



OPINION

## Why am I in IIT?

An urgent need for public intellectuals



IIT Bombay symbolises for me a great potential for realising an as yet unfulfilled promise. This promise is with respect to the care in nurturing our knowledge practices. Knowledge, as we know, can both liberate as well as impose constraints. I sincerely believe that a public institution like IIT Bombay can produce knowledge that can liberate us from our debilitating constraints.

Let me explain. Public institutions must strive to engage with public spaces and cultivate, what I call, public intellectuals. A public intellectual has the ability and desire to intervene in public debates and help shape the very contours of our daily existence. Both ability and desire are in turn moulded, if ever so gently, by institutions. The irony, however, is that although we may have very sophisticated theories in management, social science and engineering, yet time and time again such theories appear, at crucial junctures, to quite betray our trust. I am not pointing here to any presumable sharp divide between erudite theories and their tragic implementation but rather to the very assumptions that inform our theories and that given the gathering environmental, economic and political crisis, they need to be freshly re-examined. The significance of such fresh assumptions will depend on our ability to engage meaningfully with the public through appropriate platforms.

The idea of a public intellectual in India, if salient, has considerably attenuated in the post-liberalisation era. Much of the academic scholarship in India and abroad, literally remained rather enthralled with the mantra of a neo-liberal market as the solution to all our problems. Yet some of the world's largest and oldest investment banks and the largest automobile companies are either bankrupt or very close to bankruptcy. I suspect therefore that we could be entering a new phase of global growth with an economic and quite possibly a political crisis. It is time to rethink the role of public institutions and in particular, the role of public scholars and intellectuals. At places like IIT Bombay, we are particularly poised to make our relevance felt across Indian society. This, I feel, is an enduring promise that we must

attempt to inevitably realize.

At an individual level I feel that wittingly or unwittingly, we do not give sufficient significance towards researching and addressing our so called local or regional problems. Perhaps, in our desire to acquire greater international reputation, we tend to trivialise the complexity of our own domestic problems, with rare exception to this. We have hesitated in throwing our full intellectual weight in tackling a myriad of local problems: from addressing basic housing or health needs to improving governance or the building of strong institutions. These challenges may appear seemingly mundane, but I would argue that the sheer scale and degree of complexity that envelope India's problems are but a more nuanced reflection of the world at large. In other words, solving our so-called local problems could actually help much of the developing (and perhaps even significant parts of the developed) world, as the micro-financing revolution has shown. One could even say that we are blessed with an abundant diversity of challenges, which are a source of potential intellectual ferment rather than ones of despair or evasion.

India occupies a truly unique position in the cosmology of nation-states. No other developing country with our history of colonisation and of such diversity and size, both in terms of population and physical area, has successfully and 'democratically' industrialised itself. Others have 'successfully' industrialised but without one or more of these daunting factors to reckon with. Our development path is therefore rather complex, and therein lies a big opportunity for us to craft something quite original.

Given such an enduring legacy and a new global context, the present crisis is really an opportune time for public-minded institutions and scholars to embrace, rather than eschew or vacate public spaces. The greatness of an institution lies in making itself directly relevant for addressing large social problems, without in any way sacrificing its rigour and scholarly activity. 'World class' research is clearly possible even while addressing what is often referred to as a local or a national problem.

So as we move beyond our Golden Jubilee celebrations, we need to deliberate about the Institute's future. Can we really mobilise our energy and our perceived openness to construct a meaningful collaboration with the society at large? Such efforts can serve as the building blocks of an exciting and eventful academic life. We have quite an advantage to begin with. It is indeed rare for any institution in the world over to provide such academic and residential proximity for its students, staff and faculty. In a verdant campus like ours, the idea was perhaps to use this proximity to build synergy between its various members.

I am in IIT Bombay to help consummate the dream of a lively public institution with meaningful public scholarship. My own intellectual background has been shaped through a purposeful transgressing of disciplinary boundaries. I certainly hope that the path to our collective future is paved with more than just good intentions. We must strive to build genuine intellectual leadership based on the sustained collaboration with a possibly eager civil society.



Much of the dappled shade on the campus's roads is cast by the high, expansive canopy of the Rain Trees (*Samanea saman*), a good example being the road to the side of KV.

Although perfectly suited to our climate, the tree comes from distant soils, being a native of South Central America. Its name derives from the behaviour of its small, pinnate leaves: normally outspread during the day, they fold up in pairs, each executing a graceful *namaskar* when rainclouds gather overhead.

The fall of darkness, too, brings about this folding every day, allowing a lot more moonlight to filter through its branches than sunlight. Also deserving a look, but largely unnoticed, are the Rain Tree's wispy, delicate, powder-puff-like flowers (it is laden these days).

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My first project at IIT Bombay (IITB) occasioned me to sit at the Dean Faculty's Office just outside Dr. Khakhar's cabin. Till then, my impression of senior IITB functionaries was that they were kindly but conservative gentlemen, lost in the arcane worlds of their individual research. Behold my surprise then, when during the initial days of my work, I could catch very muted but unmistakable strains of Pink Floyd emanating from his office! I could not trust my straining ears and did risk a quick peek inside. Since Dr. K was quite engrossed in his work, he never got any wiser about my trespassing. Needless to say, I thought that it was beyond "cool" that my new boss had still not lost touch with his student years and my hopes for the new job immediately went up. The academics here might look to his impressive accomplishments in research but what stood out to me after my brief stint at his office was the complete absence of any hierarchy in his approach. Dr. K is unfailingly courteous and always patient even with the most inopportune intrusions. Understated but with a quiet determination about him, Dr. Khakhar is man with an ever-present smile who has not become inaccessible since picking up the reins of the Directorship. The demands on his time are innumerable. Yet, he took the trouble of sitting down and personally writing out and responding to our lengthy list of questions. We greatly appreciate the effort and wish him a wonderful beginning and a truly memorable tenure. Reproduced below are his responses to our questions.

~ Introduction by Damayanti Bhattacharya

**Q.** You have been associated with the Institute for a long time now. In your 22 years here, what are the key elements of your learning / experiences that you think will influence your tenure as Director?

**A.** Having participated in all academic activities of the Institute like teaching, research, consulting, continuing education, organising conferences, etc., I am familiar with how things work in the Institute. Over the years, I have served in various capacities in the Institute, which has helped develop my administrative abilities. During this time I have also formed relationships of trust with many people across the Institute. All these factors will influence and guide me in my work as Director.

**Q.** It's still early in your tenure, but can you give the IITB community a sense of your top - short, medium, and long-term goals?

**A.** My immediate short-term goals are continuity of operation together with planning and implementing measures to take care of the 54% expansion in student strength. On the infrastructure front we need more hostel rooms, larger classrooms and laboratories, and more housing for staff and faculty. We will also need to address issues such as how we can effectively teach large classes. The Prof. Dipan Ghosh Committee will oversee the planning for the expansion.

A committee is articulating the long-term goals of the Institute, headed by Prof. K. Sudhakar, which will take into account inputs of various sections of the IIT Community. The essence is to evolve towards being among the best education and research institutions in the world. A continuous theme in parallel will be to improve administrative processes (purchase procedures, processes related to construction and renovation, financial procedures, computerisation of procedures, etc.) and make them more efficient for students, staff and faculty.

**Q.** Within the broad range of engineering disciplines, interdisciplinary groups and centres, are there any particular areas in which IITB needs to increase its emphasis? What would you identify as the emerging key areas in the R & D sector where IITB has capabilities to contribute?

**A.** All disciplines have their importance and will grow depending on various factors – development of new technology, growth of related industries, etc. Rather than talking about specific research areas, I would like to see self-organised, interdisciplinary groups within the Institute identifying and contributing to some of the larger problems facing the nation and the world. Details need to be thought through, but my initial view is of faculty and students coming together to define and work on a problem. The Institute could help by providing support for a group to seek outside funding and booster grants to supplement funds received from industry or funding agencies. Another approach could be for the Institute to identify some key areas and initiate a similar process.

## Dr. Khakhar informally



**Q.** With so many new IITs coming up, how do you foresee IITB retaining its unique qualities and building on its brand value further?

**A.** IITs have a reputation for quality that has been built by sheer hard work over the last fifty years. I am sure that the new IITs will also become well recognised in time. The reputation of IIT Bombay in the future will depend on many factors, but most importantly on the quality of students and faculty that we can attract. Besides the new IITs, we may also have to compete with many other universities.

**Q.** With respect to the challenge of increasing number of students, how is the Institute coping? Have we been able to attract good faculty in adequate numbers?

**A.** As I mentioned earlier, this is a priority and we are taking a systematic approach to look at immediate and longer-term requirements. The OSC Expansion Committee headed by Prof. Dipan Ghosh is doing the planning. We have continued to attract excellent faculty members, but we will have to work hard to increase numbers.

**Q.** What is the one thing that you would like to see changed during your tenure and the one thing that you think should remain unchanged?

**A.** I would like to see an improved research profile in terms of the quality of the work and its impact. The one thing that should remain unchanged is the Institute's ethos - a culture of dedication to work and cooperation among colleagues.

**Q.** Looking ahead, how would you perceive the importance of engineering education in maintaining the country's competitiveness in an increasingly interconnected world?

**A.** Indian industries are now in a growth phase and are increasingly turning to developing new technologies in-house. Good engineers are also having a significant impact in the competitiveness of several industry sectors. An excellent engineering education can only help and I foresee the importance of IITs to the Indian Industry increasing over time.

**Q.** Increasing numbers of students and faculty has resulted in an increase in the volume of construction, traffic etc. on campus. Do you feel concerned that this will impose a great strain on the natural splendours of our campus?

**A.** We would like to maintain as green an environment as possible on campus. However, we have to build and build quickly to accommodate the expansion – and as

such yes, there will be a strain on the environment and inconvenience to the residents, but this will be only a transient effort. One decision is to build taller buildings so that green areas are not reduced significantly.

On a lighter note....

**Q.** When you joined IITB did the possibility of a Directorship of IITB ever cross your mind? How have things changed for you in terms of the pressures and responsibilities that come with this position?

**A.** No – I had no such ambition. When I took over the Directorship I was aware of the responsibilities that come with the job, but in truth, I never expected to be so busy. I have a lot less time for teaching and research now. Besides, lectures gives one the opportunity to interact with students. This is what I miss the most.

**Q.** Tell us a little bit about yourself... for instance, what are your non academic interests? If and when you get the spare time how do you like to spend it?

**A.** I enjoy reading – mostly non-fiction. Like millions of Indians, I am also a big cricket fan and like watching cricket on TV.

## Presenting Raintree



It's been a while and I'm taking from where I left a couple of months ago. The soon-to-be-replaced, bi-monthly magazine from being just an idea (but hopefully a good one) is finally here and we're happy to present to you the inaugural issue called Raintree – Notes from the Campus.

Yes, Raintree it is for the March-April issue. It's truly a campus tree found easily almost everywhere and this issue is about tipping our hats to the diverse and wonderful campus community that we have and bringing them together. We're hoping that in this attempt, we've kept the focus alive and in some way initiated a dialogue about us and things that should matter to us.

