from the large number of students present which included a strong representation from the girls' hostels. Despite the meeting being conceived only 2 hours prior to its commencement, the hall was full by 8:15 PM.

Before the floor was made open to questions, the Director preemptively clarified the meeting's purpose by making a distinction between personal views of any faculty member and the official view of the institution, requesting students to not discuss the former in the forum, regardless of how disagree-

able they may be. He argued that the institute has a clear set of rules, sometimes derived from actual laws, and that it is on occasions where personal zeal leads someone in authority to overdo or supplement these regulations that a redressal is due.

He also mentioned several times that no regulation regarding hostel and social life of students is passed without consulting with the student body. Drawing from his experience as a student, faculty, Dean and eventually Director of IIT Madras, he reiterated that any decision affecting residents on campus has always been made after extensive discussion with all stakeholders. These decisions are made with the help of student representatives (Gen Sec, R.A.S. and A.A.S.) in the Senate as well as the Student Affairs Council. To cite examples, he mentioned the decisions to reschedule Shaastra and Saarang to the first month of the same semester , as well as the 85% attendance rule, both of which were made after extensive consultation with students. He specifically stated that, apart from the de-

cision to reschedule Shaastra-Saarang, no decision for reform had been taken in the last three months, contrary to the numerous sensationalized press reports. He also stated that any objectionable rule could be changed subject to discussion.

The Director also requested students to understand that the positions of administration in campus (Warden, Dean etc.) are taken up voluntarily, with faculty choosing to take up these positions in their spare time. This could lead to mistakes made by the administration, either by conviction or sloppiness. However, he stated that avenues for students to express their concern existed – contacting other faculty members, Deans, and if all else fails, the Director, is an accepted course of action.

...he mentioned the decisions to reschedule Shaastra and Saarang to the first month of the same semester , as well as the 85% attendance rule, both of which were made after extensive consultation with students.

Hostel Administration

Questions were asked regarding several restrictive measures implemented in the hostel environment. The long-standing issue of LAN cuts and 85% attendance were also raised. The Director said that many of these measures began with the hope to counter declining classroom attendance and performance of students. Some of them, such as the attendance rule, had been reported by many members of the faculty — including the Director himself — as beneficial. On the subject of LAN cuts, he mentioned that the midnight rule came into place only after consultation and consensus of then-students of the institute, although contentious views were expressed later regarding the rule.

Objections were raised by students of Tapti hostel regarding regulations placed by their warden due to which students were woken up by cleaners at 6 in the morning for a "forcible" cleaning of their rooms, and the rule whereby a student found sleeping in his room between 9am-4pm without a proper medical certificate would have his parents and Head of Department informed. Students opined that this was a clear case of personal views of the administration being imposed on the student body. The Director expressed that if any such issues are reported to the administration for redressal, it can be undone

with immediate effect, prior to discussions relating to its validity.

The Director mentioned that some measure of laxness has been and still is maintained in some instated rules, and that these came with risk on the part of the administration. Lack of documentation about students' whereabouts was cited as one example, where the warden of the hostel often has to address calls from parents late into the night if they are unable to reach their wards by phone. He also stated that drinking and sexual activity was prohibited firmly by the rules within the hostel zone.

A question was raised regarding why representation by students was poor in the Senate, to which the Director responded that, while only three representatives actually took part in the Senate meetings, the agenda was published two weeks in advance for the benefit of discussion within the student body. He also added that the Senate mainly handled academic issues, and that decisions regarding student matters take place in SAC and Board of Students (BoS) meetings after discussions with student representatives and with full representation of the student executive wing.

Security Concerns

Aside from incidents of theft in campus, security came into prominence after several incidents of attempted sexual harassment by men in motorcycles. The perpetrators have been found to be both from within and outside campus, and residents of the Sarayu extension had submitted a written petition to the Dean Students for attention to this issue.

The Director explained that the best measure against external security threats would be enlisting the services of a CISF force to guard the campus perimeter which, while effective, was rejected by administration due to the fact that their patrols are armed and are not answerable to anyone except their commandant. Also, the need for such measures was not felt since the threats were not that grave.

While the administration takes regular measures to close breaches in the perimeter, they have been subject to failure. It was noted by the Director that residents outside the campus make mounds to climb over the walls and that police action in this regard had also proved ineffective. He also pointed out incidents where the infiltrating outsiders have been known to beat up security guards.

The primary issue that the discussion touched on was women's security, which had been subject to controversy due to some proposals put forward by the admin in a previous meeting, such as a paid escort service and a written "declaration", perceived by some women residents as gender-discriminatory. The earlier statement by Dean Students that women were physically weaker than men and consequently more vulnerable also drew ire, as well as his stance that victims of harassment who were outside safe zones late into the night would have to answer "difficult questions".

The following were the proposals discussed (with no question of implementation in the near future) by the Dean Students, Sarayu/Sharavati hostel wardens and women residents:

- Self-defence training for women: the Dean Students noted that it was met with a positive response.
- Cameras installed across campus, cited to be 2000 in number
- Providing whistles: Dean Students mentioned that the suggestion came from the girl students themselves.
- Pepper sprays
- Paid escorts: this was a completely voluntary proposal, and constituted assigning students only at request.
- Declaration of Safety: Dean Students clari-

fied that this was not a safety measure, and that it applied to hostels of both genders. The declaration states briefly that the signatory is aware of the risks faced by wandering in the night outside safe zones, and of the potential consequences of taking these risks.

Regarding installation of cameras, the Director mentioned that this could only be effective in departments and well-lit areas, and is limited as a security measure. Speaking about the timeline at 11 pm, he said that it had been in place since long ago, enforced only laxly. Students are free to move around the campus (or go outside) at anytime, but are requested to inform friends whenever they left hostels late in the night. The proposal of signing a declaration was, according to Dean Students, a term of agreement by which "if you are an adult, state as adults that you are aware of the risks."

