

Illustration by Roma Singh, IDC



Illustration by Chinmayee Sawant, IDC

## Bartondi

This time we feature one of our most unassuming trees, one that dots the campus in good numbers but often goes unnoticed. Not just because of its slight build, but also because it sports no particularly commanding features. Somewhat scraggly on its own, the tree – the Indian mulberry, *Morinda pubescens* – becomes even more dishevelled when hemmed in by other trees, taking on the haphazard shape offered by the spaces between the others. While in overall aspect and in its leaves and flowers it is inconspicuous, its bark and fruit are distinctive. The bark is prominently fissured vertically, and the fruit is of positively forbidding appearance. To some this coherent drupe resembles a cluster of boils bunched together into an irregular mass; to others, a clutch of ill-formed faces fused at their backs – from which derives its vernacular name, the bartondi. It is poisonous, too, to humans, though in small quantities it has been used as an effective emetic. Of late, the campus has been playing host to a magnificent species of bird not seen here for the past many years – the Malabar grey hornbill. And if you follow the hornbill's flights, you'll see it winging its way frequently into the foliage of the bartondi – the tree's misshapen fruit appears to be a favourite on the hornbill's menu. For this reason, if for none other, the bartondi is an asset whose numbers on campus deserve to be encouraged.

of the institute. People from the outside world who slip through the cracks into the structured world of IIT Bombay to provide a porous, variegated, under-the-surface vitality essential to carrying on a comfortable life – whether it's the dhobi who collects clothes from students hard-pressed for time, or the doodhwalla who smuggles in vegetables to sell from door-to-door.

Aptly titled 'Invisible to the Naked Eye', the lead article in this issue is actually a conglomeration of articles and biographical sketches that seek to record the polyphonic voices of numerous occupational communities. At the risk of being labeled bleeding heart liberals we have decided to throw our arms wide open once again. To search and find a more inclusive notion of the IIT Bombay community, both as a place and as an identity.

(contd. overleaf)

## NARRATIVES

# Invisible to the Naked Eye

■ Introduction by DAMAYANTI BHATTACHARYA

There was a time when as a child, if we wanted to express how big something was, we opened our arms and stretched them as wide as we could. And there it was... the space within stretched wide enough to encompass the entire universe. Then we grew up. We learnt that the space within our arms was just that – empty space – and our world started shrinking by the day. In this issue of *Raintree* we have attempted to invert this order. Ours is an age of annihilated distances and in this issue, we question established notions of 'belonging', by taking a fresh look at who or what constitutes IIT Bombay's campus community. Is it

**Ours is an age of annihilated distances and in this issue, we question established notions of 'belonging', by taking a fresh look at who or what constitutes IIT Bombay's campus community.**

just faculty, students and staff? Or is it also the person who delivers your newspaper in the mornings, the domestic help you've had for years, or the milkman, the bhajiwalla and the fish-seller who deliver their wares at your doorstep every day like clockwork?

An invisible sea of people – our very own tertiary sector – forms the building blocks upon which the edifice of the institute and our life as we know it rests. These people make available gallons of cutting chai day-after-day to renowned workaholics, make our gardens bloom, deliver that important piece of paper from the department office to the Main Building, and even ensure that projects are completed on time. Then there are our very own shanty dwellers – the construction workers who live in temporary dwellings of corrugated metal and asbestos sheets, actively participating in building the IIT Bombay of tomorrow.

These are the people who colour the little details of our routines with their Jack-of-all-trades personas. They don't have identity cards stamped with the logo

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NARRATIVE

# Invisible to the Naked Eye

(continued from page 1)

This time, belonging within the pages of this issue is not an exclusive condition. You don't have to be a card carrying member of this campus — you belong anyway. "There's a hell of a good universe

next door — let's go!" said e. e. cummings\* five decades ago. Ours exists right here. All you need to do to see it is readjust your lenses and mirrors. We hope this issue helps you do just that. ■

\*e e cummings was a leading American poet who chose to write his name in lowercase letters only, as a gesture of humility. **Disclaimer:** The views expressed in the introduction and the profiles that follows are those of the authors' and do not necessarily represent those of IIT Bombay or of Raintree

HOUSE SUPPORT

## Maharani — Who Makes a House a Home

■ DAMAYANTI BHATTACHARYA



Illustration by Ankita Roy, IDC



Mangal - The Housemaid  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

Pious people usually wake up in the morning and remember their Maker. I wake up and the first thought in my head is of my maid — "I hope she is coming today". More often than not I hear the reassuring clink of her bangles and payal and flip over for the last (but vital) five minutes of shuteye.

Mangal Pandurang Yadav — a mouthful of a name, which is housed in a tall, wiry and deceptively frail-looking body. She hails from a village near Mahabaleshwar and found her way into Mumbai more than 20 years ago. She is a resident of the chawls of Phule Nagar. For the last ten years, she and many others from there have been making a daily trek into the campus every morning, to cook and clean in many households. Out of the ten, she has been with us for five and half years, joining our household when my son was just three months old. She has been with us since then.

On Mangal's thin shoulders rests the responsibility of a household of seven people. With her husband as a temporary worker, she is the primary breadwinner. She has single-handedly put her four young girls through school. Her son has now finished technical training at ITI. Her eldest daughter (as it happens in most families like hers), started accompanying her to work when she was all of 14 and now works fulltime here in another household. Not just in her own home alone, she is the 'home secretary' of my house as well, cooking, supervising all the cleaning and sundry other activities, as well as looking after my son and my invalid mother when I am at work. No wonder my personal name for her is Maharani. Many middle-class women on campus (and elsewhere) like me manage to have a career because there is always a Mangal in the background, quietly taking care of the homefront in our absence — a contribution that often goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. The best part of the institute according to her is the secure work environment it provides for people like her. She is also grateful to many here who help her in providing for her children's education and pitch in to help in times of crisis. Ask her what her greatest wish is and she will tell you "of a permanent home, one she can call her own". But homes in Mumbai even in chawls, come at a premium and as yet remain out of her reach. Should we call her a part of the giant family of people who form this campus community? I know not. But she is definitely a part of ours. ■

## New Saloon's Mahaul Khushnuma Hai

■ SUMAN RAO and BODHI VANI First Year Undergraduate



Mohammed Ismail and Mohammed Firoz - The Barbers  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

In a barely noticeable corner of the Y-Point gate market, a vivid sign announces the presence of a tiny, charming men's saloon. The two charismatic young cousins who run the saloon, Mohammed Ismail and Mohammed Firoz, aged 22 and 20 respectively have worked at IIT for over five years now. A little known fact is that the operation of New Saloon has been a family affair since its opening over 38 years ago, by their grandfather Sohrab Ali. The brothers reveal that the then Director of IIT Bombay himself — due to a great fondness for the formerly wandering barber Sohrab Ali — had the saloon built and let out to him

in 1972. Though in a few decades, Sohrab Ali returned to his remote village in Lucknow, *Duphediya* to let his son Atiq Ahmed take over. Atiq Ahmed eventually left the saloon to his son and nephew when spondylitis took over, aggravated by the nature of his work.