For instance, the lead story in this issue is an Opinion piece under the section Why am I in IIT Bombay? by Prof. Shishir Jha from the School of Management in which he discusses the role of public institutions such as IIT Bombay and in particular, the role of public scholars and intellectuals it produces. Also under the Opinion section we feature an essay In Limbo written by Alay Mehta - a fourth year undergraduate student of the Institute. It's a reflection on the events that shaped Alay's experiences as a student here. The News section includes an article on Biosynth – a new innovative experiment in Biofuel from the faculty and students of the department of Chemical Engineering and CTARA. The News section also features an interview with Prof. Khakhar which will let you see your Director a little closely and informally too. The magazine has also attempted to profile some lesser known places and people in its Hidden Corners and Personality sections. The humour in the magazine is sprinkled across in the form of cartoons, photo essays and anecdotes. It combines the never-seen-before satirical talents of writers and illustrators from the campus. We hope you will find it amusing.

Here of course I would like to mention that the articles written by each of our contributors get selected because we believe that the views expressed in each of them will be of interest to the readers and to that extent we take an editorial call on what gets featured or not. However, we do not in any way constitute an endorsement of the views expressed by any of them.

Our mandate from the beginning was to provide an alternative space to reflect the younger energies and viewpoints across the campus and I hope through this magazine, we're doing just that. The success and sustainability will, however, depend on your reactions and contributions. It is after all a publication that is by, and for the campus community. We would love to hear from you, and are always looking for the inspiring, incredible, inscrutable or just plain fun.

The effort was made possible with a team of gifted young editors and prolific contributors from the campus determined to make Raintree as compelling to read as it is beautiful to look at. On my part, I think I served good tea that somehow worked. So remember, if you have an interesting story to tell, you'll always be welcomed with a cup of tea in my office!

~ Jaya Joshi

# BIOSYNTH: Trash to Treasure @ IITB ~ Biosynth Team, Department of Chemical Engineering



Doomsday prophecies see the world running out of oil by 2040. The skewed geographical distribution of oil reserves has caused much political consternation, because oil is the fuel that literally drives the economic engine. Oil wars may not be a work of fiction after all! Against this backdrop, there has been a growing acceptance of alternative fuels in general, and biofuels in particular across the world. While stunning images of extreme weather events dominate the landscape, and amidst growing concern over environmental degradation, development of alternative fuels has never been more actively pursued.

Renewable sources of energy constitute a diverse group, but their role is limited by their intermittent nature, which together with high generation costs, makes an unattractive combination. Biofuels and other forms of renewable energy aim to be carbon neutral or even carbon negative. Carbon neutral means that the carbon released during the use of the fuel, e.g. through burning to power transportation or generation of electricity is reabsorbed and balanced by the carbon absorbed by new plant growth. Plants use sunlight and photosynthesis to take carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) out of the earth's atmosphere to make vegetable oil. The same CO<sub>2</sub> is then put back after it is burned in an engine. In essence, it is a way of catching and storing solar energy without aggravating the problem of greenhouse gas emissions.

Diesel fuel is largely utilised in transport, agriculture, commercial, domestic and industrial sectors for the generation of power. The substitution of even a small fraction of total consumption by alternative fuels will have a significant impact on the economy and the environment.

Among the alternative fuels, biodiesel obtained from vegetable oils holds good promise as an eco-friendly alternative to diesel fuel. Vegetable oils being renewable, are widely available from a variety of sources and are not contaminated with substances like sulphur, and the biodiesel produced from it burns much cleaner than the normal oils, thereby causing less environmental damage than diesel. Biodiesel is compatible with conventional diesel and they both can be blended in the desired proportion. It has better lubricating properties than today's lower viscosity diesel fuels. In addition, Biodiesel reduces engine wear, increasing the life of fuel-injection equipment in vehicles.

The National Biofuel policy announced by the Govt. of India in 2007 envisages 20% blending of biodiesel by 2017. Biodiesel production will be taken up from non-edible oil seeds in waste/degraded/marginal lands. The policy further states that no taxes and duties will be levied on biodiesel. Taking cue from all the points mentioned above, Project Biosynth is a novel initiative taken by faculty and students from Chemical Engineering Department.

This student project draws upon the initiatives taken by the CTARA-IITB Project, whereby a 200 l/day plant was launched in December 2007 at YMC-Tara, Panvel. The project was conceived to be a demonstration unit for small-scale distributed fuel generation as a village entrepreneurship scheme funded by KVIC-Mumbai (Khadi and Village Industries Commission). Biosynth team members used this as an opportunity to get some exposure on the possible plant design and process of conversion.

**Vision:** For the first time ever a student initiative of installing a self-sustained biodiesel plant at the Institute level has been created. This is what Project Biosynth stands for. Starting with a capacity of 200 l/week, the long term vision is to come up with an efficient technology that can substantially reduce the country's dependence on fossils fuels as the only source of energy. It entails utilising waste vegetable oil as its primary raw material to produce an environment-friendly fuel - Biodiesel. The biodiesel produced will be used to run Institute vehicles like buses, cars, and ambulances. With time, the upcoming supercomputer facility in the Institute will also be powered using diesel generators. Later, this can be fuelled by biodiesel produced within the campus.

**Conception:** Project Biosynth aims to provide hands-on experience to build a biodiesel plant inside the campus. The Institute has agreed to fund the installation of a new R&D lab and to set up the biodiesel plant. The plant will be spread over an area of 1600 sq. ft., and will be built and managed by a team of 30-odd chemical engineering students, split into three departments - Research and Development (R&D), Design and Production (D&P) and Materials and Planning (M&P). The team is already working in new R&D laboratories, and has done experiments to test various raw materials (potential sources of waste vegetable oil) which will help in scaling up the process from the laboratory to an industrial scale. Considerable insight in this process has also been gained by frequent Biosynth team visits to the IITB-KVIC plant mentioned previously. With the commissioning work almost complete, this plant will run for a period of 8-10 months in conjunction with investigators from IITB, after which it will be handed over completely to KVIC for day to day operations.

**Progress:** Till date the R&D team has produced biodiesel from dozens of different raw materials. The results produced in R&D lab were in agreement with output from commercial Tara biodiesel plant. The biodiesel yield from the different raw materials was encouraging from point of view of economics, technology and safety. The project has successfully traced out the best catalyst for Transesterification process and subsequently eliminated all processing problems during chemical reaction and filtration of the final biodiesel product. In the days ahead, the R&D team will work out a rigorous methodology for quality control.

On the designing front, the Design and Production (D&P) team is ready with Process Flow & Process Instrumentation diagrams. Having completed successful simulations and brainstorming sessions on the designing of the plant, the project is now in the process of contracting a fabricator to obtain the actual biodiesel plant setup, which will be installed and commissioned by Biosynth team in campus. This plant will start producing biodiesel by June 2009 to serve campus fuel and power requirements. Besides raw material procurement and other materials requirement, Materials and Planning (M&P) team has also examined the possibility of growing algae culture/jatropha in and around the campus. If achieved, this would truly make Biosynth a self-sustaining venture.

Besides being an excellent opportunity for the students to learn, the project (in its later stages) has been utilised to enhance the understanding of principles taught in core departmental courses. The project being the first of its kind in India, will also ripen entrepreneurship spirit among students. Lastly, it must be noted this is not just a commercial project, but can also be utilised to make biodiesel a commercially viable product for the future.

**For any queries, kindly write to**  
**[biodiesel@che.iitb.ac.in](mailto:biodiesel@che.iitb.ac.in)**

## Events, Laurels & Announcements....

The R & D achievements of the Institute were showcased at the IIT Alumni Global Conference 2008 (December 19 - 21) held in IIT Madras in the form of an exhibition of working models, posters and film shows. Also, **Prof. Sandip Roy** (Department of Chemical Engineering) along with alumni **Shri Deepak Somani** were adjudged the winners in a competition to author a proposition paper on the theme 'How to improve the IIT Research Eco System'.

On December 28, 2008 the alumni gathered at the Institute to celebrate Alumni Day. Apart from the Silver Jubilee Reunion of the 1983 Batch, the 1962 batch also celebrated the Golden Jubilee year of its entry into IIT Bombay. The then Acting Director, Prof. Juzer Vasi presented the prestigious Distinguished Service Award 2008 to **Gautam Advani, Suresh Shenoy and Hemendra Girish Godbole**.

**Prof. S.R.S. Varadhan**, leading probabalist and recipient of Abel Prize (2007) for his contribution to Mathematics delivered two talks on Homogenisation and Scaling limit of large systems at P. C. Saxena Auditorium.

**Prof. A.L Greer**, from the University of Cambridge delivered a talk on 'Metallic Glasses- A new era for control of properties in alloys' on January 19, 2009 at the F. C. Kohli auditorium.

**The Bharti Centre for Communication** was inaugurated on January 29, 2009 at the department of Electrical Engineering, with an aim of promoting research in communication theory and systems, and fostering technical collaboration between the research and user groups. Some of the broad research areas that the centre would focus on includes 4G technology, RF MEMS, Next-Generation IP/MPLS Services, Optical Fibre Communication, Networking, Communication and Signal Processing.



Prof. Ashok Misra, former director, IIT Bombay with Mr. Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Bharti Enterprise, inaugurating the Bharti Centre for Communication

**The Parimal and Pramod Chaudhari Cell Culture Laboratory** was inaugurated on February 13, 2009 to foster extensive research in Biosciences & Bioengineering. The endowment would help in enhancing existing capabilities of the Institute's Cell Culture Laboratory.

**Pulse:** Students of the Institute in collaboration with IRCC has come up with a novel initiative called Pulse - the new science and technology magazine of IIT Bombay. The magazine hopes to highlight the major research development in the Institute. The first issue of Pulse was published in January '09 and had sections on select R&D activities, including some of the recent technology events in the Institute. 3000 copies of the first issue of Pulse were circulated amongst students, alumni and corporates. The next issue is scheduled to be published in August 2009. An online copy of the first issue may be found in the publications section of IRCC website ([www.ircc.iitb.ac.in](http://www.ircc.iitb.ac.in)).

**Dr. Jugal Kishore Verma**, Professor in the Department of Mathematics and **Prof. V. K. Singh**, Professor in the Department of Chemistry were elected as Fellows of the National Academy of Sciences, India in 2008.

**Dr. V. Ramgopal Rao**, Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering and **Dr. R. Murugavel**, Professor in the Department of Chemistry have been elected as Fellows of Indian Academy of Sciences with effect from January 2009.

**Prof. M. D. Atrey**, Associate Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, has been elected as a Fellow of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, London in recognition of his achievements and contributions to the Engineering professions.

**Dr. N. K. Naik**, Professor in the Department of Aerospace Engineering was honoured with the 'Excellence in Aerospace Education Award 2008' by the Aeronautical Society of India in recognition of his contributions in the field of Aerospace Education.

**Dr. A.K. Singh**, Professor in the Department of Chemistry received the ISCB Award for Excellence 2009, for his outstanding contributions in the area of Chemical Sciences. The Award is instituted by the Indian Society of Chemists and Biologists.

**Dr. (Mrs.) P. Venkatachalam**, Principal Research Scientist at the Centre of Studies in Resources Engineering received "National Geomatics Award for Technology" given by the Indian Society for Geomatics (ISG) at their annual convention on February 4, 2009.

**Shri Sudip Nag**, (Ph.D Student) in the Department of Electrical Engineering won the 'Budding Innovator Award' co-ordinated by the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC). It is a prestigious recognition from the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. The award is in recognition of his work on "The Silicon Locket for Web Enabled Cardiac Diagnosis" project.

