

*The Second Last Bencher*

**This book is dedicated to the  
IITM batch of 2012**

## **The Second Last Bencher**

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# The Pickwick Club

‘The Pickwick Club’, inspired by Charles Dickens’s “The Posthumous Papers of Pickwick Club” is a group of enthusiastic writers from the BTech, MS, PhD and MA streams at IITM. Like Samuel Pickwick and the three other "Pickwickians" in the book who research into the quaint and curious phenomena of life, we try to document the special times of our final year students during their stay at IITM.

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## Foreword

I remember writing “Foreword” last year for The Last Bencher which was our first ever attempt to preserve the memories of a few people from IITM in the form of a book. I wrote that article with Sapeksha Vemulapati and Surbhi Maheshwari as we were the three editors who made the book from scratch and since I have this opportunity right now I would like to thank these two people. Working with them was one of my best memories in Insti.

IITM is full of passionate people and that includes those passionate for writing. Our Pickwick Club is made of such people who gathered together to give birth to this book. It has been an honor working with such talented people and there is so much that we learned from each other. Every word in this book is a result of a collective effort from all of us and I am thankful to the whole team for supporting each other throughout the making of this book. I would also like to thank IITMAA for their support in making this book.

The real stars of The Second Last Bencher are obviously the students of the Graduating batch. We, The Pickwick Club, are extremely thankful to the people who shared their experiences with us and let us put them in this book. We are also thankful to the faculty members who took out some time from their busy schedules to write something for us.

Is The Second Last Bencher just a book? No. It is a tribute to the friendships that were made in IITM. It is the frozen piece of the memories of the people who stayed here. It is a carving of the effort by The Pickwick Club. Most importantly, it is an exclamation mark on the celebration of life in IITM.

Kanwaljeet ‘Bardar’ Singh



## From the Editor's Desk

The serene campus that we are writing this in and which you would be walking into, through the stories collected here, is a place that is home for many of us in our formative years. It is a reserved forest where there are monkeys, deer and us. There are other life forms too who snake away their lives without much noise. As soon as we got into this it felt that it's a really far off place away from home even with all the technology around. We are not always on phone or online. But slowly and slowly we formed. Cultivating friendships, nurturing ideas, learning new things and unlearning some old things along the way. Anything that doesn't destroy us shapes us up. Like a jig-saw puzzle we have been put together here.

"What memory will you write down today?" would be a difficult question to answer. One would have to sift through so many things. In fact, it is as bizarre and cliché a question as "What is life? Write a few words about it". Yet, there are some personal epiphanies that are worth sharing. Some moments which left an indelible mark on us. The central pieces of the puzzle. They are worth an immortality. As we grow up things become clearer. But the defining moment of college is a hazy one where we are all in it together. A point where all kinds of questions pop up - "Where are we?", "Where do we go from here?" So many choices and to pick one is to define us. And yet out of all this mist, we find an answer by the end of it.

College means academics, but it is also much else. It is a training ground for self dependency. And at the same time, living and working in a community. We run into a variety of people, talents and ideas on our way out. All these are an invisible groove which guides us to the end. It puts a periscope onto us. To ask questions like, "Am I interested in this?" and also giving us time to find out and settle the question. It

forms our tastes in so many things. College is a capsule where time runs slowly and it will for years to come when we ruminate on our stay. In a way, we never graduate from college though we move out of it. Even the thought of it will suspend time for a moment.

But something has to be recorded. That art work "I was here" on the last bench has to be expanded. For future. For us. And for our friends who shared this space and time with us. This book is for them and for everybody who wants a memory jog of college life. A leaf out of this tree will have a permanent shadow on all of us.

# Glossary

IIT Madras is well known for having its own 'lingo' which has been nurtured and developed over the last half century. It has evolved so much that a Master's Thesis was written on the very topic of our campus linguistics. This glossary is for you if you ever feel lost in the realm of our Insti lingo.

<b>Arbit</b>	Arbitrary, Random.
<b>-ax</b>	Universal suffix, a shortened form of max; painax, rapeax
<b>BOG</b>	Abbreviation for Bathrooms Of Graduating students
<b>Bulb</b>	Not understanding some point or understanding it after a considerable delay
<b>Crash</b>	Sleep
<b>Crib</b>	To complain about something
<b>Cup</b>	To fail in something. Originated from the U grade (symbolising a cup)
<b>Despo</b>	Desperate.
<b>Enthu</b>	Enthusiasm, being enthusiastic E.g.: Why so much enthu?
<b>Fart</b>	Useless discussion, without any reason
<b>Fight</b>	Effort, usually associated with put; put fight
<b>Funda</b>	Reason, concept.
<b>Fundaes</b>	Knowledge, Info. E.g.: He has proper fundaes on microchips

<b>Gen</b>	Generally. For no specific reason E.g.: Why did you jump? Gen.
<b>Give up</b>	Something bad in quality or quantity. E.g.: Mess food was give up
<b>Grand slam</b>	Bunking all the classes in a day
<b>Grub</b>	Food. E.g.: Get some grub for me
<b>Guru</b>	Gurunath, students facilities centre in IITM
<b>Hajjar</b>	Lots. E.g.: I have hajjar friends in IIT
<b>Hi funda</b>	An exclamation appreciating an idea or concept. E.g.: Inception movie is hi funda
<b>Junta</b>	People
<b>Level</b>	Refers to the capabilities of a person; god level, cup level
<b>Lite</b>	Not caring about something. E.g.: I took the assignment lite
<b>Macha</b>	Insti word for Dude. E.g.: Macha, what's up?
<b>Maxx</b>	Superlative to any state or action. E.g.: Give up maxx
<b>Mug</b>	To study. E.g.: I am mugging
<b>Muggu</b>	Generally used for toppers of the class or people with high CGPA or those who mug a lot
<b>N</b>	Universal prefix, implying very. E.g.: Got N-pained in the class.
<b>Ob</b>	Obviously
<b>Pack</b>	Delaying or not doing a task. E.g.: I packed my classes today.
<b>Pain</b>	Annoyance, boredom or difficulty. E.g.: She pained us for two hours with her stories.

<b>Peace</b>	Easy. E.g.: This assignment is peace. Not doing anything. E.g.: The students are putting peace in class.
<b>Prof</b>	Professor
<b>Pseud</b>	Exclamation for something more than high-funda
<b>Pseud putting</b>	Showing off
<b>Put its</b>	Do it, tell
<b>Ra/Da</b>	Universal endearing terms. E.g.: Wassup da?
<b>Rape<sup>1</sup></b>	Doing something very badly. E.g.: I got raped in the exam.
<b>Rape<sup>2</sup></b>	Doing something very well. E.g.: I raped the exam.
<b>RG<sup>1</sup></b>	Deliberately trying to spoil/halt the endeavours of another.
<b>RG<sup>2</sup>/ Thulp</b>	Another word for “toasts” that friends give to the passing out people in the hostel.
<b>Rod</b>	Difficult. E.g.: The question paper was rod.
<b>Sec</b>	Secretary
<b>Slisha</b>	Slight
<b>Stud</b>	Being good at something
<b>Tut</b>	Short for Tutorial



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# Take Light Macha!

(Literal translation: Take light dude!)

*Elangkumaran*

Located on Sardar Patel Road is a place that is home to men, machines and animals alike. I guarantee you that one cannot find greater geeks in a 1000 kilometer radius (that's the distance between IITB and IITM). The first walk around campus can offer too much for the brain to digest, it takes at least three semesters to make sense out of the chaos.

Perhaps the most unique feature of this 53 year old institute is the natural diversity. Located at the heart of the city, it houses a variety of flowers, deer, birds, dogs, monkeys and more (advanced) primates. A couple of endangered species like the black buck, (and girls) can also be found. The animals here are as exceptional as the humans: the deer are well versed with road safety and dogs sit in the first row of the Quantum Physics class. The monkeys pay us visits twice a day in the rooms, and have somehow, developed a liking for double-burst cheese pizzas.

IITM is also famous for its “four-year transform”, something so powerful that it can take a 12<sup>th</sup> grade bookworm and turn him into a heavy metal fan, a robotics aficionado, a professional Counter Strike player and a wicket-keeper all rolled into six feet of flesh and bone. The academic stud-ness, of course, never leaves. A fair warning: this does not mean that Insti junta (that's what we call ourselves) are model students inside the classroom. The truth is that many of the 9-pointers go through most courses with the minimum (albeit unusually and unnecessarily high) attendance of 85%, and sleep through the lectures in the far end of the class. During one's stay, the average guy has seen 8 television series and 300 movies, handed in (kindly note that it does

not mean done personally) more than a thousand assignments, played 5 hours of LAN games every week, “interacted” for 120 hours with the freshies (Yeah, I said it!), pulled all-nighters before 85% of his exams and been turned down by at least three girls to attend the dance workshop. Add the hostel experience, and you have the spiciest years of anyone’s lifetime. Hell, we even have our own PJ (Poor Joke a.k.a. Mokka) club. (Recent studies have shown that consistently putting PJs increases lateral thinking, any engineer’s indispensable attribute)

You have to sacrifice something to earn another. The first on that list would, of course, be REM sleep. Even so, there is not enough time to play footer (football) in the quaddy, trip on your roommates, have breakfast and of course, visit the library and hang out near Sharav (the UG girls’ hostel). Thus, ever so often you hear your friend utter this expression for “Just Chill Dude!” Bill Gates says starting preparation late makes us a better engineer. So if you want to mug for the quiz or work on a deadline that’s a week away instead of reading this book, I have three words for you: Take Light Macha !!!

# Water Water Water!

*Srinivasa Ramanujam*

A group of about twenty students gathered around a hall (which was to be named the mess hall in future), in the summer of '79 to discuss a very important issue they were facing – even though there was a water tank located right opposite one of the Research Scholars' hostel, the pipeline used was a circuitous one resulting in the water drying up even before it reached the hostel.

"We must protest", shouted one of the young Research Scholars assuming the role of the leader. "Our problem must be heard by the administrators and we must demand for immediate action", he added.

All the scholars acknowledged the speech with unanimous agreement.

"But how do we protest so that our problem gets the right attention?" came a voice from one of the inquisitive minds.

"A strike alone will not do. In the worst case, they will ask us to formally write a complaint letter and it will take months before our problem gets noticed!" said another.

"We must go on strike, but with a difference", the leader announced. "Gentlemen, I have a plan".

The next evening, scholars from the Cauvery and Krishna hostels assembled at the same place where they had gathered the previous night, all dressed up in their towels and briefs. A few bold ones were to be found without the latter. There was an empty bucket in everyone's hands indicating the reason for the protest and echoes of "Water water water" could be heard till a distance.

Shouting thus, the protest group slowly started marching towards the Director's bungalow, some drumming the buckets, while others raising the slogan in a rhythm. That the leader's novel idea was getting attention became evident with the presence of curious onlookers, who followed the group from a distance, to witness the happening.

It was when the group arrived near the Central Library that the unexpected incident happened. One of the students got carried away with the rhythm, and added four more words to the slogan which eventually changed the course of the protest!

"Water water water... Water or your daughter!!" shouted the mischievous scholar, and the new slogan caught on like wildfire with the others. Coincidentally, the then director of IITM had two daughters, both of whom were of marriageable age!

The group marched past the Gajendra Circle to reach the Director's bungalow, shouting the new ingenious slogan all the while. Fortunately, the Director had gone out with his family when the protest group reached.

They stood waiting until they saw the approaching car of the Director returning with his wife and daughters. On seeing the congregation of the protestors and hearing their slogan, he asked his wife to take their daughters inside. He then came outside and stood on an elevated platform, making himself visible to the group. There was rapt attention, and everyone, including the curious onlookers, waited to see the Director's response.

"Gentlemen", the Director addressed the gathering, "your second demand can be met. But the question is, who among you is ready to volunteer for it", he asked.

The Director's unexpected response startled everyone present. It took the crowd a while to regain themselves, and they all burst into laughter appreciating the Director's sense of humour.

That the Director later promised the group to look into the issue as soon as possible was what everyone had expected. But what most of them may not have expected was that that one of those young Research Scholars would go on to become a Professor at the same institute.

Even so, only fewer would have imagined that after he becomes a Professor, he would be invited to preside over the Cauvery hostel night as a chief guest, whence he would recall this incident to the present batch of students, 32 years after it happened!

# M-Seal N Feel

*Anonymous*

You don't know who we are. Nevertheless, listen to our story. It's one of those things you never tell anyone that you did, but secretly feel proud about, and, years later, with a chuckle, tell your grandkids.

There is always too much to do and too little time. In this busy life, we all look forward to having some fun, at least most of the time. This one time, the idea of our fun came at the cost of the liberty of the Ganga hostel staff. We locked their hostel office and placed the key conveniently near the water dispenser and fled from there. We are to this date unaware of the results and repercussions of our little mischief.

However, these things are too sweet to relish once and then forget about. Nearly six months after this incident, around 2 o' clock at night, we thought of what we had done and how hilarious it had been. As they say – when people sleep, the devil within awakes. We wanted to do something on a larger scale, something that people would talk about for some time. Extrapolating on our previous, less exciting plan, we decided to lock the hostel offices of \*all\* the hostels. The cheapest lock in Gurunath costs around 30 rupees. For a total of 17 hostels – we had to part with 510 bucks, equivalent to a buffet at Barbecue nation. But then Gurunath locks aren't exactly known for their quality. It is common knowledge that they can be picked open with a hairpin or the like, and we wanted to make it a bit more challenging for everyone. So we decided to insert M-Seal (a common plumbing sealant) into the locks which would harden fast and prevent picking.

Then came the time for execution. The six of us divided ourselves into 3 teams of 2 each and assigned ourselves hostels. The biggest challenge were the security cameras mounted at the entrance of every hostel. But

once we decide on something, even the universe conspires to help us achieve it. Praying for the Force to be with us, we managed to get hooded T-shirts and enter every hostel with our faces hidden. At around 4 am in the morning, we had successfully managed to cover 8 hostels and around 4-5 hostel rooms. It was neither boredom nor fear that had stopped us; we had run out of M-Seal!

At 9 am the next morning, we woke up to the sound of the hostel office staff trying to hammer the lock open. Of course, there was a Facebook post by someone about what we did, with an endless stream of comments and 'like's. We had done it.

When you think back about the days of your youth, it is incidents like these that come to your mind, for that rush of adrenaline and that (kind of adorable) recklessness will never come back to you again.

# Dream On

*Abhishek Venkatraman*

In my first year, I had some enthusiasm about Robotics because of my friend Kasai. Our senior, Kishore Jagathan was our inspiration. We packed Saarang (that is no easy decision for any IITMian) and went to the IITB Tech Fest. As the commentator said “A big round of applause for the team from IITM”, our hearts started beating wildly. It was our turn next. Our code was not working, the robot did not move even a millimeter. The commentator looked at our clueless faces and gave us another try; it did not make anything better. We cupped big time. It was one of the most humiliating experiences ever.

This nightmare seemed to push us to do something that would cover up for all the humiliation. NIT Trichy’s Tech Fest seemed like a good opportunity. We sweated out for 2 months and got a code ready and running. When we reached there, somehow, it stopped working: we had forgotten something really basic. Even then, we managed to make it to the finals, where we, unsurprisingly, lost.

In my second year, I was really into Robotics. I put innumerable night-outs for Shaastra and for the SRM Tech Fest. At SRM, we were supposed to make a robot that could blow fire. We got the code written by Kishore. It did not disappoint; it cupped as usual. The cake now came with icing: the bot which should have blown fire was on fire!

During the same year, just after I came back from ROBOCON (one of India’s biggest robotic events), the hostel Technical Affairs Secretary (TAS) wanted me to do Manual Robotics since I was prepped to be the next TAS. I had little fight left in me and even less enthusiasm. We were supposed to build something like a bulldozer. I bought some toy trucks and stuck a wooden piece at the end to make it seem like it was

not fully outsourced. This led to an argument with the Co-ordinator. Since even I had no clue how to sell my side, I packed off and left the TAS to clear things up.

Next were the TAS elections. Out of nowhere, another guy said he wanted to stand for the same post. In the end, I coaxed him into filing a nomination for another post and got him to nominate my candidature. As I was busy with Robotics, I did not go for the soap-box. That was not the only thing that I missed, or rather escaped. I did not go for the General Body Meeting and got some arbit guy with no knowledge about anything to do with tech activities, to present the tech budget in my place. It got passed with the added advantage of an increased treat amount.

After all this drama spread over two years, we managed to emerge first prize winners in Shaastra 2008 Robotics. We got placed first in NIT Calicut's Tatva Robotics and were national winners of Robocon. At DRDO Robotics, we came second. I became an events core for Shaastra 2010. In Shaastra 2011 Robotics, we were numero uno once again.

We screwed up a lot of things *en route* to emerging victorious in all these glorious competitions. We were never short of opportunities and I would like to thank and appreciate CFI (Centre for Innovation) for that. Hope that the tech culture, which is the essence of our institute, lives on.

# Cricket Chronicles

*Prabhu Dhev Ravi*

This is an attempt to relive the experiences that I have shared with the cricket team of IITM all through my four years here, and more importantly, to talk about the enthusiastic (and often eccentric) cricketers I have met.

Coming from a background of a strong cricketing culture, and knowing IITM's apparent geek-quotient, I was pleasantly surprised to know about the amazing cricketing spirit here. I made the grade soon enough, with many people soon anointing me as the 'Insti-team freshie' ('BS' Prashanth too). What followed were four awesome years at IITM.

Four guys defined the mood of the team. The late Ayush Joshi – Mr. Cricket, funny in patches, my mentor in Insti, hero to several others and a great team man. Vikas 'Lays' Shenoy, the guy who talks about everything under the sun as though he were the ultimate authority on it, never letting anyone else utter a syllable. Nevertheless, he is the most popular guy in any group and is a precociously talented cricketer. His popular line is, "Say something extraordinary and I'll mention it in my blog" (to which we do not pay much heed, of course). Vignesh Shenoy – the no-nonsense guy in the squad, with his extraordinary organizational capability and all that jazz, was often the guy to pull team meetings back on track after Lays' customary digressions which went something like "We should prepare a HR questionnaire for freshies in next year's team". He probably was the only true 'athlete' amongst us. Vivek Gupta – The most favourite 'bachcha' of the team (despite being senior to me), wannabe guitarist, now passing time at IIMA.

Many other isolated events which were great fun flickers in my mind – the team physio who made us lie down like lizards after the game and said “Keep on imaaaje”, till we dozed off and had to be prodded out of Chemplast. Hitesh ‘Lotion’ Pathak diving to save the boundary just because his IIT Hyderabad crush was watching, only to drop the next ball because she was walking away. IIT Kanpur guys kicking an IIT Kharagpur player below his abs, only for both the teams to get disqualified the next year (Hope that stands!). Suyog Gothi reportedly throwing a match away against Roorkee because his lady love (a Roorkee-ite) made him do so (investigations are still going strong about this). The long partnership Prashanth and I shared against Delhi, when they continuously mouthed the choicest Hindi expletives they could find, not knowing that all he knew was – ‘Mujhe Hindi nahin maalum’, and I, just a couple of words more! Kulting a huge white-board from Ganga hostel to make our field-plans for the next game. All teams cribbing about the umpiring being biased towards the home team (This happens in every Inter-IIT). The last ball tie against IIT Bombay in my first year. Complementary tickets to all games in Chepauk. The team custom of probables treat, inter-IIT treat, freshie treat, placement treat and farewell treat! The other custom of team captains cracking something huge (Mck, CAT and their like). Trying to get past Yuvraj Singh’s commandos during the Indian team’s World Cup practice sessions at Chemplast Cricket grounds. For all this talk, we managed only one silver (in my first year). Hope next year’s group can change the trend!

These multi-hued memories that I have shared with the cricket team of IITM will remain evergreen and fragrant in my memory, like a freshly mown cricket pitch.

# The IITian Bridge is Falling Down, Falling Down

*MS Sujith*

One day, when I was quite jobless (as always) and was trying to kill time by browsing random stuff on the net, my room door was suddenly thrown open with the 'James Bond style' entry of three of my juniors, Midhun, Naveen and Rashid. Unlike the movies where a powerful entry is followed by a bang, here, it was followed by whispers; top secret information about a bridge designing competition in NIT Calicut was relayed.

The contest which had a substantial amount as prize money, required that a 50 cm long bridge be made using ice cream sticks and fevicol. We plunged headlong into the project, borrowing books from the library, browsing the net for models and consulting Profs for tips about the design. My room was the centre of all activity; daily brainstorming sessions took place and at the end of each day, everyone reported their progress on the project.

On the penultimate day, everyone gathered in my room. Naveen, who had gone through the list of the previous winners of the competition, declared that 25 kg was all that the model of the previous year's winners could hold, so we had to construct a bridge which could hold 50 kg and win the competition in style. We were still pondering over the 50 kg, when all of a sudden, the nefarious Kiran came in. We had already got wind of his evil plot to defeat us in the competition, so, as soon as he entered, we hid our laptops and enormous books under the bed and pretended that we were gen hanging out. The evil mind of his did smell something fishy, but he went away without a word, although, his evil grin said it all.

After the initial scare, we worked on the model throughout the night and finally came up with a bridge that could support 65 kg. The next day, confident of our win, we packed our bags and headed for Kerala.

Upon reaching the college, everyone was amazed to hear that students from IITM had also come to take part in the competition. However, to our utter dismay, we noticed that they just had weights equalling 25 kg. With an air of arrogance, we told the volunteers that they should arrange for 25 kg more. Upon hearing this, the volunteers were dumbstruck; however, they soon collected their senses and scrambled to get the weights in time for the competition.

Soon, a female Co-ord took to the stage to give the necessary information like the rules and regulations etc. Suddenly, Midhun shouted out loud that he didn't understand Malayalam and that she speak in English. It was really ironical that, Midhun, a guy who only spoke Malayalam and had never uttered even a word of English in Insti, was giving such airs. The poor girl was taken aback. However, upon being informed by a Vol that the guy was from IITM, she was really impressed and went ahead to announce that 'Our event is so big and popular that, even students from IITM are here to participate'. Upon hearing the afore-mentioned statement, all eyes were on us, probably they were trying to figure out if we really looked like the 'Geeky Sheldon Cooper'.

After all the initial embarrassment, the competition began. We started work on our arch shaped bridge and time ticked away. However, even after one hour, we were not able to make our bridge stand and it would keep on collapsing continuously. Even though everything was going wrong, we didn't lose hope and clung on to the hope that it would stand, once the glue dried. Two and a half hours had elapsed and still the ice-cream sticks kept slipping. We were all so embroiled in rectifying the problem that no one noticed Midhun slipping away. Probably, he

had realised the futility of the endeavour and moreover, the thought of the humiliation he would have to face after all that pseud putting might have prompted him to abandon the ship.

The agonising three hours soon came to an end and the judges started inspecting the bridges. A bridge which could carry 16 kg was leading. Then, came the turn of the IITians, who had boasted that their bridge could support 50 kg. The expectations were very high; the tension was building up, almost everyone from the campus gathered to see the brainchild of the mighty IITians. A weight of 1 kg was loaded on top of the bridge and it had just touched the bridge, when all of a sudden the structure gave way, and on the ground lay the crumpled mass of ice cream sticks and fevicol. There erupted a collective laughter from the crowd, and all were jeering at the intelligence of the IITian brain. We were so embarrassed that we hung our heads in shame. However, the thing that drove the last nail into the coffin was a comment from the Vols, “When they sent us to get 25 kg more, I had expected to see a miracle, but hey, we were not disappointed, rarely does one get to see a bridge collapse under the load of 1 kg, but today, courtesy the IITians, we were able to witness this phenomenon too!”

We quietly slipped out of there hoping that no one in Insti would come to know of the disaster, but we were in for a shock. The treacherous Kiran had somehow managed to come to know of it and had shot off a mail to everyone in the hostel describing the events of the day in great detail. Back at IIT, we were greeted with taunts and were christened ‘*the Black sheep of IITM*’. “*Ba Ba Black sheep*” was the standard name that stuck to the four of us!

