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.

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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 unwittingly or unwillingly, 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.

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 during the night, with the fall of darkness, too, bringing about this folding behaviour of its small, pinnate leaves: normally outspread during the day, they fold up in pairs, each executing a graceful namaskar during the night, with the fall of darkness, too, bringing about this folding

Rain Tree's wispy, delicate, powder-puff-like flowers (it is laden these days).
**Raintree March-April 2009**

**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 much 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 Directorate. 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.

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 OGC 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 our natural surroundings 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 Directorate 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.

~ Jaya Joshi

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**Presenting Raintree**

It’s been a while and I’m taking from where I left a couple of months ago. The soon-to-be-rebranded, 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 off to its 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. Shashik Antia 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 spaces 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 Bioynth – a new innovative experiment in Biofuel from the faculty and students of the department of Chemical Engineering and CTAIA. 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 responses 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, incalculable 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 if you have an interesting story to tell, you’ll always be welcomed with a cup of tea in my office!
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.

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

**NEWS**

**BIOSYNTH: Trash to Treasure @ IITB ~ Biosynth Team, Department of Chemical Engineering**
In Limbo ~ Alay Mehta, fourth year undergraduate

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 in an ill-shaped wooden chair in the Convocation Hall, my parents beside me as we waited for the formalities of admission to unwind. As I assured myself for the last time that I had made the right choice, an insufferable tune wafted 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”). Part of the food IIT is one thing I would never criticise. Most writers who have eaten four years of meals here tell every one who has not how terrible it can get. I respectfully disagree. I could not have been more pleasantly surprised. There were no recitals from famous works, no recitals from famous works, 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”). Part of the food the student fraternity and for me – the whirlwind of cultural groups to choose from. Being the predictable anglophile that I am, I unhesitatingly joined the ranks of the (I)disclosers. I often toyed with the idea of converting Hindi to English, but the days shorter still. Now we had to find new ways to please my mind’s eye. 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Salt n Pepper by Dr. Arun Inamdar

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 con-verge 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 enjoy-able 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: RG. This dreaded word is a popular term for an unpopular trait. RG is the IITn acronym for Relative Grading, a concept borrowed from MIT along with its infinite corridor – and its dread word is a popular term for an unpopular trait. Everything that is based on fabric-famine and to throw oneself at the stage is set for PAFs and from that moment on, they cease to be mere plays.

As long as I remember, there has been a February 14th. 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 and even arrest. In the absence of 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 suspected to be doing the very act of which 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 friends 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.

Moral Policing: Grandma Style

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Born at the dawn of the 20th century, she was married at 13 to my grandfather who was much older than her. She must have performed some of the most arduous tasks, besides teaching my grandmother preening at the wedding whenever her sisters-in-law, and she was not spared from this duty. 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. Her courage. Her insights about what the Sene claims is ‘Indian culture.’

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: RG. This dreaded word is a popular term for an unpopular trait. RG is the IITn acronym for Relative Grading, a concept borrowed from MIT along with its infinite corridor – and its dread word is a popular term for an unpopular trait. Everything that is based on fabric-famine and to throw oneself at the hero. However, if you and your friends appear to be walking together a bit too often, these very ‘custodians of Indian culture’ will feel compelled to attack you.

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An opportunity to buy the house of my grandmother's family came up for my brother and he bought it. He used to come from the US for a month or so every year. I would see him and his wife and their children and my brother would tell me stories about them, how they were doing, and how they were managing to keep the house going. Every time I visited them, I would see them working hard, cooking their own food, and taking care of the house. They were always busy, always working, always doing something. And yet, they never complained. They were happy, they were content, they were satisfied.

They were the kind of people who lived for the present, who enjoyed life, who were always ready to help others. They were the embodiment of what my grandmother taught me: to live life to the fullest, to enjoy every moment, to make the most of what you have, and to always be grateful.

In the end, I realized that it was my grandmother who taught me the most important lesson of all: to be grateful for what I have, to be content with what I have, and to enjoy every moment of my life. She was the most important person in my life, and I will always be grateful for the time I spent with her.
A Date at the Library

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

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. What are the most popular sections of this Library?

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

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

Q. Do you view this as a healthy trend?

I have a decided partiality for Biographies. I read Samudra 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 for the ever-expanding personal library is that it is her nest egg for retirement. We wish her all the best for her tenure and ‘happy reading’ for afterwards.

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.

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

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

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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 brainchild 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 the 80’s and 90’s” 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. (‘Yantrik’ 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 remarkable occasion. The third edition, a VSNL cybercafé 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**

Nexus 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 Phillips 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 it’s 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.

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 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.

IIT & 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 IIIT and IIIT 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 cabbaging 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

Source: Department websites.
Count includes core faculty only, excluding visiting faculty

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: 1:2
IDER: 5:0
SysCon: 3:1
Nano: 1:1
CESE: 7:3

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

THE WAY WE WERE
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
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
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 techni-
cal 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, declar-
ing 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
doubtfully 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
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.

- 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 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.

- 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.
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 Bhamna 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 Festkörperlelektronik, Berlin, Germany and EU Guest-Scientist under a Marry 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. from Ohio State University, USA, M.Tech. from IIT Kharagpur and B.Ch.E. from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She has been associated with the Institutes 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. Dr Ghosh did his Ph.D from University of Alberta, Canada and her 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. 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 from University of Houston, Houston, USA and his post doctoral research from University of Toronto, Canada. His research interests include complex systems, control, optimization, control of multi-agent systems, Resource Allocation, Team theory and its applications, and Game Theory.

Prof. 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. from Ohio State University, USA, M.Tech. from IIT Kharagpur and B.Ch.E. from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She has been associated with the Institutes 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.

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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. Rundolph Sepichre 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.

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.

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

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

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

Retirements

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, 31st 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.
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’

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?
Four days of work a year, 361 days of siesta! Too-tired to clean-up after TechFest.
Location: The ground between SOM and KRESIT

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’

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

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