**Ms Sunita Kedia**, (Ph.D Student) at the Department of Physics, was one of the recipients of the Best Poster presentation at the National Laser Symposium (2008) held in Delhi during January 2009. Her Paper on 'Effect of Photonic stop band on the emission of Rhodamine dye' was co-authored with **Prof. R. Vijaya**.

**Dr. Deepa Venkitesh** who got her Ph.D degree in 2008 from the Department of Physics, was another recipient of



Dr. (Mrs.) P. Venkatachalam, receiving the award  
the best thesis award at the same event.

**Ms Aditi Ghosh**, (Ph.D Student) at the Department of Physics, was the recipient of the best student presentation awards at the International Conference on Photonics (December 2008) held in New Delhi.

### OPINION

## In Limbo ~ Alay Mehta, fourth year undergraduate

Part of the winning series of essays from Education Day

It's been four years, I try to convince myself, but the mind still reels from the blow. It was certainly not the happiest of beginnings. Everything I'd heard of IIT in those days of ignorant bliss seemed like a fairy tale - a conspiracy to mislead. The cultural shock, I must admit, was no trifle. I found myself, one rainy July afternoon, seated despondently in an ill-shaped wooden chair in the Convocation Hall, my parents beside me as we waited for the formalities of admittance to unwind. As I assured myself for the last time that I had made the right choice, an insufferable tune wafted through the crackling speakers - a truly dreadful relic of the once popular 50's and 60's film devotionals - and put a dampener on all further conversation.

I took the opportunity to crane my neck and study the boys (and the terminally few girls) I would be growing up with. They looked for the most a motley bunch of academics - you can usually tell by their T-shirts which are almost always sponsored by some prominent software company - with the odd exception of those fashion enthusiasts, wearing stained anti-fits and sporting Livestrong imitations. I confess, that in my mind's eye it wasn't a very good review that I gave them, and I daresay I fared no better in theirs. First opinions, some say are lasting ones. Well, I think I can offer the exception to that rule. As I got to know my batch-mates better over the subsequent year, I grew to like them and those oddities so typical of an IITian. If there was a misfit in that crowd, it was me.

To begin with, there was the language adjustment. Hailing from the south, I had formerly come to view Hindi as a sort of language of the yore, something which was slowly being replaced by the omnipresent English. IIT threw that notion straight in my face. There was Hindi around every bend. It was also, I noted with an initial amusement that soon wore off, of a very different sort - colourful and littered with slang.

Then there is that common thread that unravels through corridors and finds its way into the very rooms: academia. IIT is where you will find the geeks and nerds (and I mean this as a sincere compliment) of India, the International Olympiad finalists, the guys who'll clear all your doubts and do all your assignments before you can even offer them a chair. There is something inspiring to be living under the shadow of such greatness. As a kid I often toyed with the idea of a centre of intelligence, based on the rather trite centre of gravity. I'm quite willing to bet that if such a thing existed, we would certainly qualify as that locus in Maharashtra. Then there are of course the happy-go-lucky chaps like me as well, who have only Fortuna to thank. (But we are still the unimportant majority).

There are winners from every walk of life residing in these dingy hostels and most of them are reluctant to relive their victories. On the whole, they serve as the perfect melting pot to live amidst - and this I believe is the best aspect of IIT. Yes, it isn't the academics or the faculty, or the facilities we enjoy. It is the student fraternity and for me - the whirlwind of cultural groups to choose from.

Being the predictable anglophile that I am, I unhesitantly joined the ranks of the literary club. There I discovered how far one could stretch the definition of 'literary' without actually violating it. There were no recitals from famous works, no poetry readings. The meetings usually had word games and quizzes, and pretty much nothing else. And yet, it was all immensely enjoyable.

The food in IIT is one thing I would never criticise. Most writers who have eaten four years of meals here tell everyone who has not how terrible it can get. I respectfully disagree. I could not have been more pleasantly surprised when that first piece of paneer (was it?) slid past my lips and didn't make me regurgitate. Since then, I've rarely come across a bad meal at the messes here. They may not be fit to serve at a grand dinner but they are never inedible. Part of the glamour, I believe, lies in the criticism - it unobtrusively places one at a level above the common hosteller (a word almost always replaced by the annoyingly erroneous 'hostelite'), proclaiming to all who may care to interpret it that one has been brought up on the grub of kings. Occasionally, a truly dreadful dish does enter the weekly menu but more often than not the long arm of democracy hurls it back out, leaving behind only an unpleasant aftertaste and a enlivening conversation topic for those otherwise subdued dinners.

At the end of my second year, life in IIT changed irrevocably. Or so we wished to believe back then, in those days of heated debates and empty curses. The net had been snuffed out like a candle by the damp. The days were suddenly shorter, the nights shorter still. Now we had to find new ways to amuse ourselves, to while away the hours. Some took to television, some took to football. I took to writing.

In all the gloom there also emerged, as it did each year, the annual PAF. The atmosphere began to take on a rather bellicose character. Men skulked about the corridors, trying to stay in the shadows. Every now and then, the more unfortunate were taken away to work long into the ungodly hours of the LAN-free night, breaking their backs over bamboo brackets, twisting hemp and wet rope onto those rickety frames destined for their three hours of glory.

On all fours in the lounge of their hostel, they diligently

## OPINION

## Moral Policing: Grandma Style

~ Mrs. Suranga Date, Retired employee of Department of CS&amp;E and Campus Resident

As long as I remember, there has been a February 14th.

But it is only in the last 20 years or so that I hear it being celebrated as Valentine's Day. And it is only the last 10 years or so that certain people in the society, including our politicians have been objecting to its celebration with a lot of violence - destroying shops selling Valentine's Day merchandise, shouting from the rooftops about the loss of morals. This year saw the Ram Sene moral police getting into their act in a Mangalore pub, beating up boys and girls who were supposed to be drinking; a direct contradiction of what the Sene claims is 'Indian culture'.

When I was a child, visible socialising between boys and girls was non-existent. However, we were aware that among certain sections of the society, such as the Christians, the Armed Forces, the Parsees, etc. the western lifestyle that they followed allowed for such socialising. And while my parents were extremely broad-minded about us mixing with boys as a part of school and college, it was understood that certain things like extra attention from anyone, fibbing to parents about secretive meetings, etc. was simply unacceptable.

Our so-called 'custodians of Indian culture' have a different understanding of what Indian culture actually means. In their opinion it is acceptable, if only in movies, to cavort around trees in pouring rain, to display fashions that are based on fabric-famine and to throw oneself at the hero. However, if you and your friend appear to be walking together a bit too often, these very 'custodians of Indian culture' will feel compelled to attack you.

I honestly wish they had met my grandmother.

Born at the dawn of the 20th century, she was married at 13 to my grandfather who was much older than her. She was one of ten other siblings. While her brother studied and went on to become an engineer, she along with her sisters diligently learned all the household chores. She lived at a time when passing through a room where her father-in-law or husband was present, meant covering her head and not daring to look up. Talking to her own husband, even in front of her family was a complete no-no. She ate after the men-folk did. By tradition, mothers-in-law were harsh with their daughters-in-law, and she was not spared from this rule either.

So not surprisingly, women of her time dedicated themselves to a lot of religious observances, which was a great source of education as well as a nice way of spending what little free time they had. One of the things involved wearing special 'holy, anointed, pure, just-washed' saris while worshipping and performing religious rituals. Whenever my grandmother was wearing one of these special saris, one couldn't touch her. Even if that sari was hanging somewhere to dry, one couldn't touch it. (In my language, Marathi, it was called *sowla*). My cousins and I always 'accidentally' managed to touch her, more so after we found out that the antidote to this was for her to have another bath. When things became unbearable, my grandmother would complain bitterly to our mother, and as a result, we'd miss our nightly stories from her that day.

As we grew into womanhood, I remember my mother telling us how lucky we were not to have to follow certain customs while menstruating. In her time, everyone in the family knew it was that time, because you were made to sit isolated somewhere in the house. You ate by yourself, bathed elsewhere and you didn't wander anywhere near the places where gods were worshipped. You weren't even allowed inside the kitchen. In fact, sometimes you even cooked your own food. You also made sure that you never touched grandma. This was called 'sitting out'.

My grandmother, uneducated as she was (and very firm in her religious and social beliefs) nevertheless knew how to move with the times. It did not require special effort - just good observation. She never made me 'sit out'. She never made snide comments to my mother about me cycling at odd hours to go for badminton practice. She enjoyed my frilled sleeveless frocks as much as my 'parka-polkas', and she would smugly tell her sisters about how well we were doing at school.

When I graduated and decided to go to the US for graduate

school, folks got into action by filling her ears with amazing pieces of knowledge, like what a folly it was to be sending a girl of marriageable age to the US. Never once did she talk to my parents about this. She was fairly old then, mostly house-bound, but was part of a huge busload of folks that came to see me off when I left. Some of them must have thought that they would never see me again. Maybe they secretly felt I would return wearing a frock, sporting blonde hair.

When I returned from the US, it was also the time when my elder brother (who was working in the US) was considered a 'catch'. We would get a lot of proposals from parents of various girls. Due to some visa restrictions, my brother's return journey got postponed by six weeks. This got a whole bunch of our relatives and interested folks chattering. They would come to my grandmother and ask her, what would she do if her grandson married a *gori* (a white woman)? What if she wasn't a Hindu? What if he secretly married her and then simply landed up here with her? Maybe he had someone in mind, and that's why he was delaying his trip back home. The possibilities were endless, once our relatives had decided that he could do lots of undesirable things.

At that time, my grandmother was staying with us in Mumbai. One day, her sister came to visit her. Whenever we were around, sudden silences and much whispering ensued between them. One day, just to have a little fun, her sister loudly asked what my grandmother would do if the following day, her grandson appeared at the door with a *gori* wife.

The situation became interesting. My grandma gave her sister a pitying look and shook her head to the side in a defiant, determined sort of way. "Look", she said, "I know my grandson and the values that his parents have given him. Should he come with a *gori*, I know she will have all the qualities that we look for in the eldest and first granddaughter-in-law of the family. She will have her religion, just like ours. But if my grandson has chosen her, then she must be wonderful. I will welcome her with an aarti, anoint her forehead with a red dot and grains of rice and have her perform the house-entering ritual at the door that any new bride would have performed! She will be my first grand-daughter-in-law, and I will tell the world about it!"

It so happened that my brother returned from the US, and married a wonderful girl from India. I could almost see my grandmother preening at the wedding whenever her sisters were around.

My grandmother outlived her husband by almost 30 years and saw a lot of changes in social attitudes, clothes and issues dealing with emancipation of women. She lived her own life exactly the way she wanted to. But despite the fact that the present society was following rules which were probably a bit different from her own, she was very happy to be a part of it.

Today, 30 years later, I see the benefit of her attitudes and her courage. Her observations about how we need to change with society, tempered by the values that have been handed down to us are invaluable to me.

I wonder what her take on Valentine's Day would have been.

And I honestly wish that the 'custodians of Indian culture' could see her and talk to her about it.

Maybe there is something to be learnt.

bent over a vast white space and let their fingers do the imagining. The result, if not because of skill then out of sheer size, is quite breathtaking. When it is all put together after two nights of somnambulant labour, the stage is set for PAFs and from that moment on, they cease to be mere plays.