# The Diary of a Humble TA

*Anonymous*

Invigilation is an indispensable part of every TA's life, an exhilarating as well as excruciating experience. After five years of overdose of invigilation, this is my ode to the love-hate relationship that I have shared with it. I must, however, specify that this is my subjective take on the topic and is in no way a representation of the experiences of the entire TA community.

## **What has invigilation taught me in these five years?**

It has taught me that I am the oppressor who gets up later than the students writing the exam but yet ends up getting a *Vada* and coffee for doing nothing but walking up and down the aisles and handing over papers.

That I must transform into a monster like figure the moment I step into a classroom because if I don't, I will be reprimanded for being too lenient and cool.

That when one is invigilating, it is not unusual, if, even a student's fart or hiccup sounds like they are saying 'Ma'am' and you tend to rush off in their direction to answer their query.

That you should never forget your wrist watch when going for invigilation, because, you are bound to be asked the time by someone within the first 30 minutes. And once you answer the first query, it is like a domino effect. At a rate of one person every 30 seconds, each and every of the 60 students in the hall will keep asking you the time. Although some do it because of panic attacks, for others, it is mere entertainment after they are done making their precious contributions to the answer sheet.

• • •

That invigilation is a very ego-satisfying exercise. Firstly, the fact that a 6 feet 2 inch undergrad calls the 5 feet 2 inch you ‘Ma’am’ can really boost one’s ego. But more importantly, it provides immense opportunities to boss around people with threats such as ‘I can confiscate your phone, you know’, ‘I can cancel your paper, you know’, ‘Hey, Blue shirt! No talking there!’, ‘Who the hell do you think you are fooling, huh?’

That after spending 4 years in the Insti, students tend to associate themselves more with their roll numbers rather than their names and very often end up signing with their roll numbers instead of their names.

That boys have a very weak bladder as compared to girls. I don’t remember rushing to the washroom during any of my exam duties in the past 5 years. Neither have I seen a male TA or Prof. do the same. But our male students, like primary school kids, will constantly ask for a washroom break every 30 minutes. Perhaps it’s a ritual to bring good luck! I wonder how inspiring the ambience of the Gents’ washrooms must be to lure them out of the exam halls so often.

That even a final year student can get traumatized on hearing the two dreadful phrases ‘NEGATIVE MARKING’ and ‘TIME UP’ (which also reminds me how effectively the system has perpetuated fear).

That a room freshener is an invigilator’s best friend. I sincerely appreciate the dedication of the students to study till the last moment and their concern for the reducing levels of water on our planet and hence, their indifference to taking a bath before the examination. My advice to all new TAs is to keep a freshener handy if you want to stay awake and conscious for the 3 hours of the examination.

That no matter how hard you try to convince them against it they will not stop looking at you with eyes full of hope that somewhere in those 4 pockets of your jeans lies the key to the question paper – the end of their misery.

It has taught me to hold my breath and count till 10 to fight the urge to snap back with revulsion at the innumerable stupid questions asked. Instances of such situations can be found below.

What they ask	What TAs feel like answering	What TAs end up answering
Can you tell us the course code?	How am I supposed to know? You are the one who studied it for one whole semester!	Of course!
Can I sharpen my pencil?	No, because for that you will first need to file a 2 page application and get it approved by the Dean.	Of course!
Could I borrow an eraser from my friend?	I bet you can come up with a better excuse to smuggle answers from your friend.	Of course!
Can I drink water?	Dude! Are you a fish or what!	Of course!
Can I go to the toilet?	Again? Stop drinking all that water!	Of course!

• • •

That if you are a TA of the fairer sex, the frequency with which you will encounter questions such as the above is 5 times higher.

That students never 'copy' from each other; they simply 'help' each other out. Although they may sound as the same thing (read: malpractices) to a TA, these are two very distinct words in the dictionary of a student.

It has taught me how to deal with various kinds of crisis – mistakes in papers, misplaced identity cards, malpractices, man handling (true!), threats, panic attacks, tears, sleepy heads and clowns.

And yet people ask me what's there to observe while invigilating..... is it not a mindless activity?

Well I disagree... there is a lot more to this very amusing journey through which students evolve into scholars.

# Election Woes

*Prashant 'Khabba' Poondla*

Sweating in formals, umpteen shake-hands, forced smiles and a blur of 'important' faces; every election bears witness to a group of ambitious people hoping to be at the helm of the Institute Student Administration. Last year, I was one amongst them. I don't remember ever thinking about standing for the elections, but, according to Parag, I had announced right in my second year that 'my only aim in Insti life is to put for Cul-Sec'.

The thing you have to do most is to meet people. It is not as simple as it sounds though. Basically, you sell yourself in the best way possible. For once in your life, you are polite and friendly to a freshie and swallowing your ego, you speak to everyone who is tagged influential and important no matter what you personally think of them. You carry around room-lists of hostels, trying to find out ways in which they can be contacted. You knock on people's doors begging them to listen to your manifesto and as you deliver your 'pseud' parting line ('Vote for me only if you think I am the right candidate for the post'), you can only wish for the best.

Living off biscuits that you manage to eat between two meetings, you go to the mess solely to speak to people, one table to the next. In the process of gaining people's favour, you are deprived of more than food. Meeting your girlfriend (on the extremely small chance you may have one) is taboo. You have to be seen with the right people, dress in formals, learn to sleep in the common room of random hostels under the pretext of 'meeting someone significant' and carry around various brands of thank-you-for-your-help tokens. There are no limits to the insane rumours that spread around, ranging from my joining a Telugu

speaking class to communicate properly with the Telugu majority to the allegation that I broke a chair during campaigning when I sat on it. You turn some of these to your advantage, the others; you hope that they do not catch on.

The soap box is an unforgettable experience. People who support your rival candidate will shoot you down with questions incessantly, without any sympathy, like animals waiting to tear you apart. In the midst of all this drama and uncertainty, you are bound to lose your confidence. I remember telling my friends, 3 days before the elections, that I wanted to quit because of the sheer pressure of it all. On the last day, cooped up in the hostel room, you watch people on the phone trying to gauge your chances of a win. At the end of it all, when you find out that you have won, even if with a small margin of 43 votes, it all seems to have paid off!

# OOMAAAIGAWD!! I AM IN FINAL YEAR!!

(For those who love Engineering)

*Arjun 'Samadhi' Bharadwaj*

“This is the end. My only friend.”

I started writing this article thinking that I will write spectacularly and drown the reader in that sweet feeling of nostalgia without being cloying or nauseating, but the final product turned out to be a massive junk of clichés. Damn, even saying cliché is such a cliché.

Let me tell you, gentle reader, the reason behind writing this article. It is almost mandatory for every pseud (at least, if you think you are) final year chap, with a functioning blog, to write an article for the *Second Last Bencher* describing his time in the institute. I am no different. Like every other final year guy, I tend to picture myself as a wise grand old man handing out “wisdom” to juniors. In the first draft of this article, I delved deep into the waters of nostalgia and as I found out later, much to my disappointment, they are not uncharted waters. Nostalgia is a sin every man has been committing since the birth of time (or is it the time of birth?). Hence, any new articles on nostalgia can be expressed as a linear combination of writings on nostalgia of the entire human population since the beginning of time.

So, to do justice to my engineering education, which I am afraid, I may forget too soon, I have mathematically modelled Nostalgia:

$$\bar{\eta}_i(t) = \int_{\tau=0}^t \sum_{j=1, j \neq i}^N A_{ij} \bar{\eta}_j(\tau) \delta_{ij} d\tau + \bar{\epsilon}_i$$

where,

- $\bar{\eta}_i$  represents the *Nostalgia vector* of a person  $i$ .
- It spans the *Writing Space*,  $\Omega^{f(\bar{\eta}_i)}$  where  $f(\bar{\eta}_i)$  is a function which gives the number of elements in the vector  $\bar{\eta}_i$ .
- It should be noted that  $\bar{\eta}_i$  has been integrated over time to give the vector at the present time  $t$ .
- An assumption that I make is that while writing an article on nostalgia, the content will depend only on other articles which induce nostalgia. I am neglecting other possible influences like *Characteristic Writing Equation* and other quirks for the sake of simplicity.
- The total population of the world is  $N$ . Assuming that a person  $i$  has taken finite time to go over articles written by the total world population, I would like to define  $\delta_{ij}$  as a variable which takes the value 1, if the person  $i$  has read the article written by  $j$ , 0 otherwise. I call it the *Nostalgia-Delta function*.
- A person  $i$  is influenced to different extents by different people. This dynamics is captured by the matrix  $A_{ij}$ . I do a summation over the entire population and integrate over time to get the *nostalgia vector* for person  $i$ .
- The term  $\bar{\epsilon}_i$  signifies the error. If I neglect model errors, I can assume that this term quantifies the originality of the article.

## A Short Message

*Raghu Vamshi Kanukurthi*

It was the most stupid course of my 5 years in the Insti and it was the most bizarre incident that has ever happened to me. In my second year, we had to undertake this course called ID1200 wherein 500 of us were loaded into the long classrooms of CRC and were taught via video conferencing. What could be more non-inspiring in a course than having 5 teachers teaching the best of the shit from their respective departments? The only way to keep yourself entertained in those 50 long minutes of arbit crap thrown at you was a simple device kept in your pocket called the mobile phone. So, here, I had found my way out of the torture by texting in the class and see the class pass by in a jiffy.

No matter how much you try to not hate the TAs, you will ultimately fail, because, these TAs are epic pain-max people. My date in this class was this dark Tam sadist TA who was hell bent on catching students texting in the class. I still can't understand what sort of fun or sense of achievement the TAs derive from these petty things. I thought they were too much into their research thesis or into the sad life of Krishna/Cauvery Hostels to care about these things. So here I was, facing this TA who had caught me as his next prey. All my apologies fell on deaf ears as he didn't care much for the poor student's requests and handed over my dear phone to the Prof.

I desperately offered my apologies to the Prof for my little cute device. The Profs here are always a step ahead of the TAs in sadism. The Prof laid in front of me 4-5 great options in lieu of my phone. I don't exactly remember all of them but some of them were like as follows:

- 1) I could handover my phone to him and accompany him to the Dean's office.

- 2) He would call my parents and complain about my misconduct in the class.
- 3) I could forget about my dear phone and buy a new one.
- 4) I could apologise to the whole class with the video conferencing cameras broadcasting it all over CRC.

These were the most awesome options I could have ever imagined of to be put in front of me for a phone confiscation. I cried, prayed, apologised and begged but this man stood firm on his ground after putting up these stupid options. After some time, I agreed upon the second option and even agreed to go to the Dean but this man had different plans. He was just fooling around with these options and his mind was fixed onto the most ridiculous option out of the four. He didn't let me choose any option and finally all I was left with was facing 500 people and delivering an apology. So, this is what my apology speech went like:

“I want to apologise to all of you for my indecent conduct in the class. I was caught texting in the class and I want to state that texting in the class is not nice and we should maintain a certain code of conduct while attending a lecture”.

Although this speech finally got me my phone back, it also made me the butt of all jokes in the following ID1200 classes for at least two weeks. My condition was so pitiful that even the sadist Tam TA came and apologised to me for catching me and putting me through this pain.

# One Night @ CFI

*SK Anirudh*

This story might seem downright stupid to you, but I have wanted to write about this hilarious incident for quite a long time. I will not conceal the identities of the people in the story, because it's all the more funny with the real characters.

CFI is the Centre For Innovation at IITM and it is the place where students get together to do most of their tech stuff that does not fall under the realm of acads. This place was being used by the Insti Robocon team during December 2008. One day, we found that the usually locked door at the back of CFI was, for some reason, open. As Murphy's law would have it, we figured this out in retrospect after a grand auto theft had been committed and a whole lot of other stuff from CFI went missing. The Dean was livid. And after a large scale enquiry was carried out into the inventory of CFI, it was found that stuff worth Rs.70000 or so were missing. No one knows how much the thief took because the last inventory check and recording had taken place two or three months before the break in.

Anyway, we, Akaash and I, were working in CFI at around this time (after the inventory check around Jan 2009) for Robosoccer. We went around and found a door, which is usually locked from the inside, unlocked. We figured, without much effort, that someone had unlatched it so that they could break in at night. So, we promptly brought this to the attention of Ravikanth and Foil. Nampu and Babloo confirmed that the door had remained closed a few hours before. It does not require Sherlock Holmes to figure out that someone or something had to have opened it. We figured that the thief must have planned to break in that night and we decided to ambush him.

The latest entrant into this party was Prof, the then Co-As (Co-Curricular Affairs Secretary) of Insti. We baptized ourselves as the 'infamous five'.

So, at around 11, after everyone had cleared CFI, we reached the place, switched off all the lights, and waited. Ravikanth had arranged the perfect trap, Bisleri cans were stacked at the opening so that the thief would trip and fall when he entered. Each of us was armed with a crowbar in order to beat the thief to pulp when he entered. All tools on the nearby tables were put inside, to ensure that the thief could not throw anything at us. All this was at the stroke of midnight. Prof was kind of anxious about his CAT results, but we don't get to catch a thief every day, do we? Foil and I stood on one side of the door while Aakash, Sayan and Ravikanth stood on the other side.

After an hour of waiting, I told Foil, "Dude, I am going to rest a while. Please wake me up if someone comes along." This was at 1 am. I woke up to find that it was 4 am and everyone was on the other side, sleeping happily on each other like they had just finished a dope session.

The thief did not turn up that day, otherwise we would have probably been given the distinguished alumni award for service to the Insti, or at least some medal for bravery and if he had an AK-47 this memoir might never have been written.

# The Mahout

*Anonymous*

Past midnight in CCD, after a particularly gruelling day, the ‘star-gazer’ and his faithful accomplices start tripping on the MA students.

Soon the conversation shifts to a post in ‘Faking News IITM’, “Freshie caught trying to ride blackbuck to class” which reported that the incident occurred just a week after a student from the HS department was found trying to ride one of the elephants in GC to class.

This strikes a chord of inspiration within the ‘star-gazer’ and he proudly proclaims to his amused friends, lethargic waiters and disinterested couples at CCD there that night, he will climb to the top of one of the two insurmountable beasts at the heart of the IITM jungle.

The apprehensions of his well-wishing accomplices are brushed aside and when it is established that his intention is serious and his resolve unshakeable, his loyal comrades agree to abet him in his mighty endeavour.

It is quite late and the area around GC is deserted, save for a couple of sleeping canines. The co-ordinates of the only possible living obstacle to the task, the Administration Block Security Guard, are ascertained and one of the friends strategically locates him on the other side, ready to create a distraction in case the guard wakes up.

The other two stand by to watch the courageous ‘star-gazer’ attempt his herculean mission. Brimming with the athletic confidence only hours at the gym can bring, the ‘star-gazer’ stands by the north facing tuskers side and jumps throwing his hands over the elephant’s back. He cannot

get a grip and disgracefully slides back down. He tries again, twice, with the same result.

Undaunted, he tries using his feet, but the convex body of the mammoth is smooth and without a grip, the unsuccessful antics only serve to entertain the two who stood by watching.

The 'star-gazer' plans something more adventurous. He steps back twenty feet and runs towards the stone statue hoping to leap over the elephant's back.

The physical characteristics of an elephant's side are best summed up in the poem 'The Wise Men and the Elephant'

"The first approached the elephant

And happening to fall

Upon its broad and sturdy side

At once began to bawl

This wonder of an elephant

Is very like a wall."

That is a real elephant. A stone replica is like a stone wall. And the valiant 'star-gazer', sprinting at nearly thirty kmph crashes into it!

There is stunned silence. The 'star gazer' is catatonic. The incredulity of what just happened shocks the other two friends into speechlessness. The third who was watching from a distance comes running in.

Then, they start laughing. The psychological trauma exposes a personality of the star gazer, hitherto hidden from all who knew him as the Hypochondriac.

The still stunned star gazer mumbles that he may have broken his hand. A friend, a son of two doctors, diagnoses it, quite correctly, as not a fracture. But on the star gazer's insistence, he is accompanied to the institute hospital by three, now hysterically laughing, hostel-mates.

The security guard initially suspects the trio are drunk, but upon being showing a small bruise that has developed on the star gazer's elbow, reluctantly lets them in.

The sleeping attendant is rather rudely woken up to examine the elbow. The star gazer, very unconvincingly, tells the guy that he hit his elbow against something. Upon receiving a stare, he changes his story twice. He tells him first that he walked into a wall. Later, he says he was running when his elbow hit a pillar. All through, his once loyal friends snigger at his discomfort. The attendant, very seriously, tells the star gazer he should apply some coconut oil on the bruise and goes back to sleep.

The star gazer, his pride lost somewhere near the familiar landmark at the centre of a fine campus, limps back to his room to sleep in the hostel where the sun never sets.

# The Reason I Was Not Named Hanuman

Arjun 'Samadhi' Bharadwaj

Shakespeare was an idiot. Or maybe those who interpreted Shakespeare were. I am sure when he asked the question, “What’s in a name?” he was not being rhetorical. Ultimately, it’s the name which matters. Regimes are brought down just by chanting the names of the leaders of the movement. When you are born, people around quip, “*Baap ka naam roshan karega*”. It’s the name that defines you, that gives you an identity, makes you different, adds dynamism to your persona. People big and small, tall and short, thin and fat have written about the trials of having an unusual name. I will try to go in another direction – the curse of a common name.

It all started in 1984 when *Doordarshan*, which was the only channel available at that time, started broadcasting Ramanand Sagar’s *Ramayana* on Sundays at 10 am. Anecdotal evidences suggest that when *Ramayana* was being shown on TV, the usually busy streets of Bombay turned as bare as a desert in Siberia. People young and old, literates and illiterates used to flock to the newly acquired television sets of their rich neighbours and watch the series with utmost devotion. Among many other things, it brought a Hindu deity who was on the fringes of what can be termed as “national devotion” into the centre-fold and gradually acquired a cult following which is seen among today’s Hindu fundamentalists. But as is my wont, I digress. This series ended in 1986 and B.R. Chopra inspired by Ramanand Sagar started work on the television debut of *Mahabharatha*. In 1989, by the time I was born, the *Mahabharatha* series was going on in full swing with a sizable population of India in front of the idiot box on Sundays at 10 am. Of course, arguably the most awesome and heroic character in the series was the *Pandava* prince *Arjuna*. And hence, my mother named me

Arjun, after the great prince. Now, being a Brahmin and a South Indian, I am normally supposed to have my father's initials but my father being a wise man and wary of the limitations of an initial decided to give my *Gothra* (*Bharadwaja*) as a surname. If I were born in 1984, I am sure my mother would have named me Hanuman Bharadwaj, which my father feels should have been my name anyway.

Along with me, infinite mothers across the country named their kids Arjun, thanks to B.R. Chopra. Unfortunately, Bharadwaj also happens to be the most common *Gothra* among Brahmins. So there were bound to be an unusually high number of "Arjun Bharadwaj"s who were born between 1986 and 1990. In high school, the problems were limited to two people answering "Yes, madam" during attendance. Then I joined this coaching institute called BASE for JEE coaching. That was the first time I realized the sheer magnitude of people named Arjun. In my class of fifty, there were nine whose first name was Arjun. Among these nine, there was another Arjun Bharadwaj, with "S" as an initial. Then, there were others – Arjun Rao, Arjun A.K. (IDK, who is my batch-mate here at IITM, again), Arjun Shounak, Arjun Bapatla, Arjun V.J., Arjun P. etc. etc. To add to my bewilderment and greatly contributing to the general confusion around, I was apprised of another Arjun Bharadwaj who was also studying in BASE, but at a different centre in the same year. So, imagine this. If there are three Arjun Bharadwajs, all of them in Bangalore, all in the same year, all of them aiming for the same thing, how will I distinguish myself now or in the future? I mean, say if one of the Arjun Bharadwajs turns out to be a murderer, I am screwed.

Anyway, after I got into IITM, I forgot about the problems of having a very common name, and was living peacefully till my 5th semester when I got a weird mail from a certain Ms. Dookhy:

*Dear Bharadwaj Arjun,*

*I am writing on behalf of the international academic publisher, VDM Publishing House Ltd.*

*In the course of a research at the Library of North Carolina State University, we came across a reference to your thesis on “On Quantifying Covertiness of Ultra-Wideband Impulse Radio”.*

*As we would like to make your work available to a larger audience, I am wondering if you may be interested in publishing your thesis in the form of a printed book.*

*Your reply including an e-mail address to which I can send an e-mail with further information in an attachment will be greatly appreciated.*

*I am looking forward to hearing from you.*

*Sincerely yours,  
Miss Y\*\*\*\* Dookhy  
Acquisition Editor*

Now, imagine my surprise. Here I am, a small kid in the fifth semester of engineering, overwhelmed by the excesses and brutality of Analog Circuits and this... this Ms. Dookhy wants to acquire my PhD thesis. After a certain amount of snooping around and stalking on Facebook and Google, I came to know of another Arjun Bharadwaj from NIT Trichy who had just finished his PhD from NCSU.

Now, coming to my second story. After my sixth semester, I got an internship offer from Qualcomm in Hyderabad. The first day of my work, I get an e-mail, asking me to come to San Diego as quickly as possible for some legal work on the patents I was supposed to have in my name. I was the happiest man on Earth that day, until I realized the aforesaid Arjun Bharadwaj was another employee working at Qualcomm.

I am not saying that having an unusual name is not painful. All I am trying to point out is that having a common name has its disadvantages as well.

# Help Saaarr !

*Srinivasa Ramanujam*

That about 80% of the students had gone home on vacation was evident when I stepped into the campus restaurant that night to have my regular cup of filter coffee. When IITM is in session, the restaurant is usually buzzing with activity – people having food, beverages, soft drinks, celebrating birthdays, indulging in serious group studies/discussions, planning events, or many a times, just putting peace.

I ordered my coffee and sat in the corner of the restaurant. I was just about to drown in the bitter yet sweet taste of my coffee when I saw him. He works as a coffee master at the restaurant, and, thanks to my love of coffee, is my friend too.

"We are having a problem. I bought a DVD version of a Tamil movie, but we do not know how to play it on the computer", said my innocent computer illiterate friend.

"Let me finish my coffee. I will come and take a look at it", I replied to him.

The restaurant had recently installed a new computer which used accounting software and gave printouts of the bills to the customers. Earlier, there was an obsolete coded machine for this job. It was on the same computer that they wanted to watch the movie.

"The night shift ends at 1 am and the next shift starts only at 7 in the morning. The servers who work in the night shift come back to work only at 4 pm the next day but they usually stay awake till morning so that they can have their breakfast before they go to sleep", explained the

cashier to me. "Now that we have a computer", he continued, "We thought we would spend the night watching a movie".

After inspection, I found that the movie was in VOB format which the default movie player, Windows media player, could not play. I downloaded the VLC player, installed it and gave a short demonstration on how to run the movie using the new player. This was a bit challenging for someone whose previous computer training was limited to running the accounting software to generate cash bills.

He closed all the windows, and started from the desktop to make sure he had learnt it properly. Satisfied with the result, I wished them a good night and left for my lab.

The next evening, when I stepped inside the restaurant for my coffee, I noticed that they were all smiles, their way of telling me that they had had a good time. The smiles made me happy.

"So, how was the movie last night?" I asked the cashier while he was billing my coffee.

"Very good I must say! Thank you so much for your help. We were not sure whom to ask for the help, and we are happy that you came last night and helped us out", he said in a tone filled with gratitude.

I smiled at him, collected my coffee from the counter and walked towards my usual corner seat. When I was sipping my cup of coffee, he came again. "Thanks for your help yesterday. But if you don't mind, could you please help us with the audio too?"

It took me some time to realize that there were no speakers in the computer!

# The IIT Madras Guide to Cycling

Shivraj 'Arbit' Singh Negi

Your stay at IITM is incomplete without a cycle story of your own.