Ismail and Firoz make a jovial pair, conversing in their swanky, eloquent Hindi laced with the guttural Urdu that they have learnt in the Madarsa opposite the market gate. In due time, Firoz reveals Ismail's passion for writing romances, unexplored since they started working due to their demanding

dawn to dusk hours (7.30 am - 9.30 pm). They talk of the 'lachak' in their language as we grope to find a word to describe it, and regale us with tales of their village, their family, their life in Mumbai, their awe and immense love for Mood Indigo, and their dreams of shifting their family from the dusty Gangetic plains to the hustle and glitter of this city.

The elder of the two, Ismail, takes great pleasure and pride in announcing the absolute lack of complaints, even as the younger talks of the versatility of their customers. "IIT mein ek hi jaise sab dikhte hain (Everyone in IIT looks the same to us)," they say laughingly, as they tell us about the difficulty in distinguishing between faculty and students. Moreover, the pride they take in the progress of their saloon is enchanting — they enjoy showing off their newly installed air-conditioner, renovated walls, and their quaint but repainted and polished antique barbershop chairs from back in 1972 (of which they are just a little abashed).

The cousins share a flat with eight other people on Halman Road, a quick walking distance from IIT — and love their life in Mumbai — to quote them: "Mahaul khushnuma hai (The atmosphere is filled with excitement)!". Their ambition is to continue work in IIT and earn enough to be able to move their family, including Ismail's newly wedded wife to Mumbai. ■

## To the Daisies ■ JAYA JOSHI

If I were to make a Bollywood Masala, which required someone to play the role of an earnest phoolwali (flower lady), I would only offer it to Subbulakshmi (if she would take it), our own phoolwali for 17 years. You would too if you saw her slender, petite frame wrapped in a neat saree; her dark, quiet, round face with deep set eyes, adorned with a red bindi on the forehead and large nose stud; her thick black hair tied in a bun with fresh flowers. She walks fast, talks less and smells great. "To be overcome by the fragrance of flowers is a delectable form of defeat", said Beverly Nichols and each time when one even fleetingly passes by her basket of flowers, one is momentarily stupefied by the gentle whiff of *bela*, *chameli*, *mogra* (flowers from the Jasmine family) and sometimes *Genda* (marigold). She's a poet's darling and doesn't she embody the part perfectly?

Originally from Tamil Nadu, she moved to Bombay as a young bride in 1982 and has been coming to the campus to sell flowers since 1993. She was, however, not always a flower lady. She started off by doing small construction jobs through a contractor and worked in Hillside when it had more hills than buildings. A friendly watchman of the institute helped her to get a pass to freely enter and roam around the campus. Around the same time both she and her husband decided to buy and sell fresh flowers. Her husband who gets the flowers from Dadar flower market sits across the road, just outside the Monginis cake shop. She sells them door-to-door on the campus. In her younger days, she would come once in the morning and then again in the evening to cover almost the entire residential area. Now in her fifties, with also a bad knee, she just manages a limited clientele in the evening. She has monthly

clients who give her a fixed business of ₹150 or ₹90 a month. Her husband does *rokda business*, which I later figured was money made through loose sale of flowers to people walking by. With the money made through *rokda*, they buy flowers for the next day and the monthly business is their saving. I asked her how much does that come to. "Between ₹2,500 and Rs 3,000," she said, with a contented nod.

I asked her about her family and she told me she has two daughters and a son and then quickly said, "No, I actually have three daughters and two sons." My brows took no time to twist with a question. She sensed that and said, "I had a younger sister who lived close by and died in 2003. She left behind her son and daughter. My mother and brother who live in the village and can afford to look after them, don't. They are my children now." I heard this and forgot my next question, which I think was how does this flower-selling, husband-wife team, support a family of seven. She went on to talk about her children. She told me her eldest girl could not study much and got married early. She's happy. The second daughter studied at a polytechnic and worked for two years in the Electrical Department of the institute under Prof. Fernandes, who lives in Ananta Building. She now works at L&T. Her son, with generous help from Dr. Saraswathi Krithivasan managed to do a course in catering and is now working in the bakery division of Grand Hyatt. The remaining two are young and study in 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. "I've worked hard in this place and received a lot of love and support from everyone on the campus," she says. "All my old customers came for my daughter's wedding. A few years ago, when my husband had a heart attack and was unwell for a long time, the same people got together and helped collect



Subbulakshmi - The Flower Lady  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

money for my husband's treatment. I must have done some good deeds. I'm in a good place. I like it here."

I asked her for how long would she like to continue as a flower lady. "As long as I can," she said, "at least till all my kids have studied and become self-dependant. After that I would like to retire." There was a pause, so she said, "*Ho gaya? Main jaoun? (Are you done? Can I go?)*". She had spent her precious half hour with me and now it was time for her to get back to work. And just like that, she left me with a sweet-smelling story that lingered on. ■

## Impermanence Inspires

■ JAYA JOSHI



In this issue of Raintree, we have decidedly looked at communities beyond the popular ones like faculty, staff, their families and students. It explores the invisibility, impermanence and transience of a myriad category of people who work (and have worked for many years) for the campus inhabitants or at the institute in different capacities, without a visible and permanent identity. This Raintree brings their stories to you.

Till we actually started working on the theme, I don't think any of us knew what we were getting into. For one, the initial interactions made the unknown barriers, which we thought did not exist, become all too visible. We knew some of these people. We have worked with a few others, met and dealt with them in our day-to-day lives. But did we really know them? In a way, working on this has brought each and everyone of us up and close to our own exploratory journey. Among many others, the magazine features a dhobi working for 24 years who never charges any money for ironing Indian flags; a bhajiwala since 20 years, who is known for his generosity and doling out free bunches of dhaniya; a phoolwali since 17 years, who with a modest monthly income of ₹2,500 is obsessed with

getting her kids educated and supports a family of seven and a team of cousins who have been running a hair saloon that was opened by their grandfather 38 years ago. It also tells the story about a Main Building temp worker who loves water and hopes to become a life-guard at the newly opened IITB Swimming Pool. In this issue's Perspective, The Otherlanders, we have tried to give snapshots of the lives of those 900 or so construction workers who are perhaps the most invisible and transient of us all. Some of these have been here since six years, with still no address to call home.