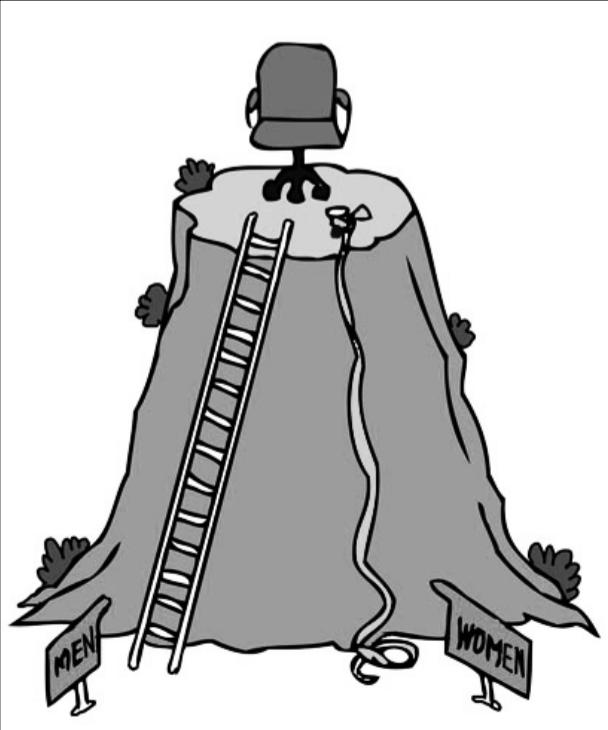
PAFs have only one constraint: originality. Everything from the script to the dances to the music score is a work of the student community. All their efforts converge into that one night, replete with dancing and general merriment. The cast of PAF is significantly numerous with almost everybody queuing up for a role, no matter how minor. The limelight of PAF has a magical affinity to it that most find hard to resist. For my part, stage-fear gripped me like a vice and I declined even the most unpromising roles. With my two left legs, dancing is quite ruled out and I settled down to playing the part of spectator, which thus far has been the most enjoyable role.

With all its frenzied activity, both academic and not, IIT has its effects on people, each struggling to cope with a system that draws its strength from its very competitive spirit. There is, then, the inevitable fallout: RGgiri. This dreaded word is a popular term for an unpopular trait. RG is the IITian acronym for Relative Grading, a concept borrowed from MIT along with its infinite corridor - and equally endless in scope. IIT does not encourage intellectual brilliance - it promotes relative brilliance. If you shined in the past there is every possibility that you will be outshined here. But it is also possible that collective ineptitude will rule the day.

Relative Grading is the Institute's way of differentiating between its many students and is not perhaps the best way to judge people. At the end of every quiz (read: test) or exam, for example, the average IIT student is not so worried about how well he has done; it is the misfortunes of others that delight him - their mistakes are his gains, their success his bane. Hostility, though very covert, ensues and any chance of a close-knit student community should have been tossed out of the window. Yet it does exist, strangely defiant of logic, proof that IIT's camaraderie is what has counted all these years.

My association with IIT had been cordial at best. I held its institutions and traditions at an arm's length, choosing to be an observer rather than a participant. Yet as time wore on, I felt myself drawn in, changed in spite of myself, whittled as even the most obstinate stones are, when they lie in the path of a river. And as I end my penultimate semester here, I begin to wish I had more time on the campus, to delve into the scene with the enthusiasm of a freshman, without the inhibitions I once carried with me. It may not have been the best of beginnings but as the end draws near, I could well make it a fine finish.

## Salt n Pepper by Dr. Arun Inamdar



# A Date at the Library

**Mrs. Shobha Kulkarni on Libraries in general, Central Library and its Users**

~ Parasvil Patel, fourth year undergraduate

Librarians and people who work in libraries are mostly friendly and helpful, with the occasional exceptions of those who come across as fiery dragons forever interposed between people and their books. Both kinds are usually absurdly knowledgeable. Yet, their skills are often underestimated and probably largely under-appreciated. To buck this trend we decided to train the spotlight at our own Central Library for our first 'Personality Section'. There, at the basement, tucked away out of sight of most, sits Mrs. Shobha Kulkarni who has been with the Library for over 32 years and has an intimate knowledge and understanding of the inner world of the Central Library.

When I went to meet her I did not know who to expect - the dragon, or the disheveled librarian lost behind a huge stack of books. Mrs. Kulkarni's office was large and airy (it still smelt of new books) and she, as well as her office was neat, tidy and precise as the proverbial pin. From my sessions chatting with her over her favourite cup of filter coffee, the impression I gained was of a friendly book lover ever willing to chat about her favourite subject - books and libraries. Reproduced below are snippets of my conversation with her.

**Q. Why did you choose to become a librarian? Describe a typical day at work.**

I was working with a bank before this opportunity came along. Being a bookworm myself, I decided to grab this chance and make the most of it. I began at the circulation desk and since then I have had the opportunity to work with almost all the sections of the library. Currently I am in charge of Book Procurement & Technical Processing Section and look after the Library's Collection Development and Management. On an everyday basis, most of my work centres on what we call 'collection management'. This includes checking new orders of books, classification of books and looking after bill payments. Most of my day goes in following up on these routine tasks of the library.

**Q. Have you observed a change in the readership patterns of students/faculty members over the years?**

Over the years while user (student and faculty) strength has increased, usage has actually gone down. When I recall my early years at the library, the library used to be packed and every available seat would have a reader. Now the only time when we have an increase in footfalls at the library is before exams. Even then, it cannot compare with the past. Earlier since books were returned manually, the circulation desk used to have a 'China Wall' of books, waiting to be returned to their stacks. Apart from a significant decrease in the number of books issued daily, most of our readers are only interested in technical subjects of their narrow specialisations. Earlier, students would pick up books of general interest, which I think is critical for broadening horizons and creating well-rounded individuals. Granted, our literature section is probably not the best but even then compared to earlier times now only 20% of the readers pick up books of general interest.

**Q. Do you view this as a healthy trend?**

At the outset, let me clarify that I am neither against technology or modernisation. Nor am I against the sweeping changes that are overtaking the Library as an institution. But I would like to take this opportunity to point out to students that 'Googling' a subject often implies sifting through a lot of material to find the right document. Also, there is none of the authenticity that can be found in books and materials to be found at a Library. When one searches for a particular book in the library there is a high probability that a person might find something interesting in the nearby stacks as well. This is absent when one searches for information on the Internet. I dearly wish that more students would come to us and seek information on their research interests or course topics. We would be more than happy to direct them towards the necessary material and guide them in other related directions.



**Q. Do you think that Libraries are 'Dinosaurs of the Digital Knowledge Era' and the future belongs to 'Cybrarians in InfoSpace'?**

No, I do not think so and there may be 'Cybrarians in InfoSpace' galore but libraries will endure. It will thrive as a centre of expertise, a gateway to information, in whatever format this information is written and wherever it is located. Moreover, there will still be a pressing need for the library as a physical entity, not only as a social meeting place and a place of scholarly interaction, but also as a place where students and other users are offered advanced study facilities with adequate user support. Furthermore, the library will not lose its importance as an assembly point of printed literature for the next decades.

But for this Library professionals would need to be multi-skilled. They will need to understand the diverse needs of different users and serve their institutions by meeting the criteria that I sketched out. Professionals must have good didactical, organisational and communicative qualities at their disposal. Generally speaking, this does not imply very new characteristics compared with the current situation. The need is not for new responsibilities but acquiring the new job attitudes.

**Q. In this light, what are the necessary steps that need to be taken to improve the central library?**

We face a shortage of manpower. We need a larger, motivated workforce for the efficient management of the library. I am currently working on a Ph.D (Impact of Information Technology on the Work Culture of Academic Libraries of Professional Institutions) and my personal reading of the situation is that our staff is quite capable. But, I would like to see them scale up their capabilities so that each person is capable of providing consolidated information in any given subject to users. This is in line with the skill sets, I outlined earlier. But they need to be properly motivated with respect to individual satisfaction levels and how they can be met.

**Q. What are the most popular sections of this Library?**

The new books on IT and Computer Science are the ones that are perpetually issued out (no surprises there). Apart from them books on Mathematics and those related to Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Chemistry and Physics are also quite popular.

**Q. How would you rate the IIT Bombay library with respect to libraries at other IITs or other universities?**

Our library has an excellent collection of books and journals. We receive adequate funds for the procurement of new books. I can proudly say that our stock management and user services are better than that of most other IITs and universities.

**Q. Any memorable incidents during your tenure at IIT Bombay?**

I vividly remember my first day at work. I was assigned duty at the book issue counter and we used to have a manual system for the issue of books as against the barcode system used now. I made the mistake of asking for identity proof from a well-known senior faculty who felt quite offended. I was mortified and since then I have been extremely careful and have avoided annoying faculty members.

**Q. A book that you read recently that left a mark?**

I have a decided partiality for Biographies. I read *Samidha* which is a biography of the life of Sadhana Amte, wife of Baba Amte. It chronicled her life and how she survived despite tremendous odds. It inspired me to make plans of joining some socially relevant cause after retirement.

**Q. Some of your all time favourite books?**

Most of my interest in literature is in non-fiction. When I was younger I did read novels, but now I prefer non-fiction over fiction. But over the years some of the books that I remember are, *Ek Hota Carver* by Veena Gavankar, *'I Dare'* by Kiran Bedi, *'Shantaram'* by Gregory David Roberts and *'How I Taught my Grandmother to Read and Other Stories'* by Sudha Murthy.

*Being in charge of Book Procurement means that Mrs. Kulkarni is always on the look out for new books. Her besetting sin is ordering new books for herself, even though her son complains about the accumulating books at home which she seldom has the time to read. Her justification for the ever-expanding personal library is that it is her nest egg for retirement. We wish her all the best for the rest of her tenure and 'happy reading' for afterwards.*

**Avid users of the library (More than 100 times)**

Prof. Gopal K. Srinivasan, Mathematics	202
Kunal Puri, Res. Sch., Aerospace Engg.	138
Pravin Chaudhuri, student,	137
Zodinmawia, Res. Sch., Physics	121
Bashir Ahmed Mir, Res. Sch., Civil Engg.	113
Surender, student,	105
Gagan Deep Kaur, Res. Sch., HSS	104
H. P. Dave, student, Mech. Engg.	102

**Yearly Circulation (issue/ renewal)**

<b>2008</b>	
Jan	10841
Feb	7106
Mar	5907
Apr	5464
May	3948
June	3319
July	7135
Aug	9376
Sept	7391
Oct	6152
Nov	5606
Dec	4404
<b>2009</b>	
Jan	10233
Feb	6546

**Most Popular Books**

**50 years of artificial intelligence**

Accession # 215498

**Final Collection – a book of ghazals**

Accession # 208888

# Techfest - From Festival to Extravaganza

~ Vaibhav Devanathan, fourth year dual-degree, with inputs from Parasvil Patel, fourth year undergraduate



Techfest is the annual technical festival of IIT Bombay. For three days in January, it gives over 20,000 students their annual dose of lectures, competitions and exhibitions. This article looks at the evolution of Techfest over the years and reviews the latest in the series.

