



# The Last Bench

and the journey beyond...

IIT Madras Alumni Association

The Last Bench

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Self publishing

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# Foreword

"But what can a decent man speak of with most pleasure? Of himself. Well, so I will talk about myself." - Fyodor Dostoevsky

IIT Madras, or Insti as it is affectionately known inside the campus, is a warehouse of fond memories and gripping anecdotes. Every year, Insti welcomes into its lush green campus a couple of thousand students scattered across different departments. Each of them proceeds to carve out his/her niche in Insti and engrave his/her presence in the annals of Insti folklore with interesting and riveting tales. These stories deserve to be told to a much larger audience or at least to be preserved for the posterity to read and enjoy. The Insti bursts at its seams with stories waiting to be told; the stories that take a hacksaw and cuts up its 'Iyer and Iyengar Institute' image into six.

The Last Bencher is a venture to collect the best stories and writings from the batch of 2011 and bring it out in a consolidated format of a book. A wide range of people from all parts of the country, of different viewpoints and of different habits have contributed to this book, making it a truly pan-Insti publication. Opinions, articles about events and happenings inside IIT Madras, eye-ball grabbing anecdotes, all found their place in this book.

Nicknames have always been a critical part of Insti culture. In an institute housing a few thousand people, catchy nicknames based on personal quirks or special incidents in life can be very handy. Nicknames that just roll off one's tongue become famous, so much so that real names are often forgotten in the cobwebs of memory. This culture of nicknames has naturally got its due in The Last Bencher.

A few professors have contributed to this nascent endeavour, providing a wholly different perspective. A warden's account of his

tenure in charge of a hostel and a professor's ruminations on the times in which he first came to IIT Madras and how it is different today are a couple of examples. In this book, they prove that they can be 'cool' in their own way, providing crucial insights on various aspects of life in IIT Madras.

The Book of memories, as it is fondly referred to by us, is exclusively a student venture. The idea for such a book was mooted by us, a few final year students of the institute. We set about, with vigour and zeal, to assemble a team who could successfully pull off the task of going about Insti and collecting stories and articles from various final year students. The team was divided into correspondents, editors and designers. Over a period of three months, our team went around IIT Madras on the lookout for interesting and attention grabbing pieces. People were met, cajoled into writing or at least persuaded to narrate their stories to correspondents. It was not easy to force final year students to go down the memory lane and hunt for interesting stories that were good (and clean) enough to be put in the book. Getting a good number of final years to set aside time for this purpose seemed, at first, impossible, then improbable and as time progressed, bordering on the inevitable. Finally, it was done.

The Last Bencher was certainly a herculean task. A lot of effort was put in to make this book a reality. As backs are slapped, high fives exchanged and the champagne uncorked, gratitude has to be expressed and the vital assistance of many to be acknowledged. Thanking each and every person who has contributed to this book may be an Aegean stable of its own and therefore we would like to keep it short. The very content of this book has been provided by many final year students in Insti and it is to them that we would like to extend bouquets of thanks for making sure that this book provides for an entertaining read.

## **Message from the Alumni Affairs Council, 2010-2011**

The Student Alumni Affairs Council is a new entity this year, at IIT Madras and we are proud to have come this far since its inception. Over the past academic year, we had provided an effective bridge between the alumni and students with a series of events like Connect-2010, Mock Interviews, Special Mentoring Lectures and Workshop on Entrepreneurship.

Adieu-2011, the graduation party hosted by the IIT Madras Alumni Association, is the culminating event in the calendar. Consequently, we needed a medium to record the cherished memories of our peers and seniors and thus, the ‘The Last Bencher’ happened. Our objective was to immortalize the institute experiences of the final year students into a book which would remain as a token of memory of their celebrated lives at IIT Madras. We are immensely thankful to the team of “The Last Bencher” for their excellent efforts in translating this idea into a reality. Also, we acknowledge the support of IIT Madras Alumni Association, in taking this idea forward.

It was a privilege for us to make this unprecedented attempt. Moreover, the outcome is meticulously descriptive and an excellent read. We sincerely hope to make this a yearly affair.

Wishing you a future filled with flying colours, the Alumni Affairs Council bids a grand Adieu. We hope that you would find this book as a prized souvenir of IIT Madras.

Govind Gopinath

Pravimal Abhishek

Baranidaran P

Ardra Manasi

Alumni Affairs Council, 2010-2011





# From Editor's Desk

The first words that come to our minds when we think of Insti are peace, freedom and opportunity. The beautiful, calm and serene campus has provided space for more than just fun and frolic. It has accommodated a host of opportunities for us to pick up interests outside of academics and to nurture them. It gave us the chance to meet a varied set of personalities from all parts of the country. But what we can never forget and what we thank Insti for is that it has helped us become self-dependent.

When we had first walked into Insti, we feared not being able to mingle with the new surroundings and the strange set of people around us. Insti was not home but it was warm and welcoming. We interacted a lot with seniors and other mates of our age only to realize that they shared the same feeling. The loads of activities happening everyday kept us on our toes and we never felt bored. In fact, one of us gleefully said, "I felt home-sick for the first time in my 7<sup>th</sup> semester."

Through the years, our perspectives and views on various issues have changed and we have learnt more values. We have learnt to admit our mistakes and are more open to other's views now. We have learnt to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and behave appropriately in all kinds of situations. All in all, we have learnt to maintain a balanced life. A balance between academics and extra-curriculars. A balance between family and friends. A balanced diet.

Picking out one or two instances from a hoard of memories is very hard. Our memories star all the friends who stood with us through thick and thin, the fun we had in hostels and many more random incidents which can't be categorized. The Last Bencher is an attempt to immortalize those memories. This is to all those friends who lived those moments with us.

Surbhi Maheshwari  
Kanwaljeet Singh  
Sapeksha Vemulapati

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# Hello Da Macha!

*Partha and Bardar*

Cast away from the outside world there lives a tribe – smart, prudent and a proud possessor of a dialect that has been well conserved over decades of modernization. They call this language “The IITM lingo”.

It's not bows and arrows that they wield; they keep others at bay with their knowledge and expertise at engineering. Want of brevity necessitated the formation of their lingo while creativity fuelled it to become what it is today. To an outsider, it might sound Hebrew but for the members of the tribe it is the way of communication. Since no dictionary (other than a particular Master's thesis) documents the words used in the lingo it became necessary to connect their language with their behaviour.

Late in the night if you ask a member of the tribe when he would be sleeping you would get an answer “I will be crashing late, da.”

The lingo serves as a great verbal code for the inmates for they can insult anyone without the knowledge of the person concerned.

If they were to meet a show-off they tag him as a “pseud putter”.

If a member gives an exam and comes back to exclaim, “Rod maxx paper ra! I am raped”, he means that the paper was difficult.

They call their home as “Insti” and refer to their members as “junta”. Outsiders are generally characterized to be “arbit junta” and referred to as “non-insti”.

This language is passed on from generation to generation through a ceremonial proceeding known as a “fundae session”.

Competition anywhere is inevitable and so much so in the tribe. A member who deliberately tries to spoil/halt the endeavours of another is referred to as RG.

There are different kinds of people in this clan- some of them are very “enthu” about whatever they do, some “put peace” while others



“put fart”. The “enthu junta” are usually the most vibrant people who enjoy working. The “peace putters” are people who would rather lie on their beds and would rather not work unless compelled to. They usually “pack” stuff until it becomes extremely necessary. The “fart putters” are the ones who do not do any kind of useless stuff and only “put fart”.

It was evident that these people were not atheists. For a person who excels at something is compare to God – “God-level” and are usually considered at the top. Some who are a little lower in hierarchy are referred to as studs below which lie “gen junta”.

When asked whether or not this lingo can be decoded for the “arbit junta” so that they may understand the cultural and linguistic intricacies of the tribe a member replied “nicest try!” meaning to suggest that it is very difficult to do so.

The language seems to be evolving as well for the newer generations are adapting to increasing need of incorporating more and more technical terms into the lingo. On being asked to explain scientific principles, the community members become excited and keep on repeating two words – “ob”, standing for obviously and “slisha”, standing for slightly. These are generally used with everything else. For example – “Ob, India will win the world cup, though Australia is slisha pain”.

The superlatives seem very easy to grasp. They are simply formed by suffixing -maxx to any word. For ex- ob maxx... sometimes a higher dE.g.ree of superlative may be used which allows the usage of maxest maxx- ob maxest maxx.

Since many social experiments are difficult to perform here is a list of words in the lingo which was chronicled through after much effort. This is by no means an exhaustive list.





- Arbit** Arbitrary, Random.
- ax** Universal suffix, a shortened form of max; painax, rapeax
- BOG** Abbreviation for Bathrooms Of Graduating students
- Bulb** Not understanding some point or understanding it after a considerable delay
- Crash** Sleep
- Crib** To complain about something
- Cup** To fail in something. Originated from the U grade (symbolising a cup)
- Despo** Desperate.
- Enthu** Enthusiasm, being enthusiastic E.g.: Why so much enthu?
- Fart** Useless discussion. without any reason
- Fight** Effort, usually associated with put; put fight
- Funda** Reason, concept.
- Fundaes** Knowledge, Info. E.g.: He has proper fundaes on microchips.
- Gen** Generally. For no specific reason E.g.: Why did you jump? Gen.
- Give up** Something bad in quality or quantity. E.g.: Mess food was give up
- Grand-slam** Bunking all the classes in a day
- Grub** Food. E.g.: Get some grub for me
- Guru** Gurunath, students facilities centre in IITM
- Hajjar** Lots. E.g.: I have hajjar friends in IIT
- Hi funda** An exclamation appreciating an idea or concept. E.g.: Inception movie is hi funda
- Junta** People
- Level** Refers to the capabilities of a person; god level, cup level
- Lite** Not caring about something. E.g.: I took the assignment lite
- Macha** Insti word for Dude. E.g.: Macha, what's up?
- Maxx** Superlative to any state or action. E.g.: Give up maxx
- Mug** To study. E.g.: I am mugging
- Muggu** Generally used for toppers of the class or people with high CGPA or those who mug a lot
- N** Universal prefix, implying very. E.g.: Got N-pained in the class.



- Ob** Obviously
- Pack** Delaying or not doing a task. E.g.: I packed my classes today.
- Pain** Annoyance, boredom or difficulty. E.g.: She pained us for two hours with her stories.
- Peace** Easy. E.g. This assignment is peace. Not doing anything. E.g. Prof is am putting peace in class.
- Prof** Professor
- Pseud** Exclamation for something more than high-funda
- Pseud putting** Showing off
- Put its** Do it, tell
- Ra/Da** Universal endearing terms. E.g.: Wassup da?
- Rape<sup>1</sup>** Doing something very badly. E.g.: I got raped in today's quiz.
- Rape<sup>2</sup>** Doing something very well. E.g.: I raped the exam.
- RG<sup>1</sup>** Deliberately trying to spoil/halt the endeavours of another.
- RG<sup>2</sup>** Short for Royal Gangrape. Another word for "toasts" that friends give to the passing out people in the hostel.
- Rod** Difficult. E.g.: The question paper was rod
- Sec** Secretary
- Slisha** Slight
- Stud** Being good at something
- T** Stands for TNR (because NR is not required).
- TNR** Totally not required. E.g.: it's TNR to put pseud.
- Tut** Short for Tutorial
- Thulp** Doing something extraordinarily well. E.g.: We thulped the match today.



# Academic Life at IITM: Changing Perspectives

*Prof. C Balaji*

It was the year 1990. Just out of the College of Engineering, Guindy, Chennai, I joined the M. Tech. program in Mechanical Engineering at IIT Madras. Needless to say, the GATE exam opened the gates of IIT Madras to many students like me, who for various reasons either did not get to enter or choose to enter IITM for a B. Tech. On the first day, the Dean (Academics) gave a presentation on the slot system and the credit system. We all were completely flummoxed by both and it took a good part of the first semester to figure out what these were, though in retrospect, I feel that it makes eminent sense to have a relative grading in an institution like IIT Madras. The verb “RG”, an outgrowth of the term “relative grading”, is now part of my lexicon and am sure will soon enter the Concise Oxford Dictionary just like “funda” (It is depressing to note that many people outside of the IIT system do not acknowledge that the word funda originated here!).

Being a day scholar, I had the opportunity to meet several “dayscis”, both B. Tech. and M. Tech. I continued for Ph. D without a break and this created several opportunities to interact with various batches of students. The universal goal among the B. Techs. was to “app” to US and never come back. Most discussions revolved around Rosenblum’s word power, GRE word list and so on. Western music was very popular and there was no A. R. Rahman, Harris Jeyaraj, Hariharan or Lucky Ali! Many students were forced to say (at least in public) that they loved Bruce Springsteen the most! That was the peer pressure then. The rock show at Mardi Gras was hugely popular and it was considered “infra dig” to either listen to songs or watch movies in the vernacular. Snobbery was at its all time best. This was also the time when there were very few engineering colleges in the country, no NITs,



VIT or the other well known colleges of today. We all worked very hard at academics. There were several B. Techs. in our classes, who in my opinion, were also very focused. There was no Shastra and liberalization had not yet begun. Saturday night OAT movies were very popular and the canteens on campus were barely passable. One could not dream of getting a milk shake or a pani puri or a club sandwich on campus. Teachers were considered as repositories of knowledge and were difficult to reach at a personal level, though they seemed very considerate. For us coming from other colleges, the mode of delivery of lectures and exam testing were all such a breath of fresh air that many of us fell in love with the IIT system. IITM worked with a clockwork precision. It was very difficult to say from the movement of student traffic at 11 AM near HSB whether the institute was working or not. Thankfully, to this day, it continues.

There are several striking similarities and differences between what I felt as a student and what I now feel as a faculty member at the Institute. From the point of view of infrastructure and facilities, we are on par with the best institutes in the world. The universal mantra of trying hard to achieve seems to be eternal. Back as a student, I felt Profs were extremely well prepared for each class and even today, in my opinion, many Profs continue to do that. However, many other priorities of both students and faculty members have changed. Students want to pursue several things at the same time and in the process some get burnt out. Several mini and micro projects in the course of their study, extra internships, internships abroad during summer, going to IAS and/or CAT coaching classes, trying to be a “vol”, “coord” or “core” for Saarang/Shashtra and the list is seemingly endless. In this mad race and craze, there is a feeling amongst all of us that the students are not focused and are unable to enjoy the primary purpose for which they are here – namely academics and a good campus life to make one “well rounded”. On the flip side, students have become more



autonomous and are clear about career opportunities. In a lighter vein, sleeping in the class is a national syndrome and was and is very much prevalent in IITM too. However, the reasons for that keep dynamically changing with time and so one can see that we have made progress on this front too!

In just a short period of 20 years, the most important change I see is that now only 10% of the graduating class goes abroad for higher studies, while the majority land up in jobs or B schools, which is a reflection of the progress the nation has made in the post liberalization era. One crucial paradigm shift in the students is that there is more “Indianization” in everything, which is welcome. People listen to more of our music, join jobs here and the “Popular Nite” beats the Rock show hands down, year after year at Saarang, in terms of patronage!

Insofar as I am concerned, I am increasingly realizing that the most important quality that students seek in their teachers is “being caring or understanding”. However, it goes without saying that first, one has to be good in his or her subject and must be able to teach reasonably well! This is a per-requisite or in my optimization parlance – a constraint that cannot be violated. The key point is, how one is able to communicate the message well and is not, how much more one knows or what his or her standing among his/her peers is. These hardly matter to the student. Once we take the position that we have an opportunity to shape the lives of so many individuals, there is more responsibility and we need to lead by example. At the same time, there is increasing pressure to publish papers, guide more Ph. D. students, take up more projects and so on. So, it is a pressure cooker situation for both the teacher and the taught.

However, just like a phoenix rises out of the ashes, I believe that people at IIT Madras can pull off a coup and emerge triumphant in all their endeavors, without losing their smile. This great kingdom has



done so well in the last 50 years and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. For me, IIT Madras is “fatally addictive” and is a “paradise on planet Earth”.

***About the author:** Professor C Balaji did his M. Tech., Mechanical Engineering from IIT Madras in 1992 and Ph. D. in 1995. He is currently a faculty in the same department.*

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## Bartender

Ashish Binu, a freshie, was pseud-putting in one of his first interaction sessions with his seniors. He was trying his best to impress his seniors with his knowledge about girls. Ashish ranted on and on... “I like Ina”, “I like Nina” and “I love Meena”. Confused, curious and interested, the seniors inquired what the difference between “like” and “love” was. Sage-like and feeling very important, he showered them with is wisdom, “Like, is like beer and love, like vodka!” Very philosophical, indeed! The seniors could not quite comprehend the material reality that the wise freshie was trying to drive home. Very benevolently, he elaborated. “Love makes you high, but like doesn’t.” One could guess that he earned the title of “bartender” for his authoritative knowledge of different drinks and what they can do to you.



# Home Away from Home

*Jitagna Mehta*

Tapti Hostel, IIT Madras. Before I came here, I had heard numerous stories of fun and excitement of hostel life. Apart from wild imaginations of loads of games and friends, I could not make more out of those stories. But now if I look back, I realise the past 5 years have been like a lifetime for me.

I entered into the institute, the hostel and I (and a bunch of other folks with me) knew nothing about it. There were seniors, very friendly, helpful seniors, who ensured smooth transition into the hostel life. The number of activities within the institute ensured that I did not feel homesick. Just like a baby taking his/her first steps.

Second and third years were very much like the young and dynamic generation of the society. We had the knowledge, the power, the desire to make a change and everything else a young mind longs for. The responsibilities of juniors, of institute activities were on our shoulders. We had to balance academics with other activities. We earned respect for ourselves based on our performance. Some of us also found that special someone!

Fourth and fifth years are somewhat like old-age. We see our beloved friends passing out- some of them we would not see for God knows how long. We see our enthū dying down and more important things like career decisions taking over. Very few of us are involved in other activities. We do not have the power anymore. The number of known faces in insti reduces drastically. One get praised for what little bit of enthū one has left in oneself. Juniors come to us for important decisions of their lives. Our word is respected and considered with great seriousness.



The final semester is like Moksha. We know our destiny. We do not fear passing out- we just fear missing this amazing place. The hostel that gave us lifelong friends. The very important learnings that we take away from the institute. The confidence one gets from the very rigorous personality development experience.

Hostel is like a big family, where you know most people, you work together for many common goals, but you also fight at times. Institute is like a society, in which everyone contributes differently. One rises to heights, faces failures, makes important decisions of life, meets a lot of new people and learns a lot.

For me, this experience has simulated my life and society and I hope to take back the experience and match it with the real life

***About the author:** Jitagna "JSquare" Mehta is a Dual Degree student in the Dept. of Mechanical Engineering. A volleyball enthusiast, he dislikes disorder of any sort. If his hostel toast is any indication, he can easily be announced the most sincere guy of Tapti.*





## A Page from My Diary

*Pushkarini Agharkar*

(11-March-07)

“It is a slow and peaceful Sunday morning. And you really can’t blame your rough mood on the weather except for the glaring hot sun which might as well char you to ashes and what is left of you is thin, dark, sooty, papery stuff (ya, I am talking about the mess dosa). In Mumbai we get soaked in sweat, here it’s worse; you get roasted in the sun. And before I drift farther from the topic, let me continue the story. So a serene morning it is and since it’s a Sunday, half the *junta* are crashing in their rooms. I am at my table attempting half-heartedly, to solve a physics tut problem. Listening to music won’t help you do it better, but I put on my headphones anyway. I know, there are dim hopes of me actually cracking the problem now. And because I have my earphones on, I don’t catch the sound of slammed doors, screaming girls, toppling dust-bins and MONKEYS SCREECHING. So, I am a first time victim to monkey attack (in the room, I mean. I have been confronted by the thugs on roads numerous times). A 3 ft tall hideous looking monkey appears in front of me from nowhere. My initial reaction is to shoo him off, but that turns out to be a bad choice. IIT monkeys are liberated and they won’t take such humiliation lightly. He or she, whoever it is, tries to take a step forward towards me and there I am, displaying a terrified scream louder than I have ever heard myself scream, louder than that scary ride in the thrill park, or finding a grotesque lizard in the bathroom, or slipping off a just swept wet floor, or hitting the barricade in ‘need for speed’. As anyone must have figured by now, I scream a lot... well, the scene continues for the next couple of minutes and the monkey is gone at last, leaving me with a pounding heart, a throat which hurts from screaming; and a ‘rough mood’. But isn’t that the beginning of the story?”



(11-March-2011)

Four years from the day I penned it down, the diary entry looks really silly. I did hate the mess dosas back then, didn't I? I can't live without eating dosas these days. They are a staple. As for the monkeys, I barely notice their presence in the corridors.