After personally interacting with a few of these people and reading up on all of them, I have started wondering if their impermanence, invisibility and transience is for real. They've spent long years in and around the campus. In their own realm, they know some of us well, our parents and our kids. They know who got married, divorced or lost a job. We attend weddings of their kids. Help them when a family member needs help. Have occasional differences and sometimes nasty fights with them. To me all this looks quite permanent. A temp worker had an interesting observation. He said, "The moment they become permanent they take things for granted and stop working. But we can't do that because we know that if we don't work we may not get any work tomorrow." I wonder if it is their impermanence that inspires permanence?

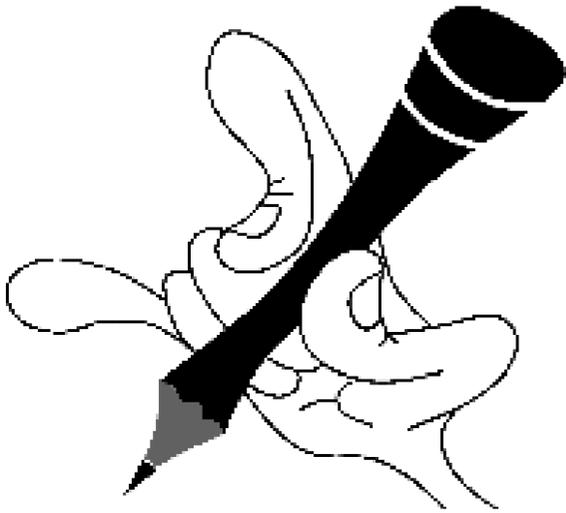
Never having spent more than two years in any place till now, my impermanence has been the most permanent feature in my life – almost sacred. Now already into my third year, with a 'Permanent' identity card which has an expiry date of year 2456 or something like that, my impermanence is, however, beginning to become a bit fuzzy. Working on this issue has been a curious, personal journey for me. Though I've never had (and still don't have) those many number of years to boast of in one place, I think on some level I do connect with this community. My brother who has never switched jobs has never been

able to understand this aspect. He often asks me, what it is like to be a rolling stone that doesn't wait to gather any moss? What is it like to never settle down? Though I never cared too much about gathering any moss, but with every move I have made, I have always felt settled as settled can be.

The philosophy of travelling works for me. I believe that if you never want to let fatigue seep into any place you are living in, you should always remain a tourist there. When I travel to a new place, I try and live each and every moment, awake or asleep, and soak in as much as I can with a sense of urgency. And I guess I feel settled, because my impermanence has inspired an urgency to build deep relationships, with all the jobs I have done, and people I have met and worked with. And if permanency means taking things for granted, I would rather work like a temporary worker.

You will notice, we have chosen to have a visual layout with short narratives for this issue. I will have to admit that the team of writers (and it's a large one for this issue, thanks to the tremendous response to our last issue), though dexterous in the verbal art had an easier job to do. They did toil around to chase and find people, meet and talk to them, find the story and write short biographical sketches. But after that it was up to the visual team, which consists of photographers, illustrators and a designer. Chinmayee, Rangoli and Venkat are not new to Raintree and have been clicking our photographs and sending illustrations since the early issues. But please join me in welcoming Regan, Roma and Ankita from IDC and Third year and Second year undergraduates - Akvil Sakhare and Jim Mathew Kochitty – a very talented new team of illustrators. We also have a new enthusiastic designer, Mustafa Saifee, a fourth year Electrical Engineering student who has seamlessly taken on from Vaibhav Singh. I hope you read and enjoy this issue, and send in your comments soon. ■

## Letters to the Editor



There is something soothing about Raintree (and its not just the name). Its articles are more like stories from an excellent storyteller. It has maintained its fresh look throughout the issues, is consistently packed with amazing content and reading it is always a delight!  
**Mayur Srinivasan**

This was the first time that I read Raintree, and I found it extremely well written and very interesting.

Of all the articles in the latest issue, (May-June-July 2010), I found the book excerpt (...And it's Torchbearers, by Rohit Manchanda) most fascinating. The world that Mr. Manchanda talks about seems unfamiliar, almost alien, to the current day IITian, since our lives revolve largely around a plethora of gizmos,

and primarily the LAN (and the LAN ban :D) in IIT. The whole idea of the Donkey races at the Pagal Gymkhana seems hilarious and enthralling. It is remarkable to note how things have changed with the times, especially considering the ginormous scale of the institute's current fests, Techfest and Mood Indigo. Our batch has had the honor of having Professor Gaitonde as one of our tutors, and his steadfast dedication to this institute, and particularly toward his countless students, is truly inspiring. I can't even begin to imagine what the institute will be like another fifty years or so down the line.

Another feature that was a good read was the accounts of the Inter-IIT sports meets (by Rajendra Laad). Every year, the meet garners the same passion and fervor that Mr. Laad's article prominently portrays. This, we are thankful, is something that hasn't changed since the Sixties, and probably never will.  
**Shantanu Sathe**

The current issue of the Raintree is the best I have seen with focus on health through sports, a vital issue for campus community. Keep up on such vital issues.  
**Dr. Kirankumar S. Momaya**

May I take this opportunity to thank you for sending me (and congratulating you for preparing) the latest issue of Raintree. I had received it last week. As usual with all editions of Raintree, this issue too is very interesting and informative. You have highlighted an important activity, one that is usually missed out in academic mileu, i.e. sports. I clearly recall an instance

when Prof S K Bose expressed his displeasure - in no uncertain terms - to the student community, at the lack of interest in sports. He, having been an army man, had laid lot of emphasis on the need for youngsters to participate in sports activities.

I'm happy that the Institute, recognising the importance of sports, has a full-fledged faculty member looking after and encouraging them. In the early days, this important activity was carried out part-time by a faculty member doubling as President, Students' Gymkhana. Some of the early-time Presidents were Profs J T Panikkar, R E Bedford and K Mathur (father of Rakesh Mathur, our alumnus who created Junglee.com, which is the present hotmail.com).