The issue of security guards without uniforms was also raised. Dean Students mentioned that the service has been around since he was a student himself. A question was raised regarding the dangers posed by false plainclothes security guards, backed up by an incident in the HS department and Sharavati hostel where girls were subjected to intrusive inquiries from strangers.

After 10 PM, many questions began to be redundant and not many new points were raised. The Dean Students and the Director both responded to numerous queries ranging from the veracity of news reports to hostel night regulations. The Director answered every query asked of him in the 3 hour 40 minute meeting, significant or otherwise, with patience. The Director promised he would look into the numerous issues raised and take necessary action in the coming weeks. ∎

Midhun Unnikrishnan graduated in 2012 with an undergraduate degree in Engineering Physics. A prolific chess player, he is the founder of the IIT Madras chapter of the "Chess is a Sport!" association. He is a former editor of The Fifth Estate. Midhun now works at Goldman Sachs in Bangalore

TRANSCENDENT GURU: Gurunath underwent several major changes and improvements this year, from the gift shop switching places with the department store, to the addition of the 'Gurunath Nutrition Kiosk' and GFC. Pictured is the mallu delicacy Puttu, one of the additions to the menu. *Courtesy: Darsana Vijay*

CHOREO NITE: One of the most popular Litsoc events, this year's Choreo Nite was filled with memorable performances. Pictured is a moment from Sarayu's performance.
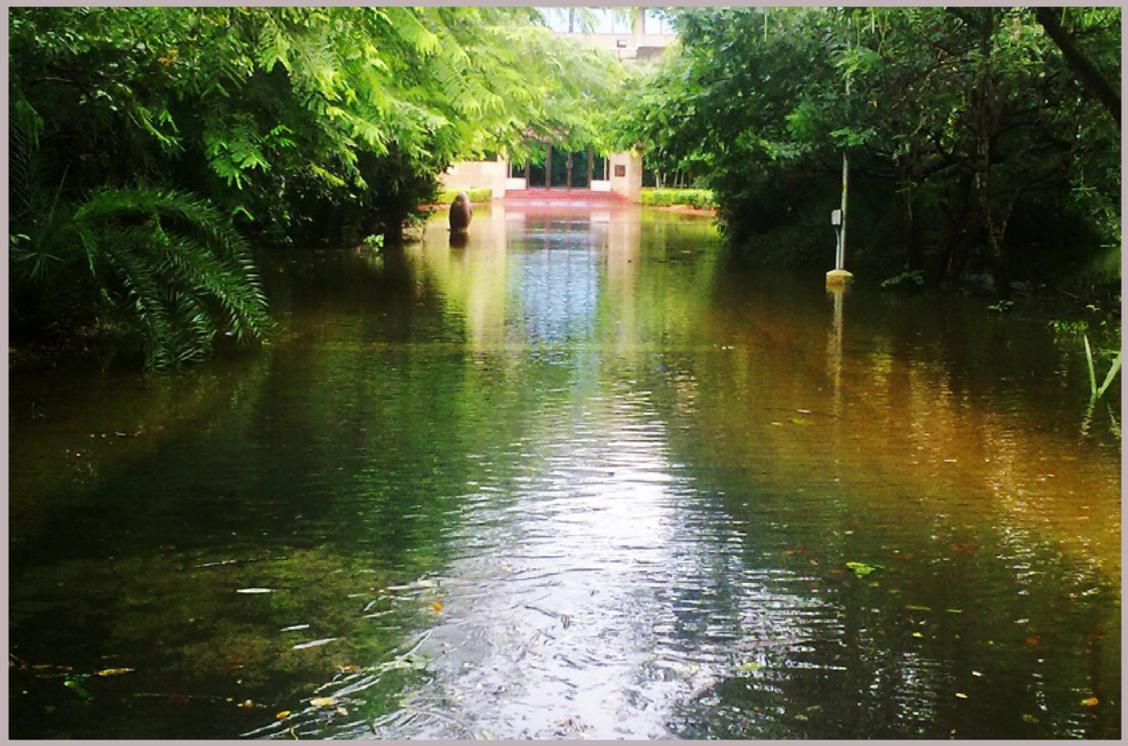
ALL WASHED OUT: The SAC road flooded during the rainy season. From November 16th, 2011. *Courtesy: Midhun P Unnikrishnan*

BACK WITH A BANG: The IIT Madras Open Quiz, revived in 2011, was a much bigger affair in the second edition of its new avatar. More than 1200 participants attended the quiz, which was conducted on Jan 16th, 2012.

The Curious Case of Hariharan Mohanraj

- Hariharan Mohanraj (2011/B.Tech/EP)

When preparing for the JEE, many are those who don't pause to wonder if engineering is where their hearts really belong. These IITians are swept along with the crowd into mundane corporate jobs that pay handsomely, or into well-trodden MS paths in Ivy League colleges. It is refreshing to hear of people who branch out and follow their hearts. This is one such story.

I was at my cousin's wedding last month when I made an interesting observation. Every conversation I had with a relative followed the exact same structure. I'd smile politely, pretend to recognize the person I'm talking to (it's a big family, I can't remember everyone), tell them that I just finished my undergrad at IIT Madras [cue gasp], inform them that I plan to go to New York to do my masters, and then spend the next two minutes explaining what audio engineering is.

That's right. After 14 years of school, including two years of "engineering group" education, and 4 years of college majoring in the hellspawn of the electrical and physics departments (EP), I'm going to NYU to become a Master of Music in Music Technology.

The music business started when I was really young, and still living in the US of A. However, it remained somewhat a hobby (time-pass, that level), until I moved to India in 2001. School band happened, lots of culturals happened, and I started thinking about music as a career choice. My parents had slightly different plans, though. "Get a bachelors somewhere good, just as a back-up. Then do whatever you want," they said. Where better than IIT, eh? I obliged.

I mean, consider the following comparative study. I'm good at music. I'm good at math and physics. Music industry, low salary (ok, so some people get paid a lot of money, but chances are you're not going to be one of them). IIT job, high salary. You do the math. Hence, I joined insti. Insti taught me one important lesson. There's a difference between loving something and being good at it. When you love doing something, you'll never get tired of it. When you're good at something, you may enjoy doing it, but that's only because you're good at it. Once you reach a point where you're no longer good at it, you'll want to shoot yourself.