I came to Chennai five years ago. Back then, I was confounded by questions varying from how much detergent to add to wash a bucketful of clothes to what courses I should take to 'put peace'. I used to get totally lost in the different languages I heard every day. Like everyone else around me, over the course of time, a lot of my goals and ideals were structured and restructured in IIT Madras. Five years later, finally at the other end of the tunnel, I put all the 'fight' I can in my courses, love the city and have managed to not learn even five words in Tamil.

***About the author:** Pushkarini Agharkar, a Dual Degree student in the Department of Aerospace Engineering, inscribes her thoughts in her blog [strawberrymargaritas.wordpress.com](http://strawberrymargaritas.wordpress.com) when she is not busy applying fluid mechanic concepts. A complete health freak, marathons and tennis are her favourites. She is a self confessed coffee addict.*



## Put Intro

Darsana Vijay

The euphoria of seeing the letter offering you the key for unlocking the gateway to your dream is beyond words to explain. The moment you rip open the package you would be overwhelmed by an avalanche of forms and n-number of brochures; brimming with excitement, you pore over every sentence with an enthusiasm you never showed to reading anything useful. As you read the general instructions to fresher students you will notice two mutually-contradictory sentences, i) *ragging is strictly prohibited in this campus* and ii) *there is a tradition of giving nicknames to the freshmen by the seniors. These are the names by which you would be known all through your IIT life.* That is the first hunch you get about the “interaction sessions” that haunt every fresher in his/her first few weeks here.

Everything here at IIT has a specific format, be it the question-papers, the routine life or the “interaction sessions”. The general format of a “typical” interaction session is as follows:

The all-powerful senior appears and he casts the “unforgivable” curse on you, “*Put intro!*” The intro is supposed to cover the main aspects of your life. So off you go beginning “my name is x”. That will probably be the first mistake of your IIT life. You are supposed to begin by saying “My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my nick is x”, where the blank is to be duly filled with your nickname. If one has not been bestowed on you till then, you are supposed to say, “I do not have a name yet” which will result in cries of “nameless shameless” and “don’t worry we will name you” followed by a lot of maniacal laughter in the background.

Next, you are expected to “put gen fundaes” about yourself. The freshie is supposed to give his/her intro in a very formal manner, without laughing or stuttering, at a very even pace. This will include



your branch/department, your all-India rank, which state you are from, your school, coaching center etc. Mild variations are possible, for example if you are “interacting” with a senior who speaks the same local language as you do, you might be asked to put your intro in that language, without using a single English word. Abbreviations are not entertained. If you say “my IIT-JEE AIR is 234”, you are done for. It should be, “my Indian Institute of Technology Joint Entrance Exam All India Rank is two hundred thirty four”. As soon as the seniors lose interest in your background, they will ask you what your interests are. If your interests include reading, chances are that you will enter into a debate with a knowledgeable senior and end up convinced that you have never read any books that are worth reading. Those who say that they can carry a tune or burn the floor will be made to give a live demonstration and they will judge your performance.

Fun variances are possible like asking the fresher to say something interesting at the end of every line or to punctuate every word or sentence with a particular word. You can expect questions that will examine your proficiency in extra-curricular subjects that are crucial for one’s existence. Practical tests may also be a part of this procedure and may include enacting a scene of the senior’s choice. In this whole process chances are there that you might let slip some stupid word which will end up being your insti-name. Sometimes, the fresher may be presented with some technical term and asked to define what that is. If your answer is hilariously foolish, that will become your nick and the answer you gave will be your funda. “Putting the funda” of your nick-name will be another part of the intro process from then on. Basically, this is the format but minor to major changes are often possible depending on the people involved.

Freshers do hate having to give up their sleep and peace for the first few weeks, but these “interactions” have their own significance. There is no better way of getting to know your seniors and establishing a



good rapport with them. If you manage to impress the seniors with your talents they will motivate you to come forward and display them on the right platform. Moreover, as you look back, it is a great deal of fun too. The IIT culture stresses on this strong filial relationship between the seniors and the juniors and this is the best instrument to strengthen the bond. We know from next year freshies can expect one question for sure; “Have you read ‘The Last Bencher’?”



# Expectations

*Anonymous*

The eight o'clock classes and one o'clock classes mean an hour of sleep deprivation and feel like eternity. I do not quite remember why and how I reached the 1 o'clock App Mech class at 12:55 (quite early by Insti standards). The class was in HSB 333. There were about a hundred students. My friend, Rohit entered the class as most cool dudes in IIT would do: No book, no bag, just a shabbily dressed self. The Prof was not in the mood to appreciate his devil-may-care attitude. He asked Rohit, "Where is your book?" Rohit was not quite bent on taking it lying down. He retorted, "Sir, my friend has my book. He will bring it." Prof was convinced that Rohit was lying. He asked, "Then, where is your friend?" Rohit looked around for Jim who had his book. Jim was nowhere to be seen. I felt that this was the right time to prove myself as a good friend.

I walked up to the Prof, with my notebook in hand, and told him, "Sir, I have the book. He had given it to me." Rohit's eyes filled with gratitude and I felt like a hero. Prof saw through my ploy and he was in no mood to forgive and forget. He asked me, "So, this book belongs to Rohit, huh?" "Yes, Sir", Rohit and I replied in unison. Quite maniacally he asked me, locking his eyes into mine in a murderous sort of way, "Then, where is your notebook?" I felt all my pride evaporate and realized that I had begun to sweat. I slowly walked towards where I had been sitting and looked helplessly at my empty bag. Suddenly, a gap-toothed smile came into view and I had the first glimpse of my saviour. Chandrasekhar! Was there any way simpler than this? I took his notebook and with a triumphant smile, went to the Prof. He was furious to see me with the notebook. He asked me, face red, "So, this is your note, huh?" Without taking his eyes off me he opened the book. I was



filled with mortal dread. I was done for, he will see Chandu's name on the front page and that will be it, my end! So much for being a saviour!

The Prof looked at me furiously. By then I was sure that I would be thrown out, at the very least. I peeped into the open book and found to my immense relief that the book had no name written on it. He shouted at me, "What book is this? No name. Nothing. Just like your head, it has got nothing in it." He threw the book out of the door and it hit Puneet, who was coming in just then, on the face. I felt that this was the right moment to put some real senti. In a very low, sad and strained voice, I said "Sir, this is not what I expected from a Prof whom I respect a lot. I thought that being a teacher; you would surely treasure books rather than throwing them at people's faces. I am sorry, Sir. But I never expected you to do this." The Prof looked lost, helpless and confused. I was struggling to keep myself from laughing. Just when I was punching the air in exultation for having saved the day, the six-feet figure of Jim appeared by the door. He came in with no book, be it his or Rohit's.

All the while, Rohit was watching the whole drama get more and more complicated. On noticing that the Prof's face was turning red with fury, he decided to put an end to all this nonsense. He said, "Sir, I had not given my book to anyone. All of it was my fault. I am so sorry, Sir. I promise that I will not repeat it." The Prof opened his mouth to tell us something. The next second, he realized that it was pointless and wiped his sweating brow and his bald head. He shook his head in utter desperation and totally gave up on us.

***Editor's note:** This is indeed a true incident but, honouring the author's wish, names of the characters have been changed to fictitious names.*



# The Applauded Jump

*Editor's pick*

Insti may be well known for a lot of things, and rightly so, but a culturally progressive attitude is not one of them. Super computers yes, sophisticated biomedical technology yes, but wholeheartedly embracing the values of the 21st century? No. One of the diktats that arise out of this approach is that no men are allowed into the ladies' hostel, Sharav, under no circumstances. There could be a couple of asphyxiated, trembling, death rattling girls in there, but if you happen to be male, you can't put as much as a toe in.

This is a fact the overwhelmingly large population of menfolk in Insti have come to accept, but there always will be a couple of daredevils here and there, with enough resources and the sheer guts to subvert the law.

Two such sterling men were Cheetah and Accepted. It was Saarang 2010 and our protagonists were standing in front of Sharav along with Aag, Again, Lokhda and Aditi. The general chit chat and the hey-you-remembers left Cheetah and Accepted bored within a few minutes. They looked around and instantly spotted Sharav. It was Saarang and adventure was in the air. In a moment's inspiration Cheetah and Accepted decided that, come what may, they were going to get inside Sharav.

Running their eyes across the building, they began looking for strategic entry and exit points in the building. For it was a mission that had to be planned meticulously. If they made a mistake and they were caught, they would be in front of the Dean before they could say Sharavati.

It was the night Shankar, Ehsaan and Loy were performing at the OAT and there was a considerable crowd in front of Sharav. For





some reason, Accepted and Cheetah thought they could blend in with the crowd and walk in to Sharav without the security guard noticing. After their brief and lightning quick sojourn inside, they planned to jump down from a balcony on the first floor on to the road and run for it.

Tidying up and tying up a few loose ends, the plan was finalised and they submitted it to their friends for approval. Speaking like one friend, they told the dynamic duo that they were crazy. Extolling the virtues of a peaceful life without adrenaline pumped adventure and explaining the obvious risks involved, Aag, Again, Lokhda and Aditi tried to convince them to withdraw, but they could have been talking to a wall for all the result they got. Ignoring the advice of their four friends, the two of them decided to go ahead with the plan.

Accepted and Cheetah walked into Sharav, trying their best to blend in with the crowd and not look suspicious. Of course, that attempt was futile, considering that the rest of the crowd was female. They could have been spotted from the moon. The warden was right in front the hostel and had no difficulty in spotting the two of them. She stopped them and started with the customary interrogation. The two of them tried to slink in by saying they were a part of the hospitality team and that they needed to get in urgently. The warden was not relenting and it seemed the plan would come unstuck without ado. However, the warden's attention was momentarily distracted and taking advantage of it, the boys ran into Sharav.

For a moment they stood there, like six year olds who had discovered a land where mountains were made of ice cream and rivers were of chocolate. I don't know if you are familiar with the band of explorers who went in search of El Dorado. Those chaps never found the city of gold, but if they had, their euphoria could scarcely have matched that in Accepted and Cheetah.



They knew time was at a premium and that any moment, the Sharav Warden might pop up and boot them out. They ran along the corridors, drinking in the sights and sounds, capturing every pixel their eyes could take. Short skirts, hot pants and stilettos captured their eyes and hearts. They ran from corridor to corridor, from wing to wing. Meanwhile, the inmates of Sharav were equally stunned to find specimens of the other sex in the hostel.

After a few minutes inside, the boys knew their time was up. Any more time spent inside could jeopardise their bottoms and their careers. They had to get out and get out fast. They ran around first floor, trying to find an exit point into the balcony and out of the hostel. They finally found what they were looking for near the office room. By this time, a horde of girls had come out of their rooms to witness the spectacle. Instant heroes Accepted and Cheetah became, as the female contingent started cheering and hooting. Accepted let himself into the balcony. Stretching his arms, he managed to get a grasp of a lower slab and swung himself down. Just three or four feet separated him from the ground. Taking the risk, he jumped down. Cheetah followed his lead and jumped down. Both landed on the cusp of the road, with minor scratches on the limbs.

Looking around in delight, perhaps expecting fans and admirers to fly in with the bouquets, they saw that the entrance to Sharav was sealed off. Quickly deducting that the Warden must have sent for the security, they realised that sticking around the area any more could be detrimental to their physical health. Taking two long, deep breaths, they ran for their lives, back to their hostel. Now that is Saarang well spent.

***About the characters:** Himanshu “Cheetah” Suryavanshi and Swapnil “Accepted” Kulkarni hail from Tapti and are students in the Metallurgical and Materials Engineering Department. Cheetah is a great athlete, hence the name. Accepted is considered to be a pocket dynamo on the football pitch.*



## A Date in Disguise

*Surbhi Maheshwari*

3rd semester, October 2007- T (once TAS of a certain hostel which has been home for Tech-Soc trophy since forever) had promised W (a Mech guy from Tapti with a nick that rhymes with W), Divya and yours truly a treat for winning Junkyard Wars event at Shastra earlier that month. One weekend, soon after quizzes got over, he suggested that we claim our treat that day. I was surprised as Divya had gone home and it was supposed to be a group treat but given that I was not that close to the treat putter, I could not point that fact out and said a reluctant OK. So it was decided, 7 pm, W, T and I were going for dinner.

A couple of hours before the treat, my cellphone announced the arrival of a message. It was from an unknown number and read: “W will pack the treat at the last moment. T wants to go only with you. He has asked W to give excuses and not come.” First reaction was to reply, “Who is this?” No amount of efforts yielded the identity of the person. It apparently belonged to a non-insti person as no insti friends of mine had it. (I checked with a couple of classmates and seniors.) The only responses I got were to the tone of: “Thought to warn you in advance”, “Your well-wisher” etc etc.

Irked by the fact that someone unknown was daring to give me advice believing that he (I assumed it was a he) knew what is good or not good for me more than I do, I took it up as a challenge. Responded back: “Even if it is true, even if W packs, what is your problem? It is none of your business who I go out with.”

W indeed packed the treat at the last minute with excuses about an upcoming presentation. Had I been unaware of the plan, I would have asked T to postpone the treat but now that I was already anticipating this move, I wanted to witness the whole drama. Played



along, went for dinner to Galloping Gooseberries and ate the quantity I would eat for evening snacks rather than a full meal. In fact, to prove my calm, before starting from hostel, I even managed to finish writing a few lines T had asked me to on a particular topic. On way back, I decided to drop the bomb. Asked T to identify the number, he too denied having it stored on his phone. Then showed him the messages, and did not care about his reaction. He tried to convince me that he was not aware of the messages or of W's plan to pack at the last minute. He went on asking me how I wanted him to defend himself but I was not going to fall for any of that. I maintained a complete silence on the topic.

W, the next day, enquired about the treat and received a cold treatment from me. We had a huge argument a couple of days later. He kept saying he had done me a favour which he hoped I would understand some day in future and my only response was- "This is cheating, I don't want to listen to any explanations."

I loved the way the whole issue unfolded. The person who had messaged me did not get the satisfaction of spoiling T's plan of a "dinner date". T could not get the satisfaction of having a happy ending to the so called "dinner date". W got blasted at by me for trying to prove that he was helping me. Divya, for no fault of hers, had to put up with a grumpy me for quite some time. I got to have the final say with each one of them.

I came to know a couple of years later that it was W's roommate R who had sent me those messages through his non-insti girlfriend's phone number. He wanted to settle some score with T and W had indeed asked him to inform me somehow as he didn't want me to be taken by surprise when he packed the treat.

R threatened T recently that he would tell me the truth, unaware that I already knew everything and hence gave me another chance to trip on him. W says he still doesn't want to talk to me on that



topic. T has, over the time (and despite the incident), become one of the most cherished friends. Divya continues to be the bestest friend and we have had a lot of crazy moments in each other's company or because of (sometimes intentional) lack of it.

***About the author:** Surbhi is a Dual Degree student in the Department of Electrical Engineering. She enjoys travelling, loves chocolates and is a cleanliness freak. Her idea of a perfect weekend is a marathon reading session, but no coffee! Some more space has been wasted over her at the end of this book.*



## Levels of Love

*Prathyush Ponnekanti*

In the last four years, I have learnt a lot about life. That life includes a good deal of love and sex. I haven't got my fair share but I have certainly researched a great deal. So if you belong to the section of my friends who've had it tough in this dimension, let me try to give you a little bit of fundaes here and I really hope your love life comes into existence soon.

All of this comes from personal experience and fundaes collected from other open source supporters and hence there is some reliability in here.

I had spent seven years of my life on trying to get cosy with two girls (one after the other of course). While one has ended up being my best friend, the other refuses to recognise me anymore. In these seven years, all I could think of was the girl who held my fancy. All I wanted to do was to look at her, walk up to her, talk to her and heck! I didn't even know what to talk! Seven years is a precious lot of time. All that time spent and still no girlfriend, I decided to get logical with things and the research began.

The idea is to hit on several girls simultaneously. Scandalous as it may sound, there exists rationale to this. Say you like a girl, you ping her and she doesn't reply, you are bound to feel low. Or say she does reply and since you like this girl a lot you'll say something that you think is flirtatious and the girl thinks is spooky. Both way, things will get screwed up in due course of time and you're down and pained. However, if there are 6 girls you are hitting on at a time the sample size will multiply the probability of a reply and what's more, you won't get desperate with her since you know you aren't too keen on her. Hell, whom are you kidding? You are hitting on five other girls dude!



Six was a general estimate I picked. The actual number depends on the effort you can put in. Any girl would require some genuine interest in her and so you better be genuine. A simple representation would go like - Say you can put in effort  $E$  and there are  $N$  girls. Then you'd put in around  $E/N$  effort on each of 'em. If the threshold value of effort for each individual girl is  $T$ , then it's easy to see that  $E/N > T$ . So pick your optimal  $N$  such that you know you'll be able to deliver the required levels of interest on each of your girls.

Now, we have been fairly simplistic in this discussion but I'm certain you're smart enough to get the point I'm trying to make. Anyway, it is now time to establish a hierarchy in interaction. There's basic SMS and 'Hello, Hi!' interaction. Then there's coffee date. Then there's lunch date. Then dinner date and then the actual deal. Once you've found your  $N$  contacts and all of them smile at you and make mild conversation (Don't worry. They will. Girls are usually nice people to know) it is time to escalate some of them to the next level - the coffee date. So you see, you'll have to put in more effort here. At this point you probably will have to downsize your value of  $N$  as the effort you need to put in will increase.

That's the whole point. With each level, you'll have to reduce the number of girls you are interested in. So by the time you reach the dinner date you would be left with only one girl and hopefully things will roll on with her. The simple point is if it doesn't work out with this girl you can always backtrack to another one whom you've left at another level.

There is too much detail I've left out here. Writing the whole stuff would take a few books and prompt recurrent yawns. However much has to be said about handling the dates at different levels. Furthermore you may ask me how to meet so many girls. Well, my friend, it is not necessary that all these girls be your dream dates. Good



looks are just one component of female attractiveness. Often times a good metric would be if you can make decent conversation with your girl. So fellas, there are quite some approachable smart girls out there who could just be your type. Check them out and the golden rule is - never make a girl uncomfortable. Dammit, there's never a greater sin than spooking your girl out. (I've been there guys. I know it too well)

One last word - Enjoy yourself during the whole endeavour. Enjoy all the conversations, the coffees, her laughs to your little silly jokes, the lovely albeit tuneless songs and lots of other cool stuff you can do without ever once hurting someone or getting hurt yourself.

Have fun!

***About the author:** Prathyush "Josh" Ponnekanti, a Dual Degree student in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, harbours a strange enthusiasm for writing letters. He resides in Narmada hostel. His pastime hobbies include composing (love) songs and singing.*





## Past Continuous

*A chat with Prof. Sujatha*

**Editors:** Let's start with a difficult question. What do you think about the attendance rule?

**Prof. Sujatha:** (Smiling). You could get me into trouble with this kind of questions but I expected this one. First thing is that I don't know whether the students want to be treated as mature people or as kids. Mature adults don't need rules for everything because they have an innate sense of responsibility. It's my job to make the classes interesting and draw in the students, true. It's also true that the students' job is to ensure that the IIT degree that will open doors for them has some substance to it. If the students are committed and are here at IIT to learn, I don't see the need for an attendance rule but as of now, it seems to be a "necessary evil".

**Editors:** How was your experience as a student in IIT Madras?

**Prof. Sujatha:** I enjoyed every bit of my stay at IIT Madras. I had studied in another engineering college for close to a year before joining the B.Tech. programme at IITM and so was able to appreciate the difference in the two environments. The infrastructure, the opportunities – both curricular and extra-curricular, the interaction between the students and faculty, the greenery, and the freedom Insti offers- this is a great place to be as a student. My time as a student here was a valuable learning experience in many ways.

**Editors:** Why did you choose to come back to IITM after working for so many years in US?

**Prof. Sujatha:** The work culture in the US was fantastic, and daily life is pretty smooth without many of the hassles you experience here. But India is home, it's what we are used to, it's where we blend in. When we thought about moving back to India, IITM was my first choice because I



love this place and I wanted my kids to grow up in this wonderful campus.

In the US, my children would have to deal with two very different kinds of environments - an Indian environment at home which is largely conservative and the US environment where freedom and independence are encouraged from a very young age. The dichotomy would end up sending them very mixed signals. In India, the peer pressure at the school level relates primarily to academics, in the US, the pressure is to be popular and attractive. Kids start using make-up and talking about having a boyfriend/girlfriend even at the primary school level. Since my husband and I both grew up here, we felt better equipped to be parents in India!