## History

When Techfest started in 1998, with the support and encouragement of Professors Phatak, Amarnath and Chandorkar, no one knew it was going to become so big. In fact the inspiration for it had come from another IIT. In 1997, Vivek Singhal and Mayank Goel (batch of 1999, EE) attended IIT Kanpur's technology festival and came away inspired by a desire to embark on their own technology festival. Advanced Micro Devices came forward as the chief sponsor with a cheque of \$ 20,000. The first edition was a gratifying success and the rest as they say, was history.

Some of the early Overall Co-ordinators have pointed out that early editions were more like a student event with probably greater space for spontaneity and fun. Of course, they do acknowledge that the modern day Techfests do score in terms of organization of large-scale events.

So, was Techfest the beginning of all things technical in IITB? Not really. The first technology festival christened 'Technofair', took place in the mid 80's and was the brain-child of the legendary Prof. J. R. Issac of Computer Science and Engineering. But while the initial attempt was reasonably successful, it was an idea a decade ahead of its time and died an early death for want of the "vibrant IIT-industry partnership in the 80's and 'fairs' that pinned their hopes on this alliance for their success".\*

After them came the technical activities held by each department and for a long time, Techfest followed this tradition, with competitions broadly related to each department. ('Yantriki' was the Robotics competition, 'Last Straw' the Civil Engineering competition, and so on.) Since 2006, the focus in the competitions has been on themes rather than on departments. In fact, part of the evolution of Techfest has involved a broadening of perspective to include a lot more things than mere competitions, something that has kept its nose ahead of the competition.

## Evolution

There have been many landmark moments over the years. In the first edition itself, when a video conference was unheard of in campus, Sam Pitroda delivered a talk by video conference to a packed Lecture Theatre and it was a truly memorable occasion. In the third edition, a VSNL cybercafe drew huge crowds of people that were among the first to be captivated by the power of the internet. In the following years, themes on entrepreneurship made an appearance as did 'Technoholix', the tech-entertainment Pro-show series with phenomenal success. The exhibition of the Formula-1 car in OAT in 2005 was another defining moment. 'Nexus' is easily the biggest robotics competition in the country in terms of outreach. Since 2005, 'Prayas' has been the socially

responsible arm of Techfest seeking technology-intensive solutions to global problems. So how has Techfest evolved over the years? As already mentioned, the shift in the competition focus has been from departments to themes. In addition, the exhibitions and lectures, almost non-existent initially, have grown to the point when they are full departments in their own right. Lectures have also been identified as 'big' and 'small' lectures, ensuring that there is something for everyone. However, the priorities of the team are still the same – competitions are still at the top of the mountain as far as importance is concerned.

## Techfest '09

iNexus was the first time a competition at Techfest went truly international, with participants from Dubai and Sri Lanka taking part in the flagship robotics competition. The very popular 'Micromouse' went into its fifth year; however, the audience for this event was definitely less than in previous years.

Most lectures had packed audiences – Dr. Spencer Wells and Prof. Chris Philips were the names that drew the biggest crowds. In contrast to lectures in the previous years, there was more interaction with the audience in this year's Lecture Series, something that was appreciated. The Invisibility Lecture drew so many people that a second lecture had to be held to satisfy the hordes of people who had turned up to watch and listen. The workshops this year increased both in number and in variety – serious participants turned up to learn skills like ethical hacking, Physical Computing and Bioinformatics.

The exhibitions were a big success – over 50,000 sq. ft. of space was devoted to showcasing the wizardry of experts from the DRDO and from Nissan. The panel debate on the industry-engineering education interface was heavily promoted and eagerly awaited, but was let down by a lack-lustre audience and an emphasis on speeches rather than constructive debate. The first night of 'Technoholix', which featured stuntmen and basketball, was highly appreciated by everybody in the audience. However, the other two nights did not get such a good reception.

Techfest '09 was also notable for the stringent security measures that were enforced as a result of the recent terror attacks. Most attendees cooperated with the security organisers, making the overall security process a smooth, coordinated one.

## Conclusion

One thing that recent Techfest teams have learnt to be careful of is sustainability - they realise that they must continue to give audiences quality content. To this end, they are definitely trying to have a smaller number of cutting-edge competitions rather than many routine competitions. To give teams something more tangible to take back, they are also looking at more tie-ups with industry, something that was notably lacking in the past. The industry angle ensures that people who make something for Techfest actually have a chance to make it

big in the manufacturing world.

One question on everyone's mind about Techfest is how much bigger it can grow and how much longer can it maintain its present rate of expansion. The prevailing opinion is that it has, so to speak, reached a plateau – both in terms of the budget and the number of people it can cater to. The number of competitions, workshops, lectures and exhibitions are also limited by the time available. One definite focus area during the next few years should and will be increasing the quality and innovativeness of the events.

It is clear, however, that Techfest is not Asia's largest technology festival for nothing – its story over the years is one of constant adaptation in response to a changing world.

\* Much of this early history has been gathered from 'Monastery, Sanctuary, Laboratory: 50 Years of IIT Bombay' by Rohit Manchanda. Macmillan 2008, pg 370-371

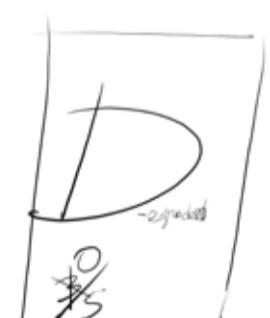
## THE WAY WE WERE

### De-graded

Prof. Buragohain (later Director of IIT Guwahati) from Civil Engg was teaching us App Mech. (Don't ask me what App Mech means. I know as much about it now as I did then.) In one of his tests, he had devised a problem. When I got the answer sheet, I realised that I had got three out of five for one particular answer. The answer was right, except that I had added two numbers instead of subtracting them, and that had cost me two marks. When I was told that two marks would get me out of the D grade into a C grade, I braved it to Buragohain's office and told him, "Sir! Because of a silly mistake, I got three marks. If you can pardon my mistake, I can get five and therefore, a C grade." Buragohain snatched the paper from my hand and exclaimed, "You are right! It is a silly mistake. It is my silly mistake. Why did I give you three marks? Let me correct my mistake." And he scratched out my three marks with a big zero. He ensured that I remained De-graded.

**Post Script:** I met Prof. Buragohain on March 12, 2009 at IIT during the Foundation Day celebrations where he was honoured with a Distinguished Alumnus Award and I narrated this incident to him. He laughed out loud and confessed that he did not remember this, but candidly admitted that he was capable of meting out such punishments to errant students.

**Story narrated by Bakul Desai, class of '82**



## HIDDEN CORNERS

## Hidden in Plain Sight: Bicycle Repair Shop

~ Antariksh Bothale, second year undergraduate, Mukul Gupta, first year undergraduate



Punctured bicycle  
On a hillside desolate  
Will nature make a man of me yet?

From a song by The Smiths

The cycle repair shop next to H8 is a boon to campus residents, especially students who stay in the hostels nearby. It is a small shop open from 12 noon to 5 p.m. on weekdays, but from getting your tyres inflated to servicing, it can take care of all your basic bicycle maintenance requirements.

The shop is always very crowded towards the beginning of the autumn semester (when first year students are taken there by their parents to compulsorily buy a bicycle), but bears a more deserted look at other times of the year. It is pretty efficiently managed by two young men (they also happen to be identical twins) who not only provide quality service but are also known to finish their jobs on time.

The utility of the shop was best appreciated by people who resided in the campus, say, 10 years ago and often had to drag punctured bicycles all the way from H6 to the Y-Point Gate. With the increased number of bicycle users (due to the ban on motorised vehicles for students), this shop may once again prove to be really helpful. The non-student residents on campus who usually go to the cycle shop at the YP Gate will find this a good alternative, especially because the YP shop is notorious for overpricing. The distance is not too different; it is mainly a problem of lack of awareness that has led to students being the majority users of this cycle shop.

With the campus now boasting of a TumTum facility, people might think that the best time to own a bicycle might as well be over. But, given the relatively low frequency of TumTums, especially in the afternoons, one shall still maintain that cycles remain indispensable. However, what many residents find annoying is that the shop often closes down for several days without notice, and is therefore slightly unreliable.

Finally, the cycle shop is definitely a resource that more campus residents need to know about and use. So, next time you want to get your old, rusty cycle touched up a bit, you could head to H8 for a change.

## THE WAY WE WERE

## THE WAY WE WERE



## IIT &amp; ITI.

Mohamed Ali was a Nigerian who landed at Santa Cruz airport in 1976 with dreams in his heart and a vision in his mind. He was admitted into IIT and that's where he asked the taxi driver to take him. The not so worldly wise cabbie took him to ITI Mulund. After an intense argument at ITI, he was told by the ITI staff that he was admitted into IIT and IIT was in Madras and he should head back to the airport and catch the next available flight to Madras. While the hapless Mohamed Ali was cabbing it back to Santa Cruz, he fortunately happened to pass through Powai and managed to see the sign on the Main Gate in the nick of time and was saved the hassle of a *Bharat Darshan* that would have taken him to Madras, Kharagpur, Kanpur, Delhi and back to Bombay.



## EXAMINATION BLUES

Once four students were playing till late night and could not study for the test which was scheduled for the next day. In the morning, they thought of a plan. They made themselves look as dirty with grease and dirt. They then went up to the Dean and said that they had gone out to a wedding last night and on their return the tyre of their car had burst and they had to push the car all the way back and that they were in no condition to appear for the test. So the Dean said that they could have the re-test after three days. They thanked him and said they would be ready by that time. On the third day they appeared before the Dean. The Dean said that as this was a Special Condition Test, all four were required to sit in separate classrooms for the test. They all agreed as they had prepared well in the last three days.

The test consisted of two questions with a total of 100 marks.

Q.1. Your name..... (2 MARKS)  
 Q.2. Which tyre burst? (98 MARKS)  
 a) Front Left  
 b) Front Right  
 c) Back Left  
 d) Back Right

## The number game

~ compiled by Puru

**“0”** : The number of maps for directions on campus.

**“8:1”** : The ratio of men/women faculty.

## Men: Women

Total count: 419 : 53

## Departmental Break-up

Aero:	20:1
Chemical:	29:4
Chemistry:	28:1
Civil:	35:1
CSE:	32:4
Earth Sciences	15:0
EE:	40:2
ESE:	10:1
HSS:	18:13
IDC:	15:2
Math	26:5
Mech.	39:1
Meta	26:1
Physics	28:5
CSRE	10:2
CTARA	4:0
Bio	13:2
SOM	15:3
IOER	5:0
SysCon	3:1
Nano	1:1
CESE	7:3

**“10:1”** : Ratio of men/women faculty without HSS.

Source: Department websites.