And so, after four years of WM Solo/Group, Shaastra and Saarang teasers, coordships, a coreship and lots of vague acad courses where I had no idea what was going on, I learned that engineering was something that I might be good at, but music is something that I love.

There was no single moment of enlightenment. There was no dramatic family crisis. The decision to say bye-bye to our good friend engineering and say hello to a career in the music industry was made gradually over time, and was well accepted. It just seemed natural. My dad made sure that I knew what I was getting into ("What's the pay like? Not good? What's the growth like? Not good? Ok, it's your funeral.") before letting me get on with it.

Sure, it was tough trying to find out where the best schools are (there aren't too many people who know about this stuff). And sure, it was tough convincing a music school to accept a student from an engineering background. And yeah, whatever job I get two years from now is probably not going to pay half as good as what insti placements would have given me. At least I know that whatever I'm going to be doing, I'm going to enjoy it.*

* If I don't enjoy it, please remember me. I may ask you to give me a job. ∎
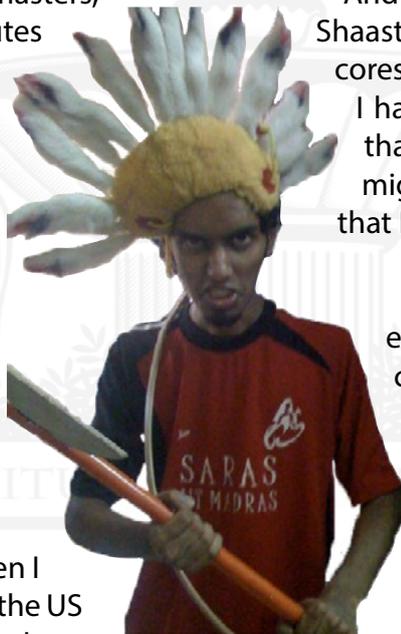
A Day in Red

- Ardra Manasi (2012/MA/HSS)

The fermented red of the grape wine

The hyaline red of the withering hibiscus

The fibrous red of the incised pomegranate

The purple stained red of the menstrual clot

The pulverised red of the broken glass bangle

But listen! The half painted face of the street play actor narrates a 'tale of red'

Beyond the pristine mountains of Kashmir

Across the Neelum river

Beneath the falling pellets of snow

Rivulets of stale blood oozes out from the deserted crevices of forgotten history

History that went unwritten!

Was it a collective memory loss?

Or was it the flawed vision of the historiographer?

Was it the blood of a Hindu?

Or was it the blood of a Muslim?

"They should look different"; exhort the ruling territorial minds

"Let us declare it as the next bone of contention

"Let us decide it in another riotous war in red"

But wait! The rivulets have suddenly dried

Disappearing into a primitive, anachronic memory in faded red. ∎

Ramblings of Another Confused MIT Grad Student

- Anirudh Sivaraman (2010/B.Tech/CS)

Anirudh "SK" Sivaraman is an alumnus of 2010 batch from the CS department. His many laurels include having been Shaastra Events Core and Newsletter vol (simultaneously). He is now pursuing a PhD at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and this is his story.

As I write this, I am in my fourth semester of grad school here at MIT, confused about life, like most grad students. Grad life is unique in its own ways, and MIT further adds to the oddities of grad life. The first thing they tell you when you get here : "We didn't make a mistake in admitting you by picking the wrong application form." A lot of professors who were formerly students here, add to this : "I kept expecting for a semester that they would send me a letter saying they made a mistake, and that I would have to pack my bags and go home". They even have a name for this weird behaviour: apparently its called impostor syndrome.

So, then you start grad life at MIT with the weight of the world's expectations on you. This is true for all the top grad schools, so without exception, my observations above apply to all of them. Depending on which department you are in, your department chair at MIT talks of previous students here. In EE/CS : It's Shannon, who invented Information Theory and Digital Circuits, in Physics it's Feynman and … well you get the drift. It is at once, both intimidating and inspiring to stand on the shoulder of such giants, and this is what drives the place forward. With that backdrop, every grad student tries to do his/her bit to make a dent in the wall that is human knowledge, and extend an astronomic body a few millimetres in a direction that is taken seriously by the rest of the world. This process is both humbling and satisfying: knowing that what you did was because of scores of people before you and what you did might influence several people ahead of you,
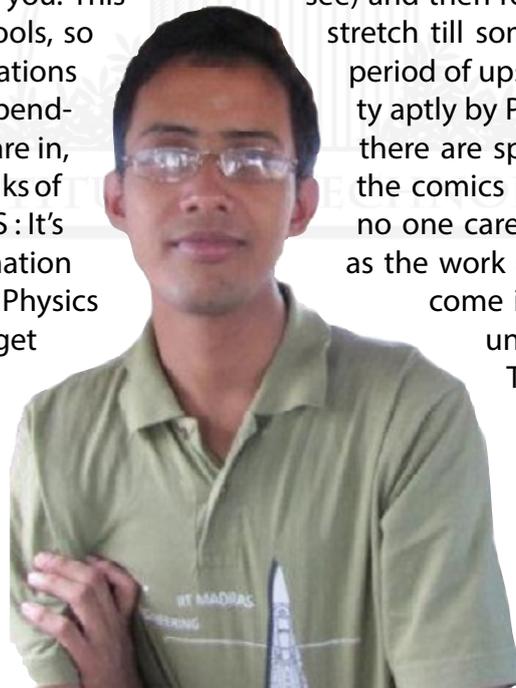
and if big enough might eventually be taught to an undergrad. It is this synergy between research and teaching, in my opinion, that is the hallmark of academia.