Once upon a time, while depositing my hostel fees at the CCW office, I was amused by the sight of a family purchasing a cycle for their dear boy, who had made it to this place. *Uncleji* showed off his expertise in purchasing cycles without getting tricked. He started off by giving the seat a powerful punch. He then banged its front wheel on the ground, making it do a couple of re-bounds. This was followed by an attempt to produce the tune of 'Kambakht Ishq' using the metallic bell. All this while, he kept quizzing the cycle salesman about some finer points of warranty, rim, wheel, tyre-tube etc. Next, he lifted the rear wheel and started pedalling. He braked, then pedalled, then braked and then pedalled. After checking the vibrations of the rear wheel through this stand-at-one-place pedalling protocol, a few other weird ideas struck him. He was soon astride, cycled a little bit, sped up and attempted a bunny hop. Gravity did not really like the ambitiousness of the old bones, and he ended up giving Mother Earth a loving kiss. The cycle salesman, totally mortified, stupefied, terrified, and petrified by the display that he had seen until now, ran out to save the cycle. The cycle had escaped unscathed. *Uncleji* had not. I rushed out of the place quickly, lest I was asked directions to the Insti hospital.

In my freshie year, I had bought the cheapest cycle on the block, a BSA SLR – plain and straight. It had turned out to be the best cycle under Insti conditions. Light and durable, I undertook many long journeys on it, including one to Mahabalipuram. Irrespective of all the claims that the BSA people make, they fail to turn up for the repairs that they promise to do after 50 days. Most of the cycles that Insti junta buy from

them end up getting rusted, dented or broken within the first few months. Plus, we, the people of the new hostels, do not have the luxury of cycle stands.

Quality issues apart, Insti cycles divorce you very quickly. They really do not like the idea of carrying around only one ass, so they keep changing their partners frequently. Mine did so during my first Saarang. I had left it outside my hostel, and the next morning it was gone. Soon after, Ravi was also divorced. His break-up took place outside CLT. I soon got hold of another second hand one for Rs. 400 (repairs cost Rs. 350 more) – an expense too dear for people like us who are dependent on their parents' mercy for their monthly income. However, I seemed to have pissed this one off really soon and it left me after two weeks, once again from outside CLT.

This was when I decided that we had to change our ways a little bit. No more buying cycles. Let's kult one. Night 2 am - 4 am were my favourite times to go out searching for good alternatives. Guards are usually sleeping at this time and they do not notice you carrying away a locked cycle. The other alternative is to just take the cycles kept in the hostel quadrangle or the Jamuna cycle shed (They are not properly chained). The locks can be cut later using a filer or hacksaw blade (filers work better). You can also ask the cycle shop guy next to Jamuna to do the services for you. He usually charges Rs. 6 to break any kind of lock. The Taramani guy is smarter. He would charge you Rs. 15, with a cunning smile on his face. So, I had a BSA SLR once again. Life seemed pleasant for a while until this one also decided to give me a divorce shortly before the end-sems.

For the next one year, I went around without a cycle and realised that it was not so difficult after all. So why so much trouble all this while?

Lessons that I learnt:

- 1) DO NOT buy cycles from the GCU vendor, EVER.
- 2) Get the lightest or kuntrymax cycles, they work better than the fancy geared ones.
- 3) Get kulting fundaes from seniors, ASAP.
- 4) If your cycle gets lost, there is no point in complaining. Just get (read kult) another one. It's all part of Insti culture.

# The Bonnet Macaques and the Broomstick Yielding Yodha

*Sushmita Agarwal*

Monkeys populating the areas in and around Sharavati are the creatures who rise with the first rays of the Sun. The Rise of the Apes is accompanied by the wars fought between various clans, for claims to the hostel territories. The hullabaloo, wakes up about half the inmates of the hostel, subsequently triggering a hunt for free bathrooms followed by a frantic dash to classrooms for the 8 o' clock class.

However there exists another type of Sharavite – who usually wakes up only at 7:50 am for the 8:00 am class. The protagonist of this story falls under the second category. While the two roommates of Anju had long woken up and proceeded for their daily activities, she was still in the land of sleep. The door had been latched from outside, but the enterprising monkeys devised mechanisms of leaping up to the lock and striking on it until it opened.

After several failed attempts, a giant monkey was successful in this endeavour. As soon as the door opened, the monkeys were ecstatic, as if they had discovered a hidden treasure. Around three monkeys ransacked the room, pouncing upon all the bottles and emptying the contents into their mouth, be it the hair oil or the shampoo, they even devoured the sunscreen. Having inspected every nook and corner of the room for anything edible, they then resorted to upturning the mattresses in hope of finding something. However, the third bed, which had something heavy on it, proved to be a hurdle in the treasure hunt, so the two monkeys climbed on the bed.

They started pulling at the feet of Anju, who was still lost in her dreams, unawares of the intruders. The simians managed to wring out the blanket and started pulling at her leg. Feeling some slippery hands pulling her feet, Anju woke up, only to see the macaques baring their teeth and getting ready to launch a full on frontal attack. At the exact moment, both the roommates arrived and shocked upon seeing the monkeys and Anju, screamed hysterically. Probably they were visualising the monkey mauling Anju's beautiful face. Having collected her senses, Anju screamed her lungs out, not even pausing for breath. As the frenzied cries filled the air, all the people in the adjacent rooms collected around the disaster area. Anju managed to wrestle the monkeys and run out of the room. The laws of nature were reversed now – humans were in the open while the monkeys were safe within the confines of four walls.

The sleuth work of the monkeys finally paid off as they discovered a packet of chips. The way they devoured each piece of the chips, making crunchy sounds and smacking their lips with satisfaction, made it look like they were replacements for Saif in the Lays ad. They savoured the Cream and Onion International style and showed no sign of retreat.

Finally, someone remembered a valorous classmate of theirs who had the uncanny ability of exacting a Zulu war cry, which would scare the monkeys out of their dirty skins. Search parties were deployed throughout the hostel to find the warrior, who was finally found, attempting to apply kohl in her eyes. Upon hearing the predicament of co-humans, the warrior, now invigorated and determined to save the dignity of the humankind, descended upon the room with a broom stick.

The intimidating war cry and the dangerous broomstick terrorised the monkeys, who ran out screaming and shrieking. They didn't stop until

the warrior was out of sight. Thus, the 'Broomstick yielding yodha' saved the day.

The story did not end there though. What followed was the disaster management programme. The entire area had to be cordoned off and disinfected, all the clothes had to be washed and debris discarded. The most difficult part of this process however was scrubbing out the footprints of the monkeys which had stained the wall. The success of this endeavour just amounted to 0.5% and the mission had to be aborted. It seemed as if the simians wanted their impressions permanently etched on the room and in the minds of the inhabitants.

## Three Parts of a Course - The Prestige Way

*Ravi Teja G*

Every course has 3 parts or acts.

The first part is called "Quiz 1". You study one day before the exam, starting at 11 in the night. You are done by 1 am. The professor gives you some ordinary tutorial problems or multiple choice questions or one line answers. He gives you a simple numerical problem and asks you to solve it - may be for you to see that it is indeed solvable. You have a decent expression on your face after the exam.

The second act is called "Quiz 2". You start at 11 in the night and you are not done by 1 am. The professor takes something ordinary and makes it something extra-ordinary. He gives you such numerical problems to solve. Now, you are looking for the solution but you won't find it because, you know, you don't really know how to solve most of them. You write whatever you can and perhaps some relevant or even irrelevant formulae for what you don't know. After the exam, you feel like a fool but you pretend that you could care less.

Till now was the good part. Because solving a problem isn't enough; you have to earn grades! That's why every course has a third act - the hardest part - the "End-Sem". You start long before 11 in the night and you are not done long after 1 am. You see the question paper and find out that it has nothing similar to what you read in your friend's notes. You realize you are an idiot but you smile when you see that all your friends have their palms on their faces. You don't know most of the answers but still you take extra time to finish your paper. After the exam, you are tensed and curse the person who made the course.

The course gets over... if yoU are lucky.

# Telecom Scam

*Anonymous*

It was an unusually boring day; the monotony of classes had driven the trio of Rohit, Mukul and Sai Tejo to the brink of lunacy. They decided to seek solace in the Idiot box. However, it was around midnight and the only things on TV were advertisements of the Sauna Slimming Belt or the pimple erasing wonder products of Neutrogena. Rohit, meanwhile, was racking his brains for an idea to spice up life and his eyes fell on Sai Tejo, who was fiddling with his phone. That was it. Rohit had found his sacrificial lamb, the lovesick Sai Tejo, who was dying for the attention of his beloved. The beloved, however, was oblivious of his existence.

Rohit managed to kullt Sai's phone, while he was lost in a dream world, perhaps visualising that the girl on TV was his beloved. 'Oh, how cute her pimply face looked when she meticulously applied the cream!' Sai fantasised. But on the other end of the room, Project 'SPICE UP TEJO'S LOVE LIFE' had already been launched. Mukul's number was saved on Sai's phone as that of Arya. Soon hundreds of messages started filling up his inbox. Sai was exhilarated with the prospects that his lady love had finally realised his love for her and thus began the session of endless love messages. He was dumb enough not to even suspect how her number had crept into his phone! Oh, how sweet were the words that flowed from her; the emotions and romantic thoughts had trapped Sai completely in an invisible love net. It was around two in the morning when the poachers went for the kill – 'Arya' asked him to come to GC, because she wanted to say something special. Actually, Rohit had roped in a couple of classmates in this conspiracy, and they willingly pitched in, for this charitable cause.

Meanwhile, the lovelorn Romeo literally flew out of the hostel cycling at the Godspeed of 40 km/hr. Every second, every cm of separation mattered to him as his beloved awaited him at GC. Even while cycling, he visualised her, the fragile beautiful creature beside the hideous monsters of the GC; lips parted apart, dying to utter the sacred words.

However, upon reaching GC, the fair maiden was nowhere to be seen. He circled the elephants twice and waited for ten agonising minutes, pining for love, but his love was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, all the conspirators emerged from thickets and began questioning the bewildered Sai about what he was doing there so late all alone? The ambush was now complete; the dumb animal had been hunted down by his own kind. First, he was dumbstruck by the sudden appearance of his classmates at the same place and time that he was summoned. Later, when Rohit showed him the intimate messages sent from Mukul's phone, Sai was heartbroken. He stood shell shocked, staring at the elephants, trying to avoid his jeering friends; probably he hoped that the elephant would come to life and trample these lowlifes to death. But such things happen only in Science Fiction movies. Sai just hung his head in shame and vowed never to fall in love again. He still continues to scrutinise all messages suspiciously, lest he be the victim of another Telecom Scam.

P.S.: The prank, however, did great wonders. Sai plunged headlong into his studies, his CGPA shot up, he became the topper, and finally he had his revenge on all those rascals in the form of Relative Grading. The Joker had the last laugh.

## The 'Corrupt' Official

*Srinivasa Ramanujam*

It was 7 in the morning. The sleepless night spent putting fight on assignments was taking its toll, making me feel sleepy. I didn't want to sleep on an empty stomach. Therefore, I flew to Krishna hostel mess before going to my nest.

I saw a man parking his scooty in front of Krishna hostel. He picked up his plastic bag and walked towards the mess. His wrinkled face, silvery moustache and near bald head told me that he must be a man in his early fifties. More importantly, his blue striped shirt shouted that he worked for the hostel management.

While I was waiting for the *sambhar* to be served, the man in his early fifties emerged from the kitchen with a plate full of steamed *idlis*, enough for a family to feast on. He kept the plate on one of the dining tables, took the tiffin carrier from his plastic bag and started filling *idlis* into each of the boxes. He filled the topmost box with freshly prepared aromatic *sambhar*.

He took another tiffin carrier out of his bag and filled it with the remaining *idlis* and *vadas*. He took the water bottles out, filled them with ozonised drinking water from the mess, and collected hot tea in a flask. Content with the quantity, he carefully placed the flask inside his bag avoiding spilling, took the bag and went out.

Now it was time. It was time for doubts and reasons. I saw more people in blue striped shirts standing in the queue for breakfast. That meant he didn't take the food for his colleagues. The only logical explanation that fitted was that he sold the food from the mess in a shop of his own outside the campus. He was a corrupt official.

It suddenly dawned on me that he was not stopped by the mess officials when he did what he did. It looked like a network of organized corruption at mess level, at the expense of the students' mess bill.

A sudden rage enveloped my thoughts wanting me to take action – to put a full stop to the corrupt practice I had just witnessed. I was about to head towards my room to write a mail to the mess secretary asking him to take appropriate action when suddenly my phone rang. It was a call from my friend who works in the same lab as me.

"Hi! I have high fever suddenly. I got myself admitted at the Insti hospital", he said. His voice was low, as if he got drained of all his energy. "I will come to see you in a few minutes", I said.

I cycled to the Insti hospital and enquired the way to reach the ward where my friend was admitted. I saw him and wondered if he had had his breakfast before getting admitted.

It was then that I heard a voice asking my friend, "Would you like to have some tea?" I turned back and saw the man who took a lot of food from the mess. I was able to see the whole picture clearly. This man, whom I had thought to be a corrupt official, took food from the mess for the students admitted in the hospital. It was his duty.

Being a residential institute, the students of IITM are first tended to by their friends or the faculty before their relatives. Our Insti hospital had made a wonderful arrangement to ensure proper food for the patients.

# Bulb

*Mrinal and Gaurav*

In the beginning, Darkness moved across the face of Earth and God said, “Let there be light”. God, along with light, gave us a by-product in the form of Pappu. We strongly suggest that you check out the glossary page of this book to know the meaning of bulb in IITM or else you will bulb while reading the rest of this article.

The “bright” conversations in the mess with Pappu had been so enlightening that we decided to maintain a text file of some of the brightest bulbs Pappu has produced. Here are his top three bulbs:

1. Our class representative informed us that our password for the department e-mail had been reset to <username321>. And, any guesses about what password Pappu entered before complaining that he was unable to access his account. Yes, he tried “username321”.
2. If Pappu considered a song fast, he played it in Windows Media Player at half the normal speed.
3. This one is our favourite. When asked to copy a file, Pappu never bothered to paste it anywhere before shutting his laptop down.

Bonus bulb: If you are thinking that the sustained work pressure in Insti might have led to any of the above instances, you are in for a surprise. When in his 8<sup>th</sup> standard, Pappu was caught cheating in his exams. Defending himself, he said that he was not cheating as the boy in front of him was writing the answer to question number 3 while he was still answering question number 2.

# So Long Math, and No Thanks for the Fishy Theorems

*Aditya Shankar*

It seemed like an era had gone by, something had passed, a change of guard had taken place. On 23rd April 2009, my fourth semester's final exams started off with my weakest subject - Mathematics. But I also knew that this was the last time I had to look the demon in the eye - no more compulsory Math courses in IITM after the fourth semester. And I was as keen on taking up a Math elective as I was on putting my head inside a hungry and highly aggravated crocodile's mouth.

It was the morning of the exam. The usual butterflies were zipping about in my stomach. I had serious doubts about whether my preparation was good enough. All I remembered was a blur of hurriedly discussed (rather than solved) problems over the weekend. I worriedly fiddled with my papers and asked some of my friends a few doubts which were still lingering in my head. As I had my breakfast, I contemplated the horrors that could be awaiting me in another half an hour. Using all the Occlumency I could possibly muster against these unwanted thoughts, I ate quickly and left for the exam hall. And in no time, I had the paper in my hands. The first words that caught my eye were 'All the Best'. "So nice of you, Prof", I thought, and began.

It had been the bane of my academic career, right from the third standard, when it took me six full weeks to figure out how division worked, upto JEE, where I didn't get through on my first attempt thanks to the wonderful paper that was dished out for me. I failed to cross the cut-off by one bloody mark. It also tortured me in IIT - it is the only subject in which I have an E grade, (of course this is also thanks to that genially smiling simian of a @\$^#& professor, whose name I carefully deleted from my mind and reserved in its place a well-

chosen set of words after seeing the grade). So, as one can infer, it has been a love-hate relationship – Math loved painning me, and I hated Math for it.

During the end-sem, I was thanking the heavens for having solved the tutorial sheets over the weekend with two of my friends, who were really good at BGT (Basic Graph Theory). Something had stuck in my mind from the revisions, where they were trading answer for answer at the speed of light and I was left confused and irritated. Quite a big portion of the finals paper was based on those tutorials, so I was pretty relieved after glancing through it once. And as I started writing, the words started forming freely, the proofs started to make sense and there was clarity in my mind. It was such a good feeling, that sense of satisfaction. Spurred on by the feeling of excitement, and the concern that I might drop out of this zone, I wrote as fast as I could, trying to retain details of all the problems in my head while doing so. And before I knew it, an hour and a half had passed. So far, so very good.

The final Math course was coded MA213 – Basic Graph Theory. I had taken it pretty blindly, the only things I had kept in mind were that it was rid of all the CS and most of the Elec people, and that it was a small class of about 60 people – which would mean I had a better chance for getting a decent grade than in a large class. The Prof, I found out, was the head of the Mathematics Department. How fitting. I face the final hurdle in the form of the boss demon himself. And after the first class, he established himself as a boss demon with attitude. He certainly knew his stuff, he was no pushover run-of-the-mill Prof. We eventually found out that he had a theorem named after himself and a Wikipedia article. He was a superb teacher, and it was refreshing to see a professor who didn't beat around the bush while clarifying doubts, and he left little room for doubts anyway. The only real minus point was that he was so unapproachable – the classes were businesslike and

thus BGT was mostly limited to the classroom and exams. But it was a good experience on the whole.

After about two and a half hours into the exam, I'd finished most of the paper, but I still had a couple of questions remaining, and I had no idea at all about solving them. "I've fought at the last minute during exams so many times before in Math," I thought, "but not today. I'm bored. So, there. Finally, I'm done with Math". Thus it came. And went. And once I stepped out of the exam hall (the exam duration was 3 hours, by the way), I felt liberated. I wanted to burn all those damn Math books I had, right from the first standard (except the TMH book for IIT JEE, I admit that book is too good for such macabre treatment). I saw people cribbing that they'd lost a subject that they could score in, such a nice subject, blah blah blah. I'd have thrown them into the burning fire as well. But to each man his own. So, some lost a good friend, whereas I found good riddance. Either way, for all of us, something integral (pun intended) did end that day.

# The Feedback Forms

*Dr. V. Kamakoti*

Dr. V. Kamakoti, Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, is one of the most well-known professors of IITM. He taught the course Computational Engineering (CS110), an introduction to the C programming language to the batches of 2007 and 2008. Dr. Kamakoti believed that interacting well with his students would make them comfortable in the class and hence they would be more active in the class for their own good. But the problem was that the class was huge – with 283 students enrolled for the course. Therefore, Dr. Kamakoti devised a new method by which he could interact with such a big class – he came up with the great idea of passing on a feedback form in every class to the students, asking four simple questions:

1. Roll Number (Optional)
2. Was the subject discussed in the lecture interesting? (Yes/No)
3. Could you follow the subject discussed? (Yes/No)
4. If your answer is No for the above, please state which part or detail of the lecture you had a difficulty in understanding.

And the process turned out to be a great success. Students asked him to repeat concepts that they were unable to understand, asked for references for some topics, shared concerns like not being able to see or hear sitting in the last benches and sometimes even exclaimed that the class was boring or repetitive, which a student in his right state of mind wouldn't have the guts to tell the professor directly. Prof. Kamakoti

would address all the concerns in the next class, with his own great humour. This not only developed a good relationship between the students and the professor but also improved the levels of attention a student paid in the class. In fact, it so happened that the second year this method was implemented, Dr. Kamakoti was proud telling us that there was not a single failure.

The method not only improved the average class performance, but also brought out the creativity in both the students and the teacher. Following are some of the glimpses:

**Student's response to the questions:**

(a) I was feeling sleepy.

(b) No comments. I was asleep.

**Prof Kamakoti's Response:**

Rock-a-bye student on the desk top;

When the teacher talks all thy dreams rock;

When the quiz comes;

Nightmares befall;

Down will come student;

CGPA and all.

## Girlfriends and C Programming

```
#include<mobile.h>
#include<Purse.h>
void main ()
{
int girlfriends;
int money;
Clear heart ()
while (money! <0)
girlfriends ++;
money ~;
printf (“Govinda Govinda”)
else
printf (“no girlfriend”)
getch();
}
```

## The Curious

How can I grow tall like you.

**Prof. Kamakoti:** Drink Complain.

## The Curious Contd.

Your name is nice, sir! What is the meaning of “Kamakoti”?

,,,,,,,,,,,,, (upto one hundred) = kama hundred

,,,,,,,,,,,,, (upto one thousand) = kama thousand

,,,,,,,,,,,,, (upto one crore) = kama koti

### **The Curious Contd.**

Have you ever been in a basketball team? What is the secret of your height? Don't say complain this time. I drink Complain, Horlicks, Boost and what not.

### **The Poet called Lathy**

He teaches in IIT,  
His Lectures are a beauty,  
Because he feels they are his duty,  
His students are very naughty,  
But he ensures there is 100% success gurantee!

### **Prof. Kamakoti's response**

It's delight to do my duty,  
With a touch of beauty,  
as agreed by the naughty,  
If the naughty do their duty,  
Their success I guarantee.

From poems to sketches, all the emotions flowed seamlessly. From criticism to appreciation, from anguish to happiness, it was all expressed in the feedback forms. When asked about his take on the use of unparliamentary languages in the feedback, Dr. Kamakoti said, "It's part of the job. When you open yourself at a personal level, you have to accept such harsh criticism." He also advised younger professors not to take any such criticism too personally.

## Put Proxy Na

*Raghu Vamshi Kanukurthi*

It was the Physics course of my first semester. Coincidentally, it was also our introduction to the concept of proxies. Our batch was divided into 3-4 classes for our Physics course. It so happened that a proxy was caught in one of the other classes. Usually, our Physics professor, Dr. Rajesh Narayanan, never checked for proxies. But that day, I guess, was an unusual one. No, I wasn't getting my proxy put and neither was I putting someone else's proxy. But still, I somehow got involved in this bizarre incident.

One of my friends, Sandeep, wanted another guy called Kartik to put his proxy in the class. I already knew about a similar incident that had happened in another class. So as a friend, I warned both of them not to go ahead with it. They just rebuked me and continued with the plan. Now, when the class started, the Prof announced that he was not going to teach much that day and asked everyone to just sign and pass back the attendance sheet. That very moment, somehow, I intuitively guessed that this guy was definitely going to check for proxies. When the attendance sheet reached back to the Prof, my eyes were on Kartik, because, to my knowledge, he had put at least 3 proxies that day. Well, my intuition turned out to be correct and the Prof took a roll call after receiving the attendance sheet. A lot of proxies were caught and all the culprits were laid forward a special invite to Rajesh Narayanan's room.

After calling everyone to his room, he asked each one of them to spit out the names of the people who were putting proxies for them. A common accomplice to the 3 of them was, of course, Kartik. While Sandeep and Dumpa took no time in taking his name, the third guy, Abdul Hameed, had certain other plans. I believe he had this caring

soft corner for Kartik. Otherwise, why would he try and save a person already caught in 2 proxy scams. This is where I come into the story. No matter how dumb it may sound but this guy, Abdul, actually told the Prof that he had told two guys to put proxy for him and he didn't know which guy did it. While Kartik was the obvious first guy, I don't know why, he named me as the second guy. I mean, just imagine, how you would feel, if in the morning you were putting lectures on not putting proxies and in the afternoon, you end up being involved in a proxy scam yourself!

# The Tipping Point

*Arjun 'Samadhi' Bharadwaj*

Every single year, as if by default or a divine calling, professors invariably observe that the quality of students has decreased and that the freshers are no longer predisposed to work hard. Snide remarks are made in almost every class across all the subjects which sub-textually go like this – “Yoor mother and fother are sending you to study only no. Time wastingaa? Yoo aar aal yooless”. This is followed by an extended discourse on how great their generation was and how they had to study under the street light and how they managed to defy all odds and succeed in life. You know, stuff like that. Advice that you don’t need. Yawn. A finger is extended to everything under the sun – internet, LAN, interaction with seniors, Shaastra, Saarang, bad sleeping habits, bad eating habits, monkeys, deer and dogs. Everything under the sun except the one relevant thing – explaining why freshers, who are supposed to belong to the cream of the country become dumb within the span of a month (if you go by what is reflected in their quiz scores). A typical MA101 course has an average of around 3 out of 20. That is 15%. So, what happened? Geniuses became dumb in a month? Strange, isn’t it?