**Editors:** I think we can continue with your answer for the previous question and get your views on dating.

**Prof. Sujatha:** Adolescence can be a confusing time, and we need to nurture a healthy attitude towards the opposite sex. I am glad to see more girls in the classes now as compared to when I was a student (I was the only girl in a class of 60 in Mech), and also more interactions now. I don't have an exact idea about the dating scene in Chennai but it appears that today's youngsters are smitten with only the bad aspects of western culture, and that worries me. But I guess, we all primarily learn by making mistakes - that's part of growing up.

**Editors:** OK. Coming back to a lighter mood, what was your most wacko moment as a student?

**Prof. Sujatha:** I didn't have a lot of wacko moments - quite boring, really. In my final year, I took part in a karaoke competition in CLT. I wasn't really competing, it was just something I wanted to do and I had fun singing Fernando by ABBA. The next day, I happened to run into Prof. GS who was one of the judges for the competition. Imagine my surprise when he told me that it was a close call for the third place



between me and Sowmya. Not sure if Prof. GS was just trying to make me feel good, considering Sowmya is now a world-renowned Carnatic music artiste, and one of IITM's Distinguished Alumnus Awardees this year – but THAT was a wacko moment!

Another incident happened on our Hostel Night. We were very upset about some of the restrictions that were suddenly introduced in our hostel. We invited the Director, Dean, et al. and the girls in our batch (we were 8 of us, the 8 of 88) put up a satirical skit that was based on the incidents and the administration. The skit was hugely popular with the hostel crowd but at the end of the play, the profs didn't know whether they should clap or not.

**Editors:** Which is better at IIT Madras, life as a student or life as a prof?

**Prof. Sujatha:** I'd say I am lucky and feel blessed to have gotten the chance of living in both the worlds. I cannot say which life is better because I had fun as a student and still do as a prof. The nice thing about this time around is that I'll likely be around a lot longer than the last time! I enjoy being a prof because I enjoy interacting with students. For me, every class is a new experience that I am learning from. Sometimes a student may ask me a question that I am not able to answer immediately or I may make a mistake. Even though it's a little uncomfortable at that moment, I always learn something. Also, it's definitely nicer to be on the other side as far as taking exams go (smiles).

**Editors:** How do you feel when you see students sleeping in the class?

**Prof. Sujatha:** I do understand that students are involved in a host of activities, curricular, extra-curricular and non-curricular and there are only 24 hours in a day. However, one should realize that the primary purpose of one's stay in the institute is to learn what you are here to learn. What better place to learn the subject than in class? Therefore, sleeping in class serves neither the purpose of recharging yourself if you are tired, nor is it serving your overall purpose of learning. So, I think



the student is better off staying back and taking rest in the room, no? It's far less annoying to the prof too!

**Editors:** We would like you to comment on the education system.

**Prof. Sujatha:** As far as engineering is concerned, the education system is focussed on developing analytical abilities. We are trained to play with numbers with ease but there is much more to life than numbers. There is little emphasis on being a good human being and too much on winning at any cost. There is very little concern about the environment, for example. So many people leave the computers, fans and lights on even when their rooms are locked, or throw trash wherever they feel like it. It bothers me that youngsters don't care about things like these, or about punctuality, or about being ethical. Perhaps, we teachers need to spend some time with you on these aspects of education as well.

**Editors:** What were the means of entertainment at IITM without net and cell-phones?

**Prof. Sujatha:** I know it is very difficult for you to imagine but yes, those were times when there were no cell-phones and there was no internet. During those days, movies in OAT used to be big hits. We used to have only somewhat older movies, not like now where we get to see new movies in OAT. We would carry our pillows there and sit together shouting and whistling. The most fun was when we would watch a movie in the rain!

There were no washing machines or laundry service so we actually washed clothes with our hands. Evenings were spent playing in the hostel or in the grounds. Reading magazines, books, even hanging out in the library or at the chai shop in Tarams or Velachery was entertainment! Extra-mural lectures were very popular and I never missed any even if there was a quiz the next day. Other than that, we played all kinds of games that are available in IITM and participated in competitions – elocution, debates, Karaoke, quizzes – we tried our hand



at many things. I can guess with the decreasing students' crowd at OAT every year that more and more people are becoming prisoners to their computers. The internet does bring a lot of useful things to the students' world but more and more people are missing out on a lot of fun because of it.

**Editors:** You have taught at the Ohio State University and now you are teaching in IITM. Tell us some differences in the students.

**Prof. Sujatha:** I need to tell you the basic difference between those students and our students before answering this question. There, the majority don't depend on their parents for their college education. I have seen students who work outside class time as waiters in restaurants and at other multiple jobs to pay their (steep!) fees while in college. When in class, they demand good teaching, and they are in college because they want to learn.

In OSU, I found that the students have very good hands-on skills and are very creative. They take pride in their work. They are motivated to learn so even the idea of copying in an exam or copying an assignment does not come to their minds. Sometimes, a student would doze off in class but I knew it was because he or she was exhausted working multiple jobs. In IITM, most students possess very good analytical skills. Some topics that would take 2-3 classes at OSU, I can finish here in 10 mins. The students in IITM grasp new things quickly and I feel happy when people ask insightful questions in class, sometimes after a topic has just been introduced.

**Editors:** Do you have any message for the students?

**Prof. Sujatha:** Students should use their time at IIT to partake of all that the Institute has to offer. It's like a buffet, try everything but you'll really enjoy it only if you come hungry to learn! It's probably the first time you have so much freedom, use it wisely and focus on your overall development and gain life-skills. Don't see IIT as an obstacle to be



crossed in order to get a fat pay packet, but enjoy the journey instead. The kind of human being you become is way more important than any degree you earn.

**Editors:** It was very nice to have this session with you.

**Prof. Sujatha:** Likewise, thank you!

***About the author:** Prof. Sujatha Srinivasan earned a B. Tech. degree in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Madras in 1992 before moving the US for higher studies. She moved back to India recently and joined the Mechanical Engineering Department as a faculty.*

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## Aloo

Some “country-maxxx” seniors from Jam were raping a freshie. They were examining his knowledge on some necessary life-skills. The poor freshie’s knowledge was pretty limited. He answered a few question correctly but was bulbing most of the time. In sheer desperation, feeling quite sure that he was done for, he pleaded to the seniors not to give him a “non-veg” name. He was very lucky. For once, the seniors heeded to his plea. They said, “So, you do not want a non-veg name, huh? Fine! Have a veg name. ALOO, let it be!”



# Not His Day!

*Editor's pick*

Insti is full of people who put the ass in assignments. They are all of the opinion that life would have been much better without those darned things. Unfortunately, that is the way things work and one has got to make the most of it. Of course, one seldom expects the junta in Insti to take it lying down. The devious, incredulous and scheming minds of Insti are constantly formulating plans to jump over or crawl under the obstacle called assignments. The oldest trick in the book is to find an unsuspecting fresher and convince him to undertake a joint operation. And by joint, I mean together.

It so happened that the hockey-playing, metal-music following, Manchester United-supporting current fourth year IPS had a major dent in his happiness, courtesy a troublesome assignment. Scoffing disdainfully at the idea of actually attempting to have a crack at it, he sent for a first year who looked, talked and walked like a nine pointer. Handing over the assignment sheet with the ebullience of a newspaper boy on the street, IPS went back to his hockey-playing, metal-music following, Manchester United-supporting ways, having banished thoughts on the assignment from his mind.

The Sun set and rose, bringing a glorious new day to the earth and the freshie to IPS' room. The young chap informed his senior that he had completed the assignment and had even submitted it, but had forgotten in the excitement to write a name on the top right corner. Aye, there is the rub. Acknowledging the fact that there was, by a liberal estimate, close to fifty seconds for his next class to start, IPS banished the fresher, grabbed a pair of pants and a key to a tube lock and sped to the hostel entrance. Jumping on the first cycle whose lock matched his key he flew like a Schumacher to class.



In the class, the professor was distributing the corrected assignment papers. He dryly informed the class that there were a few bastard papers floating around and people were welcome to claim them. IPS slyly slinked up to the stack of papers and started looking around for the best paper available. Minutes later, he found a paper which had a perfect record. He wrote his name on it and submitted it to the professor.

Time passed and the professor chanced upon the paper IPS had submitted. He called out our protagonist.

“Is this your paper”, he asked.

“Yes Sir. That is mine”, IPS replied.

“Is this your handwriting?”

“Yes sir.”

“This is not your handwriting and this not your paper”, said the professor obstinately.

“I am sure it is, Sir”, cementing a nomination for the great delusion award for unshakable self belief.

“This is my solution sheet.”

Battered and bruised, looking very much like the wreck of the Hesperus, IPS rode back to his hostel on the cycle whose lock had matched his key.

For all you greenhorns out there, one thing you would be well advised to do when on a stolen cycle is not to flash it in front of authority. Moving swiftly on two wheels and thinking a million unprintable thoughts on the freshie and the professor, IPS forgot the one golden rule of travelling on a stolen bicycle. He sped straight into the waiting arms of Tapti’s blue clad sentinel.





“Whose cycle is this?”, thundered the guard.

“It is my cycle.”

“No it is not your cycle.”

“Yes it is”, said IPS, so obstinate that the mules of the world were given a run for their money.

“This is my cycle! I have been looking for it all morning.”

Stripped of his cycle and a significant chunk of dignity, IPS trudged back to his room, like Napoleon trudging back from Moscow.

***About the protagonist:** V.V Achuth aka IPS is a Dual Degree student in the Electrical Engineering Department. A self-made hockey player, he is a key component of the institute team. A certified death metal fanatic, IPS is known to compose his own songs and render them, much to the discomfort of his wing mates. He blogs at [wachuth.blogspot.com](http://wachuth.blogspot.com).*



# Life: Dreams and Reality

*Mahita J*

I started my education in Chennai and now I am here to complete it.

My childhood has not exactly been a cakewalk for me and my parents. It was a bolt out of the blue when I was identified as "hearing challenged" by a doctor at the age of 2 years. It was one of the darkest hours for my parents. Still they did not give up hope. Through a friend, they took me to Bangalore. It was there when they first heard of the school "Balavidyalaya - The School for Young Deaf Children" in Chennai.

Without a moment's hesitation, my parents packed their bags and took me to Chennai. My dad did not have a job then. They first enrolled me in the school. The then headmistress and principal, Ms Saraswati Narayanaswamy and Ms Rajalakshmi respectively, were very kind hearted and also strict at the same time. They agreed to put me in the school for free. I joined Balavidyalaya in June 1990.

I was trained in Balavidyalaya for five years. It was a struggle and my parents worked very hard with me. The way of training in Balavidyalaya is different from normal schools. They taught us words directly without introducing us to the alphabets. They made us use the best of our hearing aids. The teachers were very strict but also warm and loving. I had three more classmates who were being trained along with me. My mother used to constantly discuss with their parents during the school hours. My parents also used to take me out to the beach every weekend so as to facilitate my training. Every day they used to make me sit with them and make me learn all the words. She used to keep dictations for me.



It was only for my sake that my mother learnt English. Since, it is difficult for a hearing challenged person to learn two languages at the same time; they decided to keep only one language for me- English.

Most people, when they talk to a hearing challenged person, think that there is a problem with his/her voice. They assume it to be more of a problem with the vocal cords rather than hearing. However, this notion is wrong. In actuality, every child first starts hearing sounds at quite a young age and then starts reproducing them at a later stage. This is how speech develops. But if there is no proper hearing, the child is not able to learn new sounds to mimic. As a result, the speech is also not developed properly. Thus, it is very crucial and of utmost importance that the hearing problem be identified in a child as early as possible after birth.

Another most common problem is learning a second language. A hearing challenged person mostly depends on the combination of lip movements and hearing through aids, to hear and talk to others. If that person depends on hearing alone, then they miss out many things. As a result, while trying to depend on audio devices like TV, tape recorder and telephone, the person misses out a lot. Unlike normal children who can pick up a new language easily by being exposed to hearing it daily, it is not the case with hearing challenged persons. This is the reason why we find it difficult to pick up a new language easily. The most annoying part is, when people ask us why we do not know our mother tongue and misjudge our knowledge for the English language alone as arrogance.

The five years of hard work paid off. In June 1995 we moved back to Hyderabad where I was admitted directly into the second standard of Sherwood Public School, ICSE/ISC. It was the beginning of another journey of my life. I remained in the school for 11 years till 12th. I passed out of the school in April 2006.



After completing my schooling, I joined St. Francis College for Women, Hyderabad and enrolled in the B.Sc. BZC course. In the second year of B.Sc., I started attending coaching classes for JAM. I gave the JAM entrance in May 2009 and cleared the entrance test. I joined IIT in August 2009, in the M.Sc. Chemistry course. It was a new phase of my life since I would be staying away from home for the first time. At first I was alarmed that most of my classmates were Bengali and I had doubts as to whether I would get along with them. But soon, my fears were put to rest as I started gradually warming to them.

These two years at IIT have been a great learning experience. I feel lucky to be working with esteemed professors and brilliant students. It is less than a month before I leave IIT. But like every phase of life, this too shall pass and before I realize I'll be busy elsewhere. Wherever I go, the memories of IIT will always remain with me.

My life has been full of twists and turns but it has taught me many things along the way. Among the most important things it has taught me is to have faith in myself and God. If one believes in self, one can do anything and if they have the will power, nothing can stop them from achieving their ambitions.

**About the author:** Mahita J is pursuing her M.Sc. in Chemistry. Bubbly and enthusiastic, she loves meeting new people. In her own words, "I believe in living life by my own rules because I alone know what it is like to be me. No one can fill my shoes." She writes at [www.chroniclesoflife.blogspot.com](http://www.chroniclesoflife.blogspot.com).



# Just One Slap

*Naman Somani*

For starters, I bow down to thee for unconsciously choosing to browse through my story. I am Naman and I'm one of the 7 members of the (in)famous Saras gang. We are known for our fanatical and maddening expeditions rather than for our intellect. And that's what sets us apart from the rest. You may ask, what's so special? A bunch of college friends hanging around here and there. Well yes, we did hang around. The only difference was that our hangouts were as diverse as the animal kingdom. It ranged from saving some one's life in the dangerous Cauvery, to asking out 70-odd girls for a single dance workshop. From giving a chase to police on a motorcycle, to being accused by cyber crime department of hacking a girl's Gmail account. From having a bath at the rocky beach in Pondy at 2 A.M., to being almost trampled to death by a 'scared' elephant at the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve. But from where did we get so much of nerve and passion to tread the unknown path? Where did it all start? Well, read on...

First year at IITM. First Saarang. Had never seen such a huge crowd of people, or should I put it like had never seen so many girls in the Insti! I, along with a bunch of friends, was relishing every sight and sound of the Saarang when our group bumped into some sly seniors. Oh damn, don't think of the devil and he would still be there! Nevertheless, we meekly greeted them and waited for them to unleash their terror upon us. However, to our surprise, they smiled even more and said, "Don't be scared. We are not gonna rag you today. How about a bet?" We remained rooted to the ground, with bulging eyes ogling at their faces. What are they talking about? A bet? That too with juniors! What if we win and they lose? They would become the laughing stock of the insti and we would become instant heroes. But I was suddenly pulled away from my sweet reverie when one of the seniors, pointing at



a girl, whispered, “You see that Red Bull Sales girl. Yeah that fair one. All you have to do is to slap her hard in public and you will find a crisp Rs 1000 note in your pocket! That’s all! Pretty straight forward bet, isn’t it?” I thought, “You must be joking. Slap an unknown girl in front of hundreds of people? That’s IMPOSSIBLE.” But then the seniors were definitely not joking. At that very instant I knew that there had to be a loophole in this offer. After all, the seniors too were IITians and they made sure that everything was a win-win situation for them. We were just thinking how to wriggle out of the tight spot when one of the big guys phone rang and both of them hurriedly left us.

All of us took a deep breath and decided to disappear in the opposite direction as soon as we could. We were soon absorbed by the enlivening carnival again and the smile didn’t fade from our faces until someone asked, “Where’s Anand?” Miraculously, the next second we heard his voice, “SOMEONE SAVE ME!!” We looked in the direction where it was coming from and were dumbfounded by what we saw. Anand was literally hanging in air, at the mercy of a super human who had grabbed his neck by one hand. We ran to the spot and the fastest among us crashed into the human giant. Bad timing as the giant caught the other guy with his free hand and flung him far into oblivion. Even so, we all gathered around him and started begging him to let Anand down, thinking hard at the same time about what had happened. Deaf to our pleadings, he kept on shouting, throwing a copious amount of spit upon Anand’s face, “How dare you? How did you even think of touching my girl friend? I am not going to spare you. You IITians are bullshit. I am going to report this to your Dean.” Dean! DISCO! Noooo! We could see Anand desperately trying to free himself, “It’s not my fault. My seniors told me to do so. Please leave me.” The seniors, as I learnt later, saw everything happening from a distance and took to their heels as soon as they saw Anand being airlifted. We continued with our earnest persuasion till some Saarang cores came running to the spot and



rescued Anand. They even managed to convince the ‘boyfriend’ as to not to report anything to the Dean and thus we were saved from the dreadful DISCO.

What had apparently happened, as Anand amusingly narrated to us later, was that Anand took the bet seriously and thought of earning some quick buck. He approached the Red Bull girl, and made a deal: He would give her 500 bucks if she allows him to slap her in public. The girl was sporty; she agreed. But before they could carry out the experiment, her possessive boyfriend spotted his girl with our friend and the rest is history. But to me, the only thing that mattered was that we didn’t have DISCO in our very first year of IITM.

***About the author:** Naman ‘Pizza’ Somani, a Dual Degree student in the Engineering Design Department is deeply attached to his roots, be it his hostel, Saras or his home-state Rajasthan (Mhara Ghar!). With a not so great opinion about Chennai climate, he likes being a part of crazy things and sometimes records them at <http://dalbatichooma.blogspot.com/>.*



## Grounded!

*Anonymous*

Usually, final exam for laboratory courses are short, written tests. But that particular semester, our department had started the tradition of having hands-on tests, i.e. performing the experiments in front of Profs. We were to choose the experiments by lottery. To my immense relief, I got an experiment that was very basic, which any IITian could do with his eyes closed. We were split into two batches and I was in the second batch. I was counting on the person who was doing the experiment before me to leave the apparatus arranged, so that I would be spared the effort. “10 mins, max and you are outta here boy!” I muttered to myself. High on confidence, I strutted around humming a tune.

Things never happen the way you want them to. As I walked to my table, I saw that the apparatus was dismantled and that I had no clue how to set it up. I had not paid attention in the class and I felt myself paying for it very dearly. I had come in with the hope that I would be able to copy the procedure from someone else. I glanced around and saw B hunched up by his table. Wishing with all my heart that the procedure would come to me, I tried to set up the apparatus. I connected one thing to another and finally, I was left with just one device. It was small, cubical device with a few switches, a wire and two-pin plug and had a name-tag “Accelerometer”. I had no clue what I was supposed to do with it. Hoping that all would turn out well, I plugged it into the socket and switched it on. There was a black-out on the whole floor!

“Accelerometer” actually runs on batteries and the plug is provided to charge the batteries using DC. I had connected it to the normal 220V, 50 Hz AC supply. Yes, I realized it a bit too late. The Prof, who was putting peace in his room, came running and shouted at





me for five whole minutes. The TA later confessed to me with a sly smile that even he had been wondering what the plug was for. At the same time, I saw B grin in front of me. “Arre yaar, thanks. I was about to do the same. You saved me da!” One man’s sorrow is often another man’s joy!

The story does not end here. One by one, everyone screwed me. The TA, the Prof, the Head of the lab, the course coordinator and the HoD. For a week, I was completely occupied with the interesting task of shuttling between professor’s rooms, to be chided and to be repeatedly reminded that the accelerometer was worth Rs. 1 lakh. I was asked to pay a huge fine which kept on decreasing with each such session (till it became zilch). Slowly, I think I learnt, in the way Edison would have, “What not to do with an Accelerometer”.

***Editor’s note:** We wish we had had this adventure. We would have surely owned it and boasted about it.*



# In the Heaven

*Anitha B. Raja*

Getting high might be just another expression for you all. But when we say we want to get high, we literally mean it. Our idea of a fun Friday night did not include pubs, late night partying and stuff that youngsters are expected to do. For us it was all about that rush of adrenaline as we sneaked past the security guards, suppressing giggles and guffaws and climbing the metal staircases that lead to our very own pseud hangout in the insti, the BT (Bio-technology) rooftop. Star-gazing, arbit fart sessions, endless card games and some grub to go with it. If there ever was a heaven on earth it was this, our haven.