Grand goals aside, what is life like in grad school? The grand goal is the finish line, but the grander the goal, the harder it takes to get there. On a daily basis, you are probably running experiments, repeating them over and over (wondering if a monkey could do them as well), verifying hypotheses and overall practicing the scientific method everyday. In CS, this boils down to writing code, reading, cursing and extending some one else's code (of course, you could write code better than any code you ever see) and then rerunning experiments for days at a stretch till something gives way. Naturally, it's a period of ups and downs that is portrayed pretty aptly by PhD comics. The scenarios depicted there are spot on, I must say. Much like what the comics portray, unlike a conventional job, no one cares how or when you work, so long as the work gets done. Grad students typically come in around the afternoon and work until the wee hours of the morning. They usually don't bother going out to get meals because there is enough free food to scavenge within the building leftover from faculty lunches and group meetings. I have a labmate who went an entire semester eating lunch and dinner on free food. There are entire sites at MIT dedicated to maintaining current free food locations. The mailing list for leftovers is quite appropriately called 'vultures' in the CS and AI Lab(CSAIL) here.

The nerd/geek (I am not sure which one is pejo-

rative, because as nerdy/geeky as it sounds, I have debated this as well) humor is the average form of humor here. To give you an example of a typical joke here : There are 15 people in an elevator, and the 16th guy gets in. There are 9 floors. When the 16th guy gets in, he sees that the button for his floor is already pressed and says "oh, that was statistically obvious". For the mathematically inclined, I think you can use a balls-and-bins argument to prove this. I am not sure anywhere else I would have heard this comment, and much less that people would find it funny. Another instance, is the use of math/flowcharts to make everything clear (including an election procedure). I daresay such an approach, if applied to insti, would be met with extreme condescension. Well, embracing the inner geek in you is part of rediscovering yourself here.
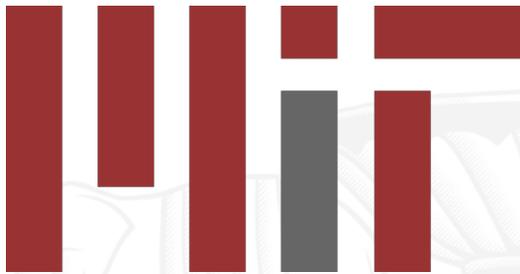
So, what's the social scene like here? Well, there are the clubs and the bars and the gentleman clubs and yes, I know everyone reading this is assuming I have done something 'interesting' by virtue of being in the US. Well, I'll leave that to people who are much better suited to answering that than me. Personally, I find the mailing lists my greatest source of entertainment. This is something pretty unique and annoying to those within CSAIL alone. This mailing list is called csail-related, and there couldn't be a more stark misnomer, since most items on it are unrelated to CSAIL anyway. Here's a sampling of the utterly pointless (not because the discussions themselves are useless, but because nothing comes out of them eventually) discussions on topics such as:

1. Why Ubuntu is not truly open source, because it allows you to install NVIDIA (a company)'s graphics drivers, as opposed to forcing you to use crappy open source drivers that make you scream.

2. The Spanish Prime Minister's capitalistic policies.

3. What caused the financial crisis ? (Note the irony of a bunch of engineers debating this topic in a scientific way). The conclusion was , in typical re-

Another instance, is the use of math/flowcharts to make everything clear... Well, embracing the inner geek in you is part of rediscovering yourself here.

searcher fashion, nobody knows.

4. What's the difference between compostable and non-compostable waste bins ? (This led to people suggesting the use of cats to eat the mice who would raid the dustbins looking for food morsels). The conversation eventually made its way to cat allergies which ruled out cats. People finally decided that Barn Owls who would prey on the rats were the optimal solution.

5. How to pick a bicycle (in response to the numerous bicycle thefts in the area) and so on. I figured out, in the process, that using your bicycle lock to lock not just your cycle, but your cycle AND another cycle is actually a nice way of stealing a cycle.

6. The best way of protesting against Amazon's and Microsoft's "non-opensource"ness (I can't pinpoint their crime in any better way). Suggestions included:

7. Make paper rockets out of Amazon's gift certificates and defenestrate Windows.

8. How Cloud Computing is Satan manifesting himself as a computer.

Oh, but I shouldn't let my seemingly flippant attitude give you the wrong idea. I love this citizen culture at CSAIL, and it's indeed great that profs, grad students, undergrads, tech support staff and everyone else can talk about things in a very open manner. Additionally, it does happen to be my daily source of comicality, and it never disappoints. ∎

Being Entrepreneurial, Daily

- Rakesh Misra (2011/Dual/EE)

A 2011 alumnus reminisces 'life in insti' but can't be more enthusiastic about the challenges that lie ahead as he pursues his PhD at Stanford.

"Are you from IIT?" That's the first question several people have asked me after I have told them that I come from India. Be it my classmates here at Stanford, or the cashiers at the various stores, or even the SuperShuttle drivers, everyone seems to be full of respect for IITs. Sample this chat that I had with a European classmate [Note: Qual(s) refers to the Stanford EE PhD Qualifying examination, arguably the toughest PhD qualifying examination anywhere in the world].

X: are you interested in joining our group?
we need some strong backgrounds :)

me: What group is this?
Quals group? Or assignments group?

X: signals/systems qual group
it is me, one american girl, one iranian girl and Y (maybe you know)

me: And how do you know whether or not I have strong backgrounds? I havent even started looking at anything reg quals ;-)

X: you are from IIT and generally IIT s are good:)

me: :D

X: today that girl told me to find somebody from IIT :D

me: LOL :D

Trust me, IITs are still the best in the world when it comes to undergraduate engineering education!

People often ask me, "Do you miss insti?" Of course, I do! Who doesn't? Here, there is no hostel, there are no wing mates. There is no DC++, there are no late-night phart sessions. There is no Taramani, there is no Andhra mess. Heck, there's not even the Ghee roast dosa of Tifanys! Ironically, I miss even the things that I used to crib about while in insti - the uninteresting mess food, the long evening queues at Gurunath, the sleepy classes on hot Chennai afternoons. Every single update about insti makes me feel nostalgic, every single time a friend tells me about his/her recent insti visit, I crave to go back to the place. But then, I guess, that's the price one pays for coming to a place like Stanford.