I was also delighted to read the deservedly laudatory reference to (the one and only) Uday Kumar, who has become a national icon, by virtue of his creating a national icon - the rupee symbol. So, he can rightfully be in the list in Hall of Fame.  
**M V Hariharan**

### ERRATA

The photograph that was printed against the name of **Shri Mela D. Solanki** - in the 'Retirements' column of the May-June-July 2010 issue of Raintree - is not his, but that of **Shri Mela Mohan Solanki**, an employee of the institute. The error is regretted.

### HOUSE SUPPORT

(continued from page 3)

## Keeping it Clean

■ **NEHA CHAUDHURI** Campus Resident



**Jawahar Kanojia - The Dhobhiwalla**  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

**"A**ram haram hai," says Jawahar (borrowing an axiom from the statesman after whom he was also named). Jawahar Lal Yash Kanojia has been running the 'New Snow White Power Cleaners Shop' at IITB's little market since 1986. The story of his naming has caught many an ear on campus. He was born on the day Jawahar Lal Nehru came to visit his village, *Moosikalapur*, in Bhadohai district near Varanasi. The name became his own in honour of the famed political leader's presence in the village. Before him, the store belonged to his uncle, Ayodhya Prasad, who started out as a wanderer dhobi; collecting clothes from all hostels, taking them for a wash, getting them ironed and distributing them back to the students before setting shop.

His work hours are grueling. You'll find him manning the shop from 6 am to 10 pm on almost all days. Even though Thursday is the official holiday for him, he chooses to stay open numerous times. "We provide continuous service. I've rarely gone home for the holidays. I truly believe in Nehru's motto."

"We used to live in the campus, inside the shop until 1993," says Jawahar, as he searches for a photograph of himself that he wants to show. "We didn't buy any property because we thought the campus is our home. And we didn't have to pay more than ₹50 a year as rent. But after 1993, we were told to stay outside the campus and now we pay ₹2,100 for 11 months as rent. The rent goes up every year by ₹100." He is quite matter-of-fact about this. When asked about why the change happened and whether it had to do with changes in rent laws, he said he knew only about his business and his work.

On an average, there is a team of five people at work in the shop. Most of his team members are also family members. He calls them from the village to help from time to time. "It's difficult to find people in the city willing to work for long periods of time in the laundry business. Things are changing," he says. He has three sons, the youngest of whom helps him here.

He is proud of the service he provides — right from directors, senior faculty and conference guests to students all year round. "I've ironed Rahul Bajaj and Arjun Singh's garments for their appearances in our functions," he says with a smile. "We launder and iron the gowns of students for every convocation. I've known Prof. Khakhar since his days in the staff hostel."

And he doesn't charge any money to iron Indian flags. ■

## “Bhajiwalla!”

■ BHAVIN PANT Campus Resident

If you live in Hillside, Lakeside or Rane Society (IIT Cooperative Society) you may have often heard the clear, melodious ring of the “Bhajiwalla!”, as he cycles with his basket of fresh vegetables. His name is Subhash Giri and he has come from a village in Mou district (near Azamgarh, UP) called the mighty – *Dubari Anroodh Chakramathiya*. When I asked him how long he has been in Powai, he said, “since Rajiv Gandhi’s death.” For a man who measures time by historic events, he has come a long way.

Subhashji first came here shortly after his brother, Makrand Giri joined IIT Bombay as a Security guard. After about five to six years, he brought his wife along and they settled down in Swaminarayan Nagar, behind Hiranandani hospital. He liked it here immediately, he tells me. The people were friendly and it seemed like a nice place. In the almost two decades which have followed, much has changed. *“Aspatal ke peechhe kuchh bhi nahi bana tha. Koi Galleria, Hiranandani Garden, Powai Garden nahi tha. Woh sadak ekdum khali thi, aur phir IIT Main Gate ka chhota sa market tha* (there was nothing behind the hospital. No Galleria, Hiranandani Gardens, Powai Gardens. That road was completely empty, and then there was IIT Main Gate’s little market).”

When I asked him about his work he tells me that he started with the vegetable selling business right away. When he began making a little profit, he decided to

stick with it and chose to do no other side business. Initially, he used to bring a thela or handcart with his vegetables, but after security restrictions, began bringing his familiar basket-on-cycle. A typical routine would be cycling around IIT from 9 am to 12:30 noon, covering Hillside and Lakeside, then coming back to his spot near Main Gate to gather more vegetables. Then he either sits there from 4 pm to 8 pm, or cycles off to Rane Society. When asked about IIT, a deferential and fond expression lights up his face. *“IIT ne hamein pyaar diya hai, vyapaar diya hai.* (IIT has given us love, business).” Interestingly, he talks about IIT as a person, and not a place where he finds regular customers.

He has never had problems with security personnel or anybody within the campus. Apart from his fraternal connection, this has a lot to do with the personal connection that Subhashji has developed with IIT and its residents. People know him to be very generous with his vegetables, often giving out bunches of dhaniya for free. He knows names, enquires after family members with concern and is as fresh-faced and cheery as his leafy veggies. Optimistic, smiling and with a lilting UP-Bihari intonation to his Hindi, his melodic voice is a plus to his personality and to his business – it ensures that housewives right on the topmost floors know of his arrival. He likes IIT for the same reasons numerous visitors do – it is quiet, green, open (and this one’s his own) – friendly. Not very unlike him and his vegetables. ■



Subhash Giri - The Sabziwalla  
Photograph by Ranoli Garg, IDC

## Just Doing our Job

■ NEHA CHAUDHURI Campus Resident



Khatri Siddhi Abbu and Sikandar Abbu - Maharashtra Grain Shop  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

The man behind the shop counter (packed with all sorts of snacking eatables) is quiet, works fast, has a lean, wiry body and mostly wears white cotton clothes. After you’ve decided what to buy, picked out the freshest bread or sifted through his batch of potatoes, he asks gently if you want anything else. At a refusal, he will quickly count the cost of materials and pack them up. If you say a smiling ‘thank-you’, he’ll nod and smile just a fraction.

When asked about his work and shop, he is taken aback, as if the shop and its wares speak for

themselves. As if he’s merely a facilitator. Khatri Siddhi Abbu has been working at the Maharashtra Grain Shop at the Y-point Market since 1969. His son, Sikandar Siddhi has inherited his quiet, efficient qualities, as you notice him walking from the back to the front of the shop, shifting heavy supplies. One can see that both father and son enjoy running the shop and catering to the large slew of customers that start pouring in from 7 am in the morning.