The answer hit me, when I was reading this book called, “The Tipping Point” by Malcolm Gladwell, a very interesting read. The essence of the book is that after a certain threshold, a delta increase would lead to massive changes. So, I asked myself, what made me give up in the first year. It was not internet or LAN as I didn’t have access to both. Was it interaction with seniors? Not really. I was a wimp in my first year, afraid to approach seniors. Was it because I was burnt out intellectually after two years of preparation for JEE – supposed to be one among the toughest exams in the world? No. I was excited. I was

looking forward to learn. And come on, JEE is not that tough. Was it because the professors were boring? Even though that seems to be the most plausible answer, again my answer would be no. I stopped listening to classes even when the professors were the best in their field. It wasn't the case just with me. Even when the topics were interesting and professors really good, a large percentage of students preferred to while away their time doodling in their notebooks rather than listening.

I religiously followed classes for a fortnight or so. Then, I gradually lost interest. By the end of first semester, the habit of mugging up everything just the day before exam started. The senate has a one-stop solution to every problem like this. Limit the freedom. So, internet was blocked for 11 hours a day, attendance requirement increased to 85%. Freshers were not allowed to go outside their room after 10 pm. No food in campus after midnight. And similar bullshit.

So, why did people stop listening in class? The answer is simple. My claim is that it was because the classes were held in CRC. CRC rooms are huge with the capacity to seat around 250 people for a lecture. Unfortunately, someone in the engineering unit really used their brains. All the fans in the room are mounted on the wall. These fans don't subtend the entire hall. Of course, they are fans made in IITM. We, in IITM, believe in precision. You sit right beneath the fan, you will be comfortable. A small move by an inch would make you a constant source of salt water. So, in Chennai where the temperature hardly drops below 30 degrees, the poor fresher is made to sit in the class profusely sweating while the professor rants on about Bra-Ket notation and Hilbert spaces. If you come early to the class, running from the mess, you may get a seat near the fan but the effect is nullified because you will be sweating so much with all the running that you just want to crash off in the class.

This is the reason I stopped listening to the classes. I asked around a bit and most people agree with me. If the administration really wants to improve the grades of the students, all they need to do is install fans in CRC. I am pretty sure that grades will improve by a considerable margin.

I would also like to delve into what I think is the second major reason freshers are the way they are and hopefully something will be done about it.

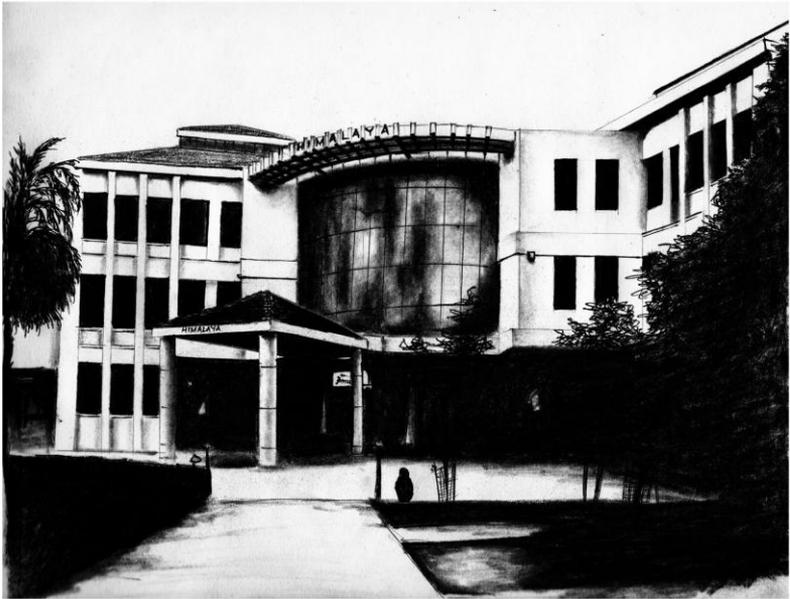
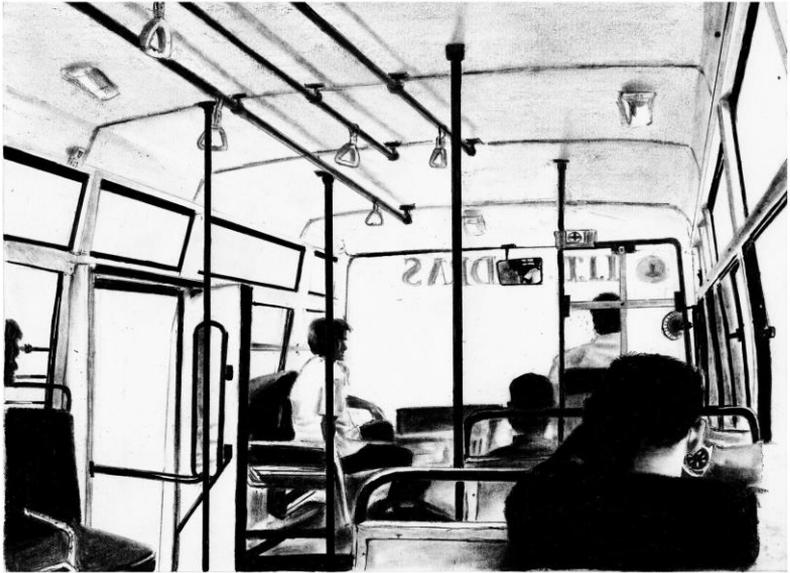
To go further into this analysis, I first ought to apprise you of two kinds of torture. One, the humane way. Pull out a tooth, piss on a stove kind of torture. It is over before you know it. The second, the route taken by those bereft of either civilization or civility. Like an HS department English exam where you write furiously in no more than 5000 words about what Wordsworth thought the difference between white and yellow daffodils was. Or an Analog Circuits Exam where you stare at the question paper for three hours, hoping that by divine intervention you can make sense of the question. The slow, painful, repetitive, time-has-come-to-a-stop kind of torture.

Belonging to the subset of the second kind of torture is the one laid down sometime in 1960s, when hostels were being built. Every morning, thousands of kids loath to open their eyes, afraid that they have to face this cruel, brutal and unrelenting beast, a beast more savage than grumkins and goblins, just the image of which would turn brave men into weeping cry babies. This structure built by a man long-lost in living memory and cursed by all and sundry ever since, is akin to the great sphinx of yore. It challenges you to a battle which has to be inevitably won before it lets you pass to your destination. It is not an easy task to defeat this beast. Every day, many fall prey to it and surrender, only to face it again the next day. It is not the difficulty in

traversing it that gives it the power but the constancy, the knowledge that it is there every day unfailingly, a grim reminder of the eternal struggle to be faced before you can enter the hallowed portals of your department. I introduce to you, gentle reader, with a hint of trepidation, the monster - the upward slope from Gurunath to Cauvery hostel.

This two-hundred-metre-long monster continues to be the bane of all freshers who foolishly, being in the green of their youth, try to tackle the monster armed with nothing but newly procured creaking cycles sold by BSA at a discount (only to IITians, mind it). After a couple of months, the comfortable bed under the mild breeze of the fan becomes more seducing than the classes on the other end of the battle, and all the enthusiasm present withers down like leaves at the onset of winter. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the biggest tragedy plaguing the institute now.

Hopefully, the administration will take suitable measures to level the ground and destroy this monster. I will keep my fingers crossed. Till then, the institute bus will be my saviour.



## Classic Short Stories

*Lakshman 'Kasai' Ramesh*

When I look back over the years that I have spent at IITM, there are 2 incidents worth mentioning:

Anyone who truly knows IITM also knows what generally happens during exams, especially, the end-sems. But, something different happened to me in my second year Humanities end-sem for Short Story Classics. For starters, I woke up late and ran to the exam hall in shorts. As luck would have it, I fell into muddy water along the way. When I finally reached the Humanities and Sciences Block, I remembered that my exam room was in the Class Room Complex. Cursing Murphy's Law (for those who don't know, it states that *anything that can go wrong, will go wrong*), I finally managed to enter the correct place at 10:05 am (more than an hour late). Fortunately, the invigilator was sympathetic and let me in. In the end, I managed a grade of 10 in that course. Now that is a great short story, isn't it??

On to my second one, I played a practical joke over the institute's LAN, by changing my DC++ Nickname to "Real Akshari Gupta". I shared all sorts of content, and also another guy's resume (let's call him X). The actual girl, i.e., the "real" Akshari Gupta thought it was X behind all this and he had to hide from her for a month. Eventually, I changed the nick and apologized to her. She took the high road and forgave me. I hate to think what would have happened otherwise!

# The PhD Thesis

*Neelesh 'Cavity' Rangawani*

In the 5<sup>th</sup> semester, one of the core courses a Mechanical Engineering student had to do was 'Heat Transfer'. The course is generally perceived as a painful course. Students had to submit two projects, for a total of 30 marks. It was to be done in groups, so Neelesh (Cavity), Foyu, Jordy and Ravinder Meena got together and decided to work on the project.

Jordy somehow got into some kind of a store room in the Mechanical Engineering Department, and got hold of a PhD thesis on heat transfer dated back to the early 90's. It suddenly struck him to copy the whole content for their project from the thesis. He told his brilliant plan to all the group members and everyone was excited, because not only would it reduce the pain of actually doing the project, but also the content would be highly valued, and they would get better marks than the rest of the class. They agreed upon using it and started reading it. It was a bit too intricate to comprehend. So they decided to get another thesis. Unfortunately, the store room was locked the next day and they decided to continue with the same one.

Unable to understand the most part of it, they gave up trying to understand it, and asked Meena to type out the section required and submit it. They were very happy that their report had PhD level data without even doing anything for it. And then came the results. Their group had 1 D and 3 Es. They were shocked. They had thought that their project was great, they had done the end-sems well too. So Cavity decided to go meet the Prof.

After a lot of efforts, the Prof finally gave an appointment and Cavity went to him. Getting to know about Cavity's concerns, he checked his records and found out that everyone in the class had got marks

somewhere between 16-20 out of 20 in the project but their team had got just 8. Unable to answer why, he asked his Teaching Assistant to get the project report and checked. The report had the equation number 5.12 and 5.13 but no other equations in the 5<sup>th</sup> section. He had encircled them and had found out from the archives that it was from a PhD thesis. Cavity's effort to pass it off saying it was copied from the internet was to no avail. In the end Cavity's end-sem paper had a question uncorrected, for which he got 10 more marks and his grade got increased by 1.

# Bura Na Maano Holi Hai!

*Shivraj 'Arbit' Singh Negi*

Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) for welcoming an outsider into an IITM Hostel on Holi.

0. For starters, the ritual cost is as follows (based on experience!):
  - a) 1 Half Pant
  - b) 1 Shirt
  - c) 1 Lock (If you lose your key in the process!)
  - d) ANY other piece of clothing which you happen to be wearing
1. Mix paint, grease, mud, cow-dung, normal Holi colours and industrial dyes in equal proportions into the shallow region of the hostel quadrangle, preferably an area measuring 4 meter by 4 meter.
2. Don't forget to add water also to the above mixture.
3. Apply generous amounts of the above mixture to your body. This helps in hiding your identity as you are only recognisable as a human form now. Also protects you against any outside attacks and prevents other colours of any hue, tint or shade from getting on to your body.
4. As soon as any outsider enters your hostel, pounce upon him and capture him before he is able to make a hasty retreat or mount a formidable challenge. The ferocity of your attack should defeat him and force him into a tame surrender.
5. Tear up all the clothes of the victim (all means all, no exceptions – the above ceremony is inspired from an ancient Greek practice of

tearing up a wild animal limb by limb, and eating it raw, then and there), but yes, do not eat him. (I am not being chauvinist but usually 'her' is an impossibility for the above ritual).

6. Drag the captured hapless victim to the prepared altar and then drag him across the area 5 times.
7. Apply the mixture to every exposed part of his body, including ears and eyelids.
8. Apply the mixture to the remaining parts of the victim's body. Preferably give him an instant teeth re-colouring (white to green, black, red, pink etc) massage as well.
9. Leave the victim alone for a few seconds, so as to allow him to regain his senses. Help him collect the rags and tie them together so that he can enter the civilised world once again with his dignity properly covered, at least, the most important part of it.
10. Give the victim a generous helping of *Thandai* to help him recharge his body.

# The Hapless Coreness

*Rishabh Maheshwari*

Shaastra might be, to a participant or a passerby, all about tech and very little about finance. Everyone sees the automated robots and ornithopters, but few are lucky to see the money channels that feed the country's premier Tech Festival. The finance team of Shaastra is often the most reviled team, often at the receiving end of the ire and wrath of several Event Co-ordinators, all of whom feel short changed by the Shylocks of Shaastra.

It was the final day and the day's budget was a mere 47k which, by Shaastra-Saarang standards, was way below subsistence level. I was a Junkyard Wars Co-ordinator along with Nitya, Diaper and Mock. The Events Core at that time was a guy called Rigid.

On the day of the event, Rigid was at the venue, conducting a pre-event round up to ensure that everything was hunky dory. Upon reaching the venue, he observed a veritable lack of Co-ordinators, who seemed to have fled the scene in anticipation of some grave disaster. Recognising that here was where he earned his money, he whipped out his mobile phone.

First, he called Nitya and demanded to know where she was. At the age of eleven or thereabouts women acquire a poise and an ability to handle difficult situations which a man, if he is lucky, manages to achieve somewhere in the later seventies. Cool as a cucumber, Nitya informed Rigid that she was at the Pentathlon event and Rigid could only grunt in approval.

Next on the list was me. His call found me at Taramani, buying grease for the event. He was not too happy to hear that one of his Co-ords was

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in a last minute scurry to procure the essentials for the event. In a low cold voice, speaking as if he had been bitten in the leg by a personal friend, he told me to hurry up and reach the venue immediately.

Meanwhile, Diaper was in his room, enjoying a siesta with a conscience as clear as the day's blue sky. The sweet serenity of his sleep was rudely broken by the trilling of his telephone and exacerbated by the cross of growl of Rigid at the other end. Diaper, who had put his fair share of Shaashtra 'fight' demanded to know who the caller was and what the agenda was.

Rigid uttered a coarse expression which many would not have thought he would have known. It just shows that you can bury yourself in this forest and still somehow acquire a vocabulary. No doubt, one picks things up from one's fellow students, a few professors, the shopkeeper at Krishna gate and so on.

Diaper was immediately summoned to the venue of the event, but he continued his impersonation of the deaf adder of the Scripture; the more Rigid piped, the less he danced. Diaper just goggled. Rigid's words did not appear to make sense to the sleep addled brain of his. They seemed to be the mere aimless vapouring of a Core who had been running about in the sun without a hat.

Rigid was not a man to give up so easily. Warming up to the act, he increased his decibel levels and found enough in his previously mentioned vocabulary to convince Diaper to make an immediate appearance at the venue.

Last on the list was Mock.

"Where are you?" asked His Coreness.

“Selling tires in Pudupet”, came the reply from Mock.

There are some things a Core’s mind absolutely refuses to picture, and one of his Co-ords selling tires in Pudupet when the event the Co-ord is in charge of is only minutes away, is one of them. Eyewitness at the location swear that Rigid’s jaw fell by a few feet and his face changed colour like a chameleon until it finally settled on a deep purple. Struggling for words, he managed to ask Mock his inspiration behind the new found entrepreneurial spirit, giving the impression that each word was excavated from his interior by some up to date mining process.

Mock, who does not let a single day pass without having hatched a scheme calculated to bleach the hairs of the best of us coolly replied that he was forced into his current occupation by the stringent fiscal policy of the Shaastra finance team.

Rigid lost the last of his remaining verve. His tongue turned to lead and his legs to asparagus stalks. He immediately cut the call.

# Internal Combustion

*Sri Harsha*

I have always believed that if you have no clue as to what is going on, it is in everyone's interest that you remain silent. I faithfully adhered to this policy in the IC Engines class. I never really got the hang of it and I had given up all hopes. While fellows on the front bench were murmuring "Elementary, my dear Watson" to each other and lapping up every word that fell from the professor's lips, I was engaged in a Walter Mitty mode, lord of my tiny skull sized kingdom. Not a squeak would ever arise from me in that class and I may as well have been putting my time to better use if it were not for the minimum 65% attendance.

One day, after class, I was waiting by the lift. A song on my lips, I was happy that yet another IC Engines class was over. Just as luck would have it, my professor came over, instantly directing a chilling gaze towards me. It was a cold disapproving gaze, such as a fastidious luncher who was not fond of caterpillars might have directed at one which he had discovered in his portion of salad.

"You are always very silent in class, how come you are not silent here as well?", he barked. I was left with the curious illusion of having committed a particularly unsavoury crime and having done it with swollen hands, enlarged feet and trousers bagging at my knees on a morning when I had omitted to shave.

Again, I held on to the motto 'silence is golden'.

Meanwhile, my professor embarked on a sermon, the relevant parts of which missed my aural system by quite some distance.

“Do you even know what topic I discussed today?” he asked with vehemence.

“I do not know, sir”, I said, changing tack to ‘honesty is the best policy’.

This further fuelled his anger and he launched into another rant. Beginning with a critique of my grades, he went on to dissect my attitude, intellect, attendance, morals and the habit of shuffling my feet when I walk in late to lectures, that by the time he finished, the best anyone could say about me was that, so far as known, I had never murdered a professor or set fire to the girls’ hostel.

Wilting under this unrelenting barrage of criticism, I frantically tried to figure out what the class on that day had been about and the whirring sound of my brain drowned out anything more my professor had to say.

“Sir, lubrication”, I half shouted, triumphant and almost pleased with myself for having remembered the topic of a lecture in which I had not even feigned interest.

The professor, despite his best attempts, laughed like waves breaking on a stern and rock-bound coast. It turned out that the topic I had just blurted out was taken and done with almost a week ago. Further censure was in order as I was escorted in person to the professor’s office, where he proceeded to tell me, in a considerably larger number of words, that the modern young man is a congenital idiot and wants a higher authority to lead him by the hand and some strong attendant kick him regularly at intervals of a quarter of an hour.

Later, I was surprised and grateful in a weird sense, that he actually made time in his busy schedule to grill me like that and then shower me with advice. He still quotes my ‘lubrication’ comment in class very often, much to my embarrassment.

# When the IITian became a Common Man

*MS Sujith*

My IIT life can be summarized as an amalgamation of assignments and exams, with some occasional excitements. During the final year of my studies, I was once sitting in a computer lab. Don't assume that I was working for my project. In fact, I was checking out a girl's profile on Facebook, as usual. Just then two of my seniors, a PhD scholar, Robin and an MS scholar, Vipin entered the lab. Although they were my seniors, we were good friends. From the look on Vipin's face, I realized that he had some crooked plans. He was a man of crazy ideas.

Vipin started the conversation in a grave tone "Da Sujithe, I'm feeling that we are getting separated from the life of the common man. We just sit idle inside the campus studying some useless equations. We should do something different. We should not end up living ordinary lives. I sincerely feel that we are losing our social awareness nowadays. We are blind to the problems in real life. We should do something to open our eyes."

I replied in a mild manner that the story of life is the same everywhere.

"What difference does it make whether we are inside the campus or outside? Everyone has his/her own problems", I added.

As soon as Vipin heard this, he lost his cool. He started screaming "Do you know how the common man lives in Chennai city? They may not even have money for food. Half a million Indians are living under the poverty line. Are you aware of that?"

What a great topic! I agreed with him. "What can we do for this? We are the not the only ones responsible for this!" I commented.

Vipin came up with a whacky plan – “I have an idea. Tonight, let’s roam in Chennai city as a common man – without our wallets, no money, no I.D. card. We’ll observe the life of a common man closely and through that we may learn some real life lessons. As you know, experience is the best teacher”, he emphasized his point by reminding us of Che Guevara’s life story from the *Motorcycle Diaries*.

All three of us agreed with him and Vipin felt proud of his idea. He made a detailed outline of the plan. We would leave Insti after dinner, go to the beach first, spend some time there enjoying the mild sea breeze and then roam in Chennai.

“Good plan”, Robin and I agreed.

All three of us assembled in front of the college hostel at around 8 pm. As soon as Vipin saw me, he enquired, “Do you have your mobile phone with you?”

“Yes, it’s with me”, I replied.

“Damn it, who told you to take the phone? We are common people now! Leave that phone somewhere. And one more thing, we are not going for any interview. So don’t come like this with us. Change your clothes and dress like a common man!”

They were my seniors, so I was obliged to follow their instructions. I ran to the room and picked up the dirtiest clothes from the laundry pile. Without phones, identity cards and money, the three of us left the campus, dressed just like the homeless on the streets.

At around 9 pm we reached Marina beach. The beach was calm and mostly empty. We sat there for two hours enjoying the cold breeze and some hot gossip about the latest beauties on campus. Two hours into

the conversation, we were losing interest and running out of topics. “Let’s move”, Robin suggested. As we were entering the road, a police jeep appeared out of nowhere. The cops jumped out and started off with a long list of questions. “Who are you? What are you doing here? Where are you going?” We told them that we were students from IIT Madras and that we were just roaming there. He didn’t look convinced. With a serious look on his face he asked us to get into the jeep. We all got in.

“Where are we going?” I asked Vipin.

“They are taking us back to Insti. What nice cops!”, Vipin replied.

“But what route is this?” Robin asked.

“Come on guys, they are the local police! They know Chennai like the back of their palms. Be cool!” Vipin replied.

So the cops are really taking us back to our hostels, I thought. It felt good to be an IITian.

But the jeep didn’t reach the campus. Instead, we ended up at the police station.

“Why did they bring us to the police station?” I whispered into Vipin’s ears, slightly worried. That was my first time in a police station. Naturally, my heart started racing a bit.

“I guess the sub-inspector feels that we are tired. Probably he is going to offer us some tea”, Vipin replied.

No words to describe my happiness. How nice are the cops in Chennai!!!

But in another couple of minutes the mood changed completely. The cops started acting like they had caught some thieves. When Vipin tried talking to them, they demanded our I.D. cards. We explained that we didn't have anything then and that we could bring them the next day. The SI was not happy. He asked for some proof that we were students. Vipin said, "Sujith, take your mobile phone and give him the number of one of our professors".

"I didn't bring my phone!" I replied.

Vipin was not happy. "Haven't I told you that whenever you leave campus, you should keep your phone with you? My phone is not working, else I would have had it", Vipin shouted. It was just three hours back that he had shouted at me for taking my mobile phone with me. All that was forgotten now!

Just then I remembered that my shirt had the IIT logo on it. I turned back and showed it to the inspector. He was not convinced. When Vipin tried to explain further, he got a slap from the cop. That was when we realized that the things were really getting out of our hands.

"Remove your clothes and sit in that corner", the inspector ordered.

Reluctantly, all three of us removed our shirts and pants and sat in the corner of the inspector's room. The prison inmates started peeping out of their cells, eager to have a look at the newcomers.

A quick description of the jail – even today, in my mind, the Chennai gutters are cleaner than the jail. I haven't in my whole life time seen mosquitoes as big as the ones that were there that day. I can still feel the pain of their bites.

Our fortunes were brighter the next morning. The person who brought the morning tea to the station was from Kerala. The station constable informed him that they had caught three thieves from his state. In an irritated mood, he approached us and started enquiring about the happenings. He had a feeling that we are some unemployed people wandering in Chennai in search of jobs. We explained to him that we were all students and described the events of the previous night. Fortunately, we managed to convince him. With his influence, he helped us get out of the police station and even paid our fines. We promised him that we would pay him back as soon as possible. We finally finished our six hour long stay in the police station and headed back to Insti. When we reached hostel, we were greeted by the sight of our friend Shinto brushing his teeth in the corridor.