People often ask me what this entrepreneurial spirit is all about, something that, we have all heard, is unique to Stanford and the Silicon Valley. "Being entrepreneurial doesn't just mean starting companies", says Chris McCann, co-founder of StartupDigest, "It's really a life philosophy and culture. The normal people I know are doing the same thing they were a year ago, complain about their bosses, don't have anything to do when they are bored, and just lead general less interesting lives. But the incredible entrepreneurs I know have interesting hobbies, are excited by the future, learn about completely random topics, and have exciting things going on all the time in their lives."

That's the spirit of this place - exciting things going on all the time. In the 9 months that I have been here, I have learned tennis and squash, picked up playing the keyboard, taken lessons in social ballroom dancing and hip hop, improved as a swimmer, helped organize talks by public figures, cooked a variety of Indian dishes, made a lot of new friends, and interacted with a bunch of leaders, entrepreneurs and celebrities,

Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

in addition to doing the usual research, courses and assignments. Every day I wake up, I try to indulge myself in something new, try to make my day memorable, so that at the end of it, I can go to bed satisfied, with a smile on my face.

> *...the uninteresting mess food, the long evening queues at Gurunath, the sleepy classes on hot Chennai afternoons. Every single update about insti makes me feel nostalgic, every single time a friend tells me about his/her recent insti visit, I crave to go back to the place.*

And this is something that I would love to see everyone doing - indulging in something new, every day.

"So you're asking me to try out a new hobby daily?" Nope, it's not just hobbies that I talk about. I am talking about not leading a stagnant life, about not getting into a routine where every today is just a repetition of yesterday. "So you want me to try out new things every day?" Not exactly, trying out the same things but in newer ways is one of my favorite daily sources of joy. And this habit helps me a lot during my research too - whenever I get stuck, I take a step back and try to look at the problem from a new angle, and more often than not, I manage to find my way forward. I practise a completely new shot every time I go to play tennis, I try some new chords every time I jam my favorite songs on the piano. It is that spirit of creativity, of innovation in day to day life that I am talking about. It is that enterprising spirit that I would love to see in everyone.

I realized it only recently, but believe me, life's too short to get stuck with a boring routine. In case you have, make a conscious effort to get yourself out of the rut. Pick up a new pastime. Or make a new friend. Or visit a new place. Or play a new sport. Or learn a new topic. Or try out a new gadget. So that when people ask you "What's up?", you have a different answer to give them, every single time. ∎

Rakesh Misra is an alumnus of the Electrical Engineering Department, graduating with a dual degree (Communication stream) in 2011, scoring 9+ in all semesters (including a perfect 10 in three of them). He drafted the Quality Systems Manual for Saarang 2009 that helped procure ISO Certification for the event in 2011. He was also responsible for bringing out 'Electric Bond', a first of its kind 'profile book' for the 2006 EE batch. He is currently pursuing his PhD at Stanford.

The Day I Scored

- Basil James (2014/HSS/MA)

Agoal. Not a girl. Or weed. Both desirable things to be scored, but not what I scored last Saturday.

Strangely, there are a substantial number of people who would remain calm and composed and greet you with the merest twitch of the lower lip if you were to tell them that I had scored a girl or some weed, but would swoon, faint, hang out a crepe and have their friends gather around and say what a pity it all is, upon hearing the news that I had scored a goal on the football field. Some might even go the extent of remarking that there is enough sadness in life without fellows like Basil scoring goals. However, being largely liberal and broad minded and drawing the line only at Rebecca Black actually explaining the hidden meanings behind her songs, I am able to accommodate such views. Further, I am able to dissect, analyse and discover the source of such emotion.

I have always been a flamboyant and irrepressible forward who was denied international honours only by the misfortune of his own genetic make-up, selection prejudices against rubbish football players, and his inability to score flamboyant and/or irrepressible goals. The fascination in scoring a goal depends almost entirely on whether you are facing the goal post and net or whether the items mentioned are facing your back. I have been, for as long as I can remember, a goalkeeper. The sole purpose I had while playing football was to stop goals from being scored, rather than actually scoring them. I suspect that this has rubbed off on the general public. Perhaps because I am a sensational keeper, or because of sheer repetitiveness, many of those acquainted with me can picture me only between the posts and nowhere else on the field.

However, the general laziness of a few friends and their subsequent disinterest in mucking about on the field, I have been forced to be an outfield player while the more idle become goalkeepers. So it was on Saturday. I had gone to the school ground hoping to catch a few goal-ward bound balls and let in as few goals as I could manage when forces beyond my control pushed me out into open play. Observing that the forward line of my team was rather unoccupied, I strode to position.

I ran about, rather aimlessly, for close to an hour or so with little result. I had wasted a couple of good chances and was generally letting anyone who had eyes see that I had as much chance of making an impact as an SFI march had of remaining peaceful. Taking solace in the fact that I had little to no experience in the business of being a striker, I sauntered about the penalty box.

Then, came the moment. It was a corner kick, though definitely not intended for me. It flew into the box and bounced of half a dozen players like the ball in a pinball machine. Then, in what seemed to me like ultra-slow motion, the ball bounced on to me. From the mere fact that I had made an absolute mess out of two previous chances, not many a punter would have put his money on me. However, seizing the tide in the affairs as Shakespeare advised, I prodded the ball with

> *Then, came the moment. It was a corner kick, though definitely not intended for me. It flew into the box and bounced of half a dozen players like the ball in a pinball machine. Then, in what seemed to me like ultra-slow motion...*

the side of the boot, accidentally adequately placing it between the outstretched arms of the goalkeeper and the right post. It was a goal.

Man has, over the course of his existence, discovered a whole gamut of emotions. Some are considered noble. Some not so much. Love, for example, has had a lot of press-agenting from the oldest times. However, on Saturday, I discovered that there are higher, nobler things than love. The sheer exhilaration upon scoring, a euphoria that wells up inside you, your brain chemistry getting all messed up, resulting in an ear to ear grin, that feeling that makes you want to run a hundred metres, take off your shirt and jump into the arms of a dozen people. That undefined, unnamed and probably unanalysed feeling is perhaps the noblest of them all.