That particular Friday of our 3rd year is a tad more memorable than the others. It was around 3 am; Sapeksh, Virus (Surya), Bcube, (Anirudh), Shweta and Swati had already started on a game of poker and were waiting for Phani (Katrina) and me to join the party. We successfully managed to escape the vigilant guards once again and this brilliant idea strikes my IIT brain. I share it with Phani. He was all game for it, even a bit over-enthu if I may say so. We then tried desperately to control our laughter as we climbed the metal staircases making sure that our footsteps can be heard. Meanwhile, on the rooftop they were halfway through the game of poker and Virus as usual messaged Preeti, pleading her to make a particular move. Bcube's ever alert ears picked up our footsteps and he pressed his finger to his lips urging the others to keep their mouths shut. With stealthy steps they hid behind the tank. Phani puts up a sudden display of his acting prowess and he speaks rustic Hindi, imitating the guards "Upar kya chal raha hain? Kaun hain wahan?" I hit on the railings making a ruckus.

There was a resounding silence only to be punctured by Preeti's phone informing her merrily that "You have a new message". A cold shudder went down their spines. Hearts thumping, the four of them



stood like guilty schoolboys awaiting punishment. A million things go through Bcube's mind and he was resolved to get his ass out of this mess. Unsure of what to do next, to add to their fear, we waited at the foot of the stairs. Just then Bcube's head came into view. He tried to gauge the height, to make sure that he was not trading his life and his 'calculating' gaze fell on us. His expression changed instantaneously from that of a helpless waif to a cold-blooded villain. He showered us with curses in all languages he was proficient in. Three bewildered faces appeared alongside the murderous, cursing face. As soon as they saw us laughing, they joined his party and lavished curse upon curse on us. Soon we were all safe in our haven, the BT rooftop, laughing over the whole episode. As we hugged our worries away, another worry ate into us. Would such a moment ever chance upon us again?

***About the author:** Anitha B. Raja, a Dual Degree student in the Department of Naval Architecture, is a fun-loving and a hip-hop dancing creature. Chicken and chocolates are never spared whenever she is around. According to her, "This campus has given a lot to me; it has been a home, a friend, an experience. How I have grown here and the times I have had are things that I will treasure forever."*



## Twice Bitten

*Editor's pick*

Nobody ever wants to go to class. No one in IIT Madras does, anyway. If there was no such thing as an attendance requirement or if one's HoD would not instantly chop the attendance, handicapped into six using a hacksaw, you can bet your bottom fifty paise, that no one would attend classes. However, as is common knowledge, Insti junta are not used to taking anything lying down. They still try to evade the occasional class or two and indulge in leisure and rest.

Dixy was one such person in the Civil Engineering department. If one trusts the word of his associates, when it comes to bunking classes, he was a giant amongst men. Where others bunked classes citing medical conditions, he flouted all authority and bunked at will. To cut it short, he sincerely believed in the maxim- A little sincerity is a dangerous thing and a great deal of it is absolutely fatal.

Dixy specialized in bunking labs, for they were the species of class most likely to induce lethargy and drowsiness. Set in the hours between 2 and 5 in the afternoon, the very mention of a lab would have Dixy snoring away like there was no tomorrow. This habit of bunking labs was especially prevalent in one slot, where the professor happened to be an old and stooping figure who had a tough time figuring out one student from the other. This compulsive obsessive bunking disorder caused a huge dent in Dixy's attendance registers and he was duly summoned by the professor. After the due warning and an exhortation to attend all of the remaining classes, Dixy was let off.

Dixy was not the one to shake like a leaf at the mere words of a professor. The next day, the clock struck 2 and the rest of his class went for the lab. However, Dixy was not one to follow the herd. The very thought of rotting away three hours in a lab gave him the heebie-jeebies.



As the rest of the junta made their way to the lab, Dixcy sauntered off to Campus Cafe. Having placed order for coffee and some scrumptious dosa, Dixcy sat leisurely in a chair, like a man bereft of all troubles.

Shakespeare once wrote- From that spring, whence comfort seemed to come, discomfort swells. As Dixcy sat in his throne, thinking sweet thoughts, walks in the very professor whose lab Dixcy had bunked. At first, Dixcy did not believe his eyes. He pinched himself and then rubbed his eyes vigorously. Realising that this was no hallucination, he jumped a good six inches in shock. The professor placed his order and looked about for a seat to sit in. As fate would have it, he spotted the cowering and crouching Dixcy.

Needless to say, Dixcy landed in some hot, boiling water that day. To add insult to injury, the next day in class, the professor recounted the incident to the whole class. The whole class was in raptures and the professor was swelling with pride upon the discovery of his skills as a raconteur when he noticed that his protagonist, Dixcy was peacefully asleep in the last bench.

***About the protagonist:** D Krishna 'Dixcy' Chaitanya, is a B. Tech. student of the Civil Engineering Department. His friends consider him a wild boar because of his habit of beating people while greeting them. He loves programming and writing new algorithms and logics.*



# An Exchange Experience

*Andreas Leitner*

“Ah! You’re from IIT Madras? How did you pass the admission test?!” That’s what Indian people often ask us, on our travels, when they hear we are Indian students. And I have to answer: “I’m only an exchange student; we don’t have to take the test.”

It is especially funny to the some faces when we, obvious foreigners, get the Indian ticket price at special tourist attractions (for those, who don’t know, foreigners pay an increased price, eg. for the Taj Mahal). But owners of the IIT identity card are treated like Indian citizens, and this is very nice! In the past few months, I have got to know a lot about this country, but I remember the beginnings very well.

When I came here, I did not know anything except some historical facts, geography, culture and such facts. The problem is they do not feed you on the ground details of the country! To be honest, for me as a German, the differences in eating were very big. Probably, I have never eaten so less meat than here in India.

So on the first day, I thought I would try Tifanys, a good restaurant on the campus, which is like a private mess. The menu card promises an interesting meal, simply because I do not know what is meant by “Paneer Butter Masala” “Butter Naan” etc.

Fortunately some other foreigners are sitting there, having lunch too. They start laughing when they see my weird face and recommend the “limited meal” for an Indian food starter like me. For my first real meal in India I like it quite much, although my mouth and my tongue burn for at least one hour after that. At that moment I laugh about my problems with spicy food in Germany...that’s nothing compared to a good Indian meal!



Same day I move to my hostel and first thing I ask myself is: Why are all windows covered with steel fences? My question is answered the very next minute, when a little monkey runs away...with MY coke bottle in his hands! What I did not know at that moment: This would not be my last meeting with animals for the day.

But first I check my room. Ok, in a way I am a little bit surprised as nobody had told me that there is nothing in the rooms, so I have to be creative. Fortunately Gurunath's supermarket on campus seems to know what newcomers need and they sell it at acceptable prices. Back in hostel I am the owner of a mattress and other useful stuff.

A sound! Strange, you have never heard something like that before. Is it a bird...no could rather be a cat...hmm... I know Indian cats make the same noise as the Germans, but what the hell? Suddenly at that moment a small lizard appears from behind the mirror and I am lucky to not swallow my tooth-brush!

Now, after spending a semester here, I can say I have got used to all the "new" things. I am pretty sure I will miss a lot of things when I am back in Germany. IIT was for sure a really great time for me and I especially learned that you should always be willing to experience something new. So if you are interested in spending an exchange semester in another country, do that!!

If you come to Europe, at least you will not be terrorized by monkeys and geckos! ;-)

**About the author:** Andreas Leitner aka Andy, is a German native who came to IIT Madras as a part of a semester exchange program. He is majoring in Industrial Engineering.



## Who Guards the Guard?

*Anonymous*

The hunt for hot girls had just begun in my first semester and I had a huge crush on a certain A who was the hottest girl in our class. We used to hang out a lot and she took to liking me. By the end of August, we started dating each other. One moonlit night, we were on the hunt for the perfect place to be. The stadium seemed inviting, an answer for our quest. In the vast emptiness that engulfs the stadium at night we sought to sitting, right at the centre of the stadium, next to the cricket pitch. Bad Decision!

Even though there was hardly any light except for the moonlight, we were blatantly visible. We had just settled down when we saw two figures approaching us from the distance. I was cursing our luck and to add to my worries, the guy turned out to be a guard and he asked us, “*Kya kar rahe the?*” (What were you doing?) I could not think of any better and intelligent way of answering other than, “*Aise hi bhaiyya*” (simply). He was in no mood to let go; he repeated, “*Kar kya rahe the?*”

Trying to act smart I retorted, “*Bhaiyya jo karte hain wohi kar rahe the.*” (I was doing what everyone also does, brother.)

I think he didn’t like my reply, “ID card *do.*” (Give me your ID card.)

All that I managed to blurt out was, “*Bhaiyya, nahi hai.*” (I do not have it.)

The guard gleefully ordered, “*Chalo mere saath CSO ke paas.*” (Come with me to the CSO- Chief Security Officer.)

A, who had been silent all the while tried to appeal to the “brother” that is in every Indian man’s heart, “*Bhaiyya, jaane do, phir se nahi karenge.*” (Let us go, we will not repeat it.)





Seeing her trying to get us out of this mess, I felt I was being irresponsible. And I asked her to go back to the hostel, assuring her that the entire situation was under control, whereas, apparently it was not. She left and I remained with the two guards.

A “universal solution” seemed quite appealing to me.

“*Bhaiyya, aap mere saath chalo, kuch settle kar lete hain.*” (Please come with me, we will settle something.)

The guard shook his head, putting up the pretense of being a ‘*satyavaan*’ (the righteous being).

“*Aap chalo toh sahi*”, I whispered “*mere paas 400 Rs hain.*” (Come with me, I have 400 rupees with me.)

The guard seemed to stick to his morals, -“*Nahi!*”

I decided to raise the bar a bit, “500”?

“*Hmm! Nahi!*”

“*Final rate 700.*”

The guard smiled and gave in.

“*Mere room chalo, abhi pocket mein nahi hai.*” (Come to my room. I do not have the money with me now.)

“*Chalo*”

The guard agreed to stay shut about the whole incident. At around 2:30 AM, we got to my room and found that I had no cash. So, I banged my neighbor’s door, woke him up, took the cash and gave it to the guard. The guard, obviously hit by greed, started demanding for more. In sheer desperation, I put in an extra hundred bucks.

After the guard went, I called A and told her about what had happened. She was scared to death. I hung up and went to KK. I woke



him up and told him what had happened. Maybe, still dazed from being woken up and told about a girl, a guard and money, he might have got the story wrong. He said, sounding like a Supreme Court judge giving his verdict, “The guard is not supposed to take money.”

“Yeah! You are right.”

I still doubt if we had both been high when he told me, “Let us go, get the guard.” and I subscribed to his crazy scheme.

We went to the entrance of the stadium and asked the night-duty guard where the other guard was. He was reported to have gone inside the stadium, perhaps hoping to find someone else, and get a chance to make more money. We went there and spotted the guard.

KK, like a true champion charged towards the guard and asked head on, “*Aapne isse bribe liya?*”(Did you accept a bribe from this person?)

All flustered, the guard retorted, “*Par ye toh stadium main ladki ke saath tha.*” (But he was in the stadium with a girl.)

KK was all ablaze, “*Toh? Apna ID card do, main tumhari report kar raha hun, bribe lene ke liye.*” (So? Give me your ID card, I will report on you for taking a bribe.)

Finding himself in a tight spot, the guard surrendered, “*Nahi bhaiyya! Aisa mat karo, yeh lo paise wapas.*” (No, brother! Do not do so. Here, you can have the money back.)

I took the money and came back with a big smile... What a night I wondered... Thanks KK...



## Quizzing at IITM: 2006-2011

*Raghav Iyengar*

Quizzing at IITM in one word, if I may, is esoteric. Screw it! I won't put it in one word. I'll take two more. Let's make them a) Trippy, b) Humbling. I've not been amongst the top quizzers in insti to be very frank but more or less, have been a LitSoc enthusiast and thus, been to almost all the LitSoc quizzes at least (as a participant or finalist). So I suppose I can take full freedom to pen down some thoughts about it.

So what makes Quizzing at IITM esoteric? Well, the weird tastes of the quiz masters personal quirks and the famed LVCs (Long Visual Connects), which is more or less a trademark of IITM, something which top quizzers from outside the campus also acknowledge. Well, why go outside for testimonies, when one inside the campus, attending a LitSoc quiz for the first time remarked thus "You know what, I feel so dumb that I have not seen Coppola or Warhol's works so closely that people here can connect stuff related to their d\*\*\*s as well if it were possible". I am sure, something of that has already happened, or maybe such quizzes can also psyche out junta really bad (Did anyone say MA101?)

What makes it trippy - Here, I'll cite my own experiences of having almost a standard team for any quiz in insti (barring the academic ones) and of course, an almost standard set of "opponents", if I may. Let me start with my team. Apart from me, there's a pre-pubescent chap, who buys a Mach 3 razor despite having close to zilch facial hair; who's so famous for attracting trips to himself that there are singers, dogs, dolphins, ice-cream shops et al named after him. If that weren't enough, we feel he's got a talent for being a stand-up comedian-if he stands up on stage, junta will automatically laugh at him! The other teammate, is from Bangalore and for some reason can make statements like "iTransvestite", will actually carry a towel to a LitSoc quiz by taking the IP too seriously (and actually wear it around him in public!), and can



somehow crack really really bad PJs (and coming from yours truly, you can realize how bad they can be). So mix these two with a person like me – you’ve got a team which will get laughed at, no matter what, in any quiz. And now consider our “opponents”. One of the teams will have a long-haired guy, nay, PhD candidate, who can transform into a murderer within nano-seconds, if one even takes a blade like object within a few inches of his “locks” (Yours truly thus claims to have a near death experience). Then there are teams with comic freaks, who make you feel really old compared to them, when they literally drool on comic book covers, as though it gives them a high of sorts.. Then of course, there are freshies at times who make you feel like idiots, when they can crack “sitters” and the pessimist in our team would ask us “Why do we want to be thrashed by freshies? Let’s pack and mug for our A slot quizzes instead!” (Needless to say, this pessimist is from Elec) And if all of the above still don’t convince you, I won’t try to. I’ll just ask one to attend a Lit-Soc quiz finals, if not a Saarang one. Period.

And last but not the least, an Insti quiz is a humbling experience, at least personally speaking. It reveals how vastly ignorant one can be and proves an old adage about how much ever we may know, it’s still not enough. It’s also humbling considering the quality of participants it has been attracting for ages. There have been stalwarts like PoTA, BoFI to name quite a few, who are legends in their own right, about whom anything said is less than sufficient. And quizzing with them, clearly shows how much one needs to catch up with every time. I suppose, if there’s inertia for one to quiz, beating such stalwarts is an incentive and a force sufficient to drive one’s Wiki-ing engines. Not to mention the prize money that follows. Rumour has it that one of the “oldest” quizzers in insti, has made up to 1 Lakh in prize money from quizzing alone, over the past 5 years\*. Neat, innit?

(\* There’s a rumour that the same quizzer has run the 100 m in under 11 seconds. So believe it at your own risk! )



*About the author:* Raghav “MRI” Iyengar, a Dual Degree student in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, is the bane of the world, especially Jamuna hostel, ever since he started having fun with puns, at others' expense. As an occupational hazard of being a Shaastra Sponsorship Core, he can tend to give an opinion on anything and everything in the world. Hence, his words and his blog ([mirror-of-the-erised.blogspot.com](http://mirror-of-the-erised.blogspot.com)) need to be taken with a pinch of salt and if possible, a shot of tequila as well.

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## And No Regrets!

After studying for 5 hours for today's exam, he slept at 4:30 am for 10 hours. Don't worry, the exam was not in the morning. When he woke up at 2:30 pm for the 3:00 pm exam, he ran to the bog, brushed his teeth and jumped on his cycle. On the way he fell from the cycle in mud. He looked at his pants and was confused to see a big white patch on it, because you know, mud is brown in colour. As he touched that white patch, he realized that it is toothpaste that got squeezed out of the tube. At that point, he also realized that he had forgotten his calculator. He was in way too much of hurry to care about the patch and his toothpaste and decided to go without a calculator. He finally managed to reach the examination hall on time and took the answer sheet. After taking the answer sheet, he took out his pen from his pocket to write the exam. As he started writing his name, he realized that it is not his pen but his toothbrush and also that he is about to get screwed in this exam without a pen and a calculator. He borrowed a pen from the invigilator and somehow wrote the exam. Yes, he did get raped in the exam and is not expecting more than average. But he is more than satisfied with the whole episode because he is the Alumni Affairs Secretary of the Insti and has a new incident to contribute to this book of memories.



## Friends for Life

*Rajat Tasgaonkar*

All that time we spent together  
Are memories to be cherished forever  
Those late night chats will always rock  
    CCD, Mess, Tifanys  
    Guru, Campus cafe or Basera  
The sip of coffee taken together  
Will always be remembered no matter  
    How long will it take to gather  
    FBing, Tweeting all the time  
    Searching some new masala  
    To add soda in lime  
Lighting the sutta, holding the lighter  
Till the laughter bursts out in tears  
Cramming for exams, those nite-outs  
    Sharing food and what not  
Be it Sangam or common room  
    Cricket, hockey or footer  
Hooting and rooting while watching match  
Making that start right from scratch  
This is what friends are meant for  
    To keep our secrets for life long  
    To always bring smile on our face  
No matter even if they separate in the race.

**About the author:** Rajat “Taz” Tasgaonkar is a Dual Degree student in the Dept. of Chemical Engg. A die-hard fan of cricket, this resident of Alak loves travelling, has a keen interest in chess and photography and is a self confessed foodie. He blogs at [www.rajattaz.blogspot.com](http://www.rajattaz.blogspot.com).



# An Ethical Scam

*Surbhi Maheshwari*

Professional Ethics (ProE) course is a compulsory course for all undergraduate students at IIT Madras.

To have fun in an otherwise monotonous lecture with very poor attendance, on a particular Tuesday of November, Leela and I came up with a plan. Read on to know the stud plan, as put up by Leela (credit: Her blog- <http://leela-aarthy.blogspot.com>). And read further to know about the studder counter plans our classmates came up with.

“What happens when a certain agent L and a certain agent S put two and two together? The result is four, no doubt, but with an incredible mission and a mischievous smile. The day was perfect for what they had in mind. Two A4 sheets and a pen were all the weapons they needed and the middle page of the day’s newspaper served as camouflage for the same.

Agent S thought it would be wise to write the column details before heading to war and agent L nodded. Sl. no., name, roll no. and sign were the chosen columns and with that, half the work was done. They made sure they kept their calm all along lest someone should doubt something was fishy. Since agent L is known to take the middle page of the paper along to every ProE class and PPT alike, nobody shot a second glance at the weapons they were smuggling in. They were nearing the war zone.

The roughly 20 students present in the hall made it seem impossible to carry out the task at hand without being caught for the same. This way and that, they analyzed the case. The decision was finally made to go ahead with the mission. The next question was how. How about entering the class along with the professor and sneaking the sheet to the ones on the last row? It was too late for that because the professor



was already there! How about faking a re-entry into the hall and sitting on the last row? There were too few students to pull that off. How about just passing it along from where they were? It would be impossible to convince anyone that it wasn't a fake sheet.

A few minutes later, the agents decided to go ahead with the most risky, yet most satisfying, option; the third one. There were two sets of students to choose from; the electricians and the mechanics. The mechanics won solely because the agents didn't know who they were. The agents asked for a pen from the row of mechanics behind them saying that they had to sign the attendance sheet. Unbelievable though it may seem, it worked. The fake attendance sheets were being passed with more and more authenticity associated to them with every signature that was put and every SMS that was sent to those who were absent. The mission was a success. The agents high-5ed, rather low-5ed, in appreciation.

One row, two rows, the sheets were moving fast and soon, it had reached the crowd on the other side of the class. A few minutes later, the professor, quite unexpectedly, decided that attendance would be taken! Was it a divine turn of events so that the agents wouldn't get caught or had the professor noticed the A4 sheets making their rounds around class? That, we'll never know."

### **Rest of the story:**

Because of the messages everyone was shooting to the people not present, the lecture hall soon had over 200 students. The professor did not even bother to collect the attendance sheets in the end. He simply said: Objective fulfilled, everyone came to the class. Leela and I wish we had kept the sheets with us as a proof of an achievement.

What made us give our plan out finally is yet another story. We both did our bit of good-and-caring-friends by messaging 5-6 people each a crisp: "Attendance in ProE class. Inform others." I got replies to the





tone of: “Thank you”, while Leela received: “I don’t care”, “Why don’t you put a proxy for me?”, “I already know” etc. The contrast in responses irritated her and she announced after the class that it was a fake attendance call and that they should all thank us for it as prof finally called a proper attendance. The blog post followed.

Came end semester exams for all and placements for BTechs of our batch. ProE was forgotten. Well, not really.