“Where were you kids yesterday? I came looking for you guys. Where did you go?” Shinto enquired.

“Ho! We went to study the life of common man in Chennai. It is interesting”, Robin replied with a yawn and a tired look. The three of us returned to our rooms. Shinto looked perplexed.

# Drops of Wisdom, or Fart... You Decide

*Billy aka William Kumar Moses Jr.*

So, who am I? I am just your run of the mill post grad doing his MS by Research in Computer Sciences. Wait, sorry, MS... what is that? It is like an M.Tech, only you supposedly do more research and thankfully less course work.

What kind of life have I led till now? One of a wise sage meditating day and night on the problem at hand, subsequently reaching the next level of wisdom? Definitely not. Ok then, what about the other extreme, partying day in day out and putting fart 24x7? Not my style. I guess I am somewhere in the middle.

When I joined IITM, I didn't know what to expect (besides the usual pre-conceived notions of smart kids, smart profs, 'n' pain). I did expect to learn something and I was definitely not disappointed there. Research is now something I really enjoy doing. But what I did not expect was that I would also end up putting my hand into so many different things. Shaastra, Saarang, Exebit, hostel activities, department activities and sports. These have been the best two and a half years of my life. So what is this article about? Simple, it is just a chance to share some of the wisdom that I have gained over the years.

1. Research isn't so much about learning about a particular area and then adding something to it as it is about learning how to learn about it and push its boundaries.
2. Be friends with the guys running Guru, it helps when you're hungry and short on cash.

3. Never, and I repeat, never, eat Paneer Butter Masala at 12:30 am from Basera, you'll regret it for the next week.
4. When bored, go to Bessie.
5. When hungry, try Pupil's between 1 pm and 6 pm (4 burgers at Rs. 200... happy hours indeed).
6. If a student asks you something you don't know for a course you are TA-ing, urge him to find the answer for himself, telling him it will help him grow.
7. No matter what the event, be part of the newsletter. People share "stories" about others, beg you to get quoted, and give you free stuff. Not to mention, your actual work will probably be just putting fart all night long.
8. It is worth going to other lectures, talks and debates that have nothing to do with your research. They may just give you an idea that helps.
9. Try and get multiple results outside any timeframe (i.e. no deadlines). Use paper deadlines only to convert ready results into papers.
10. The time (about 2 weeks or so) just before you find out the results of your submission are torturous, try and do something else that you like during that time, there is no chance of you getting any work done then.
11. This is something I strongly feel about. There may be some talk that there is a divide between B.Techs & Duals and the M.Techs, M.Ss and Ph.Ds, but I say this is total BS. I guess since I'm a post grad, I can only speak from my side, but I have a lot of friends from both

post grads and under grads and they are \*all\* awesome. And I'm sure (ok, I hope) they feel the same way about me.

12. Talk to everyone, you never know who may end up becoming a good friend.
13. Being a Core doesn't mean you think you can get the job done, it means everyone else thinks (or rather hopes) you can.
14. Winning something or doing something is easy, getting the frigging certificate afterwards is a pain in the \*\*\*.
15. To keep things cost effective at a treat, invite one 100% veg guy and then force everyone to go to a veg buffet. If anyone complains, blame it on the said veg guy.
16. To have a say on a group outing, do not sit and plan with everyone. Instead, YOU decide where you want to go and when and then tell everyone else to come along if they want.
17. The only thing needed to learn something; anything in fact, is curiosity and enthu.
18. The cycle dictates whom you can meet, where you can go for lunch and dinner, and what all you can do in one day. So, do not screw up someone else's day, buy your own cycle.
19. And finally, the most important morsel of wisdom that I've gained at IITM is this. The most memorable part of your stay here and the greatest takeaway from Insti are the times spent with your friends and all the crazy, stupid, fun and awesome things you did with them. The best part of Insti life is the friends you make, so make many and make good ones.

# OPC

*Abhishek Venkatraman*

Online Programming Contest is a Tech-soc event which requires the programmer to code a program that will solve a complex math problem using C++, Java or Python. It was looked on with reverence as something that only the best of the brightest would be able to do. This was the case till 2010, when a team of three Saras junta ‘thulped’ all positions. This was an epic moment for all and also a clarion call for the tech-junta of other hostels to best this feat.

Mandak was experiencing a serious dearth of coding talent. They worked really hard with the available resources at hand, but as expected, they scraped the bottom of the roster. To add further misery, they realized that Sharav had beaten them. This was too much to take and they decided to do anything to win the title. Taking it as a challenge, they hacked into the main server page where each team had posted their solutions and ‘kulted’ another team’s solution code. If they put this new code, they would stand fourth and earn tech-soc points.

There was a minor hitch in this plot though; the deadline for submitting the code was over. They talked to the Co-ordinator who was in charge of the event and sent him the code. Unfortunately, the Co-ordinator happened to be friends with the team submitting the original code and disqualified Mandak.

Mandak was placed 6<sup>th</sup>, the last position in OPC but it was undoubtedly the best OPC ever.

# Funny Junk!

*IVS Sandeep*

Junkyard Wars is one of the most coveted and eagerly awaited of all events in Shaastra and TechSoc. It's all about making junk – with junk! The crowd that gathers around to watch is equivalent to that of a Schroeter match, with a lot of shouting and sledging going on. In all my years of being involved in Shaastra and TechSoc, I've seen this event closely. There is a funny side to the event, which, I daresay, should find mention in this Book.

In my second year, I became a Junkyard Wars Co-ordinator. My co-Co-ordinators were Pressure (Narmad TAS at the time), Potli (another guy in Pressure's year) and HB. During Shaastra, JYW took place in CFI. We were all taking a small break and resting, when these four 'dudes' walked in. (Pardon the usage of the word, when I say 'Dude', I mean a really cool 'Saarang' type guy). They walked up to me and asked "Where is the restroom?" I was fairly ignorant at the time (perhaps even now) and I didn't know what a 'restroom' exactly meant. I assumed they were asking for a place to rest.

"You can actually use this room. We use it all the time", I said, in all my naivety.

"Are you sure?"

"Ya ya, we always use this place. Go ahead"

They looked confused and disgusted and I was unable to figure out why. They threw furtive looks at each other and quickly left. Pressure was watching this from a distance. Seeing the dude walk away disgruntled, he came up to me.

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“What happened?”

“They wanted a restroom. I told them to use this room to rest. I don't know why they behaved that way”.

Pressure suddenly burst into laughter and explained, “A restroom means a toilet. You just asked them to use this room as a toilet!” I felt embarrassed, but it was a good way to learn what a restroom was!

During the same year, we had somehow convinced Muthu (the fitting workshop guy) to clear off the area in the fitting section so that we could use it for Junkyard Wars. Prof. Govardhan was the Dean of Students at the time, and when he learnt about this, he was livid! He ran down to the fitting workshop to shout at the Co-ordinators (i.e., us). We saw him approaching and realized what would happen. Pressure suddenly hit upon a brilliant plan. He turned his Co-ord badge around, hiding the name and the words "Shaastra Co-ordinator" written on it. The rest of us saw it and did the same. Akhil (a robotics Co-ord, who would go on to be the Events Core) was with us at the time, but unfortunately, he never realised what we were doing. He never saw that we had all turned our Co-ord badges around. When the Dean reached the spot, he saw the five of us. He saw that all of us had 'white' badges, while Akhil was the only one with 'Shaastra Co-ordinator' written on his badge. The Dean did not pay attention to the fact that he was not a Junkyard Wars Co-ordinator and began shouting at him. He went on shouting for around 15 minutes. And throughout the whole ordeal, Akhil did not know why he was being shouted at!

TechSoc Junkyard Wars during the same year was a different story altogether. There were a host of problems that year, the aerospace department complained that someone stole their main ladder and dismembered it! Worse still, someone stole a professor's cycle and nobody knows what happened to it! The complaint fell on Moc, one of

the Co-ordinators that year. Thankfully, nothing happened and the Co-ordinators went scot-free. After all this confusion and drama, I felt that the Co-ordinators had done their best, despite all the shortcomings. I decided to treat them.

We had decided a time and place. I asked Laptop to call everyone.

Laptop called me and said "Rigid, no one else can come right now. Is it okay if it's only me?"

"Of course not. Get your entire team", I said.

I went to CCD at the stipulated time, and was waiting for people to join. I happened to see someone that I knew – GMan. He came and sat with me. He was joined by another person that I knew. Then Laptop showed up. At this time, I was confused. What was going on? Where were my Co-ordinators? I vaguely knew these people, but they seemed to know Laptop well. Then Laptop said "Let's start the treat". I gave a confused expression, but then I suddenly realized what was going on. Laptop had probably misunderstood "Junkyard Wars" treat and ended up calling his teammates who participated in Junkyard wars rather than his Co-Co-ordinators! I had to give a treat to people that I barely knew, for no reason at all!

## Stint at the CCW office

*Sailesh Akella*

The wheel of time keeps on turning and it is natural for each person to pass on a favour once received. “Interactions” are no different and you feel bound and responsible to guide the young freshies through their first days away from home. So, a group of about thirty good-hearted seniors were administering the bitter vaccine that is ragging to Shotgun (a freshie) near the water dispenser. The interaction was proceeding at full tempo when, suddenly, everyone grew silent. A Prof’s car pulled up near the hostel gate. One moment, Pogo was right in the middle of the crowd, enthusiastically pursuing his task of making most of the opportunity to integrate a hapless freshie into the Insti culture and to project himself as the poster boy of IITs all over the country, and the next he was nowhere to be seen! In a flash, they all ran helter-skelter in all directions. There was only one person who remained rooted to that spot: Shotgun. It certainly had been one of the worst days of his freshie life.

Even though Shotgun kept pleading that he had done no wrong, the Prof unleashed his ire on him and showed no mercy. He assured the professor that all they were doing was talk and nothing more. Pogo and RPM had been watching Shotgun’s miserable plight, safely hidden in a nearby room. Pogo urged RPM to go out and handle the situation considering that he was the Soc-Sec of their hostel. RPM mustered up all his courage and went out to meet the Prof. He paused from his grilling session and looked at RPM, who felt his confidence and courage ooze away. He blurted out, “I am the Soc-Sec, sir and I assure you that nothing was happening. Nobody has broken any rules”. The Prof asked for his I.D. card. Without hesitation, RPM fished his pockets and gave him the I.D. card, wondering if he looked a lot

different from the photo in that card. The Prof said “You may collect this from the CCW office” and he coolly walked away leaving RPM dumbfounded.

B Cube, who was putting peace in his room, received a call from a thoroughly flustered RPM who told him that some Prof had asked him to get all the seniors who were involved to the CCW office if he did not want to risk expulsion. RPM pleaded with him to come to the CCW office as soon as possible. B Cube turned all senti. “Why did you tell my name? I won’t come. If I get expelled my dad will kill me and I do not want the Prof to pain me for an hour, I have got better things to do....”, his voice trailed off. RPM called Pogo next, who had mysteriously disappeared home and was showered with a pile of advice on how to deal with the Prof. He signed off in style assuring that “Everything will be fine, da! Just chill, ok?” What else could one expect from a major fart god like him!

RPM, B Cube, Hallmark and few others turned up in front of the Prof’s office. Having nothing better to do, they cracked lame jokes and laughed incessantly trying to calm their nerves. They never knew that there was a video cam recording all their antics which the Prof used to spy on people waiting outside his cabin. For full five minutes, he blasted them for creating a ruckus in front of his office and for the next n minutes, he grilled them for inappropriate conduct. Finally, he asked them to give in their names and their parents’ mobile numbers. B Cube gave his Hyderabad number and coolly walked off, never getting caught. That day they all made a pact that they would tell Pogo that they had been fined the exorbitant amount of Rs. 2000 each.

When Pogo came to know of this huge fine that they had to pay, he went all senti and put treat for all those who had gone to CCW that day. Soon, the story spread all around Insti that they had been fined

thousands and in mess, junta would come and stroke their heads with sympathetic expressions. Pogo asked RPM, towards the end of his tenure as the Soc-Sec, to write the fine off in his budget under some random head. RPM could not help telling him the truth and he loved the expression that graced Pogo's face for a second before he lunged at him.

As B Cube and RPM narrated this story, laughing in reminiscence, I asked, my eyes wide in wonder, "So you guys were not really fined?"

# Differences between Shaastra and Saarang

Ravi Teja G

<b>Shaastra</b>	<b>Saarang</b>
Shaastra is white	Saarang is black
Footfall around 20k	Footfall around 50k
19.9k are geeks	25k are hot and single chicks; the other 25k are couples
Publicity is absolutely important	Publicity is important
Robots dance	Humans dance
Rock-show: Monkeys throw stones at humans	Rock-show: Bands like POS, Opeth perform at OAT
Number of core committee members are finite	The number reaches infinity



# Memoirs of Fia

*Fia*

Life in the institute has been a roller coaster ride. From a very tough first year for me, never having lived away from home, getting used to Insti life, learning how to work in a team, managing stuff and learning to live on my own has been an incredible formative experience.

Here are some memories from my time on campus that I will never forget.

One night, tired after a long game of football, five of us were craving for a bath. Unfortunately for us, though, the hostel was out of water. So, we decided to go to the next most convenient place, the swimming pool! Jumping the wall, we entered the pool with a splash, jumping from the top diving board. The guard woke up, alerted by the noise. Some of us escaped, but those who were caught had to bribe the guard into letting them go.

Another night, after returning from my aunt's place, I inadvertently walked in on my friends who were spending some time on the terrace. I shouted "Who's there?" scaring them as they were not aware that I had returned and were terrified because they assumed that I was the warden. They have not yet forgiven me for that. In our first year, we had a footer match at night. Only 4 of us went to cheer for our hostel. The rival hostel had a massive cheering squad of over 40 freshies. At half time, our hostel held the other to a draw. Then, we cheered really hard for the hostel even though we were only 4. The 2-0 win that night was one of the sweetest in my life.

In my first year, I was campaigning for the elections, going door to door asking people to vote for my candidate. In Krishna, I knocked on a

particularly irritated senior's door and asked him to vote, rattling away my candidate's credentials. For the next hour, I was ragged in the M.Tech students' room and made to explain why exactly I was campaigning for that particular candidate.

The relation between seniors and freshies has been deteriorating over years from one of absolute respect to one of dismissive contempt. I was at the receiving end of this when I asked a freshie this year for his name. I was shocked with "I have a name – Shashank, and I don't want any fucking name". It's another matter altogether that I interacted with this specimen for a good while later, but the whole incident was just symbolic of the erosion of age old customs by pointless administrative rules.

In my 2<sup>nd</sup> year, we represented the institute in water polo at the inter IIT held in IIT Kanpur. We were all food poisoned and were very sick. But we still played the semi-finals and won! Unfortunately, we got worse and couldn't play the finals, but we were glad that we could overcome tough odds to achieve our goals.

Insti life has taught me a lot and I am proud of the friends I have made here. I am sure that a few years down the line, I will be remembered as the friendly FIA. These have been really incredible 4 years!

## RKK, after all

*Diwakar Das*

It was year 2008, when a few more of the brightest minds of their age took admission in various undergraduate courses at IITM. They, like other IITians in their first year, came in with sprawling aspirations and hopes of learning something great, something amazing that only the best in the country can get. This is when they met Professor R Kalyana Krishnan, fondly known as RKK. It was their first semester course called ID110, which is generally introduced by RKK. He is undoubtedly one of the best professors of all time. The problems that he gives are very challenging and students crave for them. And he too expects the best of solutions, with least number of or no approximations, and if you match up to his expectations, you are truly the best.

As the first assignment for the class, he asked them to find the height of the water tower next to the CRC (Class Room Complex). Since it was their first assignment in the institute, students were extremely enthusiastic to finish it with utmost accuracy and sincerity. Different people had different ideas. Diwakar Das had the idea to use a laser, and knowing the horizontal distance from the ground, he would find the vertical distance. He took his readings with great care and multiple times in order to avoid errors. He jotted down the technique he used to do the measurement along with his observations and submitted the assignment. When he got back the paper, the paper read 1. Initially, he was unable to understand what it really meant but later realised that it meant marks. Yes, after doing all that he had done, he got 1 mark for it. The reasons were also mentioned. The water tank had a convex wall on top of it, and through laser, he could not have reached the top-most tip of the tower. Fair enough! The highest marks awarded for the assignment were 4! Interestingly, the people who had copied had got

figures like  $-32$  and  $-26$  and  $-14$  for varying degrees of copying. It's really amazing how he could have possibly found out copies, in a pile of 600 odd papers, and more amazing are the marks that he gave for the varying degree of copying. With RKK, nothing is random, so there must be some good explanation for the marks too!

# Identity Crisis

*Ravi Teja G*

After mugging for a mere one hour the previous day, I slept and woke up at 6:00 am. Although I had mugged only the 6 problems given in the tutorial sheet, I wasn't tensed. And following were the reasons why:

1. There were many others like me.
2. My brain was no longer of JEE standard. It had fallen to the level of 'Give me a formula, give the values of known variables and I can find the unknown using a calculator'.
3. I didn't care anymore.

So, I tried to memorize the 10 or so formulae again and went to the exam. I took the paper and went to my allotted place.

"Take out your I.D. cards and place them on your desk", the invigilator announced.

It was then that I realized that my pocket was empty. I had forgotten my purse in the room and it had all the stuff that could confirm my identity as a mechanical student of IITM.

One of the TAs came to me and asked "Where is your I.D. card?"

"Sir, I forgot to bring it. I shall produce it immediately after the exam".

"No, no. Please go and bring it now. Or, go to HoD office and bring the warning slip signed by the concerned person", he explained a detailed procedure which was more complex than applying for a driving license/passport in the Indian Government offices.

I really wonder why such insane rules exist in Insti. Why on earth will someone else come and write my exam? It is like asking a person, alive, 'Show me your birth certificate so that I can confirm that you exist'.

I tried to explain my situation to the TA, "Sir, please excuse me for now. Time is ticking away. I have to write the exam".

"Okay. Wait. You talk to the madam", and he left, sending the madam to me.

"What's wrong?" She sounded calm.

"Ma'am, I forgot my I.D. card in my room".

"Okay. After the exam, go to HoD's office and get a warning slip".

"Okay".

"Otherwise, your paper will not be graded".

"Sure Ma'am. I will bring the slip".

I checked the time. It was 8:10 am. A good 40 minutes left. I had to hurry.

I looked at the question paper and to my utter disgust none of them were tutorial problems. The hard mugging for the past two days, little sleep, I.D. card issue and this brain-cracking question paper, everything increased my stress levels to cause a severe headache. I felt like giving up and sleeping in the examination hall.

I looked at the paper again and again to make sure that it was the same exam for which I had mugged. I wrote a couple of formulae and some numbers on my answer sheet just to cross the "zero" mark. I would get

at least 5 out of 30 now. I remembered the invigilators words, ‘... your sheet will not be graded’.

After the exam, I went to the HoD’s office as instructed and took the warning slip. I then had to get it signed by some person in the office who was apparently absent. When I asked a lady out there, “Get it signed by so & so”, she said. That so & so turned out to be the guy who fixes mikes and projectors in our MSB classrooms. I wondered if he had the relevant credentials for signing on a warning slip.

“Sure”, I said and left. Fortunately, I found the guy and he signed and I still doubt that he kulti my pen as I didn’t find it after that. And it turned out that he had the most number of doubts regarding my identity.

“Did you lose your I.D. card?”

“Show me your I.D. card whenever you are free”.

“Apply for a new one in case you lost it”.

After this encounter, I rushed to the next class, half-a-km away, in the scorching Chennai heat. Full of sweat, I slept in the class dreaming about a land where there are no I.D. cards, birth certificates etc.

I thought of bunking the remaining classes for the day and get a good sleep to forget everything, but the universe had different plans for me.

“Did you submit B slot assignment?” someone asked me.

Shit, I had not submitted it.

I called my friend and hand-xeroxed his assignment. It looked better than the original. I felt relieved and was about to pack to my room

when one of my lab mates interrupted, “Did you write last week lab’s report?”

Holy shit, I had not done that either.

So, another copy-paste act delivered a horrible lab report.

Moral of the day: Never ever forget to carry your I.D. card or the Universe will conspire against you and make sure everything else goes wrong as well.

## Excess Baggage

*Uttara 'Munkey' Narayanan*

I wait at the airport  
Rubbing my eyes and  
Wondering if my heart  
Is trying to jump out because  
I am not going to see home (and my TV shows)  
For a while or whether my mother's  
Pickles will last  
Or whether the  
Lady with the overdone  
Make-up will charge me  
For excess baggage.

I realise I am not  
That great with social skills,  
Worse at digesting Maggi  
First thing in the morning  
And doing laundry regularly  
So as to be presentable in class.  
It is not the deer or the blackbucks  
Or my so-called bursting-at-the-seams schedule,  
It's called Local Area Network.

Summer arrives,  
Aunties and uncles gasp,  
"How much you have changed!"  
There is so much ghee I am served  
And new clothes are bought  
(Thank you Amul).

An overseas intern,  
Aunties and uncles wink,  
“Arey, foreign return! Great proposals!”  
Lesser ghee this time  
Thanks to all the cheese,  
Incessant text messaging and  
Acid punk play lists.

This time,  
I am going back home,  
With the same  
heart-jumping-out-of-my-mouth feeling  
Wondering if I will ever miss my  
Thursday morning Maggi or  
Whether it was really smart of me  
To lug my first year German text book  
Back, just to ‘brush up’.

This time, the lady with  
The overdone make up tells me-  
“Excess baggage!”

# The Graffiti

*Neelesh 'Cavity' Rangawani*

IIT Madras, Godavari Hostel, 3<sup>rd</sup> wing – this is where JMC, a bunch of jolly, happy-go-lucky IITians reside. But among them resided a self-proclaimed Picasso, 2G, who loved cartooning, and had actually drawn trippy cartoons of everyone in the wing on the wall next to their doors. The cartoons were great, and everyone loved them. He loved them the most, so much so that he adorned them with his signature '2G'.

One fine day, Mr. 2G got high and got a fluorescent green colour spray paint from somewhere and started making graffiti on the walls of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wing. Little did he know that his art work would be “appreciated” so much that the warden himself would come to see them! The graffiti was so perfectly placed that when you entered Godavari Hostel, it was hard to miss the slogans 'JMC Rocks' and 'We all love you, JMC' along with the signature.

One day, these caught the eyes of the warden, who came up to see them. Instead of appreciating 2G's creativity, he called each and every student present in the wing and enquired. It so happened, that exactly one half of the wing had gone out, and the other half was present. The warden called all those present and started questioning them. Some had the policy of just staying silent, some kept repeating “Sorry sir, but I don't know” and then there was Gujju. Someone once said, 'The best defence is a good offence', but Gujju redefined it to 'A good offence is the best defence'. When asked by the warden if he knew anything about the paintings, Gujju started, sounding offended, “Do you think I support this? I have already complained about this. You are the warden, you should be taking care of this. I am in no support of this kind of nonsense”. The warden was completely dumbstruck. He probably did

not expect this at all, his behaviour and temperament completely changed. On further interrogation, the half wing present concluded that it must be the other half's job. Mr. Warden had to catch the culprit. So he decided to wait at the entrance till the other half of the wing came.

They were received by the warden with a volley of questions. They had a suspicious looking black colour bag, which immediately caught the warden's eye. Fortunately it was just fruit juice. Having got the wind of the brewing trouble, they had come prepared with their plan. They said they had been in Pondicherry for the past 2 days and it must be the other half of the wing, which would have done this nefarious deed. Totally confused, the warden finally gave up, ordered to repaint that part of the wall and left everyone countless warnings.

## What it Means to get into IIT

*Anonymous*

Insti is a place where the best of the best minds come together from all over the country. Each has his own story of the success of getting through JEE. Often these are stories of intense sorrow, stress and pressure.