Until 2006, the shop supplied raw materials to various IITB hostel messes. Currently, all the supplies

at the shop come from various distributors in Vashi. Prod him about his shop, his work life, his business, and he only says, “Quite a few professors knew me when they were kids here. When they came back to teach, they said, *“Arre uncle, aap ab bhi yahin ho!”* (You’re still here, uncle!) with pleasant surprise.”

The shop is open from 7 am to 9:30 pm and remains closed on Sundays. He owns a house nearby, just opposite IITB and stays there with his family. ■

# The (milk)Man of the Hour

■ BHAVINI PANT Campus Resident

I have never seen my milkman. I met him for the first time as part of a profile for *Raintree*. Mr. Thapa was incredibly reluctant to talk about himself, as if he preferred his invisible status. Modestly, he told me on the phone, "I don't need any publicity, madam." But he is also an incredibly unconventional milkman, if there was ever one. Mr. Thapa has done his MCA and works in a software company. Supplying milk is his family business, but he does it to stay fit. "I have to begin my rounds by 4 o'clock in the morning. I have a bike, but many buildings have their gates closed so early in the morning, so I have to take up the milk packets on my own." Needless to say, he doesn't take the lift.

When I tried to convince him to open up a bit more, he said he couldn't understand the point of writing about "us". He didn't think there was anything special or indispensable about the hundreds of people who work on campus, unknown and unseen. He also didn't consider himself a part of the community which works for the campus, despite the fact that a major bulk of his business comes from his customers inside IIT.

Ask Mr. Thapa about milk thievery, and he loses his laconicity to quite an extent. Particularly bothered about thieves who steal milk from his bike, he resents the fact that people don't wake up early enough to keep their building gates open. "Everybody ought to wake up by 5 am. It's just a matter of routine." If a building gate is closed, he has to park his bike outside the building and enter only with the required number of packets. With the rest of them outside, he often has to encounter a lighter burden on his bike after delivery.



Illustration by Ankita Roy, IDC

The only moments Mr. Thapa shows himself to his customers are when he comes and collects the bill. In a micro-conversation with Mrs. Thapa, she revealed that his family has requested to him, time and time again that he needs to look only into the financial and administrative matters of their business. But Mr. Thapa steadfastly holds on to his routine of personally dropping off milk packets and collecting payments. If customers want to increase, decrease or stop their milk supply altogether, they need only SMS him the night before with their address and changes.

The invisibility of this process is deepened with an intricate system of unwritten rules that you are

unknowingly bound by, once you are his customer. If there is no milk bag hanging outside your door, he assumes you do not want milk. In some houses where there is no system of hanging a milk bag, he will ring your bell only once and leave if nobody wakes up to open the door in time. If the packet falls apart or leaks, you can leave a note in your milk bag for the next morning, he carries replenishments. With villagers learning how to combine banking and cellphone technology to pay their bills using their cellphones, there may come a time when if you are Mr. Thapa's customer, you may never see him at all. ■

## INSTITUTE SUPPORT



Illustration by Regan Raj, IDC

# The Man of Secrets

■ ANTARIKSH BOTHALE Fourth Year Undergraduate



Sachin Kamble  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

Those working in IITB's Public Relations Office swear by him and consider him one of the most reliable and efficient employees around. Sachin Kamble, who joined the PRO office after a brief stint in the Academic Section, attributes all that he is today to his work experience at IITB. In the past several years, Sachin has handled all kinds of work at the PRO, right from arranging functions to handling media personnel and foreign visitors. It is this variety, which he finds both challenging and fun, that keeps him going.

As the son of an IITB Hospital attendant, Sachin has been connected to the IITB campus ever since he was born. He

started working fulltime right after finishing school, so he couldn't go to college or get a degree — something he wants to amend now. Chatting with him revealed his other interesting aspects of him. Sachin is passionate about swimming. Not only has he learnt it for more than 10 years, but has also received formal life-guard training. He hopes to be appointed as a coach or a life-guard at the newly-opened IITB Swimming Pool.

When you ask him where he sees himself in the future, Sachin's eyes twinkle with passion. "I am in love with water", he says, "so whatever job I do, I want to be close to the sea." He is filled with gratitude for the PR Office, to which he gives full credit for shaping his skills to their current level. "When I started doing this job, I was an inexperienced teenager", he explains, "but now I have both knowledge and confidence, and I can handle a variety of jobs." He hopes to get a good position outside where he can rise up through the ranks. ■

## I am Here ■ JAYA JOSHI

Karuna J. Dhale, who works as a Junior Technical Superitendant under Prof. Prita Pant in the Metallurgical Engineering & Materials Science (MEMS) Department speaks a measured, simple language but with such confidence that it sounds provocatively profound.

An M.Sc. in Chemistry from Mumbai University, Karuna wanted to teach, but despite having a good academic record, was unable to find a decent teaching job. If she had continued teaching Chemistry to an IIT coaching class, which she was before she joined IIT Bombay, the institute would've missed out on a driven, efficient, motivated and enthusiastic worker – a rarity these days.

It was sometime in early 2007 that she saw a recruitment advertisement in the newspaper for a Technical Assistant's job in CRNTS (then SAIF). In April 2007, she joined the department on a consolidated salary of ₹12,000/- for a three year contractual position. She tells me that these three year contractual positions are of two kinds. First is the 'consolidated salary' option, in which you get a lump sum consolidated amount with holidays and OPD facilities at the hospital. The second is the 'scale' option, which is better because then your remuneration and benefits are as per the corresponding government scale with holidays and OPD facilities. She moved on to join MEMS in October 2008 on a higher scale option and later, hopes to be absorbed by the institute as a permanent employee.

Ask her about her work at the laboratory and there's an unmistakable spark in her. Karuna says that her work at CRNTS was connected with whatever she had studied at college but at the MEMS laboratory, it was all new. 'It gave me a brilliant opportunity to learn new things' is a line I've heard many times. Honestly, I'm a bit wary when I hear that line. But when Karuna said so, it had a special ring to it. Karuna didn't have much idea about Material Sciences when she joined the lab and was hired to work under Prof. Pant to

operate the Nano Indenter – a central facility of the institute and a very important one. The instrument was still not in, so she was informally given the task of operating two other instruments — FTIR and UV Visible Spectroscopy. She was quick to learn and is now looking after all the three instruments.