One fine winter morning, while I was enjoying the warm sunshine at my Gran Ma’s place, far from any net connection, Vani calls me and says: “ProE results are out. I failed. Leela failed. AAS failed. CoAS failed. You have passed.” We were both in a shock, I tried to chill her down and we started thinking logically. Vani needed only 19 marks out of 60 to pass the course (we both had got 2nd highest score in the midterm exam, 31 out of 40 and 50 was the passing line). Getting anything less than 20 was impossible given that we had even put a bet on who would finish the exam the fastest and 15 minute was the maximum time any of us in a group of 5 had taken. Rational thinking resulted in us concluding that calling the professor directly is the best way out.

In the mean while, the thread of mails on which grades had been posted was growing exponentially in length. Anxious queries were flying around. They got settled soon as Vani came to know from the prof that the grades were not yet out. Then started the process of finding out the culprits. Leela had managed to sleep through whole of this at her home.

In a proper detective manner, BP1 and BP2 of Elec came up with the explanation: The mail had been sent by an id name1125@gmail.com whereas id of the actual person was name1123@gmail.com. Also, in the fwds list, the hyperlink actually led to a certain Sabu’s email rather than the name being displayed. The



culprits were soon out in the air. They admitted that the attendance scam and joblessness after having got placed had led to their actions. To make it sensational news, they had decided to fail most of the girls and most of the institute positions holders.

Leela kept fighting around questioning why only she had been failed and I had been passed. Apparently, people could not believe that I could do such a mischief (yes, am so innocent) and mistook Leela and Vani (Srivani- Agent S) to have been the trouble creators. Finally the results came out a week later and yes, you are correct, none of the electricians at least had failed.

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## Deflated

After reading Five Point Someone, I was curious about how things ran in IIT. It was my second day after my dad had left. That evening, in Tapti quadrangle, I saw three 3rd years, Rasila, Ghajni and one more guy. Like a pompous champ filled with pride over clearing JEE I went and asked on their faces – “Yahan ragging waggin nahi hoti kya?”

They replied, “Saale tu chahta hai ki hum ragging karen?”

Me: “Haan karo meri ragging, abhi!”

Rasila: “Beta tu room par aa freshie meeting ke baad.”

And the rest, as they say, is history.



# Missed Call

*Anitha B. Raja*

It is a fine Thursday morning. As I step out of my room I notice that something or rather someone is missing. Surekha! I find the door to her room, half open and her on the bed, snuggling under the covers. I scream at her, “Do you know that we have a class at 9? D slot?” Bleary eyed, she looks at me and delivers her first words of wisdom for the day, “Flu Mech da! Put Peace!” She takes her time getting ready and we reach the class late, even by insti standards. The prof has a pained expression on his face as he lets us in. We were the two most prickly thorns in his flesh. All he could do was suffer, ignore and at the max crib.

The very purpose of the Flu-Mech class is to catch up on the latest news all around us. We take to this task diligently by keeping an incessant flow of conversation going. Once in a while we do feel guilty of this disturbance that we 'might' be causing to the class, that is when we text and ace at playing all the games that are on our mobiles. Exasperated and worn out after putting such “pseud fundaes” for a whole hour, the Prof would ask “Did you understand the concept?” Surekha would be the first one to say, 'Yes'. On one such occasion when her strong nod was an overdo, the prof said sadly, wiping his sweating forehead “I know that you have not understood, you also know the same.” Mild drubbings rarely have any effect on hardened rocks like us.

Another fine day, Surekha was joyfully pursuing her routine activities: texting friends whom she had been out of touch with and playing ‘bingo’ as and when she took a break from this strenuous activity. Just then I felt the air thicken; the people who were sitting behind us fell silent. To see what the cause of such abnormal behavior was, I turned my head a bit to find the prof looking directly at Surekha. She didn’t have any clue that he had been watching her for the last few minutes. I nudged her as she had given no indication of taking her



fingers off the keypad. Surekha looked at me and said, “How many times have I told you not to....” and her voice trailed off as she saw the prof’s face looming over us. In the shock of the moment, she threw her mobile away. The mobile rocketed towards the prof and narrowly missed him, landing near his foot. Surekha bent down to pick it up. Her hands were sweating from all the tension or maybe she had serious problems with picking up objects from the floor (about which I had no clue about); every time she tried to pick it up, the phone dropped again. The prof, with an expression of defeat in his eyes, took the phone calmly from the floor and handed it over to her continuing with the class.

Often we look back and exclaim with disbelief “That was *the* prof!”



## From a Warden's Diary

*Prof. G Srinivasan*

Here I am going to talk about my experiences as Warden of Jamuna Hostel – a position that I would cherish forever. I was the warden during Sep 2003 to Sep 2006 and interacted with seven batches during the period.

### *Finally it comes*

I had always wanted to become a warden. This thought should have come because of my close interactions with Prof TTN and Prof LSG both whom were very popular wardens. Very early in 1993, when I had hardly served the institute for three years (I was a Lecturer then), the Narmada students wanted to suggest my name as warden. I politely rejected the request simply because it was too early. A senior colleague also told me that I should concentrate on teaching and research since it was still early days.

In 94-95 when Prof LSG completed his term as warden Jamuna, he had listed my name as one of the choices from the students. My O.R class that year had about 40 students from Mechanical Engg who lived in Jamuna. The Dean felt that I was too lenient (which was why my name was perhaps suggested) and did not consider me.

The third time was when Prof SC Choudhary suggested my name for Ganga and this was also not considered. GS did become Ganga warden, but it was (late) Prof G Sundararajan.

Finally in August 2003, Prof Idichandy called me and asked me if I could become a warden. I told him I would like a UG hostel and he replied “Jamuna”. The hostel was very famous for sports and got a warden who played only “carom board” and “cards” in his life!



### *My Schroeter enthu*

During the period I was the warden Jamuna was consistently winning the Schroeter. In my first year as warden I had no idea about the importance attached to the events. We had with us the institute sports secretary and perhaps among the best athletes the institute had. The students asked me to come for the Gymknana day function which also featured the 3 a side volleyball match between Ganga and Jamuna. Jamuna was comfortably placed at 19-15 in the third and deciding set and single-handedly from there, Piyush won it 21-19. I was quite happy lifting the trophy since I have not even won a single sports medal in my life.

In my second year I decided to put enthu for Schroeter and decided to be part of the cheering squad. The first footer match I attended to cheer, we lost to Godavari. The only cricket match I went to see, we lost. I decided not to continue my enthu since I was turning out to be an unlucky mascot for Jamuna. Either because of my luck or because we missed the best athlete due to injury, Jamuna did not win the Schroeter.

In my third year as warden, we had perhaps the most disorganized sports secretary. We were way behind in the points. We had absolutely no hope of winning and all the die hard sports fans had given up. From somewhere out of the blue came the cricket gold from the MBAs and Jamuna won the Schroeter.

### *Holi*

The hostel life in IIT Madras is incomplete unless you have been part of the Holi celebration. During the early years (1993-95) students would come as a group to my house and apply colour on us (About 30-40 Narmada guys turned up in 1993). Somehow over the years the students visiting faculty homes during holi (at least my home) reduced.



My first holi as warden coincided with a hostel management meeting and I went to the hostel before attending the meeting. Since I was well dressed and was going for the meeting, I was spared with a couple of “tilaks” in my forehead.

The 2005 holi was different. Most of the fifth and sixth wing students knew that I was coming in the morning and for about 15 minutes we had a more respectful holi with only the tilak in my forehead. I also went to the ninth wing (rooms 401 to 432) which was the MBA wing and suddenly found a full bucket of water poured from behind. And then the fun began for 20 minutes, at the end of which no one could recognize me.

From Jamuna I went to Saras to meet Srikanth. I could enter easily because nobody could recognize me. On seeing me Srikanth ran away since I was threatening to touch him. While coming back home, some colleagues could not recognize me as I greeted them. I think they managed to recognize me because of my scooter.

### *The unsolved syringes*

One morning the office staff informed me that they found a used syringe near the football goal post in the hostel. The syringe also had a brown substance in it which has been left behind. Initially we ignored it thinking that the monkeys would have got them from somewhere. When the third syringe appeared in five days, we were anxious. Was there some problem where someone was injecting things onto himself? Do we have a juvenile diabetic who was using these syringes?

I finally brought it to the notice of the Dean and we had a meeting of the Secretaries and senior students with the institute officials. One official was convinced that some student was injecting something directly onto himself because the left over fluid was “brown” in colour. We sent a mail to the Dean disagreeing on the “brown”



substance issue and thankfully for us the Dean agreed with our explanations.

Till this day nobody solved the “case of the brown syringe”.

### ***The final footer match***

The entering batch of 2006 arrived and I was addressing them in the common room. Some seniors who had just played football in the quadrangle arrived to join us. When I saw the football, I asked the seniors if they would play a friendly match with the freshies and they agreed.

It was a pleasant sight with the seniors playing as a coordinated team and the freshies who did not know each other well struggling to get some coordination. The seniors were dressed in shorts while some freshies were wearing full pant and belt. The seniors also had a couple of institute players including the footer captain.

The seniors certainly played a “friendly” match in which they did not nudge any freshie and did not indulge in any “bullying” in the field. For 10 minutes we had a good competition after which the seniors comfortably won 2-0. At the end, a senior came to me and said’ “Great fun. We have also identified a couple of players for the JAM team”

On 19th September 2006 I handed over charge to Prof Prem Bisht. The students ended my tenure as warden with a farewell football match between the third years and the seniors.

***About the author:*** Prof. G Srinivasan earned an MS degree in Industrial Engineering in 1987 and a PhD degree in Industrial Management in 1990 from IIT Madras. He has been a faculty in the Department of Management Studies since then and one of the students favourite for Operations Research course. He is also a counsellor cum friend to many students than just a teacher.





# A Couple of Memories

*Prof. G Srinivisan*

## **The lunch in Narmada**

The first time I taught O.R. I (this course is now called Fundamentals of O.R.) to UG students was during July-Nov 91. There were two batches and my class had a large number of third year Mech students from Narmada hostel. We used to have a mid semester week where the mid semester examinations for six slots (A to F) would be conducted. The exams would start on a Monday and end on the following Tuesday. There would be no classroom instruction during the period.

I went to visit IIT Kanpur during this break and Prof TTN, the other instructor, set the common question paper. Krishna (Poncho) was close to TTN and when Poncho scored high marks in the mid sem, the joke was that Poncho had RGeD others by picking up the question paper from TTN's house. When this was told to me by the class which cribbed about not being able to get the paper (all these in good humour), I added to the fun by saying that you guys forgot that I also had access to the paper and by properly "treating" me the class could have got access to the paper.

The class remembered this casual comment of mine and invited me for lunch to Narmada hostel (as a "treat") on the day of the last end semester exam (F slot). On that rainy day after completing my F slot exam, I walked to Narmada hostel at around 12:30 p.m. I was surprised to find almost all my students (about 25 of them) waiting outside the hostel to receive me. The mess sec was also in my class. He had arranged the tables in a huge rectangle and all of us had lunch together on that 'round' table!



Then they took me to “Lux’s” room which, according to them, was the best room in the hostel. I sat in the comfortable chair and was surrounded by at least 25 students sitting wherever they could find space in that room (including on other’s lap). I could see about five faces peeping through the window from outside. There was a general “wing chat session” for about two hours and I answered so many of their questions patiently. These questions ranged from my subject to my family and many other aspects. When I left the room at about 3 p.m., one of the students remarked, “It was like ragging a prof!”

### **The unintended recipient**

One fine morning I received an e-mail from one of the students (who was in the USA). It did not start with Dear XX. A part of the mail read thus...

*“i need to impress your parents and they should feel that they arent making a mistake by doing or allowing you to go with your choice or wishes. This is something which i have always strongly thought about and i have looked at many different ways of doing it. I think topping in IIT isnt a very easy thing to do. There is a lot of home work which has been put into this from my side. And it was for the sole reason that your Dad should be impressed”*

I knew immediately that I was not the intended recipient. Within minutes I got a mail informing me so and apologizing for the inconvenience.

The reason I have reproduced the lines is the fact that this person wished to ask for the girl after he achieved something for which he worked really very hard. He cared and worked to prove himself worthy in eyes of the girl’s father. When I find students worrying about their love and wasting time (and not doing anything) I am reminded about this e-mail. This boy finally married the girl to whom the mail was intended and I attended the wedding and blessed the couple.



## Soberly Drunk

*Editor's pick*

Society loves drunken men. There is something about them, a mystical allure of their inebriated ways that draws all eyes towards them and makes all tongues describe and comment on their actions. Consider, for instance, all the brouhaha around Charlie Sheen and you will understand the point. The attitude of curiosity and fervent nose poking into the affairs of men with more than a couple of martinis in them also spawns countless imitations and acts of drunkenness. Acting drunk is perhaps the best way discovered to fool one's fellow man and play a few practical jokes.

The same thought occurred to Srikanth, Kartik and Rohit as they were returning to Insti one evening. Sitting inside an auto, the three idiots thought that a bit of practical joking at the expense of a few friends would not hurt and proceeded to hatch a plan. They decided that acting drunk was perhaps the best way to heighten a few blood pressures. Getting their story straight, they went through a list of friends who could be the butt of the grand joke.

Foil, by virtue of being a simpleton and a trusting friend was chosen. Being a weekend, the three of them assumed Foil would have gone home. They put through a call to Foil's place and it was duly answered. Unfortunately for the three undergraduates in the auto, it was Foil's father who picked up. Oblivious to this fact, the three of them got into the act with ardour, starting on rambling rants and drunken demonstrations. A startled and confused man at the other end managed to decipher that the boys wanted Foil. He cut the call and called up his son.

Having been informed by his father that three of his friends were in the middle of a busy Chennai road late in the night, Foil called



Kartik. Convinced that their plan was working perfectly, the three of them continued to give the impression that they were more than gently stewed. Kartik told Foil that they were alone on an unfamiliar road and were trying to get transportation back to insti. Alarmed at the plight of his friends, Foil placed a call to Stretch. Stretch called the trio and got the same story and some added masala, possibly about sinister figures lurking in the background ready to take advantage of their drunkenness.

As Srikanth, Kartik and Rohit sat in the auto, laughing their derrieres off, various people in Insti were poring over whiteboards, exercising their brains to save their three inebriated friends. The friends called their friends who in turn called their friends and a sizeable team was gathered for the rescue mission.

Meanwhile, the auto deposited them at the main gate, just in time for the last bus. Boarding the bus, the three of them reached their hostel. From the comfort of their rooms, they called up Foil again to tell him that they had somehow reached the main gate and that the security might not let them in if he saw they were drunk. Shortly, a platoon of the search party was dispatched to the main gate to bring the three back. Five minutes later, Kartik called up Foil and told him they were safe in Pampa. In his highly strung state, Foil did not question how three drunk out of their senses people travelled from main gate to the hostel in five minutes. Spreading the word that the boys had successfully negotiated umpteen hurdles to reach Insti, the whole search party moved as one man to the hostel.

Enthused and encouraged by the results their prank had produced till then, the terrific trio decided to continue it. The three of them gathered in one room and switched on the faintest light, providing a psychedelic atmosphere. One of them had been instructed in the art of playing a flute and started to ply his trade. When a few dozen people converged on that room, led by Stretch, they saw two guys who were



apparently oblivious to their surroundings and one guy playing a few bars on a flute. The search party was given a customary drunken greeting. For the next twenty minutes, the search party stuck around, tending to their drunken brothers. The three of them enjoyed the attention as well as the feeling of having summarily fooled at least twenty people. For a moment, the three teetotalers toyed with the idea of actually getting drunk.

As time passed, Stretch got more and more intrigued. Demanding minute details of the story, Stretch started investigating into the matter. In a matter of five minutes, the story fell apart. Stretch himself being no stranger to alcohol soon saw through the act and could not believe he had been led up the garden. Needless to say, Stretch was as pissed off as a child who had been denied candy. Srikanth, Kartik and Rohit were jubilant that they had put one over their mates.



## My First Street Fight

N V S “Patent” Anuraag

Once in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year, I went to Besant Nagar beach with a couple of friends. It was 11 o’ clock in the night when we decided to return. The roads were almost empty. Though the hunt for auto was long, we finally got one and negotiated the fare. He offered to take us to Insti for 50 bucks, which was very reasonable. We agreed.

A couple of minutes into the ride and truth struck us like a cold slap on the face. The driver was drunk out of his senses and was driving as if he was driving a Ferrari. At one time the auto appeared to be on two wheels and almost tumbled. We had hardly travelled half a km when one of the auto driver’s friends joined us. He appeared to be drunk to worse limits than the driver himself. After a few close calls and heart in the mouth moments, we reached Taramani bus stand.

Suddenly, the driver started demanding Rs. 100. We refused but instead offered him 60. Neither he nor we were ready to budge. He started hurling abuse at us and threatened to hit. We were not prepared to take it lying down and responded to his threats. The quarrel grew worse and it broke into a fight. He grabbed one of my friends’ collar and started beating him. My other friend ran and called the guard at the Taramani gate. I got hold of the driver’s friend and dragged him to the shutter of a shop. Meanwhile, the auto driver was overpowering my friend. I turned my attention to him and we double teamed him. Two against one proved effective and we soon pinned him to the ground.

Sensing that the auto driver and his friend would be on the ground for some time, we ran as fast we could to the Taramani gate. My friend was bleeding from the nose, a result of a punch by the auto driver. It was the first street fight of my life and I am glad I came out of it without much damage and clearly on the victor’s side.



## Misplaced Proxy

*Editor's pick*

As has been documented earlier in this book, Dixcy had a penchant for cutting classes. He was not one to shy away from bunking just because some professor or HoD said he should not. The heart he bore and the mind he swayed by would not shake with fear nor sag in doubt. When Dixcy was not bunking classes, he was always sleeping in classes. Reliable witnesses state that finding a couple of needles in a haystack would be a cakewalk when compared to finding a single class in which Dixcy stayed awake.

The only use anyone had for Dixcy in a classroom was to register a proxy attendance. In this field, Dixcy was a *persona non pareil* and was a widely sought after artist in the practice of “putting proxy”. Ctech, the class representative (CR) for the course had a longstanding partnership with Dixcy in putting proxy. The course was taken by two new professors who were yet to accustom themselves to the various sly and cunning techniques the students used to bunk or to register proxies. Ctech and Dixcy would go to class on alternate days, relying on the other to answer the attendance call.

The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley, once wrote the poet Burns in the best Scotch accent he could muster. Dixcy and Ctech being but mere mortals were susceptible to this rule. One day, both Dixcy and Ctech turned up for the same class, but neither had bothered to inform the other of the fact. As usual, the professor started out calling out the names. In due course of time, he called out Ctech's name. Ctech, recognising his name, responded. Dixcy, on recognising Ctech's name was suddenly pricked by the stud of duty and responded at the same time.



Astonished, the professor asked whether the real Ctech could please stand up. No one responded. Still amazed, the professor asked for roll number one. Formulating a grand plan in an instant in his sleep afflicted brain, Dixcy stood up. Meanwhile, the real roll number one, Abhinay too stood up.

Dixcy said, “He is Abhinay Reddy, Roll no. 1 and Class Representative”.

“I know who the class CR is. It is Ctech”, replied the prfoessor, amazed at Dixcy’s antics.

The whole class exploded, like Einstein’s unstable keg of gunpowder. The contagious laughter even affected the professor. Dixcy stood there bemused, the prospective butt of all jokes for the coming week.





# We Electricians

*Avinash Nagarajan*

People call a school “A home away from home”. Sadly though, nobody ever says that of an undergraduate university. Perhaps there is a reason for that. A competitive environment does not really lend itself well to bonding, and it is my good fortune perhaps to be able to say that I have found a home away from home!

The Department of Electrical Engineering at IIT Madras has a long and fabled history. The Professors’ dubious reputation of being strict in the class and hard on the grades (and, deceptively having names that translate to “peace and calm” to boot) go hand in hand with respect and awe for them, and the department as a whole. In laying these misconceptions to rest, I would like to set the record straight about the department and the institute we have all come to love.

My batch (2006 EE entrants, BTechs and Dual Degree), as is likely the case with most others, brought together an incredibly diverse group which has grown into an amicable and a cohesive one. From the talented and laid-back to the effortless performers and the human incarnation of Reuters (Yes, there was just the one), we had it all. The perfect testament to the amicability of the group is perhaps the fact that we brought out the first ever department yearbook (appropriately called “The Electric Bond”) in our institute’s history. A community effort, it was indeed an extraordinary sight to see everyone participate (albeit not all voluntarily).