Being a game with zero audiences and no consequence to anybody other than the players, I merely turned around and looked around me. On their faces were a unique mixture of amazement, incredulity and relief, for we were getting a shellacking at the hands of a superior opposition. I was merely grinning from ear to ear.

It was at that moment, for it has been a very very long time since I scored a goal, that I realised why professional footballers celebrate the way they do upon scoring. They may score in almost every game every weekend but they are ecstatic enough to prance around and do somersaults in front of forty thousand people. That is why Wayne Rooney can shout into a camera, Ronaldinho can flex his body into a dance, Cesc Fabregas can risk a yellow card by taking his shirt off, Raul can kiss his ring and Totti vibrate his palm around his ear like a confused man trying to adjust the volume on the car stereo. They may be getting paid astronomical sums of money for doing that but in a golden moment or two, true passion and love for the game shines through. It is those moments that make the game truly beautiful.

I, on the other hand, am still ecstatic and continue to boast of my telling strike. ∎
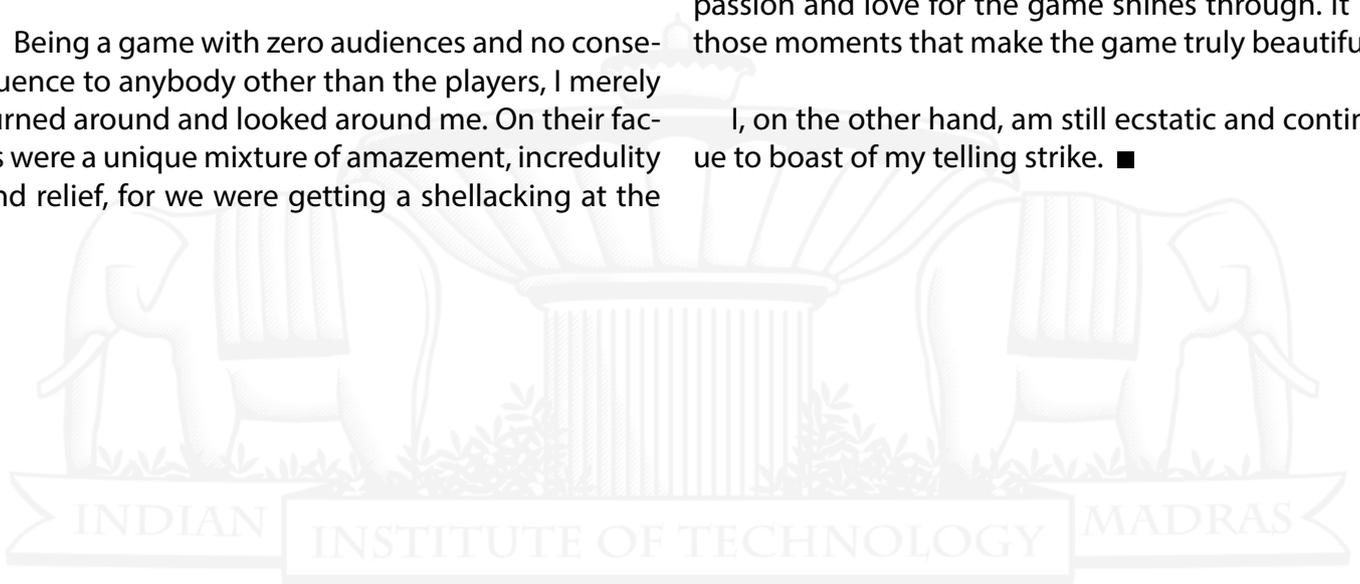
Saarang 2012: Saarang 2012, credited with losing the 'bigger than ever' tag in favour of 'better', was a huge success. The pro-show performance by the music-director duo Vishal-Shekhar is pictured.

St. IGNUcius himself: On February 6th, 2012, Richard Stallman delivered a memorable speech at the SAC auditorium. Here, he is pictured in the middle of his famous 'Long Live the Church of Emacs' speech, as his 'alter-ego', a saint of the 'Church of Emacs'

Holi hai: The fact that it fell on an instructional day did nothing to dampen the mood at this year's Holi celebrations, on March 8th, 2012.
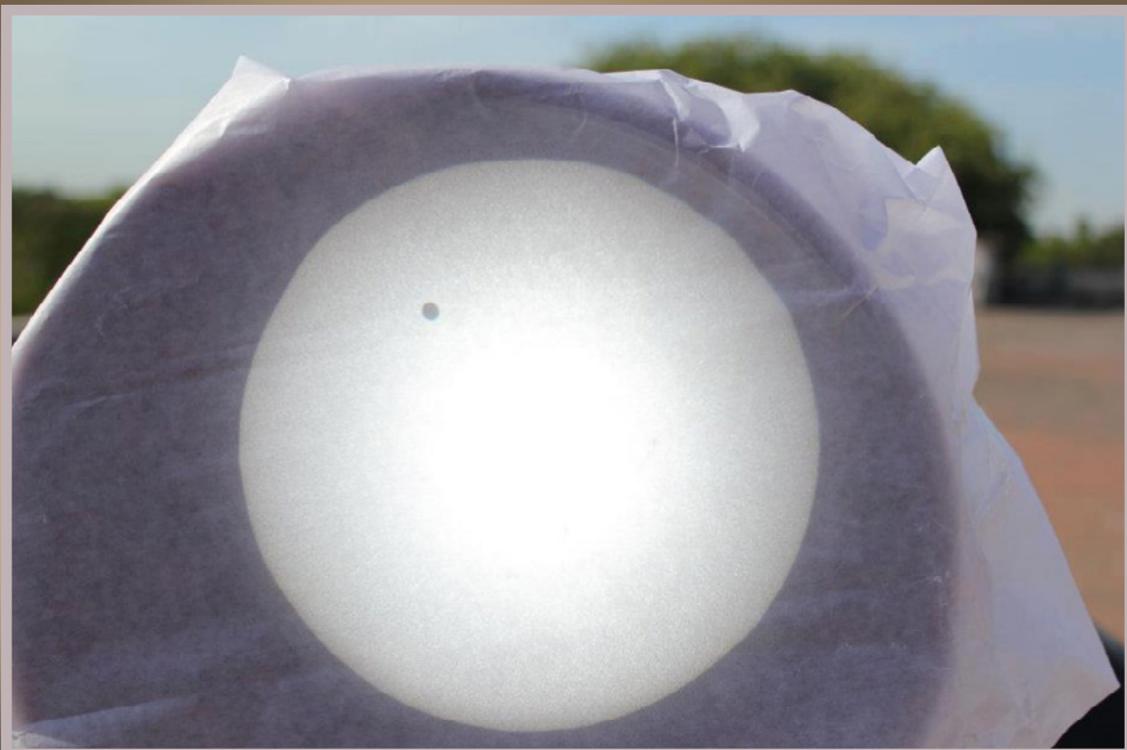
Flirting with Venus: Image of the recent Venus transit from a Newtonian reflector telescope projected onto a screen - clicked at HSB Rooftop, IIT Madras. *Courtesy: Akshay Subramaniam*