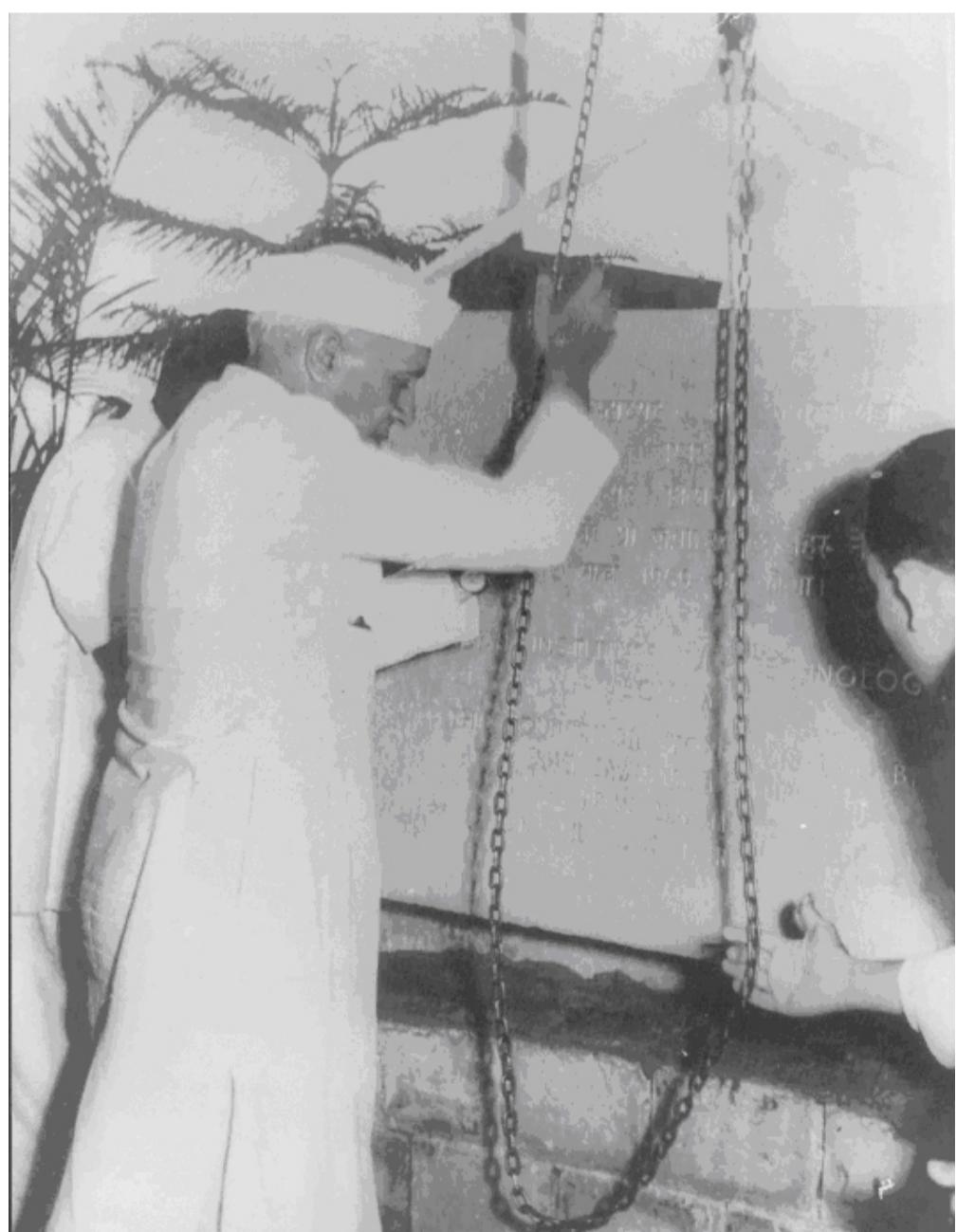
Count includes core faculty only, excluding visiting faculty

# A Belated Baptism (Chapter 1.1)

As part of our ongoing series, the following is an excerpt from *Monastery, Sanctuary, Laboratory - 50 Years of IIT-Bombay* written by Rohit Mnachanda.



*The architect being welcomed ... and at work (below). Pandit Nehru, staunch champion of IIT project, is led in by IIT-Bombay's first Chairman of the Board of Governors, Seth Kasturbhai Lalbhai*



*Nehru raises the veil on the Institute's foundation stone*

March 10, 1959. A small team of men drive into a north-eastern outpost of Bombay. It's an area still desolate and hard to reach, but one of striking natural beauty. Taking a sharp left at one point, they drive up a steep rise of terrain and into its saddle; and suddenly before them, to their right, materializes a sprawling, tranquil vista, a study in contrast to the city's industrial areas they've been driving through. It's an arena an eagle wheeling up in the sky would see as a large bowl of landscape, amphitheatre-like, its northern rim as if chipped away to form the saddle the contingent has crested. Dominating its background there glistens an outspread lake, amoeba-shaped, reflecting the brilliant blue of the March sky above; garlanding the lake is a rolling crescent of hills. The whole arena is dotted with trees. This watery, hilly, leafy locale our team are looking out upon is the precinct of Powai, inlaid with its own fine reservoir named after it, the Powai lake.

From its privileged vantage the eagle can see long stretches further than the human eye. Due north of the hills beyond Powai lake it notes another, larger lake, cupped in a second bowl of terrain. Yet further, north of this second lake, the Vihar lake, lie dense, brooding tropical forests, lifetimes removed from the urban bustle of Bombay, despite being hemmed in on all sides by its suburbs.

Between the two lakes, Powai and Vihar, lies a tract of land shaped, in this aerial view, roughly like the body of a crab with two stubby claws extended. This enclave, an expansive 550 acres that until recently was semi forest land, is the destination our travellers are about to gain. For some time now, a part of the enclave has been abuzz with activity. Every hundred metres or so, new buildings are being put up; or at any rate their rudiments are visible. Foundations are being dug in, plinths smoothed into place. Rough-hewn, unmetalled roads, specially clawed out for the day, criss-cross the grounds. About a kilometre in from the road, a large festive shamiana has been erected in a clearing.

The group arriving at the site are cause for considerable excitement for the throng already assembled here: the entourage includes in its number independent India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. To those present, the occasion itself is as singular as their guest of honour. He has made his way here to lay the foundation stone for the organization in which they're employed: an institute of technical education and scholarship, only the second of its kind in the country: the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.

The day unravels. The visiting contingent drive about the rocky uneven roads, speeches are made, the foundation stone is laid; an Institute comes into being. To be more precise, though, today's event is really a sort of ceremonial flagging-off, somewhat in the nature of a baptism: the Institute is already a living, breathing organism, having been absorbed in its working life for the better part of a year.

The Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-Bombay for short) is to be one of five sister Indian Institutes of Technology, in around two years from then to be favoured with the status of 'Institutes of National Importance' by an act of parliament. Their birth orchestrated with a keen personal interest by Nehru himself, he envisions the IITs as the leading



Pt. Nehru being greeted by Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Chairman, Board of Trustees, IIT Bombay

producers of the large numbers of technical personnel, also the repositories of technical expertise, needed to bring to life a dream he cherishes dearly: the technological and industrial self-sufficiency of the fledgling nation. In Nehru's words, the IITs are meant to 'provide scientists and technologists of the highest calibre who would engage in research, design and development to help in building the nation towards self-reliance in her technological needs'.

The laying of the foundation stone of this, the second of the IITs, at Powai in Bombay, is naturally cause for celebration. It's no less an occasion, though, to breathe a deep sigh of relief: the event is taking place after an unexpected hiatus following the formation of the first IIT at Kharagpur. Although the institutes in the eastern and western zones of the country were meant to come to life near-concurrently, the one at Bombay has for a variety of reasons lagged as many as seven years behind the first.

The occasion is therefore a momentous one for all concerned. Yet while the general mood is upbeat, in the midst of the festive cohorts bustles a man who, although the picture of good cheer on the surface, is not entirely at ease within. In fact he is inwardly quite troubled. Brigadier S.K. Bose, who has formally taken charge as the Institute's first Director just a couple of months ago, in January 1959, has plenty to occupy his mind. He doesn't allow his anxiety to show, however, and fortunately there is much to divert him today. He busies himself playing host to Pandit Nehru and the accompanying Soviet delegation; he drives them personally round the nascent campus in an open-top jeep; he listens to Nehru's speech, gives his own.

Pandit Nehru, in a reference to the 'IIT project', says, 'I suppose that among the many things that are being done in India today, the establishment of the great institutes of technical training and knowledge is perhaps the most important.' There follows one of his most widely quoted assertions on the technological enterprise: 'It is relatively easy to put up a factory or a plant, it is much more difficult and it takes much more time to train the human beings that will run a factory or put up another factory or plant.' Speaking of IIT-Bombay, he says he is happy it has 'very suitably been established near the great city of Bombay which has such a fine record in various kinds of endeavour in the progress of our country – almost in any front of national activity.' He then goes on to remark that he sees today's occasion as 'another symbol of our attempt to grasp the future'.

Nehru ends with a paean to the toiling multitudes in the villages of the country, declaring we have much to learn from them. He quotes a rural song 'recited to me by my friend and colleague, the Governor,' which is 'a gospel of work without getting involved in the consequences of work.' Consequences come, says Nehru. 'Work without fear and without too much attachment.' Speaking of the key role played by the financial assistance received jointly from UNESCO and the USSR in bringing this IIT to life, Nehru ends with a vote of thanks to them 'for their great help in this undertaking'.

This flurry of activity may help sweep, for the time being, Brig. Bose's worries to the back

of his mind, but he knows they will return to haunt him once the event is over. The situation he and his Institute find themselves in is an unenviable one. Though the Institute's activities have formally commenced (academic sessions having started the previous July, in 1958), IIT-Bombay doesn't enjoy a corporeal existence yet. A campus may have been identified for it, and work begun on constructing it, but there are still no buildings to speak of. The Institute is eking out a nomadic existence, operating doughtily from its temporary lodgings in Worli, some 25 kilometres from its earmarked site here in Powai. A somewhat unlikely benefactor is hosting it there, the Silk and Art Silk Mills Research Association (SASMIRA), which has generously provided IIT-Bombay a roof and an address during its period of homelessness. Crucially, however, the Institute has been housed at SASMIRA on the firm understanding that it will vacate the premises rented out to it inside two years – on or before July 1960 – by which time it should move to Powai.

There is thus only a little over a year remaining before IIT-Bombay's allotted time at SASMIRA comes to a close. In this short interval, an entire campus for a technical institute – then again one conceived on a lavish scale – will need to be fashioned from scratch. This is a task daunting enough in itself; and to compound the problem, the portents before the Institute aren't the rosiest. Construction work has thus far been excruciatingly slow. Nor is it showing any signs of picking up, mired as it is in the convoluted procedures of the agency executing the project, the Central Public Works Department.

The energy and inventiveness with which the Institute was eventually put into place over the next year and a half, against formidable odds and in good time to honour its commitment to SASMIRA, makes for a story all by itself, enlivened with its own turns and conjunctions. But all of that will have to await its telling in a subsequent chapter. For the moment, we flash forward along the Institute's journey from its Foundation Day (as the 10th of March was subsequently to be known and observed) across a few decades, taking a telescopic view of IIT-Bombay's evolution from its early days to the threshold of the recently concluded century, and the circumstances it found itself in at this cusp of time.

#### A sudden stirring

Over the ensuing three decades and a half, going into the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Institute builds itself up. It starts its working life, grappling with the many growing pains that lie in the way. It moves on to consolidate its initial strengths and successes and, without fanfare but with perseverance, sets itself to doing what it is meant to do. There rides on its air the hum of activity one would expect to pervade any institution of technical learning in its infancy going about its business. There are the lectures in cavernous halls, the practicals in laboratories, the occasional research seminar. There is perhaps the odd book or research paper being written, the odd academic visitor



Arrival of Pt. Nehru at Powai, the future home of IIT Bombay

happening to drop by, the Institute's superstructure being added on layer by layer. Graduates and post-graduates are churned out with clockwork regularity year after year. There is all this, but it is little more than a hum. It may just be discernible in its immediate vicinity, perhaps – in the city of Bombay, and possibly in the satellite towns in its catchments – but is barely audible to the world beyond.