It was my fifth semester and my wing-mates and I were having a general fart session in the middle of the night. The discussion started with the usual topics – Insti, department cribs and girls. After some time, most of the group went to bed and just my friend and I were left in the room. We started talking about how we got into IIT and this was when he narrated his story to me. This friend hailed from a remote village in Karnataka. He was the son of a welder – a person considered as ‘lower class’ in his village. He was a brilliant student and had scored the highest percentage of marks in his Class 10 Board exams and, thus, caught the attention of his entire village. As he was preparing for JEE, some people from the ‘upper class’ had come to his father and had asked him to stop him as he would not get anywhere in life. This jeering turned to threats in the village *Panchayat* in no time. In spite of all this, his father struggled a lot and supported him all through the two years. When the results came, his father had tears in his eyes and went to the *Panchayat* thumping his chest, saying with pride “My son got into IIT.” My friend had tears in his eyes as he told me this.

There was another batch-mate from my department who went through similar turmoil. He was a guy who used to top all the exams in school. Tragedy struck his family when his father passed away in his class 10 and his performance was affected adversely. His friends and relatives started discouraging and making fun of him instead of supporting him

through tough times. He was the only one of his peers who made it to our campus or any other IIT.

For some, getting here would be a way to great opportunities, for some it's a means to quench their thirst for Science and Technology but for some it is the only way to escape society and its cruelty - not just for them but for their families as well.

# The Dream Team

*Dr. Preeti Aghalayam*

The year is 1994. I am desperately looking for girls to be on the basketball team with me. Who knew that being a captain meant knocking on so many doors and begging folks to participate? I took to subliminal messages – creeping up on friends who were sleeping with their doors unlocked and whispering in their ears – *You are a basketball player. You love getting out there at 3 pm and throwing the orange pumpkin around. You come alive even as the smell of pain-spray overwhelms you.* If I had marginal faith in higher powers, I would have prayed.

I canvassed aggressively. I beseeched my close friends to just come check it out for a day or two. I promised them they could leave if they did not like it. I told them it would have health benefits for later. I promised never to scold them for anything. I promised riches, I promised gold. I swore I would be their life-long slave. And most of all, I argued, it was really a lot of fun.

No one believed a word of what I said. But we were thick friends, and so, in a show of solidarity, they all trooped down to the basketball courts that year. The Inter-IIT was in Chennai that year, so that was really a compelling argument. No horrid train journeys to endure, no unpleasant winter weather to deal with. *All you have to do is stay back in Sarayu for ten days, imagine how fun that can be* I transmitted my mental message in the afternoons to sleeping – budding – sportswomen.

One thing I must say about the 1994 team. We were dedicated. If you totted up our skills, it would have amounted to not much. But discipline we had in spades. The boy's team was irregular and irreverent and barely willing to listen to the allotted coach. Not us. We obeyed him to the letter. We showed up at absurd times of the day for practice

(So the boys could have the court during prime time. Seriously!). We played on the tar court when required – and let me say this – that tar court was really brutal.

The coach was happy with us. Not happy in the way coaches are when they have a talented bunch of players. Happy in the way they are forced to be when they have a talentless but enthusiastic mass of players. He took us out to play a few practice matches around the city. We went to Stella Maris and the girls creamed us. We went to a local school and a high school (boys) team thrashed us. We bravely enrolled in a tournament at a local engineering college, and apart from some mild eve-teasing by the lads there (to which I regrettably reacted vociferously while on the court), had nothing to show for it. And then it was Inter-IIT time.

We had designed our own uniform. The old one was really nasty – a dark brown skirt with a light brown t-shirt. Super ugly. We selected colours, picked out cloth, took measurements from everyone, harassed the local shop-C tailor, and finally had our awesome outfit – a jet black skirt with a bright blue top. We got our numbers painted on and totally felt ready!

Our first match was at OAT. We played Delhi. As we entered from the sloping entrance into the OAT well, I watched warily. The IITD team girls looked so big! We were remarkably tiny in comparison (or maybe that was just me). I entered the court and was dribbling the ball to the center and turned back just in time to see Priya fall down. She had slipped at the end of the slope and fallen down, somehow without bending her knees, and had two giant moons of blood on the poor knees to show for it! She smiled, and continued in, unfazed.

We played with all our heart, and somehow, miraculously, we won. This was our first win! Then we met IITB, at the Institute courts. I

barely remember this game, so heady was the feeling of winning a second consecutive match! I was pretty sure that the streak couldn't last. I had a habit of giving a small speech in the afternoons, before we all started getting ready for the game (tying crepe bandages, ironing our precious new uniforms, rolling up the hair in super tight ponytails and sticking hundreds of pins to control strays, etc.). I would wait outside the door for 30 seconds usually, eyes closed, to gather my wits and to find something positive to say. Our losing streak was unbroken the entire year, despite all that...

But this all changed that fateful December! My joy knew no bounds. I must have been quite a jerk to hang out with as I could talk of nothing but our basketball team and the details of our wins, during that time. I was sleeping, dreaming of having the won the NBA or Olympic gold or similar. I woke up with a start and saw rain pouring down. *Nice*, I thought, *cool the city down a bit*. The next morning though, it hit me. The stadium would be flooded, putting an end to my track and field dreams. I could deal with that. I cycled fast over to the basketball court. Patches and patches of water!

I was blubbery in my disappointment. The rain continued to play spoilsport through the day. We had to wade through water and slush everywhere on campus. We begged the sports advisor (Prof. Gokhale of Aerospace Engineering), not to cancel our basketball games. He smiled as he usually did when I got into one of my crazy enthusiastic monologues. I remembered a *dharna* I had staged once, in front of his office. I had heard a rumour that he was banning 'contact sports' for girls. I wasn't sure what he meant by that catchall phrase, but I was sure I didn't like the idea. So I opposed it in the only way I knew how to. By sitting outside his office and talking my head off when he called me in. He smiled as we explained our situation, how close we were to the dream...

Thankfully, they decided to hold our final match in SAC – a leaky roof there notwithstanding. We met the best team of the tournament (by far), IIT Kanpur. They had good chemistry among their players. They had several girls who had played a fair bit in their school days (a very valuable thing. Basketball is not an easy game to pick up when you have 25 credits to complete in a semester, and labs, workshop, exams and 75% attendance rules to worry about). I was pretty confident of losing. But really wanted to win, badly.

As always, we were in a race against time. Girls basketball matches in IIT have, over the years, demonstrated one common feature. The officials, the audience, coaches, time-keepers, all have one common goal. And that is to run the clock. We were supposed to have two 20 minute halves of playing time (with the clock stopped if the ball was not in play). We were usually barely given 20 minutes total playing time (the clock running even if the ball rolled over to the tennis courts or whatever). I knew about this, and hated it, but did not object too strongly to it because of a small thing called stamina. We were all good in academics, top of our classes in high school, rather clever in exams and literary pursuits. We were not athletes. Not really.

The game started and we managed to keep a steady lead, and I felt a surge of confidence and happiness. We maintained a tight defence against the Kanpur girls. And lady luck shined on us. I looked into the audience and was pleasantly surprised to see a tall person up there! My close friend and fellow basketball enthusiast, visiting from the US! That moment is etched so strongly in my memory even today, like a photograph. It was befitting then that I quickly scored several baskets in a row to impress my future husband! Time was running out though, and we were neck-to-neck. I was inspired and all but still very nervous.

It was perhaps the last 30 seconds of the game when Priya, the one of bruised knees fame, caught the ball. She released it towards the basket and I saw to my horror that she had her eyes closed! Unerringly though the ball found its target and suddenly it was all over. We hugged her so tight, sweaty creatures all of us, a mass of blue and black in the center of SAC. I turned around for a second and felt a pang as I saw the young Kanpur team nearly in tears. It was a tough, and unexpected loss for them. We were the underdogs, clearly.

It has been years now, but I still have such great memories of this team and this inter-IIT! We had such a great time training together, working so very hard! I have been on other sports teams in my life, but none this special. One of my friends, Amutha, used to watch all our matches, cheer lustily, and bring us Tang to drink. I remember that. There was only one goal that entire year, and at the end, we achieved it. That was awesome. There is that much cherished gold medal somewhere in my effects.

About a week after I moved to IIT Madras in 2009, I showed up on the basketball court. My friend from Sarayu days, Shanti, was there (she is a professor in Electrical Engineering now). We started playing and I saw this fire-brand of a lady on the opposite team. I discovered Anu, Applied Mechanics professor, an all round fantastic basketball player! The last time I met Anu? In December 1994 in SAC. She was part of that unlucky young IIT Kanpur team! Talk about life coming a full circle!

## Standing Out While Fitting In

*Dr. Prathap Haridoss*

In my view, the funny thing about fashion is that if it succeeds, it fails. If everyone buys the ‘new look’, the new look will quickly become the ‘old look’ – boring, passé and out. Being out of fashion, or in your ‘own fashion’ is therefore not as un-cool as it seems.

Be it your college, your job, or your social circle, there is always a pressure to ‘fit in’. Do you want to fit in? Do you need to fit in? How far will you go to fit in?

I am told that interview panellists frown on male candidates who have beards – apparently it means that the candidate is trying to ‘make a statement’ – a potential non-conformist and trouble maker. Is that a fair assessment? What about wearing traditional Indian dresses for an interview? What is it likely to say about the candidate and what does it say about the prospective employer? While dress codes are the norm in certain businesses, I believe organizations should carefully examine the purpose of the dress code in their setting, and actively explore the possibility of using a guideline rather than a compulsory code.

We live in an era where the awareness for respecting diversity in workplaces has greatly increased. Yet the pressures of work are such that a friend of mine became a non-vegetarian because she had to attend business lunches regularly, and being a vegetarian led to what she felt were awkward moments trying to find something vegetarian from the menu card in foreign lands.

What about the music you listen to, is your ‘favourite song’ really your favourite song? Or did someone instil in you the idea that it had to be your favourite song for what else could it be?

Some time ago, I was on a panel interviewing students to select recipients of a scholarship. There I met a student who was surprised when asked “What non academic book have you read that has inspired you?” There was a sense of disbelief from his side at the idea that we had asked something ‘non academic’. To ease the situation, the panel asked “What about a magazine or a newspaper?” That didn’t ease the situation much.

This is not a new phenomenon. Many years ago I had a roommate who had great difficulty making a phone call to the operator to find out the STD code for his home town. In the end one of us had to make the call on his behalf.

Make no mistake, both these people were academically brilliant.

When you meet such people who seem to have constrained themselves very significantly, you wonder – how come hostel life did not change them?

Yet I have also known friends from school days, who were very pleasant and fun folks to hang out with in school, but turned out to be grumpy folks in college. And you wonder, why did hostel life change them so much?

There are no magic answers on how much we must give in to change and how much we must strive to be ourselves. Status quo vs. change is highly situation dependent and perception dependent. At the same time there are enough real examples where it is not that difficult to make a decision.

We must value diversity in people we meet, and importantly, in ourselves too. There is no need to change quickly, just as there is no

adamant reason to be exactly the same forever. To evolve in a well considered manner, makes life an interesting journey.

I read an article on drinking and smoking habits in the US. The study showed that if someone had not consumed alcohol or smoked till the age of 17, chance were high that they would never drink alcohol or smoke, for the rest of their lives. I don't know what that age might be in India, but I suspect it may be more like 20 years of age for a similar result because most of us experience our first taste of unmonitored freedom in the initial years at college. So perhaps what you do in those years may define you for the rest of your life.

Drinking and smoking, seem to be activities where more people seem to experience or exert social pressure. During my graduate studies in the US, I never faced social pressure from any American for not drinking. They accepted me as I was without even a hint of discomfort. In fact, in restaurants I got free coffee since the waitresses assumed that I was the designated driver. Strangely, the only 'pressure' I experienced was from a small fraction of my Indian friends who seemed uncomfortable with the idea that I did not drink. This despite the fact that I accepted them the way they were and never ever asked them why they drank. I can only conclude that they themselves were uncomfortable with the idea that they drank, and this was one way to show their discomfort.

Conventionally we are tuned to thinking of diversity along religious or regional lines. However the diversity we encounter most often is behavioural diversity, regardless of its origin. Amongst classmates, friends, colleagues, relatives, and your spouse – it is easy to encounter and notice. Accepting it gracefully makes it a pleasant experience for everyone. Being inflexible, supercilious and imposing is uncalled for. A healthy curiosity is different from a hostile cross examination.

Be comfortable with who you are, at the same time be open to evolving yourself. When you see diversity, give it space, examine it, discuss in a friendly manner, and assimilate that which your considered thought approves of.

Upon encountering diversity, people seem to react in different ways ranging from hostility, scorn, to amusement, genuine curiosity, friendly acceptance, support and understanding and immediate assimilation. When we encounter diversity, we must realize that we recognize it as diversity because we are ourselves diverse with respect to it. Someone can be different from us only if we are different from them. So by respecting diversity, we are respecting ourselves.

Change is neither automatically for the better nor automatically for the worse. Considered change is usually good, flippant change is typically immature and is indicative of rudderless behaviour. Pressurizing people to change is possible a sign of a complex.

As you move on from your education to your work place, you will encounter many opportunities where you will observe people responding to your diversity, or will have opportunities to respond to their diversity. As a first step I hope you will recognize what you are doing, and will respond in a mature manner that you will feel comfortable with in the years to come. As you get into leadership positions in your organizations, you will set the tone that others will likely follow. While enforcing order may be the tried and tested route to take, I hope you will instil in your organization the maturity that allows for freedom of expression while maintaining or even enhancing the cohesiveness of the organization.

# Adventures at Central Workshop

*Ravi Teja G*

Central Workshop, as they say, is the Heart of Engineering in IITM. Being one of the biggest workshops in India, it facilitates to impart practical skills for the students in major fields of Engineering and Technology. It is this place where students learn the ground level engineering skills. Whether it is making a perfect circle with a drilling machine or converting a square rod into cylinder in the Lathe machine, it is all there in the Central Workshop. As expected, there are a lot of incidents that take place in during the workshop classes and we present to you a couple of such (mis)adventures.

## **Fitting Workshop**

There were 2 instructors for our fitting workshop. Both of them looked very different but they shared a common quality – They never had any expression on their face! I never saw any one of them laughing, crying, angry, or emotional – you can include any expression in this list!

One instructor scared us away with his lecture on the very first day. He imposed several strict rules. He first explained various tools and then our work. We had to make 2 cuts in 2 pieces and then 'fit' them together. Hence the name fitting! One was the male cut and the other was the female cut (It is not my nomenclature. It is actually called like that).

There were different cuts like the UV cut, T cut, etc. We were also given some special cut to work upon which requires one of the pieces to be made into a rectangle with a triangle over it.

So, we were required to make the vertices of the rectangle into perfect 90 degrees. This had to be done by filing – the most frustrating part of fitting. The right angle could be checked by some other mysterious tool. When I was satisfied with my work and showed it to the second instructor, he just put my piece on the two arms of the measuring tool and showed a tiny hole through which light was passing, which meant that it was still not a perfect 90 and I had to file it again.

The file, I say, is the worst tool to handle. It never cuts to the desired length! I again kept the work piece in the Bench Vice and started the to and fro motion of the file.

Having filed the piece with utmost care this time, I went to show him my job with a feeling of self-satisfaction and pride! He examined every nook and corner of it and again showed me another point from where light was coming out.

He just kept standing there, showing the same point which literally meant that I had to repeat the entire filing job!

After much effort and two more tasks when I finally showed my end product to the main fitting instructor, he examined it and said, "All are under dimension!"

'Sir, have some sympathy on me. Just throw me some damn grade and get rid of me!' was my final thought.

## Milling and Shaping

A workshop with similar work to be done as fitting but with different machines. It was basically a team work, each team containing 5 members. There was this high enthu guy Chandrasekhar in our batch who just kept on pressing something or the other on any machine until it got spoiled!

Shaping Sir gave certain instructions and precautions clearly mentioning to us to handle the machine carefully as it was worth a huge Rs. 50,000 or so.

After 1 hour, OUR LOVELY 50K MACHINE WAS SPOILED BY CHANDU! That stupid guy kept a hammer in the middle of the saddle which was moving and lo! It got stuck and broke after making a loud TUP sound. We rushed to the instructor and told him that our machine wasn't functioning. He came to check and immediately discovered the hammer which appeared like a rat in a cat's mouth.

"Who did this?" was his immediate question.

"CHANDU!" was our immediate answer.

He and his companion tried to repair it in as many ways as they could but they failed. It was more like Chandu versus the instructors rather than the instructors versus students.

"Okay. You guys can pack now. Come early for the next class. We'll get it repaired or give you a new machine." our-~~tried-in-vain-to-repair-Chandu's-damage~~ instructor said.

Next was the GEAR SHOP. But nothing interesting happened here. Chandu tried to try his hands on that gear-making machine but it was too good to resist even Chandrasekhar's hands!

# Birthday Bash

*Rohit Mitta*

Birthdays without ‘Bumps’ in the Insti are unimaginable. My second birthday in the Insti was one of the most memorable experiences of my life. 24<sup>th</sup> October, the day before my birthday, happened to be Mandak hostel’s Ice cream night. It was almost midnight and everyone had had enough ice cream to last them for a lifetime! But lots of ice cream packs and cold drink bottles were still lying around. And my friends couldn’t bear the thought of letting it all go waste! So, Khabba decided to make some calls to people of other hostels and invite them to the ‘Ice Cream Night’ at 12. All this while, I quietly had my share of ice cream and tried to slip into my room. But as soon as the clock struck 12, about 30 people surrounded me and before I knew it, upturned one full ice cream box over my head! Down went coke after that! Covered in cold ice cream and drenched in coca cola, I saw another group of people turn up with more leftover ice cream. Determined not to be caught this time, I began running towards the quadrangle. With half a dozen people taking turns to run behind me I had to give up after 10 rounds of the quadrangle! After another round of ice cream came the Birthday Bumps, which, much to the agony of the Birthday Boy, has been the most painful but sacredly followed tradition in the campus. No one pays any heed to your protests till they are satisfied that they have made the birthday ‘Happy’ enough.

Now that the worst was over, I walked back to my room to sleep peacefully. I sat on the bed but sprang up instantaneously realizing that my butt hurt too much. Unable to sleep on the bed, I finally ended up with my head on the pillow, legs on a chair next to the bed and butt floating midair, dreaming about the real ‘Happiness’ of the birthday to come in the morning!

## Zenithers – Divided in Opinion but United in Action

*Ashish Kumar*

Deciding a date and a venue for a treat was always a contentious issue for Zenithers\*. All the eight members of Zenithers\*, as any other group of people in their wee-twenties and with the IIT-tag stapled to them, had a myriad of opinions even on the simplest of issues – where and when to eat. I was the jobless guy of the wing and would always be the proponent of any idea of treat. I was backed by Demo most of the times. After grueling discussions and a lot of convincing and countless negotiations, a date would be fixed. Zeroing down on a venue was even more troublesome.

But that treat was different. It was Jalan's birthday-treat. Unlike most of the treats there was no discussion to decide the time and venue. Demo had just gone to Rajdhani in EA the last day and had loved it so much that he did not mind going again that day. So, seven of us headed for EA that night. Chaubey had not gone for a treat except for a couple of times when we got lucky and succeeded in convincing him that one can get edible food even at non-five-star hotels. We were still some 50-60 meters away from the bus-stop when we saw our bus 5C leaving. It was already late and we wanted to catch it desperately. But, DD, who liked to have his starters at Tidel bakery itself was eating Channa-puffs. The traffic was congested and bus was moving very slow. So, we decided to run and catch the bus.

Suddenly, a bike loaded with four drunken rowdies whizzed past us. The four of them were shouting and their bike's silencer was competing with them. We kept running and wondered whether they expected everyone to clear the roads for them. The inevitable happened. The brakes could not decelerate the bike just in time and it rammed mildly

into the bus. At the same time, one of us brushed their touch-me-not bike and they lost some balance, more because of their drunken state. We didn't even take notice of it. But, the bike's driver's pursuit of heroism was jeopardized by this ghastly act of ours. We were just settling down on our seats when he got on to the bus and started stomping and hurling abuses. No one reacted.

Our assumption of everything returning to normal was belied when we heard Adarsh, red-faced, bellowing with rage. It took us a moment to understand what had happened. The bike driver had slapped Adarsh. He probably had not noticed that there were eight of us and had found Adarsh, with his school-boyish charm, an easy prey. But, he had messed with the wrong people. Zenithers were divided in opinion but united in action. The next moment, the eight of us were on him and subsequently he was out of the bus. The crowd had gathered outside the bus to enjoy the free live fight and did not bother to interfere. We had calmed ourselves and were determined not to make it violent. But, the rowdy was a fight-mongering ardent Rajnikant fan. He came again, gripped the iron-rods near the bus-gate, started swinging to-and-fro and throwing his legs towards us. Our anger, knew no limits. This time we were full-on. His body below his tummy (only this portion was accessible to us) savored enough Woodland's and Action's dust. This went on for 5-6 minutes. The police came after a couple of minutes but took no action. Maybe, they too, were enthralled by the intensity of the fight. Maybe their heart was with the biker and wanted him to do what Rajnikant does every time – defeat eight men single-handedly. At last, in midst of our shoe-blitzkrieg on the rowdy's waist and butt, the police interrupted and took his custody. It did not take much time or effort to prove our innocence and the fact that it was the biker who started all of it without any reason.

The dinner as usual was fun. The Rajdhani Thali had a spree of items and even with our unbelievable appetites we felt immensely full. After satiating the stomach, it was the turn of eyes for the girls in EA are a treat to the eyes.

When we came to IIT, they said hostels were “Home-away-from-Home”. Well, they lied. You just get a room. That is not home. You have to find a set of like-minded people and live like a family with them to create a home out of that hole. I am fortunate that I found my second family which bears my tantrums, consoles and motivates me when I am down and gives me stuff when I ask for them. Love you Zenithers!

*\*Zenithers is the name we gave our group [Demo, Madhukant, Jalan, Saand, DD, Adarsh, Chaubey and me] living in the sixth wing of Saraswathi hostel.*

## GTA in Real Life!

*Parag Gupta*

Having a bike in Insti is a mark of one's studness. And it's quite obvious that everyone who didn't have one, meaning most of us, longed to have a ride! I had gone outside Insti many times before this day, but never on a bike.

It was the day of the inter-hostel event Queen of Sheba (QoS). For those who have no fundaes on QoS, it is a contest in which each hostel is given a number of tasks which they need to complete within a certain period of time. So, Parag and I went to Amma Nanna (a shop) to get some stuff for the same. While we were leaving the Insti, Parag casually told me that he had an intuition that because we were going without an RC and a helmet, we might be facing some trouble on our way.

Everything went fine till we were on our way back to the Insti. At one of the traffic stops, the signal had just gone red when we tried to cross the road thinking it would be peaceful for us to go a bit early. Just then came a traffic policeman who hit me from behind, but Parag didn't stop the bike and kept moving on. We thought that the trouble was evaded until we were at the next traffic signal where one more policeman started fidgeting with Parag. Luckily, we were on an Enticer, and as the policeman didn't know where the key to stop the bike was, he was trying to hit Parag, applying the brakes again and again, and also was trying to deflate the tires. As soon as he bent down to deflate the tires, his walkie-talkie fell down on the ground and using that as an advantage, Parag started the bike. As the policeman was stopping the bike earlier, I had already gotten off the bike. I began running after the bike in full speed with the policeman behind me. There was a bus stop

nearby; so even some people there tried to stop me. But somehow I managed to catch hold of the bike's rear end and sat on it.

Now, as we were on our way back to Insti, one cop began following us. Parag tried to increase the speed as much as possible but that didn't work. So we decided to take some other way to the Insti which neither of us knew. We entered some random street and since the cop was following us, kept on changing lanes without knowing where they were taking us.

To get rid of the cop we entered some slum area, and we were driving at a speed of 40-50 km/hr in a region where bikes were not so common. Everyone was staring at us and suddenly we found ourselves at a dead end. We had somehow evaded the cop for a certain time, but not for ever. So we started asking the people there for help. No one there understood even a word of what we wanted. Some of them were just forcing us to leave as soon as possible, whereas others who supposedly understood our problem were telling us to stay calm. There was too much chaos. A dog was barking, people were looking at us as if we were some terrorists or thieves.