The Last Word

College is a funny word. It changes meaning as you grow older, encapsulating multitudes of feelings, memories and perspectives. You start off believing it's the definitive end to the many years you spent working, one among lakhs and lakhs also attempting to achieve the Indian middle class dream. One year later, you slowly, sometimes painfully, realize it's only the first step in a much longer, more elaborate journey. You begin to explore - you discover, you learn, and before you know it, you've transformed. You're older, wiser, and finally, you realize how little you've actually learned, and how much farther you must go on.

I learned a lot these past four years – each year had different characters and settings, but all with a lesson at the end, like stories from Aesop's fables. In the beginning, when you first enter the hallowed pathways of the country's best institution, you subconsciously begin believing all the things they say about you, even if you shrug it off in an attempt at modesty. If everyone says you're fabulously intelligent, you must be that smart, right? It takes all of one week for that extremely comforting idea to come crashing down around you – you're not the "smartest" guy on the block, nowhere close. And whether you realize it or not, that's when you begin asking the question that will define your next three years in college, "Who am I?" Unfortunately, this time, The Answer isn't 42.

Second year is an oddly interesting year. You're finally not at the bottom of the proverbial food chain. Now that there's a host of naïve freshmen who come to you for advice and wisdom, you're lured into the illusion that you've found The Answer. Simply because you have people willing to listen to you expound on life, purpose, passion and other fancy words. Meanwhile, you also look up the food chain, and find role models, people you subconsciously begin to idolize and whose path you attempt to replicate, confident it will guide you to The Answer. All the looking up and down pushes you into a murky state where you believe you've understood yourself, simultaneously being filled with pangs of self-doubt. In hindsight, you begin to understand why the Greeks call this the sophomore year.

The next phase is where you finally begin to piece together the clues to The Answer – you can sense its impending presence. You see what you're good at (sometimes unexpectedly), and you genuinely begin to understand the concept of passion. You work harder than you've ever worked in your life, building the road that will lead you to the finish line. By this time, you've made extremely close friends, who give you company in your journey – although the destinations are the same, the paths you take meander, taking different turns and bends. You find solace in the fact that your companions seem as lost as you.

And then, finally, after all the hard work, you reach your final year. The defining year, as the wise elders tell you -- the same elders who claimed you were set for life after 12th grade. You attempt to describe yourself in a page (with power verbs in size 12 font and 1/2 inch margins), and try and state your purpose in 2000 words. After six strenuous months of telling people about yourself wearing a pressed white shirt you've borrowed from your neighbor, you reach the end.

And that's when it hits you. You're never going to find The Answer. It's a mirage, something you incessantly trudge towards but what ultimately ends up defining you is the journey - which turns you took, what company you kept, what courses you took, what skills you learned. It's then that you understand – you will spend the rest of your life searching. Except this time, you're probably not going to fall as often. And even if you do, you've learned how to pick yourself back up again.

That's college. A seemingly disconnected bundle of experiences, choices, mistakes and moments that unsuspectingly come together to paint the picture of who you are and who you will be.

College – in all senses of the word -- made me who I am today. Thank you, IIT Madras. ∎

Vinay Sridhar was the Executive Editor of The Fifth Estate, 2011 - 2012

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MADRAS

A

Put Intro Da!

END SEMESTER ☐   MAKE UP ☐

STUDENT'S NAME [＿＿＿＿＿＿＿]   ROLL NO : [☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐]

NICK [＿＿＿＿＿]   HOSTEL [＿＿＿＿＿]   ROOM NO(S). [＿＿＿＿＿]

B. TECH ☐   DD ☐   M.A. ☐   M.TECH ☐   MBA ☐   M.Sc ☐   M.S ☐   Ph.D ☐

COURSE NO: **IITM101**   *An Unofficial Course on Insti Life*   PART : ☐

QUESTION NO.	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50
MARKS										

51-55	56-60	61-65	66-70	71-75	76-80	81-85	86-90	91-95	96-101	TOTAL	

ATTEMPT ALL QUESTIONS
(Please TICK the points relevant to you.)

Instructions:
1. Strike out the irrelevant details in point(s) having '/'.
2. Fill in the blanks wherever applicable.