Her job is to analyse samples coming from students of different departments, do tests on these samples, prepare a report and relay it back to those who've sent these samples. She credits a lot of what she knows today to Prof. Pant. According to her, "If she wouldn't have been there as my superior-in-charge, things at the lab would not have been the same for me." "Prof. Pant", she says, "has taught me the basics of Material Science and everything about the instruments and how to handle them. She would give me books to read and then spend time with me answering my questions. She has coaxed me towards looking at research more seriously. I have tried applying for PhD earlier, but could not get through because of lack of preparedness. But with Prof. Pant's fine tutoring and my hard work, I'm confident I will make it this time."

Karuna, however, would ideally like to enrol into PhD only after getting the permanency stamp from the institute. As a staff member enrolled in a PhD programme, she will fall into the 'Institute Category' and through that, with the support of her superior-in-charge will be entitled to take time off from her daily work for her PhD work. With Prof. Pant as her superior, and hopefully as her co-guide, she wouldn't have to worry too much about that.

Karuna's father passed away when she was still in her 12<sup>th</sup> standard. She lives with her mother in Vikhroli and has two elder sisters, both married and settled. Karuna's brother-in-law was very supportive of her and she herself has lived with a huge sense of responsibility for getting herself well-educated. "While in college, I didn't have the luxury to enjoy studies," she says. "But now it's different. This is the first time I'm enjoying my work — everything about



Karuna Dhale - Jr. Technical Superitendant, MEMS  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

my work. Everyday I encounter new problems and challenges. I look forward to them because I have so much fun solving them. If I can't get a solution, I keep thinking about ways to get it. It keeps my mind busy and satisfied. I want to pursue a doctorate but not for getting a higher position or more money but for the love of the subject. If a good opportunity comes my way, I'll be very happy to take it, but other than that, I'm very happy with the way things are and wouldn't want to change this for anything."

By now, I'm so involved and infected with her exuberance that I don't want anything to change for her. But I have a question that starts nagging me, so hesitatingly, I ask her what will happen if the two things that she's hinging her hopes on — permanency and PhD — both don't work out? She is after all on a contract that will terminate. Does that not worry her? She doesn't pause for too long, looks straight at me and says, "It's possible that one of them won't, but the other will surely happen. I'm good at my work. I have an excellent working relationship with students, colleagues and my bosses. I love what I do. I will surely get somewhere." Oh yes she will, says a clear voice in my head. ■

## Byte by Byte ■ BHAVINI PANT Campus Resident

Mrs. Kulkarni was appointed as a Coordinator by IIT Bombay's Cell for Human Values, to manage the Computer Literacy Programme (CLP). CLP is an initiative of NSS Sanganak Vidya Kendra (NSVK), a joint program of NSS at IITB, VIDYA and the Cell for Human Values. CLP began in IITB as a result of a paper published by Prof. K. Narayanan (professor in-charge of Cell for Human Values). The paper was on his research findings of a project done for a corporate house, to assess the socio-economic impact of computer literacy programmes in different states of India. He was then approached by the then Dean (R&D) and Director to start a similar initiative at IIT Bombay. The programme teaches its students basic computer skills, and its syllabus has been constantly monitored by numerous KRESIT professors.

Well-versed in Hindustani Classical music (she has taught many campus kids over the years), Mrs. Kulkarni initially wanted to work for the Sangitanand Project, which works with Pandit Nayan Ghosh to spread music appreciation on campus. However, managing CLP is an experience she has cherished for the past two years.

One of the many things Mrs. Kulkarni changed was CLP's timings. They were from 9:30 am to 6 pm – she got them extended till 8 pm. "We have many students who have full-time day jobs. Evening classes are the only way for them to attend their classes." There were a handful of students for CLP when Mrs. Kulkarni joined. She had a large part to play in spreading awareness about it. As the word spread, students from as far as Ghatkopar, Vikhroli and Bhandup began pouring in. She particularly likes encouraging people of all ages to learn computer skills. Under her management, CLP's

student demographic has diversified from school-going 10 year-olds to 70 year-old grandfathers! Among others are Ratandas, a waiter at Gulmohar who has just finished the Basic Computer Skills course and is learning C programming now, and Mr. Vikas Shinde, a Supervisor for Hostels 1 to 4, who apart from basic computer skills, is also learning English. She now actively spreads the word about CLP in hostel messes, PHOs and other such avenues to attract more students.

Mrs. Kulkarni recognised that English literacy and computer literacy go hand-in-hand. Many students who initially joined to learn English later went on to learn about computers. She beams with pride as she describes two special courses, which began last year, to help unlettered employees working in IIT become comfortable with both English and computers. For English classes, an NGO called Jan Shikshan Sansthan was selected to collaborate with VIDYA and thus was born the Adult Literacy Programmes, which benefited over 60 campus employees. For computer classes, she approached Mr. Joglekar (Assis. Registrar, also in-charge of the Personnel Development and Training unit, or PDT), and a series of unique computer classes were started, wherein employees were allotted time from their working hours to come and learn basic computer skills.

Hers is an admirable story. A simple housewife, life changed drastically after her husband passed away. Mrs. Kulkarni then became a part of IITB's Cell for Human Values and is now managing two of its most popular and hectic initiatives. "I didn't know anything about computers, but I knew how to manage people," she



Mrs. Vidya Kulkarni - Coordinator, NSVK  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

says. She was also thankful to VIDYA and the support and encouragement she received from her colleagues and supervisors, Prof. K. Narayanan and Mr. Joglekar.

She would deeply appreciate any students or campus residents who would like to volunteer to teach at CLP. "It will be a unique experience for IIT students to see the kind of people who come here and learn English and/or Computer skills, despite the inescapable problems due to their background and circumstances." CLP is a constantly buzzing enterprise, so it was no surprise that she was welcome to the idea of using old computers (in basic working conditions). If you are passing out and have a desktop to dispose off, you could donate it here. As she says, "our biggest priority is to connect to IITB as much as possible – in whatever ways possible." ■

## INSTITUTE SUPPORT

## Welcome to Jal Vihar! ■ NEHA CHAUDHURI Campus Resident

One would think that the endless stream of visitors (single, married, with three month old babies, with parents and wives) who overstay due to various constraints, often for six to eight months in the old Guest House — Jal Vihar — would cause inconvenience to the staff that runs it. The double rooms available are luxurious, with AC, TV, Internet connection and attached toilets. Along with the rooms and a seminar hall, the Jal Vihar runs a Dining Hall for meals. The sheer variety of guests' needs and demands over their long periods of stay, therefore, could take a toll. Contrary to such assumptions, the staff is friendly, caring, disciplined and mindful of the needs of the people who stay (and overstay) here. And they are vocal about the fun they have catering to different people and making them feel welcome in the campus.