Indeed the world at large – and this includes successive governments of the nation, the media, and the general public – scarcely takes notice of the Institute, an indifference that's particularly evident when one contrasts this with what is to follow near the turn of the century. There may be the occasional appreciative murmur about how its graduates have flourished in both the engineering and in other, at times quite unaligned, sectors, making it more and more a sought-after destination for the brightest school-leavers. There may also be the occasional rumble about whether or not IIT-Bombay (in common with the other IITs) is too elitist, catering to too small a population of students privileged with, for instance, a splendid campus, well-equipped laboratories and an enviable low student-to-teacher ratio; and the occasional complaint about the exodus of many of its graduates to other countries, chiefly the US. By and large, however, it is left well alone to get on with its prescribed mandate – that of training tomorrow's engineers and technologists to the highest level of competence attainable under the circumstances.

(... to be continued)

## Steps to Improve IIT-Bombay's Research (or at least the perception)

~ Anonymous

A recent set of statistics presented in the heads' meeting painted a grim picture of the quantity and quality of the Institute's research output. The campus community came up with several possible concrete steps to change this, or at least the perception:

- Hold a competition titled "Top-10 research ideas in the next 50 years", and allow only the institute's students and faculty to participate. Also take care to announce the success of the proposed research ideas well before those 50 years have passed. Later release a press article claiming that the top-10 impactful ideas for the next 50 years have come from IIT-Bombay.

furniture must be of metal, so that if the canteen is unused, the furniture can be added to the above rusting experiment.

- Ride on the (projected/perceived) success of the nano in the country; give an honorary doctorate to Ratan Tata, and hope that people will link this with the nano-technology program in the institute.
- Research is timeless. Extend the current timeless, unbounded, open-ended nature of faculty and committee meetings to classroom lectures, thesis presentations, etc.

## SHOUT BOX

- Create hills near the academic area, and water puddles from A/Cs within labs. These will provide inspirational hill-side and lake-side views respectively, for tired researchers, without them having to walk to the hill-side or lake-side of the campus.

- Conduct the first ever mass-metal rusting experiment by collecting all abandoned and/or confiscated cycles, motor-bikes, cars, etc. The uniqueness of the experiment is guaranteed, and will enable us to publish several novel research results.

- Construct an open-air canteen to promote interaction among campus researchers; the

- Claim relief from research obligations until we continue to mentor new IITs, or until the 6th pay commission is implemented, whichever is later. To improve relative research output, include the new IITs in the comparison study. If the new IITs threaten to exceed your research output, include their research output in your own count, since after all you mentored them.

## APPOINTMENTS



**Dr. K.S. Mallikarjuna Rao** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Industrial Engineering & Operations Research Group on December 2, 2008. He obtained his Ph.D from Department of Mathematics, Indian Institute of Science. His research interests include Deterministic and Stochastic Control, (Differential) Game Theory, Viscosity Solutions, Markov Decision Processes, Probability and Mathematical Finance.

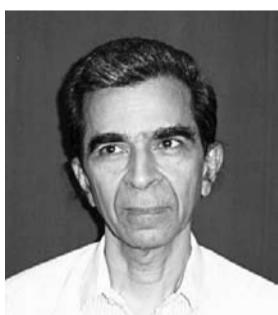


**Dr. (Ms) Mira Mitra** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Department of Aerospace Engineering on December 11, 2008. She did her Ph.D from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore in 2007. Her research interests include structural health monitoring, wave propagation, numerical techniques, wavelets, carbon nanotubes and nano-composites.



**Dr. Vishnu Bhama Narayanan** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Industrial Engineering & Operations Research Group on December 2, 2008. He obtained his B.Tech and M.Tech degrees in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Bombay in 2003. He obtained a Ph.D in Industrial Engineering and Operations Research (IEOR) from the University of California, Berkeley in 2008. His research interests lie in integer programming, convex optimization, and polyhedral theory.

**Dr. Manjul Bhargava** from Princeton, USA is currently appointed as Distinguished Guest Professor in the Department of Mathematics from December 22, 2008. His appointment is for a period of two years.



**Prof. S.H. Patil**, who has been with the Institute since 1970, as professor from 1973 has been appointed as Emeritus Fellow in the Department of Physics from December 24, 2008.



**Prof. Benjamin Lee** has joined as an Assistant Professor (Contract) in the Department of Electrical Engineering on December 29, 2008. Prof Lee is a native of Toronto, Canada. He received the B. S. degree in Applied Physics from Caltech in 2002. He recently finished a Ph.D. degree in Applied Physics, from the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Harvard University. His research interests include the development of novel quantum cascade laser devices for spectroscopy and chemical sensing, optoelectronics for solar energy harvesting, microfabrication and nanotechnology.



**Dr. Subhabrata Dhar** has joined as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physics on December 31, 2008. Prof Dhar did his Ph.D from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He was Research Associate at Paul Drude Institut für Festkörperelektronik, Berlin, Germany and EU Guest-Scientist under a Marie Curie Excellence Grant at The University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany. His research interests include Magnetic Semiconductors, Spintronics, Optical and Transport properties of wide band gap semiconductors such as GaN and ZnO.



**Dr. Samir K. Maji** has joined as an Assistant Professor in the School of Biosciences & Bioengg. on January 1, 2009. He did his Bachelors and Masters from Calcutta University with Chemistry and Ph.D. at Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Kolkata. He did his Postdoctoral Studies at Harvard Medical School, USA; University of California at Los Angeles, USA; Salk Institutes, USA and ETH Zurich, Switzerland. He is working on the role of Protein aggregation in Neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.



**Dr. (Ms) M. Mukhopadhyay** has joined as an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering on January 5, 2009. She obtained her Ph.D. degree from Ohio State University, USA, M.Tech. from IIT Kharagpur and B.Ch.E. from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She has been associated with the Institute's Department of Chemical Engineering since 1976 contributing in terms of a few new processes & technologies, and published several technical books, papers and patents. Earlier to this appointment, she has served in the faculty of IIT Kanpur and IIT-Delhi.



**Dr. Sanjeeva Srivastava** has joined as an Assistant Professor in the School of Biosciences and Bioengineering from January 27, 2009. He did his Ph.D from University of Alberta, Canada and his postdoctoral research from Harvard Medical School, USA. His research focuses on utilising the potential of Nucleic Acid Programmable Protein Array (NAPPA) and Surface Plasmon Resonance (SPR) technologies to understand high-throughput protein-protein interactions.



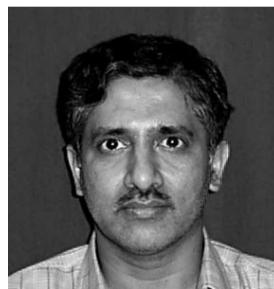
**Dr. Santanu K. Ghosh** has joined as an Assistant Professor in the School of Biosciences and Bioengineering on February 2, 2009. Dr Ghosh did his Ph.D. from Jadavpur University, Kolkata and was a Postdoctoral Fellow at Bose Institute Kolkata, University of Texas at Austin, USA. His research interests include, understanding mechanisms of faithful chromosome segregation during meiotic cell division, functional studies of different regulatory factors involved in vegetative cell division among others.



**Prof. Pradeep Sarin** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Department of Physics on February 6, 2009.



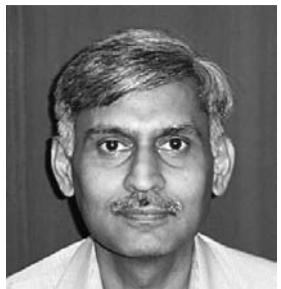
**Dr. (Ms) Arpita Sinha** has joined as an Assistant Professor in the Systems & Control Engineering Group on February 9, 2009. Her research interests include cooperative control of multi-agent systems, Resource Allocation, Team theory and its applications, and Game Theory.



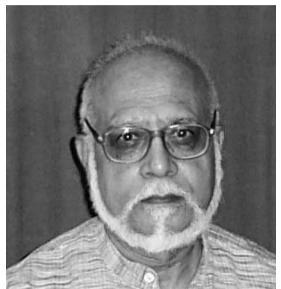
**Prof. A.K. Suresh**, Department of Chemical Engineering has appointed as the Dean (Faculty Affairs) on February 26, 2009.



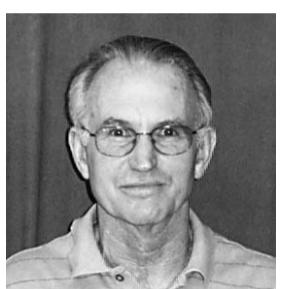
**Dr. Ganesh A. Viswanathan**, has joined as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering on February 25, 2009. He did his M.S. Chemical Engineering from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore in 1999 and then went on to do his Ph.D. and post doctoral research from University of Houston, Houston, USA and Department of Neurology and Center for Translational Systems Biology, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York. His research interests and projects are in the field of innate immune response, noise distribution and propagation in signaling pathways, pattern formation in packed-bed reactors.



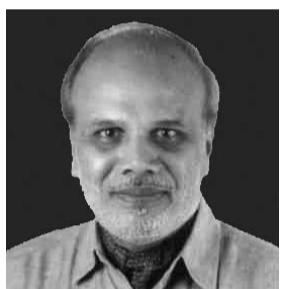
**Prof. Dinesh K. Sharma** has been appointed as the Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering on January 1, 2009 for a period of three years. He did his Ph.D. from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (T.I.F.R.), University of Bombay. He has been at the Electrical Engineering Department of IIT Bombay since 1991.



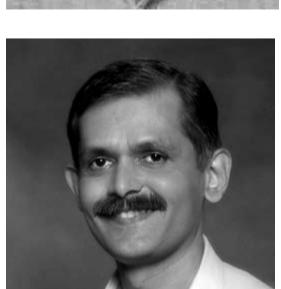
**Dr. B.M. Arora** has joined as Distinguished Guest Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering on December 1, 2008.



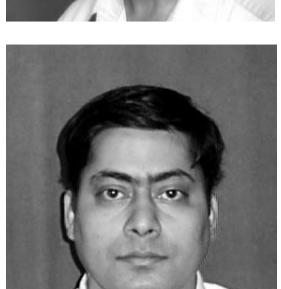
**Prof. Douglas J. Young** has joined as Honorary Visiting Professor in the Shailesh J. Mehta School of Management on January 28, 2009.



**Dr. Kamal K. Sharma** has been appointed as Adjunct Professor in Shailesh J. Mehta School of Management from January 1, 2009.



**Dr. Shirish Waghulde** has joined as Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Metallurgical Engineering & Materials Science from January 1, 2009.



**Dr. Soumyajit Mukherjee** has joined as Lecturer in the Department of Earth Sciences from February 9, 2009.



**Dr. Bibhas Adhikari** has joined as a Post Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Electrical Engineering. The appointment is for two years.



**Prof. Ramu M. Sandesh**, Industrial Design Centre has been appointed as an Assistant Professor on February 25, 2009. He did his M.Des. Product Design from IDC, IIT Bombay. His interests include Product Design, Form Studies, Nature and Form, Systems Thinking, Craft Culture Design and Development.