Of course, no mention of the department would be complete without a mention of our coffee shop. Like the gang in Friends’ lounging around in the Central Perk Coffee Shop, we can also be found here smack in the middle of work sharing a light hearted moment over coffee and butter biscuits. Students and professors alike gang up in this



hallowed room, which invariably leads to us transcending the professional boundary (probably to the chagrin of quite a few; I know I wouldn't want my project guide spilling the beans on me in front of my friends!!)

Being in the dual stream, it is a strange feeling to bid farewell to nearly half the batch. But, this also brought the rest of us even closer. The dual batch of 2011, especially the communications stream enjoyed an unrivalled level of bonhomie. We call ourselves the **ToNNet - the 3GPP**, a play on the TeNeT (The Telecommunications and Computer Networking) group, a group comprising of the professors working in communications and the 3GPP organization. Quite geekily, it stands for "Totally Nuts over Networking - The Third Generation Peace Putters". An extremely competitive bunch, we drive each other to do better. From something as trivial as our performance in a lab to our performance in our final 2 years, our batch has outperformed, which can only mean that (save for a few exceptions) the competition within the group was well natured. Our name has spread far and wide (with a professor also holding an honorary membership).

However, we take the old adage "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" seriously (perhaps a little too seriously). We, as a group have made it a point to spend some time together. The most memorable of these experiences are certainly the birthday celebrations. Starting with the grandfather of our group, a certified Paparazzi-in-training, we have made something of a tradition of birthdays. In the halls of the communication wing (where we toil night and day), birthday parties at midnight typically consist of a cake, a collage of amusing pictures, a gift that remarks on the characteristic trait of the person, and of course, party hats, balloons and in house photography. Lunch/dinner treats follow. I will treasure these memories, as I will my own collage!



As we embark on the next step of our lives, I am sure most of us would cease to be Communications Engineers (I know some of us already have). But, I do hope we continue to be members of the ToNNet family. And, if Facebook and Google Talk are any indication, I am sure we will always be nuts over “Networking”.

***About the author:** Avinash Nagarajan, fondly referred to as Nag, is a Dual Degree student in the Department of Electrical Engineering. He is a technology enthusiast and likes blending fun with high end technology to create cool apps. Though his interests span the spectrum, from photography to tennis, his dressing sense is nearly always monochrome.*



## Then and Now

*Prof. L S Ganesh*

I have been through several phases of IIT. Pre TV and internet era was an amazing period of time. Students' creativity and visualisation was of a certain distinct nature. In early 60's, campus life significantly comprised of a variety of extracurricular activities. Students harboured a holistic attitude towards recreational hobbies and dabbled in almost everything-be it debate, dramatics or sports. IITM boasted of national players of almost every popular sport including bridge. Students were into every kind of music - Jazz, Hindustani classical, Carnatic etc. Such was the reach and zeal regarding the intra hostel events that they used to be held at the OAT. Various campus communities, the students, faculty and their families, the staff, bonded over huge carnivals held at regular intervals. Till early 80's, inter hostel boxing used to draw huge crowd in the OAT. Student-run Institute Hiking Adventure club was one of the most popular clubs. In the area of academics, the spirit of engineering was intense. Students engaged themselves in critical thinking and group discussions which reinforced the very essence of vision of IITM. Mardi Gras and Bharat Utsav, predecessors to Saarang, was the platform to some of the most creative artistic minds of our country. Prohma, predecessor to Shaastra, too was a huge success. I myself served as the Cultural Advisor from 1997-2000 and maintained excellent relationships with every person I met during my tenure.

There used to be one music room in SAC. One music team with UG and PG students alike! I have been part of the music group during my students' days when IITM music group was at its peak. One particular incident which I would like to share happened way back in 1980 at Rendezvous of IIT Delhi. Our team was practicing at around 2 in the morning and there were a few IIT Delhi students to help us out with sound equipment. The moment they heard us, they were



spellbound. And the word spread like fire not only in the Institute but also in the whole of Delhi. Our team was slated to perform third. But the organisers requested us to perform at the end so that the other colleges performing after us didn't get disheartened. Finally IITM played at around 12 midnight and the auditorium was simply overflowing! The craze continued the next day too. A local rock band came to perform. But to our surprise, public forced the band to pack within an hour and started demanding for our team. The moment was priceless. Till today, whenever I go to IITD, I find at least one person who recognises me because of the musical havoc we caused!

Holi used to be a gala affair. Insti buses would be employed to take the all of us to the Besant Nagar beach. By the time the festivities ended, the sea water colour would literally change into pink, red, green etc. Every hostel night would conclude with a movie.

Times have changed. And so has the Insti. There is phenomenal transformation in terms of education and campus life post TV and internet era. Engineering has become a necessary evil. Students just want the stamp of IIT, get a job in a foreign bank and earn loads of money. The passion and eagerness to explore the infinite aspects of engineering are lost. Affinity for respective branches has decreased. The student faculty relationship has weakened. Leave academics, there is hardly any enthusiasm for extracurricular activities. All the events have been shifted from the OAT to much smaller venue of CLT. Even then, most of the time, the audience consists of just the judges and the organisers! The ever growing UG-PG divide is another change that pains me. Students' outward behaviour, I feel, has completely gone for a toss. Overdose of unwanted public display of affection is highly embarrassing, especially for the other residents of the Insti. The building designs have also changed. I believe that the structure of abode determines the behaviour of the occupant. One can easily separate students who reside in the old hostels from those of the new hostels. The students of the



older buildings tend to mingle and interact more owing to the spacious quadrangles these buildings have.

But then, a coin always has two sides. Changed times have brought in positive transformations also, in form of the role of IITM Alumni. Centre for Innovation (CFI) is one such example.

As a faculty member of Department of Management Studies and as an ex-warden of Jamuna Hostel, I have realised that today, IITM's faculty faces an arduous challenge: to help students discover a balance in life and maintain it throughout their lifetime; to guide them to find the purpose of their lives and encourage them to pursue it relentlessly till it is achieved. Adolescence is an overpowering as well as a delicate phase of life. Thus, we, being the faculty and elders, should handle them carefully, guide them to the righteous path as much as possible and groom them into responsible citizens of the future. This also calls for a need to change and improve the student-teacher interaction. Students too have a major role to play in this regard. They should strive to challenge the teachers intellectually which will definitely result into healthier relationships with the faculty.

My only dream for IITM is that I want to see this institute to such great heights that every student in the world, would say "I want to study in IITM." And I hope each and every member of IITM will endeavour to make this dream come true.

**About the author:** Professor L S Ganesh is a faculty in the Department of Management Studies. He received M. Tech. in Maintenance Management and Ph. D. in Forecasting, System Dynamics, Educational Planning from IIT Madras in 1979 and 1986 respectively. He is a very eloquent speaker whose guidance lectures to freshmen are attended even by senior students.



# When God sent Light

*Editor's pick*

In a place like IIT Madras, technical festivals and competitions abound like rabbits in a coop. Anyone who can wield a couple of ICs or is a genius when faced with a programming language could walk in and no questions asked. One such event that always draws all and sundry is the one named contraptions. Contraptions is one of the simpler and yet most interesting and exciting events in Insti. Basically, contraptions involve a lot of stuff falling on to other stuff to realise one ultimate goal. Or to be slightly more technical, objects trigger motion in other objects and a chain reaction of sorts is setup in pursuit of a goal. In what is usually described as a domino effect, all kinds of things, from screws to falling anvils fall on each other and look great. It is what one is likely to see in sweet and innovative ads from Honda or Toyota, where small, shiny things fall or roll to make something else move which in turn sets some other object in motion and finally strikes the key in ignition.

Bardar was in his third year and decided that he would contribute to his hostel's Tech Soc points by "putting fight" in the contraptions event. Bardar spent hours, days and weeks on it, inspiring second years and freshers along the way. One and a half months passed as Bardar made blood sweat to garner a few Tech Soc points. In the end, he devised a contraption that worked somewhere along these lines.

- (i) A ball coming from a pipe hits a domino.
- (ii) A long series of dominoes fall.
- (iii) the last domino in the series is covered with white paper and as it falls it sends white light to a light sensor and actuates an electrical circuit.

A couple of trials were conducted and the results made Bardar ecstatic. Brimming with confidence and with the slight hope that he



might actually win the event, Bardar proceeded to the venue. The competition got underway.

We asked Bardar about this “massive fight” of his and here is what he had to say.

“Well, the domino fell perfectly but the circuit didn’t start. We had all the whole team and the coordinators waiting for something to happen but nothing happened. After 20 seconds of looking around in disbelief, I started thinking of what to tell the freshies, who in the then foreseeable future would be trying hard to mend the pieces of their broken hearts. But the moment I turned towards the freshies, I saw a sudden change of expression on their faces and heard the sound of three motors running in series. That sound was music to my ears as out of nowhere the impossible had happened. The circuit started working as if some external or supernatural force had acted on it. So, the contraption that we made ran successfully.

The whole team knew that something unusual happened to our contraption, but the coordinators didn’t have a clue about it. For them everything was as normal as Chennai’s temperature. So, we didn’t discuss even a bit about it until they left. As we sat together after the celebration, one of our team members with a hawk’s eye told us that the circuit was actuated by a flash from the camera of a photography volunteer for that year’s Shastra. We got dazzled by the beauty of the way in which nature stopped our contraption before it practically started and showed us a contraption of its own. People who were there can say whatever they want but they would agree on one thing, there were no atheists left in the team”.





# How not to be a Bad Teacher

Rakesh Misra

Have you ever tried estimating the number of hours that you have spent in classrooms during the course of your IIT education? I did it recently, and the number turns out to be more than a whopping 2500! (2500 is for a Dual Degree student. You can do the Math accordingly.)

Realizing now the amount of time that a student spends for classes, and backed by my own 2500 classes of experience as a student, I carefully thought out what are the things that one should do/not do so as not to be dismissed as a *bad teacher* straight away. Here are the ten most important ones.

- 1) **Don't arrive late for your class.** Be present at the scheduled start-time. An occasional delay is acceptable, but on a regular basis, any delay more than 2 minutes reflects very badly on your professional ethics.
- 2) **Don't humiliate students in classroom,** especially if they arrive 2-3 minutes late to your class. The late-comer might have arrived after breaking his alarm clock that didn't ring at the right time or after puncturing his cycle on the way or after not getting a piece of (so-called) *dosa* in mess despite standing in the queue for 15 minutes - don't make him feel worse by humiliating him as soon as he enters the class.
- 3) **Don't come unprepared.** You may have been teaching the same course for the last 10 years, you might have taken the same class just a week ago, but do spend some time to prepare every time before coming to a class. You may spend anything between 2 minutes to 2 hours or more to prepare, but never walk into a class hoping for stuff to come out of your mouth all by itself.
- 4) **Don't dish out petty rules and regulations.** Asking students to switch off cellphones in class is okay, but asking them to stop using cellphones



in life is definitely not okay! Don't thrust too many regulations and restrictions on the students. Don't make stupid rules on how they should enter the room, how they should sit upright, how they should shake their legs and how they should breathe in air. Maintain your sanity, give them their space.

5) **Don't make a mess on the board.** Be neat with your handwriting, be clear with your notations. Use the board well. Don't make spelling mistakes. And for God's sake, please don't spell the title of your course wrong!

6) **Don't harp on attendance.** Your institute may have attendance regulations for students, and as an ethical/law-abiding teacher, you may have no option but to take attendance every class, but never use attendance as a crutch for making students attend your class. If your teaching is not a reason good enough, then your classes don't deserve to be attended anyway.

7) **Don't bluff.** You are not God; you are not omniscient. It is never a shame to say, "I'm not sure of this right now" or "I'll think about it and get back to you in the next class". Never bluff to hide your ignorance; the next-gen students don't take long to figure it out!

8) **Don't throw high sounding jargon.** You know the subject better than the others in the classroom and that is exactly the reason you are there as a teacher; don't try to prove it. Think at the level of the class while introducing new terms and concepts. Don't show off; don't be rude.

9) **Don't talk to the walls.** Your students sit right in front of you; look at them while you're explaining. Be interactive; don't deliver a monologue. Don't sound monotonous too; modulate your voice well. And please don't talk facing the board.

10) **Don't stretch your class beyond the scheduled end-time.** You may take a couple of minutes more to wind up the last topic you were



discussing, but every extra minute beyond that will reduce your popularity by half. And never try to take advantage of your students' respect for you by asking questions like "Can I take 5 more minutes?"; they will always agree just to save you from humiliation (Can you imagine how you would feel if all students answer a unanimous "No" and walk out of the classroom?).

The article is intentionally not titled "How To Be a Good Teacher", because that is an entirely different topic. But the first step to be a good teacher is to not be a bad teacher.

***About the author:** Rakesh Misra is described as a perfectionist by the people around him. This Dual Degree student in the Dept. of Electrical Engineering has an amazing knack of taking pictures with every possible celebrity who visits Insti or happens to meet him elsewhere. A resident of Ganga hostel, he has a lot of initiatives to his credit. He occasionally blogs at [innertunes.blogspot.com](http://innertunes.blogspot.com).*



## How We Met!

Govindraj Vinayraj

Barely one week into Insti, Ibo was the only guy in the class I had spoken to more than a ‘hi’. I was playing in the class with a brand new blackberry. So here I was, eyes glued to the mobile and my thumbs running a race across the key-pad, never even for a brief second doubting that I might be caught. It so happened that the Prof was also observing my joyride in “gadget-world”.

The prof very calmly told me to get out and took the phone away. Thinking that it was actually a blessing in disguise and that I could manage to grab a bite from Campus Café or Tifanys, I strolled in the corridors. Suddenly, my phone vibrated, it was an SMS; just a usual ad. ‘Wait! Mobile! Oh, crap!’, it was Ibo’s mobile that the Prof had actually taken from me.

I called the Prof after the class and apologized. The prof said, “Yeah, I remember. Come to my office at 3 pm.” I went to his office, all prepared for a long and winding discourse on classroom etiquette. He asked me to come and sit next to the person who was already there. To my surprise, it was Ibo. The Prof said, “Both of you claim this phone to be yours. Come to a conclusion and tell me who it really belongs to.”

That time I realized that Ibo had not expected me to take the pain and screw myself for someone I barely knew. His respect for me grew. And we faced the Prof’s ire together. He even called up Ibo’s parents. Adversity makes men cling to one another. And till today, we stick together as best friends.

***About the author:** Govindraj “Borba” Vinayraj is a B. Tech. student in the Dept. of Civil Engineering. He has a lot of random enthu and his friends say they cannot pin point what he is really interested in.*



# Chennai Challenge

*Claudia Blank*

Winter 2009: For the first time my German professor mentions that there is an exchange program with an Indian university. Ok, sounds like an interesting chance to experience something new coupled with lots of travel destinations for eventual free time and holidays. Some of our fellow students had already been there and had come back alive. Why shouldn't I go there? First question: Where is Chennai? Never heard about it before. Second question: What is IIT? After some minutes of internet research, the third question: As it is all about "Technology", how can I pursue management courses there? Some months later, at least those questions are answered.

September 2010 [SCENE 1]: Arrival at Chennai airport. The climate is more humid than I could ever imagine. On the way to the campus, I admire the non-existing traffic rules, rubbish everywhere along the streets, a terribly smelling "Adyar" river and houses which look as if they will collapse within the next few minutes. I tell myself, let's try to see things in a positive way: Maybe Indians don't appreciate external appearance, but internal values? [SCENE 2]: Did I say internal values? Mistaken, for sure. My hostel room at IIT Madras campus is empty and looks the way I imagine a German prison cell. Well, German prisoners enjoy more than 7m<sup>2</sup>, own a carpet and a TV... Prisoners normally have to ask permission for going out, so do I. I want to leave IIT for more than three days? My hostel warden needs to be informed and I have to register all the details of my absence in a special "Going Home Book". I want to go and meet some friends in the boys' hostel? No way without registering my visit in a special "Visitors Book". Wow!!! And here's the icing on the cake. The CCW guys try to gain more information about my private life than my mother does. Welcome to the kindergarten.



It seems as if Indians appreciate bureaucracy as much as cricket. Let's think about the abbreviation IIT... Indian Institute of Technology. Sorry to say that, but so far I couldn't find the TECHNOLOGY. Most things are handwritten on a piece of paper. Maybe India's position as an IT-nation has not reached the administration of IIT yet. But I'm sure within the next 50 years the CCW will also find its way into the 21st century.

The campus is quite beautiful compared with the rest of the city of Chennai but the animal life here came as a shock to me. Whereas pitiful cats and dogs are treated not so nicely, hordes of holy saucy monkeys spread the rubbish from the dustbins all over the campus while they are searching for food. Besides the animal wildlife, I also got in contact with the Indian cuisine. Probably our relationship will always be a mix of love and hate, but after six months in India my stomach is now really longing for pizza, pasta and pork.

So, was there any positive experience at all? Definitely yes. Whenever I had (or took) some days off, I escaped the bothersome campus life and travelled through India. It is amazing how many different faces one single country can have. Most Indians I had the chance to get to know are very openhearted and friendly – I would exclude the majority of rickshaw drivers from this statement.

March 2011: Retrospect. Globally seen, I totally underestimated the difference in the living standard I was used to and the one I was pushed to on the IIT campus. Probably it would have been helpful if I had less expectations and more patience during my stay. Anyway, I got lots of impressions of a completely different style of life, but now I'm glad that my exchange is over. And as for everyone, for me too, the most beautiful place on earth is my home.

**About the author:** Claudia Blank, a Management Studies student, hails from Germany. She visited IITM as a semester exchange student.



## Times I had the cake and ate it too

*Surbhi Maheshwari*

- 1) 26th November as Belated Christmas. Leela and I fooled Vani to believe that she had forgotten Christmas the previous day. Cheery on the top, we made her agree that it was once-in-a-lifetime mistake and we ought to videotape it. She re-enacted the whole drama for our camera. And then it dawned on her, after 2 hours of belated Christmas spirit, that New Year was a month away and not just a week.
- 2) Helped Vani send roses to her dearest enemy M, a particular Shastra spons core, on V-Day with proper arrangements such that his wingmates receive the parcel before he does and bump him hard. M chose to confide into me his frustration for not being able to guess the sender and discussed the various possible names, before finally realizing it was Vani. Even after knowing the whole plan, he believed me to be innocent.
- 3) Again Vani and I, the partners in crime. Used a particular feature of SMail to send T, a certain TAS, mails from himself (Karthik calling Karthik style) from Vani's laptop. I was the one who composed the mails and still, T forwards (or sends back?) those to me to discuss the issue and the possible culprits. Traces it to Vani's IP address finally and believes me when I say I had no idea about this whole thing.
- 4) Literally kicked a certain co-ToNNet member P when he tried to prove a watery-eyes-due-to-sneezing-me to be a crying-me and challenged me to do better than use a plastic bottle to hit him. To take revenge for the humiliation, during a birthday celebration later that evening, P tried to conspire with other group-mates to bump me. He and one more person lifted me but no one bumped and the moment they let go off me, P got bumped by the whole group.



## Scoring in Saarang

*Editor's pick*

Saarang represents different things to different people. For some, it is but a great opportunity to showcase their amazing talent that would have rusted and rotted away in ignominy if it was not for Saarang. For some others it is the exemplar of what is wrong with modern society, an unscrupulous and unabashed display of vulgar commercialism and the McDonaldsization of art and culture. But for a majority of Insti junta who swear by a certain 1962 Elvis Presley musical comedy, Saarang is just that: Girls! Girls! Girls!

Karthik was an innocent lad who believed in quarks and leptons and drank Tropicana Lichi. One day, waking up in his seven metre square room, he looked out of his window and observed an extensive gleam of purple and gold, quite like the cohorts of the Assyrian. It was Saarang 2010. Excitement and enthusiasm permeated everywhere and it slowly crept up through Karthik's window and enveloped him. Being a staunch believer in the maxim, 'If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly', he quickly pulled on a pair of trousers and was on his way.

Roaming about like a rudderless ship in the doldrums of the Pacific, our gleamy eyed protagonist lost his way in the first few minutes in Saarang and soon wound up at the starting point of the Saarang Treasure Hunt. At a loss to explain where he had reached, Karthik jumped six inches high in shock when a hand tapped his shoulder from behind and then broke the Olympic record for high jump when he turned around and observed that the hand belonged to a member of the fairer sex. In a voice that sounded to him like the peal of a dozen sweet bells tolling, she asked him if he wanted to be the final member in her Treasure Hunt team. Karthik made a noise like gas fizzing out of a faulty pipe. The rest of the team took that as an yes.





The Treasure Hunt progressed and with it Karthik recaptured his ability to form words and make coherent sentences. He soon embarked on a conversation with the girl. Dishing out talk smoother than the finest Scotch, Karthik soon extinguished any interest the girl may have had in the Treasure Hunt. In ten minutes, they were behind OAT, reciting the 'Pale Hands I Loved beside the Shalimar' and taking the conversation to uncharted waters. Somewhere in the midst of the conversation, the girl revealed to Karthik that she had never learned to handle a bicycle.