The staff works in shifts of eight-and-a-half to nine hours. There's the morning shift from 6 am to 2:30 pm, and an evening shift from 1:30 pm to 10 pm. A night attendant is usually at hand in case guests require something at night. Most staff members rotate their set of tasks. So if a couple of them are working in the dining hall, a few are room service attendants and another two are cleaning staff. Usually two people cater to guests at the reception. All in all, the Guest House has 12 permanent, 24 on contract and four temporary staff members.

Karbhari G. Kusher is part of the permanent staff and has been working here for 27 years. He talked about his memories of a time when the Guest House catered only to people who came in for conferences,



Guest House Workers  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

or new faculty who stayed for a short time. "But the trend of new faculty staying here for a couple of months or so has been going on for the past 10-15 years," he says, adding that "if the faculty and guests are disciplined and come to dining hall well in time, we are able to do our jobs better. But as it is, an odd person here or there can be eccentric. Not losing our cool about it is a part of our job." He laughs as he regales me with tales of last-minute dinner additions or specific food requests. He lives within campus. His three children have grown up with an education from

Kendriya Vidyalaya. They are all graduates now, he tells me with pride. He enjoys working at IIT Bombay. Jai Das Ganpath Nivendkar is somebody I've found ever willing to help out. When prodded about his life, he said that his daughter got married last year and a marriage is in the offing for his son. He lives outside the campus in Sewree, near Parel. He has been working here on contract for several years. "I enjoy this job because we get to make friends with people who stay here. It feels good to be a part of IIT Bombay," he concludes. ■

## Speaking Technology: Literally ■ NAMITA MENEZES Project Staff

*The nuts and bolts of the engine that drives the numerous projects running at IIT Bombay are its Project Staff, whose labour and energies go a long way in bringing these projects to fruition. Yet, this is another largely floating and amorphous body of people flying beneath the radar of the institute scanner. Provided below is a brief write-up from Namita Menezes, erstwhile campus resident and fresh entrant into the category of project staff who talks about her project — Spoken Tutorials — with the missionary zeal of the newly inducted.*

"Ummeed hai iss tutorial se apko Sci-lab ke upyog par gyan prapth hua hai, Dhanyawad!" (We hope the tutorial helps you use Sci-lab better. Thank you.) Neha, who was listening and correcting her previously recorded .mov file for the third time in the day, shut shop. She could hear her second born stirring after her afternoon siesta. It was time for her child to wake up and for Neha to change gears and shift roles. From a professional, working on preparing tutorials which are translated and recorded by her on her desktop at home, it is a quick switch to "mother" mode since afternoons are reserved for showering attention on her second born.



Illustration by Regan Raj, IDC

Neha is one of many housewives from IIT Bombay who works from home on the project Spoken Tutorial (ST). This project provides exposure to technology as well as an understanding of different free and open source software (FOSS – available freely on the internet for various uses in software programming). ST also enables educated, qualified and yet unemployed people to not just earn money but also be gainfully employed to help others — a vastly empowering experience.

In April 2010, I too needed Prof. Shridhar Iyer's advice and roused myself from my daily housework duties to take a short walk down the academic corridor to meet Prof. Kannan Moudgalya. Like everyone else, I had also assumed that since this is a technology-based project, the main targets of the project would be meant for other tech-savvy people. In the beginning, I was a general bloke with exposure only to Google's applications on the web so the vast knowledge base of softwares and updates of mediawiki were overwhelming. However, it did not take me long to get over my stupefaction and surprisingly, I discovered that the best thing about ST was its focus on "Community Development" so that its target group can encompass an entire universe of students, professionals, housewives and even the occasional retired grandparents.

Today, I am a full time staff for the project. When it comes to the people who create the tutorials – it's a world of impermanent workers and yet it leaves a permanent impression on so many lives. To capture a computer based activity (learning of a computer language, for example), simultaneously with a narration is at the core of a spoken tutorial. Through the project, a person can share his/her knowledge with communities (of students for example) that do not have access to this knowledge by making a video on the internet. Knowledge passes around thus helping others in this rapidly changing world of technology.

At first, I was doubtful about how well I could handle such exposure to technology because I felt intimidated by it. Now I see that I was wrong about doubting myself. Instead, such widespread exposure has taught me about the humanistic aspects of technology. In IITB, many students arrive with the knowledge of one or other software in their streams of education. Each of the students say — Oh! I know JAVA (a programming language), Oh! I know LaTeX (a document typesetting system software) — but can they render, educate and share with others this knowledge? If you want to learn more software, can you find a teacher? The tutorials help here. For example, Srihari is a 10<sup>th</sup> standard student who wanted someone to teach him LaTeX. Bingo! The tutorials were Srihari's answer to his search for a tutor. Since they were also available in Tamil, his mother-tongue, knowing English was not necessary.

When we make spoken tutorials, we translate them into many languages so that knowledge is transferred to a wider circle of people. The tutorials also reach out to people who work at translating them. Nasira, who translates the tutorials into Urdu expressed curiosity to know more about the tutorials that she was translating. So she learnt the tutorials along with the task of translating. Wasn't it a win-win situation?

Through this project we can reach out to a child working alone at midnight in a remote place in India with no one to guide her.

To confirm the truth in the story, please visit [www.spoken-tutorial.org](http://www.spoken-tutorial.org) and [www.spoken-tutorial.org/wiki](http://www.spoken-tutorial.org/wiki)

To test the story, anyone could offer to

1. Create Spoken Tutorials in any of the FOSS if you are well-versed with any of the FOSS
2. Dub the Spoken Tutorials into the language of your choice ■

# A Popular Bookshop

■ NEHA CHAUDHURI Campus Resident

Jairam Ramesh, our Environment Minister and alumnus, has praised this shop. Prof. Phatak, among others, has appreciated the presence of this shop in the campus. *Powai Planet*, a local magazine and the *Times of Mulund* supplement have done stories on the shop; its wares, services and people. Yes, this is indeed a popular bookshop. And you guessed it right, we're talking about the campus's New Popular Bookshop, where the youngest students to the oldest book-lovers can find something or the other to amuse or instruct them. It's been new ever since 1963, when it was set up at the Y-Point Market. Currently, it has a collection of 9,000 technical titles after which they stopped counting, the shop attendants said with a laugh, when prodded about other books.