**Shri Vijay Kumar** has been re-employed as the Security Officer in the Security Section of the Institute till December 31, 2009.



**Prof. Sanjay K. Mitter** has been appointed as a D. J. Gandhi Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering from January 12, 2009.

**Prof. Randolph Sepulchre** has joined as Visiting Professor in the Systems & Control Engineering Group from January 23, 2009.

**Ms Deepti Verma**, Department of Chemistry has been appointed as a Post Doctoral Fellow from February 27, 2009.

**Mr. V.R. Sai Vemulakonda** has been appointed as Research Associate in the School of Biosciences and Bioengineering from January 29, 2009.

**Shri Vijay Gulabrao Kowe** has joined as Assistant Registrar in the Academic Section of the Institute from January 29, 2009.

## RETIREMENTS

### Retirements on April 30, 2009



**Shri Liladhar S. Gawali**, Sr. Lab. Asstt., Electrical Engineering



**Shir K. Mohandas G. Kudwa**, Jr. Supdt., Aerospace Engineering



**Ms. Rachel Varghese**, Jr. Supdt., General Administration



**Shri Shantaram B. Dhas**, Sr. Supdt., Academic Section



**Shri Daya Mohan Solanki**, Cleaner (SG), Public Health Office

# The Case of the Murdered Hellos

~ Bhavini Pant, Campus Youth

*Times New Roman Express, 31<sup>st</sup> March*: A disturbing trend has been observed among the professors of our campus. It has been noticed that our usually inscrutable, pedagogic and sometimes puzzling academicians have become cold, focused assassins of the oft-used and cheerful 'hello'. One incident among many is recounted first-hand by 17-year old TP, a long-time resident of the campus.

It was a sunny Friday afternoon. Everything was as normal as it could be. It seemed like it was any other day in the Institute. I didn't feel anything was different either, as I walked down to the little market next to the Post Office to buy an extremely miscellaneous collection of groceries.

Everything was normal. Suspiciously normal.

As I was turning towards the New Popular bookshop, I saw Professor Mutthu carrying multiple bags of cardboard sheets, long notebooks, geometry boxes and chart papers. Sigh, new stationery, I thought. There is something fantastically mysterious about brand new, unused stationery that I can never put my finger on.

So as I was saying, I was turning towards the New Popular bookshop and I saw Uncle Mutthu carrying multiple bags of cardboard sheets, long notebooks, geometry boxes and chart papers. The materials were a disorderly lot. But Uncle Mutthu, formidable in the world of Physical Chemistry seemed blithely unaware of these misbehaving materials. He quietly pegged the bags on to his bicycle and began pedalling forwards.

It was a funny little scene, you had to admit it. But I kept my smile to myself and walked ahead. When I reached the socially accepted distance, I raised my hand a fraction and said, "Hello, Uncle Mutthu."

Uncle Mutthu pedalled straight on, his thick glasses highlighting my supposed invisibility. My hello lay arrested mid-reciprocation, brutally unnoticed. It was as if he didn't even notice it was for him, or that it was even there. I could do nothing, as it lay wheezing its last friendly breath, finally dying with Uncle's third pedal away from me. I am heart-broken and in shock. I've now decided to protect my other hellos by never letting them out of reach. I don't think they can survive another attack."

The consequences have been far-reaching - campus residents, including the students, remain wary of letting their hellos out of their sights. Now, two *new improved* breeds known as the 'inquiry' and the 'response' have replaced the affable hello. 'Inquiries' on prospective Ph.D students, international conferences, paper publications, et cetera and their 'responses' have beaten the hello hollow in the race of the survival of the fittest. The hello and other warm, emotional species - habitants of longer phrases including bit-sized, informal conversations - have speedily become endangered.

The questions are many: How many hellos have already been murdered in this heinously cold and sociopath-esque manner? How many deceased hellos will our residents and students hold the professors accountable for? Our future generations may never know they ever existed – just like the murderers.



## IN THE WILDERNESS



Pariah Kite. Location: Near H7, September 22, 2008, 8:36am. Photographed by Puru

# What's In a Name?

~ Sweetie Ahluwalia

"Men are largely what they expect to see and they record what seems to them important."  
Arnold Toynbee, 'A Study of History'

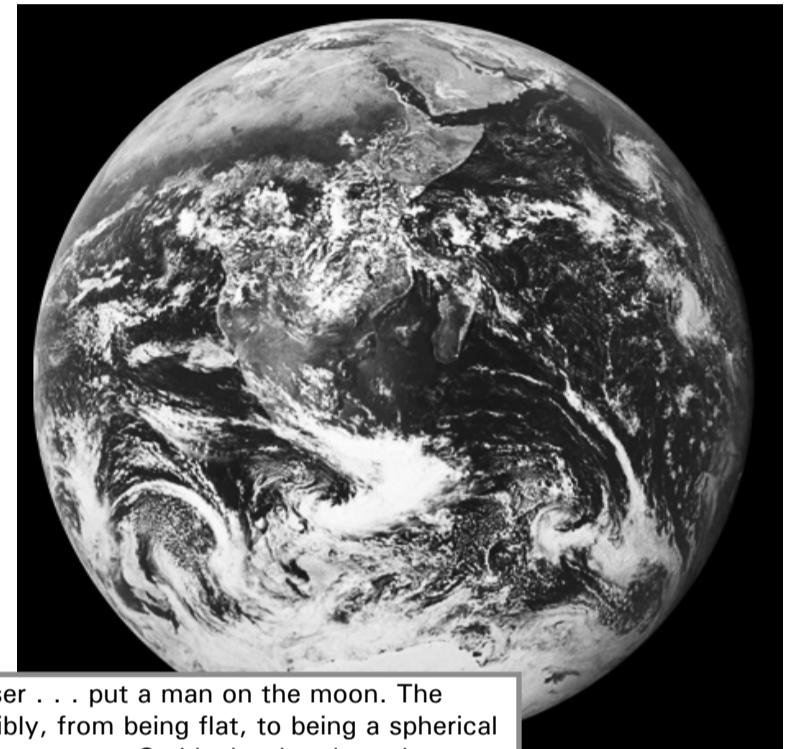


Arnold Toynbee

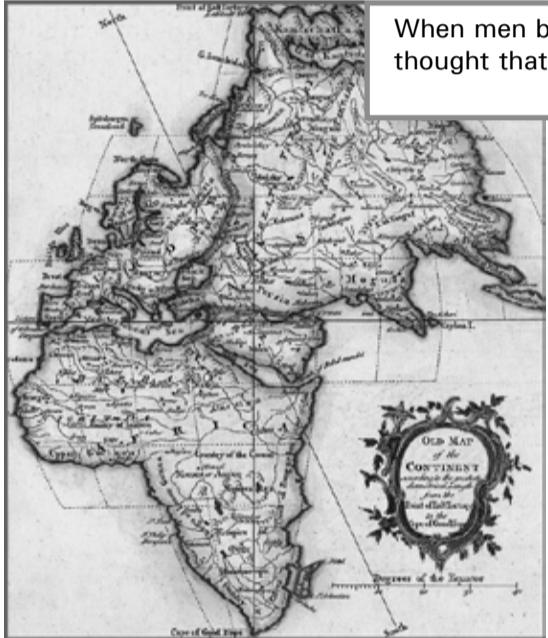


Hi! Call me Sweetie! Sweetie Ahluwalia. When I am not reading Toynbee, I chew gum.

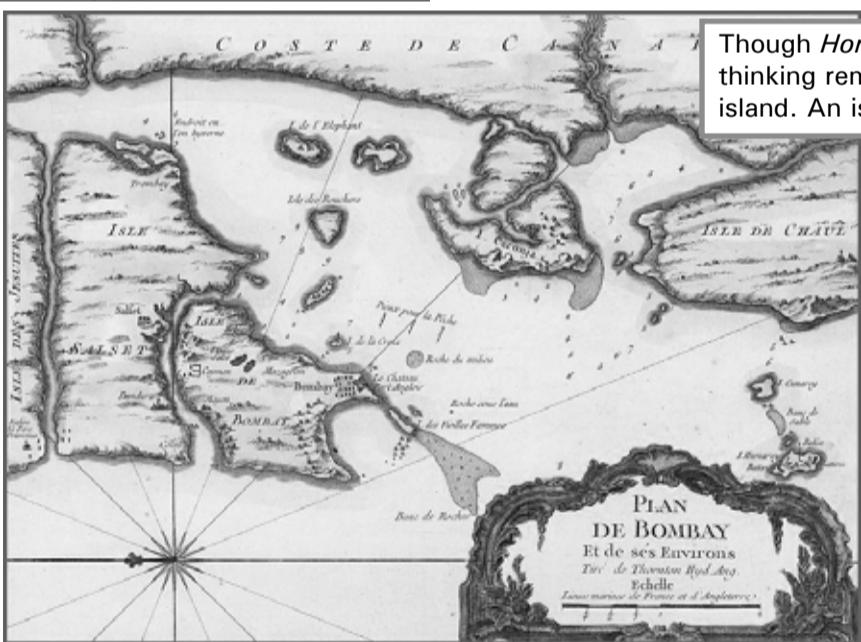
The universe is a hubble...I mean a bubble! A bubble that I blow and swallow when I please.



When men began to draw the first maps, they thought that the world was flat.



Then they got wiser . . . put a man on the moon. The earth changed visibly, from being flat, to being a spherical planet. One amongst many. Suddenly, the planet began to look lonely.



Though *Homo Sapiens* could see that the earth was a sphere, their thinking remained flat. They quarreled over names; and over an island. An island named Bombay. Now renamed as Mumbai.

Within the island of Mumbai are the twin lakes of Vihar and Powai. We don't have to go to the moon to see them. 'Google-Earth' - and you can see these two lakes. I remember a time when one could visit the Vihar lake at night. The times have changed and they should!



In the middle of Vihar lake, is an island. Once upon a time, swimmers loved swimming to the island.



So within the island of Mumbai, is a lake and within that lake another island. Why does an island, draw us towards it? Isn't our planet too, an island? A round island in a sea of darkness and a distant light.



Do we have lakes inside us? And are their islands in that lake? Between reading Toynbee and Krishnamurti, I blow bubbles and think of names for the roads on campus.



"Why do we love to name things?" Krishnamurti could have said that, but he didn't. I said that. I - Sweetie Ahluwalia, but then . . . what's in a name?

# Campus Sightings

~ Puru



Four days of work a year, 361 days of siesta! Too-tired to clean-up after TechFest.

*Location: The ground between SOM and KRESIT*



Some memory pills needed somewhere . . . By the time this project was finished, no one could remember what it was built for.

*Location: Next to BWE / Gulmohur*



Another IIT Bombay innovation all set for a patent, 'Landscape Recycling': Where there are hills, make pits, where there are pits, make hills.

*Location: Behind KV / Next to 'Vridhashram'*



One way to boost a recession hit economy: break down the new, build the 'newer, improved'

*Location: Pavement blocks on Raintree Avenue (H10 - KV Road)*



If you are an alumnus, then could one of these be yours?

*Location: In front of Staff Canteen*

Send in your articles, photographs, etchings, poetry, or anything else you would want portrayed in the magazine to [pro@iitb.ac.in](mailto:pro@iitb.ac.in).

## MAILING ADDRESS