'You don't know how to cycle, eh?' asked Karthik, beaming like a lighthouse, a gleam in his matching the best of the gold from Kolar. Grabbing the opportunity like a drowning man would a straw, he offered to teach her and was accepted.

Anyone who is familiar with Bollywood would not need to know the details of what happened next. Like a cliched montage from a cliched Mumbai rom-com, the couple progressed in their association for the rest of Saarang. It was with a heavy heart and a voice that sounded like the violin ensemble of the Vienna Orchestra during a particularly sad piece, that the girl informed Kartik that she was leaving, going back to Pune.

If nothing else, Karthik was a man known for perseverance and steadfastness. In the four months that followed Saarang, he travelled to Pune fourteen times, still in the throes of that magical association fermented over cycling tutorials, keen to know what some had found so sweet.

Times sped on and brought to Karthik January 2011 and with it the next Saarang. Not one for half measures, Karthik put fight and went all the way to Pune to bring his lady friend to Saarang 2011, throwing in a round of India's best floral displays at Bangalore as an added bonus. Safe to say, that is one eligible bachelor out of the way. Score!



***About the protagonist:** N V Karthik, known by his friends as Google, is a B. Tech. student in the Department of Metallurgical and Material Sciences. He enjoys playing flute and has started Insti's flute club. His interests include music, table tennis, hapkido, Art of Living and tripping on everyone including himself.*

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## Bardar

Some sly seniors outside Himalaya Mess spot a naive looking freshie and decide to feast on him. The freshie starts in a monotonic tone "I have no name. My nick is Kanwaljeet Singh." "Kanwaljeet? What does it mean?" The freshie has no idea and tries to make up by blabbering words like lotus, victory etc. Before the seniors could stop him, a call interrupts the freshie. Giving an apologetic look to the seniors, he takes the call and starts chatting shamelessly on the cell. 3 min, 4 min, 5 min – Ab toh phone rakh! The seniors are irritated but they pretend to be patient. Suddenly, the freshie asks, "Who is on the line?" That's it. The seniors get ready to pounce upon their prey. "What was that? You didn't know who you were talking to?" The freshie looks shocked, "I initially thought it was my friend Gaurav. But after sometime I realised it's not him because he congratulated me for IIT JEE after so many days!" "Damn, you are such a bulb! I am sure Kanwaljeet means donkey and not lion." And everybody laughs. "Oye Sardar! Weren't you also a bulb like him in your first year?" Somebody asks the only Sardar in the group. "Kind of. But he is even bigger bulb than me. So let's name him BARDAR!"



# A Robotic Report

*I V S Sandeep*

Robocon is the biggest annual national and international robotics competition. Nationals are held at MIT College, Pune. Robocon 2009 was one of the most mesmerizing events for IIT Madras as we won the Nationals for the first time since the year we had started participating in 2004.

The team was: Ashwin Ram, Abhishek, Abhishek V, Anand Narayanan, Praveenth, Yogesh, Alex, Pramod, Swapnil, Dinesh Jayaraman, Rajan, Prateek, Shruti, Ashwin Sudhakar and myself.

After winning the Robocon 2009 Nationals, our team was all set to head to Tokyo for the international competition. The event was spread over five days. One day was meant for testing our projects and one day was meant for sight-seeing. We had a team assistant called Aadarsh who was arranged by Indian Embassy to assist us in Japan.

We spent the first day reassembling the bots. Though we had all the tools required for fixing and assembling the bots other teams were more than happy to share their tools if need arose. The next day, while practicing in the actual arena, we faced quite a few technical problems. We realized that we had to improve our bots to stand any chance.

The competition was scheduled to start on the third day. Our team was represented by Mujra, Blade and Mazaa during the ceremony. Our first match was against Japan. Their team too was facing technical problems similar to ours. However, the Japanese had a stronger coding team. Sadly we couldn't match their skills and were out of the tournament.

The next day we had nothing to do, apart from watching other teams compete. We soon noticed that all the teams were exchanging souvenirs. We weren't aware of this tradition, and we weren't carrying



anything special. So, we gave them Indian coins & currency notes we had with us. In return we received nice souvenirs in the form of pen-stands, paperweights, key chains etc.

We spent the last day visiting various parts of Tokyo. We were thrilled to be part of such a great experience. It was a great trip and provided many memories for life despite not making it to higher rounds.

***About the author:** Sandeep aka Rigid is a Dual Degree student in the Department of Chemical Engineer. He is very passionate about tech activities, especially robotics.*



## Bhoot! Bhoot!

*Himanshu Suryavanshi*

I am sure you would agree that spooking out friends is fun, especially if they happen to be easy targets. Who would not cash-in on such an opportunity? That too if it presents itself in form of an extremely scared neighbour who believes in ghosts and believes that they are out in the open looking for him? The opportunity resides a couple of doors away from my room and is commonly known as Bhojpuri. Teamed with Aasmani, another wingmate, I decided to pull through a plan that any sane person would not fall for. But the person we were dealing with was not sane in that sense. The tools we needed to implement our brainchild were a long, thin yet strong copper wire and a candle. In the dark of night, we turned off the power supply in the wing and rushed to terrace. The candle was tied to the wire, lit and carefully lowered down to reach Bhojpuri's window. The copper wire was put in simple harmonic motion to make the candle swing around. Sudden power cut woke Bhojpuri up and lo, the next thing he saw was the candle hanging mid air outside his window. Trees in the background added to the effect. Bhojpuri literally shouted: "Bhoot! Bhoot!" and ran out his room. We promptly went down and met him as concerned friends, got him some water, listened to his story and soothed him down. He was too scared to go back to sleep and insisted that I let him stay in my room for the night. He even made me accompany him to bog and wait outside for 5 min. But it was all totally worth the reaction. And worth getting Bhojpuri a new nick: Darpok!



## An over-the-bridge experience

*Editor's pick*

You need to pay attention to this story as this one is about our man. Yes, this is about one of the editors of this book. He is the guy whose wit and extraordinary intelligence will always remain a mark to be achieved by the coming generations of humanity. There was a time when God said, "let there be light" and later there was a time when God realized in his own light, "There should be Sapeksha".

You may not know but in Sanskrit, Sapeksha means relativity. The theory of relativity or in better words, "Theory of Sapeksha" is the very theory that made Einstein scratch his head 299,792,458 times before understanding it.

The above statements will not be able to do any Justice to describe the studness of Sapeksha.

Now as the story goes, Lathy (Akhilesh Kopineni ) and Sapeksha are enjoying their summer holidays in their hometown of Hyderabad. They have some work in The Hindu office in Panjagutta, Hyderabad. Lathy reaches the Hindu office first, settles a few things there and calls Sapeksha. Now Sapeksha is coming to the Hindu office in an auto with his friend, Subbu. Sapeksha calls Lathy and asks him for directions. Lathy tells him that he will not be able to see Hindu office but it very near to Kalaniketan. instructs him to get down as soon as he sees Kalaniketan and cuts the call. Now with all the superhuman intellect that he possesses, he follows Lathy's words very carefully. As soon as he sees Kalaniketan he stops the auto and forces Subbu to pay the bill and get down the auto. Then they realize that they are standing in the middle of a fly-over.



Subbu with an exculpated incredulity in his eyes realizes two things, (1) the first two paragraphs of this article are a hoax, and (2) never ever follow a man called ‘Sapeksha’.

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## CR2RR

On a particular Sunday, an 8:00 am call from home made me get up early and go for breakfast to The Himalaya (mess). The Himalaya is a beautiful three-storied building. Each floor houses one caterer; ground floor RR, first floor SK and second floor CR caterers. I was in CR mess. The staircase has nice, beautiful, smooth steel railings. I was tempted to slide down. And I gave in to the temptation. Wheeeeeee!!! At the end of the first bend, I felt the first sign of danger as I tripped a bit. Nevertheless, I sat back again. I was rotating with the railing as fulcrum. But suddenly I rotated beyond a certain angle and lost my grip. I was airborne for half a second before I hit the ground floor.

When I got back my senses, I could make out around thirty anxious heads gazing at me. My immediate reaction was “Am I alive?” As I was being shifted into the ambulance, I kept asking myself continuously a few questions: “Will I be normal again? Will I be able to walk again? Will I be able to play again?” Almost every part of my body was painning badly. And I had a swelling on my head. Soon the customary medical scans followed. All the scans unanimously declared that there wasn’t any major injury. During my stay, I was attended by four doctors (three female and one male!). I had a torrid time at the hospital - absolutely no work to do, no people to talk to. Finally after two days, I was declared fit to leave for hostel.

I became really famous in the institute within a span of few days. Everyone became tongue tied when they heard about this incident. It earned me the nick “CR2RR”.



## Sneaky Four

*Kanwaljeet Singh 'Bardar'*

It is a story involving five of us; I, Bardar along with RPM, Bcube, Susti and Nikhil.

It is the General Body Meeting (GBM) of our hostel, Mandak and RPM, the social secretary presenting the budget for the year comes up with an idea to promote wing interaction. He proposes to have "The Dare Knight", an inter-wing competition. The only clue is that it is on the same lines as roadies. That's impossible here, we think. Nevertheless, we give him a chance to prove his mettle.

As a result of increased dose of vagrancy, I wander one day, into RPM's room. And as always, he is busy with his fingers on fire, typing away sweet messages to all the femme-fatale in his contact list. After some time I get the comp all to myself. I generally browse through some folders and chance upon a file named "Dare-Knight". My mind comes to a screeching halt and then involuntarily I have a devious smile. I don't trust anyone except one person who is very close. That's me again. I mail the file to myself and walk out of the room struggling to display the most normal behaviour.

One day before the event, I go to Bcube. He is a person to go to for short-cuts to success. And this definitely is going to be our short cut to be the Dare Knights. After showing the list of the tasks going to be assigned, we decide, we would do the tasks a day before and store the element of surprise for others. There are three tasks at hand.

The first task is to get a photograph of a teammate hanging from the rope in front of the gym. We are all athletic enough and finish the job as quickly as possible. To RG others we then wind the rope to the rod and cement our position further as the Dare Knights. The second task is a photograph of a team-mate sitting on one of the





elephants of the Gajendra Circle. Those uncomplaining mammoths witness our courage. The lone security guard sitting near the Ad block doesn't keep watch in the night and we discover this. We then have in our hand the photograph of one of us *mahouting* the elephants. Almost commanding them to move.

The third task is a lot more fishy. We are to obtain a photograph of a team mate diving from the highest platform in the swimming pool. Since we knights have decided to do the feat in the night there are difficulties. The swimming pool is closed at night. And even if we sneak in, the sleeping guard could wake up due to the splash of water.

We divide our roles for this mission. I would be the photographer and Bcube the jumper. Sustu would keep watch if someone is coming from the back side of the pool from where we slip in. And Nikhil has the tough job of distracting the security guard at the time of the splash. As soon as he hears the splash he has to talk loudly on his mobile and there is nothing like a fight ~ either real or virtual on a phone ~ that doesn't distract attention of the security guys. They are trained to watch out for fights. Also Nikhil has to inform us on our mobiles if the guard comes inside.

We are ready. We take our assigned positions. I hold Bcube's T-shirt and shoes. I am ready with the camera now. And Bcube jumps off from the top platform into the swimming pool and I click. There's a big sound of the splash and I disappear to the backside where Sustu was. The guard hears the splash and Nikhil jumps into action. He starts shouting on the mobile to gain the guard's attention. He is successful in it. Good job. Poor Bcube comes after some time and asks us where we had disappeared. Then we look for the photo in the camera and realize that only the splash is visible! Oh S\*\*\*! We realize digital cameras need some time to focus after you click. We decide we have to go for another



one but this time the guard will definitely come inside. We call Nikhil and tell him to continue walking the talk, in front of the guard.

The second attempt. We are nervous. We take our positions. Bcube jumps off. And I click even before he jumps. There is the sound of splash. It unsettles the guard again from his sleep. We run towards the backside of the pool. Nikhil shouts even more on his mobile this time, but the guard stands up and looks at the swimming pool door. He takes two steps forward, peeps in the swimming pool area and sits down. Peace. We look at the picture and Bcube is standing on the top diving board. We decide we have to do it yet another time. Now, this is risky. This time the guard would definitely come inside and catch us. But we have come too far and there is no backing down now.

The third attempt. This time Bcube jumps off and I finally get the picture. There is the splash sound and Nikhil shouts at the top of his voice but the guard opens the door and runs inside to see who is there. We run towards the backside from where we had come. We see the guard coming towards us with a torch but we slip outside through the opening and run towards the stadium. After few minutes Nikhil joins us and we tell each other that it was one hell of an experience.

Finally, the ceremonious day arrives without much pomp. We know, we have a surprise for everyone. As the event starts, we collect the list of tasks from the common room from RPM. We go through the list and... and... Oh no! We don't find the swimming pool task in the list!

***About the characters:** The main characters are residents of Mandak. Having been wing-mates for past four years, they are indeed a close group of friends.*



## 20 Years in IITM

*N Bharathwaj*

20 years in IITM? Then I must be a student turned professor. But I assure you that I am a 25 year old student! Now you must be wondering how an IITM student can possibly spend 20 long years in the campus.

My mother works in the institute and hence I have been staying in the campus since the day I was five. I have some wonderful childhood memories associated with IITM. Typically the routine would start like getting up late for school (KV IITM), cycling at the top speed to school and sometimes enjoying a ride in the car by some of the professors. And being a student of KV IITM had its own advantages. We got to visit the IITM labs frequently. The professors then were actually our super seniors. We had a whale of time interacting with the same professors during our school's alumni day celebrations. After the school hours, street cricket along with professors' wards was a must.

My first episode with IITM as an educational institute started when I was selected for the summer fellowship under Dr. Balaji Srinivasan. This experience helped me learn how IITM functions as an academic entity. Till then I had only known how IITM looks and functions as a social entity.

It got me so excited that I registered for the MS program and I was fortunate enough to get a chance to work under Dr. Balaji again. Thus began my journey as a student at IITM. It was kind of a great start since my summer fellowship work earned me a conference publication and I attended the orientation programme for the MS students the day I came back from the conference. At last my mother's dream had come true. She had always wanted me to study here. On a lighter note, I would like mention that during my school days, I used to call the



professors and their wives ‘uncle’ and ‘aunty’ respectively. But when I actually entered the dept, I didnt know how to address them.

Soon the course work stared. I also had to do research in parallel. Juggling both was a revelation in the sense that it made me evaluate my strengths and weakness. I made new friends, most of them are MS students and we got into this fixed routine of completing our work by 5 in the evening and heading out to Tifanys to eat. We also started exploring some of the food outlets, mostly North Indian, in Chennai (one seldom finds a good North Indian restaurant here).Then came the end semester exams. We were as usual chilled out and managed a B in all the subjects. Marks didn’t really seem to matter to us and we were happy because we were learning something new every day through our research. The freedom that I got under my guide was tremendous. We used to chat on a daily basis, discuss the problems that I faced, and he was the one who pointed out that I should learn something new daily when I step into the lab. I got a summer intern during the month of May and it really helped me in speeding my research work. Again, we had fixed routine-get components from Richie Street; eat at Agarwals in Sowcarpet; crash and put night outs to complete the day’s objectives. This proved to be a boon since I was able to increase my working duration.

Over all, the atmosphere inside IITM is beautiful, competitive and brings out the best in everyone. To sum up the whole experience so far in one word, it has been AWESOME and I sincerely hope it doesn’t change as I work towards my graduation.

***About the author:** Bharathwaj a.k.a. Bharath is a happy-go-lucky MS student of the Department of Electrical Engineering. Crazy about cartoons and Hindustani music, Bharath is also an exceptional tabla player.*



## Dixcy on Fire!

*Editor's pick*

It was the summer of 2009; Dixcy was doing a project and staying in hostel without permission. On a busy night-out, around 4 AM in the morning, Dixcy's devious mind started to work again to do some mischief. He talked to his room neighbour Harish and took a match box from him to smoke and after that started playing with the matches. Burning the match sticks and throwing them here-&-there. Suddenly a tree caught his attention. Without giving a second thought he started burning the tree leaves with the matchsticks, and according to Dixcy they were burning very well, surely because of them drying in the scorching Sun. He continued to harm the tree, burning out the leaves, when the Security guard caught him. And Dixcy begged him not to tell this incident to anyone but all went in vain. The Security guard told this to Assistant warden who called Dixcy and took his ID card. He begged again. But the Assistant Warden had already informed the Hostel warden and who curious to pain Dixcy came early at 7.30 AM.

He checked and scrutinized Dixcy's room for any sort of illegal items according to Hostel norms. But couldn't find any cigarette butts or match sticks. After this he was taken to CCW office. The wheels were set into motion. Warden called the Dean directly and took an appointment within 2 hours. Dixcy was scared to hell this time. Meanwhile, people from the four departments namely horticulture, security dept and others came to take snaps of Dixcy. He pleaded not to write a report against him.

Finally came the time for Dixcy's hearing. The Dean was naturally very angry at him. Two reasons for this: One was that he was staying illegally and the second is he burning down the trees.



Dean started firing Questions like bullets to Dixcy, “Why did you keep match box in your room?” To which Dixcy really gave a clever on the spot witty answer, “I burn agarbattis (incense sticks) to keep off the smell from the drains under repair” “Why are you staying illegally and without any notice?” Dean demanded. To this he replied he had been here since one week only, he went home and came back to complete up his project but the truth was he was there for 2 months and hadn’t been to home that summer till then.

Finally a punishment statement was made to Dixcy. He was to be fined 2000 bucks and he told he will call his house the next day so he immediately has to leave for his home, Harish was also fined and asked to pack Home, as he was also involved for not bringing the matter to highlight for which he was an eye witness. Harish asked “Why should I pay?” But Dixcy had already revealed that Hairsh knew the whole story.

Dixcy, in total fear now, didn’t want to risk his life anymore and packed his stuff quickly and made a move to his home. Fortunately he already had a booked ticket for that day to his home place. The only right thing that happened! Harish didn’t leave for home rather he shifted to Ctech’s room.

Assistant warden indeed called Dixcy’s home the next day to confirm that he had reached home.

***Editor’s note:*** Hope you remember ‘Dixcy’, from his earlier adventures.



## A (50-7)\*2 km Cycle Trip

*Surya Sudheer Meduri*

You may be asking why have I have written an idiotic equation instead of saying 86 kms cycle trip... well, read on. You will soon know the reason.

As a result of unbearable boredom and extreme joblessness, I was growing desperate to do something adventurous or at least go out somewhere. The moment I told this to Buddi (Praveen) and Hemanth, they came up with the idea of going to Mahabalipuram on cycles which is 50 kms from insti. The best (some people say worst) part is that we planned to start at 11 pm and see the sun rise at Mahabs. The plan seemed wild but we did all arrangements so as to be comfortable. The trip was scheduled on 27th September 2008. We got 3 cycles which were in good condition and Hemanth took care of important things (food and drinks). Actually, Hemanth had gone to attend a first aid camp in the morning, then slept the whole evening and never looked like had got stuff but still was lazy to even cross check what all he had in bag. Buddi went for some meeting and returned at 11:30 and the laziest person of the team (myself) got ready by 11:30 and finally were set to start...but it looks like nature didn't really like our idea and it started raining heavily. We were not willing to pack the journey and planned to move out at any cost after 15 min. Rain reduced to slight drizzle and we started at 12:30 am with no real protection from rain.

After 10 km of a comfortable journey, it began to drizzle accompanied by heavy breeze and we had to increase our efforts by at least 100% but we never lost hopes. We were really going well. At Sholinganallur junction fate decided to test us with additional troubles. The moment we reached the junction, power went down and all street lights were out. The road we have to travel on is called East Coast Road (ECR) and is notorious for accidents. The only advantage is that the



road is a highway and has a separate bicycle lane. We decided not to come out of bicycle lane at any point of journey. We were still doing well, covered 40 kilometres in a span of 3.5 hours, took a break around 3:30 am started again. Just when we thought we had faced all possible problems other than a cycle puncture, we got (un)lucky again, 7 km from our destination, 4 am!

Buddi, who tends to day dream at times, was lost in thoughts and failed to observe a stationary lorry in front of him which had hollow rods protruding outwards. In spite of me shouting at him, he just couldn't come back from his world, hit those rods and fell on the ground. Hemanth, who was cruising ahead, heard the shouts and came back and both of us were shocked to see a heavily bleeding face with one cut on head and other on cheek. I couldn't react for a minute or so and it was Hemanth who got to his senses first and told me to hand him over his bag. That time we realised how important that morning first aid session was. He washed Buddi's face with water and started applying cotton and a lot of bandage to control bleeding. We panicked when we heard that there is no hospital in a vicinity of 10 km. Somehow we managed to get a bus going to Chennai. Hemanth and Buddi made their way back to institute hospital and I stayed back at that deserted place with 3 cycles and 3 bags. Sateesh took Buddi on a bike from bus stop to hospital. Buddi got 16 stitches on forehead and cheek. Soon other friends came to take care of him.