After we tried a lot to explain our problem to some of them, there came a young man, Nelson, who understood English. This guy seemed to be helpful. On his instruction, we kept our bike there and went with him to his house which was a single room containing an *almirah*, a few racks, a cooker, a chair, a stove and a few more things. He told us to first calm down, have some water, asked us our problem and inquired whether we had hit someone or whether we had been driving drunk! But after he understood that we were students of IIT, he started finding ways to save us from the cops but the bike was a problem.

He had an aunt who was 'politically active' as he said. She called someone and spoke to him in Tamil. We couldn't understand the

conversation but I assume it was something about the bike's number being noted by the police. Actually the bike had an AP number plate and one needs to have RC for that. We didn't have one, but breaking the signal twice was a bigger problem. Also, the colony we entered was a high chain-snatching area, and had 4 cameras installed at the entrance to the colony. That meant that in any condition our number had been traced by the police.

Nelson told us that the people in the colony were planning to surrender us to the police. So he had brought the bike to his place. Then, I sat on his aunt's Scooty, Parag on the bike with Nelson, and then these people not only ensured we were out of that colony but as Madhya Kailash comes on way to Insti, they came with us all the way to the Insti gate. We somehow got ourselves out of a situation which could have resulted in a fourth year's placement offer being snatched away from Parag along with a DISCO (Disciplinary Committee) for both of us. And maybe a lot more. But thanks to Nelson and his Aunt we were saved.

And yeah! We won the Queen of Sheba that day.

# Oshum Akshent

*Anonymous*

Being a Central University and all that, professors in IIT are generally allowed a free rein. Though the students at IIT are often touted as the best and the brightest of the nation, inside the Institute they are often on par with fellow inhabitants such as the monkeys and the black bucks.

One day, I walked into class to find someone I had not seen before addressing the class, talking as if she had hot potatoes in her mouth. It turned out to be our new professor. From the minute I walked into her class, I could not decipher most of what she said in her marked Bengali accent and this only aggravated the other problems with her style of teaching. That course seemed destined for the end of the drain.

The course spawned a whole set of jokes, Chuck Norris and Rajnikant featuring prominently in them, in keeping with the flavour of the season. Those with a bit of affinity for practical jokes would 'pain' her every five minutes, asking her questions designed to test her command of the English language as she did her impersonation of a Bengali woman coughing up a hairball. Great fun was to be had by all through this simple yet elegant ruse.

The fascination of practical jokes as a form of entertainment depends almost wholly on which side of the joke you are at. The professor was slowly but surely reaching the dregs of her reserve of patience and we were pretty sure that she would not let us off that easily. The most demanding aspect of the course was the minimum attendance of eighty five per cent. The professor informed us all unequivocally that anyone on the wrong side of that rule would be dealt with sternly.

Not being able to take it anymore, I decided that enough was enough and resolved to confront our professor and convey the general opinion of the class. I approached her one day, after class, and did my best to assume an aggressive stand. In my mind's eye, I pictured myself along the lines of Hulk, hands on hips, staring into the eyes of all evil and injustice. Seeing my stride, the professor was shocked and alarmed and quickly informed her colleagues.

Soon, a barrage of professors descended up on our class, like a wolf on the fold, rationing out advice and threats in equal measure. One professor signed off saying that rushing at a female professor and criticising her classes in loaded terms was enough to warrant a sexual harassment allegation.

Days passed and the semester came to an end. As expected, I got an 'E' grade in that course and there was nothing I could do about it. I guess the professors always have the last laugh.

# The One with the Winds

*GD Srinivasan*

It was December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The entire wing was deserted except for the two of us just like any other December. We always believed that staying back at Insti was much more fun than going home for the vacation. The mornings (i.e., 11 am onwards) were whiled away watching sitcoms, movies and skating and the nights were spent cycling and in random chats which were focused on making each day special and memorable.

One day, we decided to order two cheese burst pizzas for our evening 'snack' and I guess that did the trick! After devouring them, we had an uncomfortable feeling and both of us being highly health conscious (for a certain reason) agreed that we needed to exercise by going to Mahabalipuram on cycle and returning back the same day.

We planned the entire trip in 15 minutes. In those valuable 15 minutes, we managed to Google up the route and get some fruits for the journey. As we started at 1 am in the night, we ran into a group of friends who were astonished when we told them about our plans. Feral dogs, no emergency pumps, no shops in case of puncture, food in the form of only fruits and the dangerous OMR were their major concerns.

The wind was cool, dogs and cattle were in their own slumber, the tea shops looked busy and we chatted merrily about everything under the sun. It seemed that nothing could go wrong. But after two hours of cycling, we headed into a region of absolutely no light. We expected some kind of street light to turn up somewhere but it was the darkest part of the OMR. The roads were bumpy and any moment the cycle tires would rip open. We were in the middle of nowhere and hardly any

vehicle passed by. A punctured tire would mean that we would have to wait till 9 am in the morning.

At one point we simply couldn't figure out where we were heading. Any tanker with a drunken driver or without head lights would have surely knocked us down in that area. Murderers, robbers, kidnappers and every evil ran in our minds. All we could do was to avoid discussing them and talk of something else to distract ourselves but whatever we tried talking about, it would invariably converge back to murder. Fortunately, I remembered that we had a fully charged torch and this helped us overcome the long stretch of darkness.

Then came the next big challenge - wild dogs. They all seemed very innocent at first. At one particular stretch, there were about 20 dogs barking violently right in the middle of the road. Both of us halted our cycles, switched off the torch and stood still. We were no match against 20 dogs. An idea struck. We cycled back some 300 meters and stopped. One, two, three and go! With all the energy we had, shouting loudly we headed straight into the pack of dogs with lightning speed. This took the dogs by surprise and three dogs retaliated with a chase. At that speed, I was sure that my cycle chain would come off and even imagined myself being mauled by 3 dogs. Luckily, nothing of that sort happened and we were comfortably ahead of the dogs.

We had crossed the hurdle and cycled with a triumphant look. By then it was 3:30 am. We then took a 30 minute break at a local tea shop. The next one hour of journey was nothing different - the same deserted roads without street lights, the wild dogs and moreover, there was no hint of Mahabalipuram. We later realized that we had missed a turning when we were being by the dogs. Every extra kilometer we cycled, we convinced ourselves that it was all for the good - exercise!

We had cycled some 58 km in all. It was 5 am by the time we reached the sea shore and we were all set to see the sunrise. We threw down our cycles and lay down on the wet sand stretched out. Our legs were numb but we were still not tired. The feeling was heavenly! It being a cloudy day, we could not catch a glimpse of sunrise but we were least bothered.

Now, all we needed was some hot food. Hot *pongal* and *vada* was the first thing we craved for at that time. At around 6:30 am our need was answered and we enjoyed every bit of it. Finally, after all the roaming around in Mahabalipuram we realized that it was 9.30 am, and the sun was beating down mercilessly. Still, we didn't bother. We were content that we had seen all the places to our heart's fulfilment and decided to head back. This was a blunder. We thought we could make it back in 4 hours and we need not bother about the sun as we had our umbrellas. We didn't anticipate one factor though - the SEA BREEZE!

The breeze seemed innocent in the beginning. As we went ahead, it got stronger and stronger. At one point, we had to exert all our force to prevent the umbrellas from flying away and for achieving speed. The extremely strong winds along with the sun and lack of water made life even more miserable. After a nonstop 2 hour effort we still had 35 km. All we knew was that we were rapidly dehydrating with salt crystals visible on our face but we didn't resort to any kind of shady activity that the Bear Grylls (Ya, the Man vs. Wild chap) would do.

We took a diversion to OMR expecting the winds to be much gentler in that region but we were frustrated. The conditions were exactly identical. Added to that, was the bumpy ride on OMR and the traffic. Thankfully, we found a shop, gulped down 3 coconuts each and poured a bottle of water on our heads. At this point, we saw the board which read "Chennai 34 km" to our shock and dismay. Shyam almost went to an extent of stopping an auto but I convinced him that we should proceed. These 34 km really tested our stamina and determination.

Half dead, we finally reached Insti at 2:45 pm and heaved a sigh of relief. By that time, we had had 15 more coconuts. After a quick bath, we slumped on our beds only to wake up at 9 30 pm for dinner and go back to bed again. That entire day, we had cycled 120 km in all. The next two days, we didn't even dare to glance at our bicycles! This trip - Semester 08, Adventure 01 will surely be a memory to be cherished.

# My Sports Journey in IITM

*Bhavin Gawali*

One of the first things which I did after coming to Insti was to roam around, scouting the sports facilities. I was awe struck by the facilities we had and was as happy as a candied child. The two years spent preparing for JEE had left me frustrated and all I wanted to do was to go out there in the field and have a blast with my friends.

My first year was spent in Thamiraparni hostel and since we did not have a quady most of my time was spent playing gully cricket in and around the hostel. My first experience of Inter hostel rivalry came during freshie Schroeter. I played my part cheering my hostel teams to finals of both cricket and football. The footer team won the final but the cricket team lost in a closely contested final, but what really impressed me was the sheer intensity with which the cheering was done for all the hostels throughout the tournament. But there was also a big question in my mind, “Do you want to be remembered as the guy who was one amongst the people who cheered very well to help their hostel win or the one who played and won points for the hostel?” I found a couple of friends who played Table Tennis in the hostel and went to SAC to play with them. Luckily the Insti captain was also practicing there for Insti and he asked me to attend trials for the Insti team. In the selection round, I won couple of my matches initially but then lost the next two. However, I managed to make a good impression and was made and I was selected for the ‘B’ team. In Sports Fest, which followed almost immediately the ‘A’ team won gold and we won bronze. In that year’s Schroeter we lost all our matches against a hostel which did not even make into leagues. I was so sad that I packed my racquet and started playing cricket and football in and around the hostel again.

I was allotted Saraswathi hostel for the rest of my Insti life, the first thing I saw was the quady and almost immediately, I knew that most of my evenings would be spent in the quady. The TT racquet was out again and regular practice for NSO selection was on, but I spent most of my time in quady learning footer. After a few days, I realised that it would be difficult to get into the hostel team let alone Insti team. Hence, I choose the easier way out of it – “I became a goalie”. It was just the fifth day in Saras and I was already in the footer team. I got to play in home and away fixtures against a hostel and we won. Meanwhile, NSO TT selections came up which I got through, but I realised there was no future in TT when I saw that there were two new national players in the Insti. I went for the Footer NSO and cleared it ‘peacefully’. I even managed to clear Baskey NSO, but I chose footer. I was not selected for the Insti team that year but I kept practicing. I even broke my wrist in the second sem but ignored it as an occupational hazard. By third sem, I had seen all the videos on DC++ and YouTube about goalkeeping and practiced a few tricks on field. I managed to get into the ‘A’ team as third choice goalie, but was not selected for Inter-IIT. The Inter-IIT that year (2008) was supposed to be held in Chennai and I wanted to see it at any cost and with some help from my good friend, I became the photography co-ord for the Inter-IIT sports meet. The meet was just awesome, and it made me work harder to realize my dream to get into the Insti team.

Next year, I was still the third choice footer goalie and had to miss the Inter-IIT at Kanpur. Both the first and second choice goalies would be there the next year, so I turned to Hockey as I had a better chance of getting into the Insti team. But I was selected as the third choice yet again for being the keeper.

I was disheartened as I saw my dream of going to Inter-IIT melt away once again. But lady luck had other plans. The second choice broke his

arm in an accident and the first choice, Sunny had to leave for an intern. Sunny was not sure if he would be able to make it to the games and so I was asked to come along with the contingent to Delhi as his backup.

I was nervous and excited, nervous because I was short of practice, excited because I was finally in the Insti team. But once I went there I did exactly what I did during my first Inter-IIT experience - Photography. Even though I was not officially in the team I did get the complete Inter-IIT experience, and what an experience it was! Right from the train journey from Chennai to Delhi, fighting the Delhi winter, the awesome mess food, practicing footer under floodlights for the first time, roaming around Delhi with the team, cheering for IITM and most importantly 'winning GC'. I was there for all of it.

The next year, my fifth and final year, I chose to stick with footer but found myself again with the familiar tag of third choice goalie, a freshie and a second year ahead of me in the pecking order. And this is how my journey with the Insti teams ended. I never got to play in Inter-IIT but I did win four medals in three different sports in Insti. I went to Inter-IIT as a footer player without attending any of the footer practice sessions although in the end, a keeper with broken hand was preferred over me (yes, my friends still tease me about that). But I got what I wanted. I did go to the field regularly, made new friends, learnt new things, and most importantly, had lots of fun.

## Friends In Need Are Friends Indeed?

*Nishant*

Final semester is the best time to remember all your sins and have a nice laugh over your mischiefs. The roof top sessions in this particular semester bring out many secrets, from the ones that you have treasured over the years to the ones that you are too embarrassed to discuss. One such mischief, a life saver, took place in my second year, and involved meticulous planning, a lot of trust and three perfectly synchronized wrist watches.

It was the Math end-semester exam, and I must confess that my mathematical skills are, let's just say, not so good. The end-sem was worth 60 marks and I needed a mammoth "21" to pass the course. This task was unfathomable for someone like me, who could only manage to score 6.5 out of the 40 marks in the quizzes, and I had no doubts about it. My tutor was the "Father Figure" of our wing - Bonda and his TA was Hawa, the adorable darling of the wing. I started my preparations at 8:30 in the night after a heavy dinner. The two of them were revising the course by the time it was 12 and I was still struggling to understand the fundamentals.

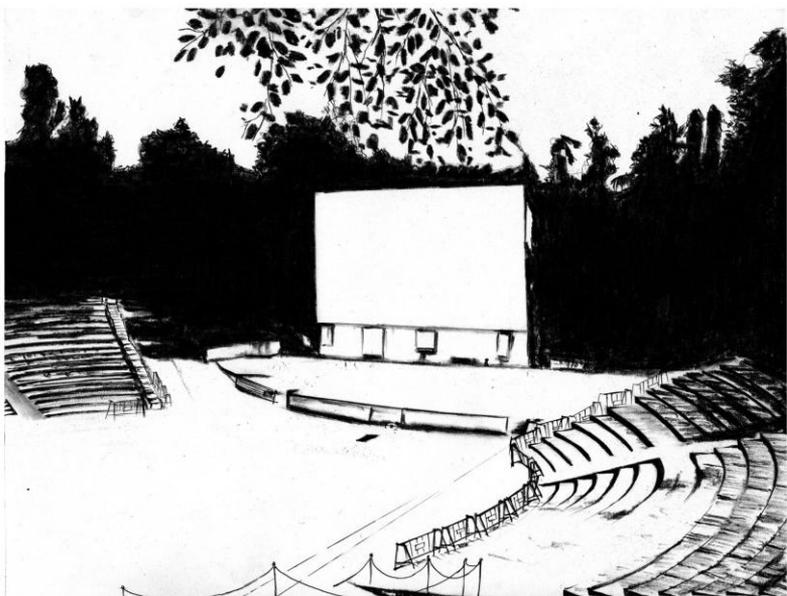
At 12, they decided to take a break and go get some grub from Basera. I still remember the look on Bonda's face when I told him that I was tired as well and would join them for grub. He was in utter disbelief that someone could take it so lite. By this time, my mind had started accepting the fact that summer term would not be such a bad thing after all and the two of them were also equally confident that I would cup the course. I don't think Basera food has ever done me more good than it did that night when it worked as the fuel for a mind blowing plan.

Since the three of us were confident that I could not score 21 on my own, additional aid was required. The biggest road block to free flow of vital information, however, was the fact that the three of us were in three different class rooms. It's true that often calamity brings out the best in a man, and since I had made up my mind to pass the course, I judiciously spent the next 45 minutes convincing the two of them to take turns and visit me in the toilet at specified time points. It was decided that Bonda, the more trustworthy of the accomplices would visit me twice; first, at the end of hour one and again half an hour before the finish. Hawa was supposed to visit me at the end of hour two. With the plan set and our watches synchronized to avoid confusion we came back to the hostel and studied a little more. I was so happy that the two of them had agreed to help me out that I decided to crash at 2 in the night; after all, I needed ample rest before the big day.

We woke up at 8, got ready, had breakfast and revised the plan. The three of us wished each other good luck and entered our respective rooms. When I got my paper, my job was cut out; I would solve whatever I could and then wait for the right time. By the end of the first hour, I was done with solving questions which summed up to only 16 marks, which was not bad at that time, since I was oozing with confidence that Bonda would come and relieve me of all this trouble. It was time for the first visit and, as planned, I reached the toilet right on time. Till then, the thought that it was possible that they might not visit me at the holy place had not occurred to me, but after spending a couple of minutes alone, a chill ran down my spine. I was being betrayed by my own wing-mates. The task of scoring the 5 extra marks still needed to pass seemed too intimidating now. The feeling that I would not be able to clear the course started to sink in and my mind started consoling me that such things happen.

But I did not give up hope. I held on to the belief that if not now, he would come later. At least, Hawa would not ditch me like this. My eyes remained pinned at the window. I decided to give it another try and see if I could manage any more questions somehow. To my surprise, even though it seemed like I had exploited all my mathematical intellect in the first hour, some new questions started making sense now. I even decided to take a chance and write whatever formulae I could remember for every question, although, at the back of my mind, I knew it was going to be useless. Meanwhile, I remained vigilant for any glimpse of familiar faces going towards the toilet. But there weren't any. The three hours passed and with a heavy heart I handed over my paper to the invigilator. It is but obvious that Bonda and Hawa received the silent treatment from me for the rest of the week.

However, things changed when I got my results, because, that year, 27 were the passing marks required for the course and I had scored 27.5! Though it only fetched me an 'E' grade, I must confess I felt really good about it. I guess I had a reason to forgive Bonda and Hawa now. Had they not ditched me I would have never gained the confidence that I could pass a Math course on my own.



# Turning Tides and Lessons of Life

*Dr. Rinku Mukherjee*

When students approached me to contribute an article for their book, they gave me a copy of their last publication entitled “The Last Bencher”. The title took me back to 1994-1998 when I was an undergraduate student at Jadavpur University. I wouldn’t use the title “The Last Bencher” for myself. I was mostly among the “The First Benchers” in every class. I remembered an incident in that context.

It was yet another afternoon class right after lunch and I was perched on the first row of benches as usual. My head was tilted a wee bit downwards towards the desk looking at the notebooks and I would raise it occasionally to look at the instructor. Both my hands were resting on the desk by the elbows and both my palms were resting on my forehead as one would usually use their palms trying to block direct sunlight.

It was nearly towards the end of the class when I realized being shaken by the shoulders by a classmate from behind. I turned around and saw him gasp! He looked at me as if he had seen a ghost. We waited till the class got over and then I accosted my classmate to find out his cause for such bewilderment. As I approached him he blurted out, “Rinku, YOU”? He was still looking at me with wide eyes. He continued, “I cannot believe YOU WERE SLEEPING ON THE FIRST BENCH”!! I smiled but he continued, “I thought you were a good girl. You always sit on the first bench but....SLEEP!!” As he started to mumble, confusion was writ large on his face. I patted him on his shoulders and moved away leaving him to deal with my “fall from grace”.

I continued to be the “good girl” who always sat on the first bench! My friend however knew the secret to my “goodness” and since that day he would diligently offer me cloves to chew on everyday without fail to keep me awake after lunch hours. I must confess: it didn’t work!

Now that I am myself a faculty, the average number of students in my UG class is around hundred. I wish we could find a way to arrange desks so that absolutely everyone would sit on the “first bench”. The journey from being a student to faculty has indeed been a stupendous one except the tables have been turned around, literally.

My first day at IIT Madras began when I walked into the Mechanical Engineering Head’s room. I was actually looking for the Applied Mechanics Head’s room and had gone into the office of a rather nice-looking building, which said “Mechanical Sciences” to enquire. The lady there directed me to the Head’s room right next door. The name on the door was different from what I had known as that of the Head of Applied Mechanics. I just presumed that the Head had changed in the last two months! I walked in accompanied by my husband. The rather imposing gentleman behind the desk asked us what we needed after taking a look at us briefly. I said I was looking for the Head of the Applied Mechanics and that I had come to join. The gentleman looked up, paused for a second and thundered in his baritone voice, “You should know there is a difference between Applied Mechanics and Mechanical Engineering. If you do not know the difference, how do you expect to study here?”

I tried to protest meekly but couldn’t muster up much courage to tell him that neither my husband nor I were students anymore! The gentleman soon directed us to the Applied Mechanics Head’s Office and we took off quickly.

I managed to formally join the Department of Applied Mechanics! My first official duty was invigilating a Quiz in CRC 101. It was 8:45 am and as I entered the room my senior colleague, whom I was meeting for the first time thundered from the other end of the room, “Where is your ID card? What is your Roll Number? How do you people come without your Identity cards”? I walked as fast as I could to reach him and lowered my voice to say, “Professor, I am a new faculty here. I am not a student”. He stared at me for a good two minutes before handing me the examination material and thundered out of the room muttering to himself. My upgradation from student to faculty was complete!

My first “real” assignment was to teach Engineering Mechanics to a class of around ninety students in CRC 101 in January 2008. As I walked into the classroom I kept asking myself as to how this was going to be different than giving a technical talk. I had borrowed books by Timoshenko, Shames and Mariam-Craige from the library, prepared some notes but really had no idea how to start. For some reason, however, I wasn’t nervous or jittery.

As I entered the classroom, students stood up. That, however, did make me nervous. I immediately asked them to sit down and requested them never to do that again. I had done this all my life myself but now it just didn’t seem right.

Well, I took attendance by calling out names. That was my way of trying to get to know the students. Some students came up to talk to me at the end of the class and I was happy to get the first day out of the way. As the classes wore on, I started learning on the job and more importantly enjoying myself. My students were an excellent lot and that helped! They were always ready with questions and my classes were very interactive, which kept me on my toes. The students were gracious enough to invite me to their “Hostel Nites” and I got to spend some

time with them outside of class as well and got to know them better. During my student days, I had never visited the boys' hostels even during "Cultural Nites" open for families. So this was a first too for me at IIT Madras.

I think most often than not, we, adults, do not seem to acknowledge that even we are nervous when we start teaching and guiding students for the first time as part of our duties as a faculty and while doing so, we too are learning the ropes as much as our students. We forget how nervous we were when we were looking for jobs after our PhDs. We were nervous when we gave our first faculty candidate talk, we were nervous when we answered questions of the selection committee and we literally "wet our pants" when we were interviewed in the Director's office!

It is of utmost importance to us that we do well, not just to prove a point to our peers and seniors but also to our students. We, as teachers and guides want our students to respect us and praise us and say nice things to us as much as our students want the same things from us. The bottom line is that like our students, we want to get good grades too! I have realised that I am actually no different from an average student other than the fact that I am several years older in age (I would like to look at it as experience). It is also interesting how I, as a faculty or adult or the senior have learnt many of life's lessons from the experiences of students. So, as long as I am learning, I am growing and I am alive. The day I stop learning or feeling nervous and jittery, I will be dead.

It is interesting how I, as a faculty or adult or senior have learnt many of life's lessons from the experiences of students. I once scolded a student, Raghu, who, whenever I asked him anything, would stand up, put his hands over his mouth, shudder and murmur below his breath. I was very irritated with his behaviour and made sure he knew that.

Later, Raghu came to my office and we had a chat. He told me how he was from a remote village, he had studied in schools which barely had a tin shed, he did not know the English language, how he felt pretty out of place in a city like Chennai and how students from cities like Mumbai discriminated against him or made fun of him. Many such attitudes and his struggle to come to terms with his own realities had made him develop a very low self-esteem. He was also thwarted by my ability to speak English and he was also ‘scared’ of my accent!