1. Got an *Insti Nick*.
2. *Put* Night Out(s) - Breakfast was the last meal before going to sleep and not the first.
3. Participated in *Shaastra/Saarang/Dept. Fests*
4. Attended a *Saarang Dance Workshop*.
5. Was a *Lit Soc/Tech Soc/Schroeter* junkie.
6. Worship "*Guru*".
7. *Insti lingo* became the primary tongue!
8. Learnt NEW Language(s): ＿＿＿＿＿ (Programming ones don't count!)
9. Have a *Saarang/Shaastra/*＿＿＿＿＿ *Vol* Badge.
10. Have a *Saarang/Shaastra/*＿＿＿＿＿ *Coord* Badge.
11. Have a *Saarang/Shaastra/*＿＿＿＿＿ Core Badge.
12. Learnt a NEW sport.
13. Represented *Insti* at Inter-IIT/NYC Next/GE Edison/＿＿＿＿＿＿.
14. Celebrated *Insti Veshti Day*!
15. Explored IIT-M Research Park.
16. *Thulped* at an *Andhra Mess*.
17. Visited all 6 *Insti* gates.
18. Managed to maintain 1 cycle throughout *Insti* life.
19. "Christened" a *freshie*!
20. Head banged at *Saarang Rock Show*.

21.	Have at least 3 *Insti* tees from each year spent in *Insti*.
22.	Picked up a NEW hobby/interest
23.	Had an early morning breakfast at *Dream's Nest*.
24.	*Mugged* at *Cen. Lib.*
25.	Have a Grade Card that "spells a word".
26.	Can manipulate Chennai Autowalas *peacefully*!
27.	Believed that Bathing is a social obligation and **not** a daily ritual!
28.	*Put* Treat(s).
29.	Spent a summer in *Insti*.
30.	Discovered the legendary "Beware of Crocodiles" Board.
31.	Played under flood lights.
32.	Saw the sunrise at Elliot's Beach.
33.	Put *Non-Comp* performance in Lit Soc.
34.	Watched the Saturday Night movie(s) at *OAT*.
35.	Attended *EML(s)*.
36.	Spent night(s) slogging in *CFI*.
37.	Got Birthday "wishes".
38.	Had one thing that was shared by a *Hazaar Junta* in your wing.
39.	Been an active part of Insti Club(s): _____
40.	Went on a Road Trip (Cycling/Bike/Car).
41.	Regular visitor of *Bhajji Shop/Tidel Bakery/Sangeeth/GRT(K)*.
42.	Know why this point is the answer to "Life, The Universe and Everything"!
43.	Believe that Xerox is the greatest invention of all time.
44.	Worked for a social cause (NSS doesn't count). Ex: Teach for India, Blood Donation.
45.	Became a fan of some webcomic(s): _____
46.	Visited Guindy National/Snake Park.
47.	Taken the *Border Road*.
48.	Visited all Hostels/Water Tanks/Oxidation Pond.
49.	*Put* a movie marathon with friends.
50.	Had GTalk chat(s) with your room neighbour.
51.	Did your Laundry yourself.
52.	Swept your room yourself.
53.	Put the same photo on more than 3 mess cards.
54.	Know the *Room Father/Brother/Mother/Sister*.
55.	Believed that *CLT*, *ICSR* and *SAC* were "cool" places to "chill" out!
56.	Gate crashed hostel *ice-cream night(s)*.
57.	Ran up a 100 bucks overdue at *Cen. Lib.*

58.	Did all *Tuts* for a course on your own.
59.	Watched an India-Pak match in the common room.
60.	Got chucked out of CCD at closing time!
61.	Celebrated a birthday in front of *TBH*.
62.	*RGed* junta by removing the cycle carrier.
63.	Got mugged by *Insti* monkeys!
64.	Partied at *GRT* or the likes of it.
65.	Slept for 12+ hours straight.
66.	Contested an *Insti*/Hostel Election.
67.	Used a Hack Saw as a spare key for your room.
68.	Watched a match at Chepauk.
69.	Have Gymkhana Card(s).
70.	Tried and "Tasted" all the Messes.
71.	Visited *Insti Heritage Centre*.
72.	Had Lunch/Dinner at *Taramani Guest House*/*Bose-Einstein Guest House*.
73.	Visited all 16 departments.
74.	Attended a concert in Chennai. (***Non-Insti***)
75.	Held a sub-50 rank on *DC++ Anagrams*.
76.	Participated in the *Terry Fox Run(s)*.
77.	"Walked" the *Insti* bus route.
78.	"Contributed to research" at *MUF*.
79.	Got a pic with Blackbuck/Deer in the same frame.
80.	Contributed to *TFE*/*Reflections*/any other institute magazine/publication.
81.	Visited *Campus Cafe*/*MSB Mallu Canteen* between classes.
82.	Asked a doubt in class that the *Prof.* could not answer!
83.	Stargazed from HSB roof top.
84.	Been to *DoSA* office.
85.	Made friends in other colleges in Chennai.
86.	Had coffee with a *Prof.*
87.	Had dinner/lunch with an *Alum*.
88.	Saw Players from Indian Team practice at *Chemplast*.
89.	Tiffs meant Filter Coffee, Dosa, Bournvita
90.	Located the legendary *IIT Madras Water tank*!
91.	Attended a Class you DID NOT register for!
92.	Had second dinner(s) at *Basera*.
93.	Played Holi by "The IIT-M rules".
94.	Have *Saarang*/*Shaastra*/*Film Club* Poster(s).

95.	Got *Hazaar Treat* for finding an item listed on a *LOST IP*.
96.	Went to *Pondy/Mahabs* for a weekend.
97.	Appeared in an *Insti Adieu* video!
98.	Wrote an *RG* for someone.
99.	Honoured at *Institute Day*.
100.	You want to add **at least ten points** not found on the list!
101.	~~Got~~ EARNED your Degree.

SPACE FOR ROUGH WORK
(You may add YOUR points here.)

Grading Pattern:

    1. 81 to 101 : *Studd*
    2. 61 to 80   : *Awesome*
    3. ≤ 60 : *Bindass*

Your Grade :

"Course" Coordinators

    1. K. "PDF" Pramod
    2. Kaushik S. Mohan
    3. Partha Sarathi "MuX" Pati
    4. Lohit Vankina

Department-wise photographs, batch of 2012
(courtesy Varun Desu, Alumni Affairs-in-charge)

CH
B.Tech

CS
B.Tech

CS DD

CS M.Tech

EE
M.Tech

HS
M.A.

MM DD

MM
M.Tech

The following pages have been left blank to the mercy of your fellow graduates...

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