Next challenge was to get all the three cycles back to insti which indeed looked a very costly business with each of the lorry guys there asking about 1200 rupees and auto was costing around 500.

Finally, Hemanth and Sateesh came to the place I am at by bus and we three started cycling back to institute. Before starting, we did a bit of forensic investigation of the accident site with our camera and started at 9 30. Hot sun and humid Chennai weather conditions made





the journey tough. But we managed well by taking rest at regular intervals, having breakfast, juices, taking pictures at stud locations and then finally made it to campus by 12:50 with our bodies not supporting further. After coming back, we had a small discussion session where the sole objective was to make Buddi realise what all he missed just because of that reluctance for a moment and we really dominated it because Buddi was advised not to speak much and he couldn't even speak loudly.

**A few** striking moments of the journey:

- Hemanth says he has a water bottle with him but never filled water in it. Only he should know what's the use of an empty bottle.
- 15 min before accident, while we were resting Hemanth instructed us: If anyone by mistake meets with an accident, try to make sure that you don't fall on your head.
- Despite first aid, while blood was still oozing and I and Hemanth were worried and trying to get a bus, Buddi calls us to says: Arrey, take a picture of me with all this blood and cotton na!
- Soon after pic session, Buddi says "Why are you asking for a lift? Give me one hour rest, we shall cycle back to insti (43 kms)".

I hope now the equation makes sense to you all. We could never travel the last 7 km of a 50 km route and there was a different trip on forward and return journey.

**About the author:** Surya Sudheer Meduri from Narmada Hostel is a Dual Degree student in the Department of Civil Engineering. This talkative ex-CEA Secretary is an ardent blogger and an institute hockey player. He loves travelling and exploring new places. He blogs at <http://suryasudheer.blogspot.com>



# My First Time

*Anonymous*

It was 2009 and I was in second year. I hadn't talked to a single girl in Insti till then. I had an illogical fear of girls and was called a *fhattu* when it came to talking and interacting with them.

It was Saarang time. It being my second Saarang, I still had zeal to attend it throughout. My friends and I tried to attend all the pro shows and as many workshops and other events as possible. At Street Play workshop, I got lucky and a very beautiful girl asked me some query. I gave her the appropriate information and left.

I happened to see her again at Salsa workshop. She was really cute. I decided to put fight for her and told this to my friends. They encouraged me to go ahead. They said "You should not miss such a great opportunity". I was scared of approaching her and talking. After a few deep breaths and uplifting words from friends, I gathered some courage. I wanted to ask her to be my partner for a dance. My legs were shivering. It was going to be the first time of me starting a conversation with a girl, that too such a pretty girl!

I started moving towards her with the feeling that my friends were there with me, just a few steps back, but they all vanished in different directions. I was all alone by the time I reached her. My fear suddenly leaped back, but somehow I had to talk to her. I thought I was going to get beaten up brutally but still I was there right in front of her and there was no chance of getting back. I gathered my utmost courage and asked her whether she would dance with me. And... she refused. I asked her why she didn't want to dance with me. She said she was not interested in dance, rather had interest in dramatics. That was it, "The End!" I don't have any clue of dramatics. I quietly left the place and joined my friends. I was not only relieved that nothing went wrong and



I did not get bashed but was also happy that my first conversation went pretty well.

***Editor's note:** We're sure the author of this story will regret his anonymity, a few years down the line, when he won't be able to say: This was me!*

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## Freshie

A freshie being given a nick by a senior: usual affair.

A second year given a nick by a senior: rare but not impossible.

A second year given a nick 'FRESHIE' by a senior: It happens only in IITM.

It's not like IITM junta have run out of words that the Insti lingo has penetrated into the nick naming ceremony. Sometimes, it's the rare breed of the amazingly weird students who are just born in this world to be bestowed upon by an Insti lingo nick. So it happened that a particular second year student used to greet his hostel GCU coordinator every day. And the coord used to beam back at him thinking that there are people other than freshies who know that he is the hostel GCU coordinator. One fine day, this coord and a friend were enjoying a coffee break in Himalaya mess when our hero approaches the coord and asked him whether he called all the second year people to his room. "No. Why?" "Aren't you Teacher (the Hostel Sports Secretary)?" "What the hell! I thought I was famous!" The coord thought angrily and sent the hero to go to a group of freshies sitting in the same mess to find out his name. Even after this, the coord wasn't satisfied and told the hero "You are worse than a freshie!! Wait, do you have a nick? Even if you have, I don't care! From now onwards your nick is FRESHIE. Till the day of your graduation, you will still be a freshie."



# When Dominos made Burgers

*Editor's pick*

Insti, along with Sudan, Guatemala and Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most hungry places on earth. The only fact that differentiates Insti from the others honorably mentioned is the fact that its residents order Pizza at fairly regular intervals. An especially alluring brand of pizzas Insti seems to prefer is Dominos, largely because that is the only pizza house a majority have heard of. When one of the more senior residents of Insti hears a rumbling in the abdomen, he (mostly) sends for an unassuming fresher, an unwitting fellow who is about to lose a good hour or so of his life.

The routine procedures were followed, like clockwork, when a certain juntling, endearingly named after a measure of the frequency of a rotation, got hungry and wanted Italian pie. He found a first year with just the right amounts of hypnotic, spinning, googly eyes and a spine of Jell-O and sent him off to a gate to get the order. Minutes and hours passed, but status quo was not revoked. There was the senior, there was his hunger, but there was no pizza. After a long run that saw more misery than the Stephen King novel *Misery* and more frustration than the popular board game *Frustration*, the man finally appeared armed with a package.

The senior pounced on it like a wolf would upon its Russian peasant. Seconds later a cry of anguish was heard, like a rather large group of banshees. Inquiries into the matter revealed that the errand boy had mistakenly brought back a whole bunch of Pupil burgers rather than the desired pizzas.

These are the days when empathy is all the rage and one is constantly asked to put one-self in someone else's shoes and see if the sizes match. I would like to digress for a few moments here to ask you to



do the same thing; what would you do if you got a stash of Pupil burgers instead of Dominos Pizzas. Responses, if collected, I am sure will vary from sending back the boy to the gate to hunt for the pizza to gobbling up all the burgers. But what the person in question did when given Pupil burgers instead of Dominos Pizzas was truly unique.

Our man picks up the phone, checks his balance, dials up Dominos and comes up with the question “Sir, you are from Dominoes right? Do you know what the difference is between Dominoes pizza and Pupil's burger? You have given us Pupil's burger.” At the other end, someone gulped like a school of goldfish, unable to make out what the caller was articulating and probably assuming that some television channel was planning some major scoop. Taking full advantage of the silence at the other end, he went on the rampage, like the Assyrian, like a wolf on the fold, spewing words like a Walther PPK.

No amount of persuasion or dire threats were working as the near and dear hostel mates could not get in a word sideways to inform our protagonist that when a first year brings you Pupil burgers in the place of Dominos Pizza, shouting abuses through the phone at the latter is not going to help.



## Behind the scenes

*Sapeksh Vemulapati*

By March end, it had finally gotten to us that if we didn't start the "hardcore" work we wouldn't finish the book. Editing had to be done on a very detailed basis. Articles would have to be read and reread and checked for continuity, grammar and other pseud(o) things editors claim to be doing. At this point, each of us was being stretched to our limits (at least that's what we showed) in delivering the maximum and any kind of provocation would have broken us. On-going hostel nights were further reducing the efficiency.

At this stage, early in the morning at 1:00 AM on a particular day, I sent this mail to the group.

*Hello everyone,*

*I will have to express utmost disbelief in what's happening around in the Insti regarding the book we want to publish. I wouldn't want to take the name of the person who did this. But I sure want to make it clear that any difference of opinion should have been shared and discussed before communicating to people not in the team. I shall not be working for the book anymore. I just hope that this does not repeat for others in the team.*

*Sapeksh*

Not keen to think much about the consequences of this mail and tired from the long day I slept. At 8:00 in the morning, I got a call from Surbhi. She was just out of sleep.

Surbhi: "Sapeksh, I just read the mail. What happened?"

Me: "Congratulations, you are the first April fool I've made today."



And as soon as I finished the line, I couldn't understand anything more from the other side of the line. All I could get was quick mumbling laughter mixed with anger and confusion. She claims to have said, "Am glad it was a prank. I prefer becoming a fool over the book facing a set-back." Ya, right! We do know all these cover up statements.

Next was Govind, our Alumni Affairs Secretary, who had given me a call at 11:00 am as soon as he saw my mail in the Departmental Computer Facility (DCF) of the Civil Engineering department. The dialogue was similar to the first one but included more harsh statements from him and more laughter from me.

I was awake now hoping to hear from others in the team. Trinath and Sohini contacted Surbhi directly to confirm whether it was a prank or there was something serious. Ah, I wish they had called me rather. Surbhi, to continue the prank, instigated Bardar to check the mail and figure out what's the issue. As I got back to my room, Bardar who lives in the same hostel as me, called me from the other side of the wing.

Bardar: "What happened? Why did you leave the team? Who said what? Tell na."

Me: \*Gesturing him to give his hand so I could shake it\* "It was nice working with you Bardar. How could I forget you? Congratulations on becoming the third fool I've made today."

And then I saw a series of slowly changing expressions on his face. First there was shock. Then a confused one. Then I saw enlightenment. And then the ever-ready-to-be-given smile. Although, I would say, it was never tough to fool him.

In the meeting we had the same evening, each of us was sure that this incident would go in the book. Most of them had one burning question though. It was not long before one asked, "Why did you want



to do this at such a stage?” And a few worries, “What if this were true? Would we have managed to continue?”

However pressed with tension and responsibility we were, I wanted to play a prank on the team. That’s how I am. And that’s how we tripped on ourselves or rather I tripped on the rest of the team.

***About the author:** Sapeksh is a B. Tech. student in the Department of Civil Engineering. This rock music fan is one among the people who conceptualized this book. More about him towards the end.*





## From Be Tech to B. Tech.

*Akila Kesavasamy*

In the four years spanning my stay at IIT Madras, a million things have changed around me and I have with them. Having said that, I think it is but obvious for man and beast (unlike) to transform with varying circumstances, in the very least, as a mere function of time. It is, therefore, humanly (and thus ape-ly) impossible to go through life as enriching and as impactful as the B.Tech. life of IIT Madras without reforming a bit. For my part, I have and here's my story.

I come from Kerala and more specifically, Trivandrum. I went to a national government funded school that instilled in me great fashion sense, much before it did common sense. So I went to school daily with my hair tightly plaited on both sides with red ribbons to match the navy blue *salvar kameez dupatta* uniform I wore. Obviously we were elite and therefore three of us from the school made it to IIT Madras in 2007, about the time my common sense started prevailing and I ironed my hair a bit.

Institute life was a welcome change because it brought with it, a sense of independence I had never experienced before and the sensational feeling of actually living a dream. First semester was chaotic; it is with reason, I am sure, that the curriculum is hectic and most of the things don't make sense. By the time I was done with a day of classes and workshop and ED and ID and NSO and Lab and Hostel freshie induction programs, I was so fresh for the entire night of *phart-putting* as we fondly called it, that I realized I had slept through most of the former list.

With the risk of sounding like everybody else that walks through the Mordor gates of JEE, I was ambitious and I decided that I wanted to study and thus reach great heights. I was aware of the fact that



I was the branch closing rank and therefore felt, all the more, that I had been destined for Chemical Engineering. So I went through a bulky curriculum of Transport phenomena, and Process control and Reaction engineering and some of them I really liked more than the others. Though my grade card is not very representative of that fact. At school, grades seemed very important and in IIT, I went by the motto that *Knowledge is more important*. Now, some presume that it is the fundamental difference between getting good grades in school and not really being a 10 pointer here. But I believe that correlation does not imply causality.

Apart from the general outlook towards academics, another significant transformation that came over me is the crucial change in my social outlook. I can confess, without much inhibition, that I was an introvert of a certain degree – the degree being representative of a gender bias. IIT cured me of the awkwardness I felt before I came here to the extent that, (and I say this healthily) I don't feel the difference between talking to a girl and a guy now. I think it is a result that arises out of throwing in people together into a profession that really does not differentiate between the sexes.

And as I am ready to bid adieu to the institute in a couple of months, I speak of the great journey that has transpired personally for me from a shy, not so confident, serious and sensitive person to an outspoken, tough person who can take a couple of jokes. A sense of humour has become an essential component of my life and for that part, if not anything else, I am glad.

I have loved every moment of B.Tech. life here at IIT Madras (with all its glorious ups and valiant downs) and I owe it in great part to my friends here who have accepted me with my numerous flaws. I know that a great journey awaits the graduating batch of 2011, both individually and collectively; I wish them luck in all their endeavours



and hope that someday we will be able to return the favour of this four-year transformation to our Alma-mater.

***About the author:** Akila “Pain” Kesavasamy, a B. Tech. student in the Department of Chemical Engineering, takes pride in the fact that she can make people laugh. This ex-Literary Secretary of Sharavathi Hostel spends her spare time by blogging at [www.lovinglyf.blogspot.com](http://www.lovinglyf.blogspot.com).*

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## NSS

It is very rare in IITM for a person to have a nickname which depends on someone else's nickname. We have a guy called Sreenath who was determined to get his branch changed from Civil Engineering to Mechanical Engineering in his first semester. He indeed worked hard enough for it. We knew that Sreenath knew everything when it came to academics and due to his ever helping nature, there was an everyday interaction between him and the rest of his wingmates, especially during exams. Whoever went to his room for clearing doubts on any topic said, “**Sreenath is a stud**” after coming out of his room. It wasn't long before they started calling him **Studsree** (pronounced as Stud-Shri). But wait! Studsree is not the protagonist in this story. You cannot have any other article in which more than three-fourth of the article there is no mention of the guy on whom the article is centred. There was another guy living in the same wing as Sreenath, having the same name as Sreenath (Srinath), in the same branch as Sreenath but academics... Well, there are some things that make you different from others, the very reason that makes you unique. So, it wasn't long before Srinath (not Sreenath) got his nickname from his own wing people- NSS: Non-Stud Srinath.



# A Walk in 2030

*Arul Sekar*

Imagine you are coming back to insti after 20 years; you take a walk starting from stadium all the way around Insti and back to the stadium. You silently listen to the interesting comments/questions each and every part of Insti puts to you.

Stadium: Aren't you with your buddy for the secret talk? Beware! Grass is embedded with microphones. Dude, its 2030!

Security guard: World may have changed but my snoring will never slow down.

DoMS / Class rooms: Are you an exchange student?

Tifanys: Whom are you waiting for? Pack off. He/she is not going to come over.

Sound of breeze: Dude, don't wonder where the sound is coming from without the breeze, 'cos it's the sound of the ghosts of cut down trees.

CLT: I have told you 'n' times that you are the elite students, the future is in your hands and you could give back so much to the society! Oops! I got it. Your pay slip is still not enough. Seems like the society hasn't given enough to you in 20 years.

OAT fence : I am the loving fence that gave way whenever you were out of tickets for a movie or a Saarang show. Those painful kisses!

Quadrangle & Sangam : Do you still have it in you, that joy of fighting spirit in your guts?

B'day bumps : Can you feel that pain in your ass, when you got one? When was the last time you got bumped on b'day?



Monkeys: What have you got for me this time? You used to stock up so much stuff in your room for my 10 am / 4 pm rounds.

IITM lake sign board "Beware of crocs": Take a dip & figure out if crocs still exist. Did they ever exist?

Swimming pool waters: Fat ass! Do you want me to gulp you few more times, won't spare you this time!

Sports fields: Fighting spirit-wins-loses-evening games-Schroeter-Inter IIT-Team effort ...pack, Pack all these - Who had the sexy abs?

(Back to stadium)

DoMS DayOut : Have you got your team to win me again ?

Stadium: Sorry! No sky view. Only sky scraper views. Never mind, try shedding some sweat from your pot belly.

Guess this 2030 walk would be "A walk to remember" for one and all. You may come again or may not.

Insti may be like this or may not for it is close to the sea shore (with all the global warming fundaes). I do not know, but if at all a day comes when Insti has to be saved, I would want every one of you to buckle up and better be here to do whatever it takes to save it. I will be here when Insti calls and will wait for you all.

Insti - Home sweet Home :)

***About the author:** Arul is pursuing MS in Entrepreneurship at the Dept. of Management Studies. He is a great outdoor activities enthusiast and owns a start up-Ecologin, which works towards providing customized trekking programs to people. At the same time, Ecologin tries to help tribal villages in coming up with sustainable ways of livelihood.*



**This book is dedicated to-  
The Batch of 2011**



# Team Intros

## Surbhi Maheshwari

Surbhi is someone without whom this book wouldn't have happened. She has an eye for the smallest of the details. She occasionally writes poetry in Hindi and very often writes threat mails to the group even before someone thinks of slackening. Owing to her counselling activities, she is considered to be the 'Godmother' of her hostel.

## Kanwaljeet 'Bardar' Singh

Bardar's jokes and bulb moments ensure that the work atmosphere stays jovial. He does bodybuilding and lives a disciplined life with his straightedge beliefs. His prowess in Guitar-playing, Writing, Dramatics, etc. has given an artistic touch to his personality. He believed music was his forte until his astrologer said that his future lies in writing. Since then, he writes poetry, prose and songs at [shhhhbardarispeaking.blogspot.com](http://shhhhbardarispeaking.blogspot.com).

## Sapeksha 'Zero' Vemulapati

Sapeksha is the most cool-headed guy in the team. One of his main jobs was to mediate the arguments between Surbhi and Bardar. He carries a pack of cards with him all the time to ensure that he doesn't lose any opportunity to play. He has dabbled with everything under the sun and takes great pride in talking about his name.



### Basil 'Nympho' James

Basil loves anything written by P.G. Wodehouse and anyone else willing to try their hand at humour. He writes when bugged and otherwise at [basiljames.blogspot.com](http://basiljames.blogspot.com) . He is a huge fan of the Arsenal football club. If you are lost in a web of stud similes while reading some article, Basil is to be blamed.

### Trinath Gaduparthi

Trinath says he wants to be anonymous. We think, rather than modesty, it is the fear of his PhD guide finding out why his thesis is not progressing. The senior-most member of the team, he brings in the philosophical touch. His poetry can be read at [musingsbytrinath.blogspot.com](http://musingsbytrinath.blogspot.com).

### Darsana Vijay

Darsana, the youngest member of the team, is a silent observer at all our work sessions. 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. She has a knack of turning useless material into beautiful art pieces.

### Prateek Barapatre

Prateek is a self-proclaimed procrastinator but the promptness in his efforts toward the book says otherwise. He likes playing cricket and writing poetry. While not coding away to glory for his Master's thesis, he writes at [the-strayed-rambles.blogspot.com](http://the-strayed-rambles.blogspot.com).





### Sabah Farheen

Sabah, an eloquent speaker, gets along with people very easily. One page is not enough to list out her talents. Therefore to keep it short, she has a keen interest in music. A great keyboard player, she is currently learning guitar. Her table tennis skills display her agility.

### Sohini Sarkar

Sohini, a bubbly next door girl, says writing gives her a high. She is a good Chess player and puts on a spectacle every time she laces up her boots for dancing. She enjoys writing letters and blogs at [eccentricityatitsbest.wordpress.com](http://eccentricityatitsbest.wordpress.com). A proof of her creativity is shown by the fact that the title credits for this book go to her.

### Abhinav 'Cop' Ram

Abhinav is the most punctual person of the team. Although he credits his punctuality to joblessness, he is forever rushing between the infinite things present on his to-do list. He sees the world in a different way and has an overzealous passion towards capturing its living colour through his photography and designing skills. He loves animals (especially deep fried).

*Happiness doesn't increase  
nor the potency of sadness ebb  
by one writing away methodically  
in an origami of expression.  
Though written about  
the flowers wilt.  
Written other wise  
the situations tilt.  
Memories, monuments protected  
closer to our heart  
slip away, as if shunning  
this constant puncture of blankness.  
We own them for a while.  
Soon they disown us.  
Lose us in a busy market place  
bade good bye, in a variety of ways.  
We catch some through writing  
store them in a smoke jar for future.  
They plead for an escape.  
Their deleverence is never satisfactory.  
Only in writing  
we promise them  
anything and everything.*

*Trinath G*