I was really taken aback by this new reality that I was facing. I took a few minutes before I got myself together and before I could say anything. I narrated to him that my upbringing had been way more privileged than he could possibly imagine. In fact, I was beginning to thank my stars for it all over again! I apologized to him for having judged him without realizing that I would be hurting him so badly. However, I also told him that if he had low self-esteem, he had to blame himself and not his peers or ‘friends’! He looked at me with wide eyes.

“You have fought your conditions, competed at the JEE and now you have got an equal footing at IIT Madras, just like all other students in your class, whether they are from Mumbai or Chennai”, I explained.

“You should be proud of your achievement and set an example for others to follow. Instead, if you are feeling low about how you speak and how you dress or how much money your family has, who do you think you should blame?”

I saw him light up. As he left my room I saw a spring in his step. He seemed to be a different person from that day on. At least I thought so.

What he didn’t realize however, is that he had changed me as a person. He had taught me to look beyond the obvious. This incident had “Dude, get off the high horse” written all over it!

I was always happy that I had it all sorted and I was clear in my head since I did not believe in any bias on the basis of caste or creed or gender or religion but incidents like these have made me take responsibility. I have had to open up the closed boxes and take a re-look at them! And only my students have helped me do that. I have felt the pain of my student, who has faced backlash due to his religion, I have tried to understand the struggles of a student belonging to a certain caste, I have felt one with the girl student who was fighting to find her place in the world and so on.

As a student I was taught by my teachers and as a faculty, I am being taught by my students. And I thought I had finally got a good enough education after I earned my PhD!

# Placements – The Biggest Roller Coaster

*Rakesh Sridhar*

When I was a freshie, I didn't care much about placements. But then, the curiosity was always there to know what the pay packages were, which companies came to recruit, etc. Sadly the data published in the newspapers are usually rumours and the numbers published are partly wrong, if not altogether farcical. And to be honest, I had no idea of the different types of companies coming for placements (except for core companies in Automobiles and Software companies). So, I think it might be good to share my experience for the benefit of the juniors.

Disclaimer: I don't plan to publish any data on the offered pay packages. So, if you are searching for some numbers in this page, I'm sorry. There aren't any!

Placements at IITM start in the beginning of December and go on for a month or more. Unlike the IIMs, we call the first day of placements as Day 1 and not Day 0. The companies which come on Day 1 are some of the best in the World – McKinsey & Co., BCG, Deutsche Bank, HUL, ITC, Shell, etc. Moving on, if you get placed on Day 1, you'll be deregistered from placements and you cannot sit for any company from Day 2 onwards.

The companies which come to Insti can be broadly classified into 5 types:

1. Consulting firms – McKinsey, BCG, Deloitte, ZS Associates, etc.
2. Banking (Investment banking mostly) – Goldman Sachs, Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse, Morgan Stanley (?), American Express, etc.

3. The so-called Core but I would call them Supply chain companies - HUL, ITC.
4. Core - Schlumberger, Shell, etc. [Honda, Hyundai from this year!]
5. Analytics - Capital One, Nomura (?), etc.

Based on the resumes, companies shortlist candidates. In short, they look at your CG and the extra-curricular in your resume. And the shortlists start coming out sometime in early November with the consulting firms releasing them first. And the preparation starts now. The preparation depends on the company you are applying to. As far as I know, the finance and the CAT preparation go hand in hand. The consultancy preps are altogether different with emphasis on case studies. And the core, as one might know, tests you on fundamentals of core subjects. No rocket science (Unless you're in Aero!) One important thing to note here is that there will be some new companies coming in now and then. Some of them will be so good that you might like them so much. And so, it is a better idea to have a little prep on each of the different types. In my case, I had no concrete intentions to get into core. So, I was just preparing for consulting firms. But then, Honda and Hyundai registered for the very first time this year and I was immediately attracted to core companies.

That was a broad idea on placements. I'll share my personal experience now.

25 Oct. 2011 - I was in Delhi for the Indian F1 GP. The first shortlist came out then. It was Boston Consulting Group (BCG), one of the top management consulting firms in the World. Out of the 20 shortlisted, I was one. I'm guessing the uniqueness of my resume got me through. I had done almost everything with respect to Automobile Engineering and hence, it was a proper Auto nut resume, which you don't see as often as you would see a Cul sec or a BP1 or a Core + ITC intern's

resume! A few days later, McKinsey released its shortlist. And out of the 26 in the list, I was there, again! It's not easy to get in these shortlists but if you have gotten through, you are good, no doubts whatsoever. By this time, I realized that I had something special in my resume and there is no way I'm not getting a job.

And with the news that Honda and Hyundai are coming, I grew confident and narrowed down my options to just 2 types of companies - Automobiles and Consulting firms. For some unknown reason, I was over confident about my chances in Auto corps and hence, concentrated only on the Consulting companies. Days passed. My B. Tech project kept me busy for most of the semester and I reached the final few days before the interviews began. And as I had hoped for, I was in the shortlists of all the four: BCG, McKinsey, Honda and Hyundai! To be honest, I didn't really like the idea of joining an India-based R&D. And for some reason, I didn't like the idea of working in some Soap company. So, HUL, ITC, Shell, CAT, etc. were never in my spectrum.

The Day 1 dawned finally! Suited up in my unbelievably cheap 30 Euro German suit, I went to Mahanadi hostel, the venue of the interviews. At exactly quarter past seven, my first interview began. It was with BCG. A big surprise awaited me. The BCG interviewer started with a case skipping the usual HR part. Since I didn't do even a single case in the past 2 days, I was scratchy in my approach initially. But as the interview progressed, I gained some traction. At the end of the interview, I realized that it wasn't good enough to get through. But, they usually offer a second chance and I did my second round with an Ex-Suzuki employee. My HR part of the interview was good. Again, I committed a few errors in Case interview and I realized it quickly. After the interview was over, I was convinced that I was not going to make it. Though it was sad, I knew that I learnt a good lesson and proceeded to

the McKinsey interviews with confidence. After all, I always wanted McKinsey more than BCG.

My first McKinsey interview was with a top partner who works in the Social sector. I kind of struck a chord with him in the initial five minutes. The forty five minutes session was more of a normal discussion than an interview. And with the interviewer asking me questions in Tamil, I was feeling very relaxed and I have to accept that it was the best interview among all of my 7 interviews. Full of confidence, I went to the next room for my second interview. This one was a complicated number-based case. I made a lot of errors here and there. But then, I picked up the mistakes quite well and wasn't really bogged down. On the whole, the case went okay but definitely not great.

One important thing to mention here: Out of the 7 companies I'm eligible for applying on Day 1, I was shortlisted in only 2 companies – BCG and McK! That was very strange especially considering my tech-based resume. But then, I think the so-called tech companies knew that I won't work for any oil company or soap company... Only automobiles, my resume shouted!

With the BCG option clearly out of the window, I knew that if I'm not getting into the final stage of McK, I'm done for the day. And it was just half past 11! Since my second McKinsey interview was ordinary, my mind reached the state of 'give-up!' Also, my peers were discussing about how great their interviews were. All these made those nervous times almost impossible to handle. But, the hope for that slightest chance of getting through was there. Last year, McK shortlisted twelve out of the twenty six candidates for the final round. So, there was always a 50% probability! Half an hour later, my first interviewer comes out with the list and starts announcing the names. I thought I heard my name somewhere in the 6 names he read out. But, I dismissed the

thought as a dream. Two minutes later, the Placement in-charge woke me up and told me that it was not a dream but a reality! I had made it to the top 6 for the final round of McK interviews. Unbelievable!

With my heart beat in frenzy, I gobbled some Tiffany's food offered by the interviewers. A few minutes later, I had my third interview. I had nothing to lose but everything to win! You basically start from scratch now. So, I forgot everything and went into the interview room with calmness and confidence. A 20 minutes HR interview started off the proceedings. It went on well, I should say. Then came the sad part - A simple case. I started off really well but after a point, there was clearly a huge communication gap between me and the interviewer. I tried to explain and he tried to explain his vision to me. But it was of no use and I had to admit that I started 'bulbing' like crazy. The interview ended badly.

Coming out of the room, I felt like a big loser. It was so close! I thought I was done for the day and was planning to leave. Suddenly, the McK people called me for my fourth interview! I knew that it was going to be a make or break one. I went in and did quite well. I cracked the case thoroughly and the interviewer was all praise for me. He exclaimed, "Terrific! Terrific! That's all I need!!" I thought I had done it and was hoping for that one last confirmation. A nervous 30 minutes passed and then, came the results. I didn't get through. I was devastated. There was no way I'm going to lose this one after such an awesome fourth interview. But, life is like that. You never know what is gonna happen

'Pained'. That evening was very hard on me. After a few hours, I was okay and told myself that something big is waiting for me! And Hyundai was actually there the next evening. It is the first time Hyundai had come to Insti and this was a part of the Global talent search program. It looked apt for me in several ways. Convinced about my chances in Hyundai, I skipped my Schlumberger and Capital One

interviews on Day 2 despite being shortlisted! Skipping Schlum was too daring a decision but I think it was the right decision to make at that point of time.

The Hyundai's process started off with an analytical ability test which I cracked 'peacefully'. Then came the interviews. Twelve of us were shortlisted. It was a single round of interview and the interview panel consisted of some of the top guys in Hyundai - two Koreans and three Indians. I was over enthusiastic and hence, started speaking very well. Automobiles are something I can speak about for years together and I am most fluent when I talk about them. I just ran through the 45 minutes interview beaming with enthusiasm. I answered almost everything except for a few tech questions. Since I was just the second one (out of 12) to be interviewed, I had to wait for something like 4 hours for the results to come out. I was confident that I'm getting placed in Hyundai. Quarter past midnight, the results came out. I checked the list and was astonished not to find my name. Not even in the waitlist! It was just too unbelievable especially after the great interview. If McKinsey devastated me, this one demolished me completely. I had no answers to why I was not selected.

Unable to control myself, I approached one of the interviewers and asked him, "what the heck is going on?!" (No words changed!) He was smiling and was visibly happy during my interview and hence, I thought he would give me the most honest answer. He said, "You speak too fast an English for a Korean to understand!" Would you believe that! I was like WTF! He finished off saying some proverb (in Tamil) meaning, "Whatever is destined to stick to you will stick!" And then, he said the cliché statement, "Something big is waiting for you!" I heard this statement more often than anything else on those two days of placements.

Two back to back blows. And the pain of skipping something as big as Schlum. I was done in. Well, not really. I decided that I'll wait for that big thing to come before I give up. Honda R&D, Japan was coming to recruit in India for the first time and IITM was there in their radar apart from IITD. Because of some logistics problems, they had to come on Day 5 though IITM offered them a slot on Day 1. Two important things to know about Honda: 1.) It is the first international placement in Core for Mech, 2.) It offers the highest pay package among all Core companies incl. Schlum! Could this be that 'big thing' waiting for me? I guessed so. And hence, I decided not to sit for any companies on Day 3 and Day 4. It was again a daring decision to skip CAT, NI, etc. but I knew that Honda is that big thing!

The idea to skip Day 3 and Day 4 gave me enough time to recover and recoup myself. Those 2 days gave me some time to touch up on my fundamental knowledge of Automobiles. Other than tech and HR, I was going wrong at a few places (Feedback from Hyundai) - Like my fast English and over enthusiasm. Thanks to a friend, now a McK associate, I learnt how to speak slowly! And an invite from the Swedish embassy in Bangalore helped me chill off at the Taj Vivanta on Day 4 of the placements! The two days gave me that much needed energy to face the Honda interview. And the D-day arrived finally.

5/12/2011. 1400hrs. I had requested the Placement team to schedule my Honda interview late in the evening. And they did. My interview was among the last 5. Before I went in, the placement Co-ordinator informed me that Honda was yet to find that perfect student they are looking for. I told myself that there is no way I'm losing this one unless destiny wanted me to! So, with all the confidence, I went in for my HR interview. I corrected my Hyundai mistake of speaking so fast. I spoke slowly and clearly. And they asked the same set of questions I had anticipated - Like "Why Japan?", "Why Honda?" etc. They had some

crazy questions too – Like “Will you marry a Japanese girl?” I answered from my heart with the mind coming in for those crazy questions. As expected, the HR panel was visibly impressed. Next up, it was the tech interview. The earlier interviewees were of the opinion that Tech round was more HR than HR round! But, I dismissed all those feedback and went in with a clear mind. “Ask me Tech, I’ll answer you! Ask me HR, I’ll answer that too!!”

The HR round is conducted by an external consultancy but the Tech round is conducted by an all Japanese team from Honda. As my fellow interviewees had informed me, it was proper HR. The same old questions, “Why Japan?” etc. After those, came a tech question. “Explain me the difference between Honda’s hybrid system and Toyota’s hybrid system.” It was a doubt I had in my mind for a long time before the morning of the interview. I had checked the answer just in the forenoon! Luck? Well, may be. I answered it very well and asked him, “Is that enough or do you need more detail?” The interviewer was very impressed and I could see it! The interview ended with that question. And again, the wait for the results began!

This one didn’t take 30 min (McK) or 4 hours (Hyundai) but just 5 min! The HR person informed that they had selected me! I refused to believe him until I saw the entire 10 member strong Japanese contingent from Honda calling me for a photo shoot! And yes, I did it! I’ve made it to one of the most prestigious automobile R&D’s in the World! But by this time, I was weathered with these random highs and lows of life that I didn’t experience the entire excitement. A few minutes later, I realized that they had selected just me. So, I became the first and the only IIT M guy to get placed in Honda R&D in Japan.

The placement season which started on a high note with my BCG and McK shortlists ended on a high with Honda despite the lows during Hyundai. I had finally succeeded, in my seventh interview!

# Starting Up

*Imran Parvez*

*If you want something all by your heart then whole world will conspire for you to achieve it.*

- Paulo Coelho

There are 2 kinds of people at IIT – Those who do not have a clue what they want to do of them. And those who exactly know what they want and define their life accordingly. I didn't belong to either category till a certain point. I was more of a windsock – A sock that moves in whichever direction the wind blows.

3<sup>rd</sup> semester was all about running if I have to describe it in one word. Apart from academics one had to run for several things, run for fundaes, run for senior's work, run away from senior's work. Everyone was trying to be a coordinator for some or the other thing in Saarang. I particularly didn't have a specific Co-ordship in mind. One could apply for 3 posts. I was fairly confident about getting GA and I was good at design. So, GA and Design became my first and second choices respectively.

After my design coordinator interview, the design core called up called up the GA core and asked him not to give me GA as he wanted me to be in design. And thus my journey in design began.

5 months design was a steep learning curve for me. I was the only coordinator whose works were used for Saarang apart from Infy's (my core). This was it – I decided that I would not leave design and will keep doing it for the rest of my life.

Saarang got over and it was election time. My eyes were keen on who was going to be the Cul-Sec because I wanted to become Design Core for Saarang 2010. Co-CAS election was the least of my interest. BMX became the Co-CAS and it wasn't even a week after elections that he called me up and said he wanted to meet me.

“Hi! Chill, I am BMX”, he said.

“Hi! Congrats!” I said, still failing to understand why Co-CAS would want to meet me.

“I'll come straight to the point. I want you to put for Design Core for Shaastra”, he said it as if it was a very small thing.

“What?” I was shocked because I had Saarang coreship in mind and not Shaastra. “I have to think, I mean I was thinking of Saarang”, I said. In fact, I indeed thought that I would be a Shaastra Design Coordinator in 2009 and then apply for Saarang Core 2010.

The week after that was really a tough one. I asked a lot of my friends if I should take it up. Many of them were skeptical, mostly because it wasn't until then that 3<sup>rd</sup> years would become core. I met 2 important people, Mamme and Infy. Infy said “Designers for Shaastra is thinking and for Saarang is playing. Define who you are and decide”. Mamme said “Don't worry. It will not be really hard”.

I was enjoying what I was doing. It didn't look tough, it wasn't difficult. I liked my work. I am a Dualite and I had finished only 5 semesters till then and I had taken up the highest position one could take (being a core). I hardly had any post I could apply for after that. I started blogging, designing for several start-ups (mostly my friends'). Design as a hobby was looking really good. Design as a job wasn't really in my mind.

8<sup>th</sup> semester: Engineering Design has a 6 month intern to be done during the 8<sup>th</sup> semester. Mine was at Philips. The work wasn't really interesting to me. Knowingly or unknowingly, I ended up doing a great job. People at Philips were really impressed with my work. One thing, which swept them off their feet, was the presentation I made. I made a video presentation. And the way I explained all my work was easily understandable in the video. I ended up doing design even at work. That was when I realized that given a job, I would do it anyways, but I would do a good job when I design.

After coming back to Insti after my internship, I had a PPO in hand. Having a job security was something big. With the placement's season in just about 3 months, I met some people who gave me a small hope. I met Rohit, Ghoda and Ram from Desto. I already knew Ravi from my Shastra Core time. They wanted me to work for them and it was nothing new except for more challenging work. I was again doing what was the most interesting thing for me. 3 months just flew by and I still was stuck to my computer with image-editing software running on it round the clock.

One such day in December, when all my friends were busy preparing for the interviews, I was in deep thoughts. Should I sit for placements and get a job? What would I tell my parents? Lots of questions were bothering me. One feeling was strong inside me: *I don't want to give up my freedom for some 50k, 9 to 5 job.*

I love my parents a lot; I know everyone does. My parents gave me a lot of freedom to do whatever I wanted to do with my life. They believed in me and just asked me to follow my heart. I was really clueless on how to tell them that I didn't want to sit for placements. I knew they would not say anything if I told them that, but I wanted to give them a real strong reason as to why I didn't want to get placed. I decided to sit for a few

companies and if I got a job, I would go and say that I got a job but I didn't want to do it. I wanted to be with Desto and do interesting stuff.

December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011

It was the GM interview: My first interview. As expected, I couldn't convince the panel about why I was interested in that job profile because I wasn't. It ended up making me more resolved to follow my heart instead of the crowd.

Two days later,

My parents came to Chennai.

"What is happening with your placements? Do you have any interviews tomorrow?" Dad asked.

"Dad, I don't want to sit for placements. I don't want to take up a job at all. I want to be in Desto and work in it. That is what is interesting to me and defines me. I can't go do a job from morning to evening and earn some 50k at the end of the month. I don't want that 50k also. If I am doing something that I am passionate about and earn money, I am satisfied with whatever I earn. I don't want to go work for someone. I want to work for myself".

They were really happy. I love them for everything.

*It doesn't matter if you've done hundred and one things today, if you've done something that leads you towards your dream then you can happily sleep.*

Life is all about what you make of it. I am proud of what I am right now. I thank all my friends for helping me to shape myself. I would like to thank a few especially: Geethika, Ghoda, Warner, Srujan, Akram (my brother) and my wing mates.

## Team Introductions

### **Bardar**

The nutcracker who makes sure the team is never too engulfed into serious business. He is generally the butt end of most of the team's jokes but definitely the glue that holds this team together. After putting his foot in everything under the Sun, Bardar has emerged as a man of uncountable arts. You can get a glimpse of a few such talents at [shhhhbardarispeaking.blogspot.com](http://shhhhbardarispeaking.blogspot.com).

### **Abhinav**

True to his nickname 'Cop', Abhinav is tall, serious and hardworking. He has excellent management skills and has played a very pivotal role in getting this book together. He sees the world in a different way and has an overzealous passion towards capturing its living colour through his photography and designing skills. One work of advice though. Ask him to narrate a story only if you feel you have nothing better to do in the next 3 hours of your life.

### **Kiranmayi**

As one of the most organized members of the team, Kiranmayi makes sure every editor does his or her job on time. She has the eye for quality and had the final call in selecting the articles for the book. A great

admirer of the English language ever since she can remember, she aspires to be a technical writer after she completes her PhD and tries to find as much time as possible between her late nights at lab and her research seminars to keep up with this passion.

### **Trinath**

Literally the ‘ghost’ of the team, Trinath watches everything from above and intervenes only when really required. Name any book that you have recently read and this guy would have read it ages ago. Talk to him about movies and you can see the same spark in his eyes. An extremely eloquent speaker, Trinath will not let you even realise when he grips your attention and immerses you into his fascinating anecdotes, our favourite ones being the ghost stories from when he was a B.Tech student here, 4 years ago. Another reason why we call him the ‘ghost’ editor of the team. His poetry can be read at [musingsbytrinath.blospot.com](http://musingsbytrinath.blospot.com).

### **Sohini**

Sohini, the building block of the team is one of the liveliest persons we know of. She loves writing (and we mean literally), so much so that she actually prefers anything being handwritten than typed. Be it arranging for a treat or a day out with friends, she is always the most enthusiastic person to do so. She enjoys collecting stamps, coins apart from writing letters and poems at [eccentricityatitsbest@wordpress.com](mailto:eccentricityatitsbest@wordpress.com).

## **Darsana**

Darsana is the sweet and silent load runner of the team. Any editor's dream writer, she will always smile and get the job done on time no matter how many articles you give her. Not only is she prompt but she pours life into each and every word she writes. Besides her exquisite writing, the glimpse of which can be caught at [darzwrites.blogspot.com](http://darzwrites.blogspot.com), she is known for playing Veena.

## **Basil**

The Midas of the team, Basil can transform the most boring of articles into an interesting read. If you are lost in a web of stud similes while reading some article, Basil is to be blamed. He is a huge fan of the Arsenal football club. He writes when bugged and otherwise at [basiljames.blogspot.com](http://basiljames.blogspot.com)

## **Anuran**

Anuran is the magician responsible for the breathtaking, life-like sketches in this book. Beneath those misleading body builder looks is an exceptional artist who has been into sketching since the last 12 years. Watching his hands move stroke by stroke towards each and every one of his fabulous sketches is a pleasure. Anuran loves to spend his leisure time on the BT department rooftop gazing into the sky, looking for inspiration.

## **Madhukant**

This Sainik Mama (an alumnus of Sainik School) can be identified by his unique capability of being funny and boring, at the same time. An academically serious student (in short, *Maggu*) and a Civil Services aspirant, he claims to have recently developed an interest in writing and reading. True to his nick - Nagin, he is a little short tempered, and thus seems unapproachable to strangers in the beginning but his hostel mates feel otherwise.

## **Ankit**

Ankit loves to travel and had covered many places in the country. Apart from that, he is a huge tech geek especially in the field of mobile phones. His hobbies include cricket, writing and listening to Kishore Kumar Songs. He often writes about his travel experiences at [ankitbehura.blogspot.com](http://ankitbehura.blogspot.com)

## **Sarthak**

Sarthak loves writing, so much so that he wanted to talk to people and write their stories just for the fun of it. He is also a part of many writing activities on campus including TFE (The Fifth Estate) and the newsletter teams. He is world famous in IITM for his crazy PJs and one of the key members of Facebook pages like IIT Madras Mokka club and IITM Memes.

## **Evelyn**

Although the youngest member of the team, Evelyn has a lot to teach the others in terms of punctuality. Always completes her work before the deadlines and spends the rest of the time immersed in books in the library. She must be credited with running around and getting together the most number of articles for the book. A War movies addict, she counts 'War and Peace' as one of her favourite books.

## **Elangkumaran**

Elan is one very observant person and an exceptional writer. He has the notion that it's the small everyday things that adds value to our lives and he uses these things that we often take for granted to pour life into his articles. Sravanth and Elan made a great tag team and made sure that the articles that went to the editors required no further work.

## **Sravanth**

Sravanth is one of the most hardworking members of the team. He is someone who puts in a lot of legwork and was very pivotal in collecting articles from the final year students. He is very prompt, enthusiastic and always full of ideas. Besides that he is a huge wrestling fan.

## **Sowmya**

Sowmya pours her heart into more number of activities in Insti than anyone can imagine possible. Be it her department festivals or Shaastra and Saarang, she leaves no stone unturned and is forever rushing between various things on her to-do list. She never misses a meeting despite being involved in so many activities.

## **Dhruv**

Dhruv is one who knows the 'whos-who' in Insti. A late entrant into the team, he has the tendency to disappear often only to be found chilling out at Gurunath or more often at Café Coffee Day.