The shop owner – Sudhir S. Gokarn also manages two other branches – one is a publishing and distribution branch in Powai and the other, a bookshop in Anushakti Nagar. His wife, Sneha Gokarn and his aunt and uncle manage this shop most of the times as he is busy with the other two. About nine people in total work at the shop to search titles, sell stationary items, arrange books, check for new supplies and so on. The shop also supplies to the IITB Library and has a tie-up with most of Maharashtra's Kendriya Vidyalayas.

Most of the people like working in the shop As Hema Valavalkar says, "I like it here," with a shy smile, reluctant to talk more and getting distracted as yet another customer calls for attention. Sudhir tell me that the shop conducts exhibitions in various departments of the campus regularly,



*The Popular Team*  
Photograph by Rangoli Garg, IDC

and updates itself on the kinds of books to buy for higher education. It also procures the latest books for students of all ages. Many a times professors come to the shop with their demands, but an equal number of times, people from the shop go from office to office asking the faculty whether any books need to be ordered.

The shop is well-known for its efficiency, willing service and prompt responses. Work timings range from 8:30 am to 8:30 pm – a total of 12 hours, and rarely does one see the shop counter empty. Indeed, the owners have chosen an apt name for a bookshop based inside a campus that overflows with bookworms on any given day! ■

## PERSPECTIVE

# The Otherlanders

■ DAMAYANTI BHATTACHARYA with SRINATH RANYA and NIMISH KHANDELWAL Second Year Undergraduates



Photographs by Venkat Dhamara, IDC

Ghagras in fluorescent pink and yellow, with patchwork and mirror cholis, women in faux bone bangles. Everyday as I walk home for my lunch break I come across another group of working women. Construction workers from the neighbouring C-Type Multi-storied building seem feisty and full of life. The footpath is converted into a temporary buffet table as they gather around for a simple lunch. They are an eye-catching sight; obvious 'otherlanders' with a measured, confident gait hearkening back to their nomadic roots, the occasional flashes of 'Happydent White' smiles on bronze faces, burnished by a far brighter sun than found at our green and fecund campus at Powai. When I walk back to office the women are back at work. To watch them at work in their brightly-coloured, perfectly clean

ghagras is almost unreal, their femininity in stark contrast to the manual nature of their work and the messy and dirty chaos of their work sites.

IIT Bombay has been on an expansion mode for some years now and the entire campus has been converted into one giant construction zone. Everywhere you turn there is yet another construction site, at times mirroring the continuous cheek-by-jowl growth of Mumbai. Just like the island city, we too now attract our own share of economic migrants – construction workers from North and East India who are brought in by construction companies to complete our mega-building projects, be it the Convention Centre, the Indoor Swimming Pool, the new lecture halls or the new department buildings coming up on both

sides of the Infinite Corridor. Going by the number of projects proposed – the Hostel complexes ( H-15, H-16) the Ananta-like B-Type towers for faculty housing, etc. it looks like this temporary army of manpower is here to stay, at least for some more time. Who are these people? Where do they hail from? Where do they stay? How do they lead and sustain their lives here? Although they have been around for quite some time now, they remain tucked away out of sight from the institute landscape and are largely invisible in the campus' mind-scape. This is a story of our very own 'otherlanders', who live and work as exiles in our small city-within-a-city.

(contd. overleaf)

# The Otherlanders

(continued from page 9)

Once you delve into the world inhabited by these construction workers, there is an almost eerie connection with our colonial past — erstwhile colonial divisions of white town, native black town and working-class neighbourhoods, consigned to ghettos and out of general sight. There is a certain similarity between this mindset and in that of the early planners of our campus. There is an unwritten but omnipresent practice of zoning, whereby faculty and staff quarters, to this day, remain rigidly separate. To this have been added the working-class shanties – temporary hutments and structures that house the construction workers, behind the Convocation Hall next to Kshitij Park and H-13.

Approximately 400 people live on the plot near Kshitij Park and another 500 near H-13. At first sight most of the workers are of short stature; dark-skinned, wiry, with calves reduced to bone alone (indicating the amount of load their legs handle) and prominent upper body muscles, owing to the hard, physical nature of their work. Curious faces and tentative smiles greeted me as I enter the construction area, eyes that question, “Why are you here?” But once the awkwardness surrounding the initial exchanges is dealt with, they are friendly and answer questions freely.

After some questions, you get to know that a majority of them are from West Bengal and Bihar, although there are chances that there is the odd Bangladeshi tucked away in that group. People like Hafeezullah, Hitler Khan (What were his parents thinking?!), Bhola, Raju, Asadul Sheikh, Amarendra Kumar Saha all interacted freely. There were other migrants from Gorakhpur, U.P like Mintu Lal, Seshnath, Gabbar Singh (his parents definitely watched *Sholay* way too many times and ended up picking the wrong role model) who have been here for close to one and a half years and live next to Narmada Prasad, Sahil, Jitender, Rajesh and Kishore. There were also the odd few from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Most of them are young, 23-24 year-old school drop-outs, who chose construction work for its easy availability and the low skill requirement, which is not beyond what can be learnt within a few days on the job.

A majority of those who work here are bachelors, with a few families scattered here and there. Many of the single migrant workers do have families – wives and children living in their respective villages with their parents. Some even have their own farms back home, but while farming might provide sustenance it is not enough to improve their lot. So they follow the odd friend or family member, seeking the nebulous promise of bright lights and better prospects in the city.

Construction work takes place in shifts. Those that work the regular 9 am - 6 pm slot are paid (a modest) ₹130 a day (near Kshitij Park), ₹150 (near H-13) as wages. The overtime rates are ₹260 if they work till 9 pm and ₹520 if they work till midnight. Most of them end up earning around ₹3,000 a month and since their only major expenditure is on food, they end up saving about ₹2,000 a month, a part of which they send to their homes. Some of them would work under any contractor who can provide them with work; there are others who move with their respective labour contractor. Thus, an old cycle repeats itself. The old, colonial ‘coolie’ worker who sought out the city to work in the odd jute or textile mill, their lives circumscribed by a cycle of monthly remittances sent home. In addition to this cycle was the triumvirate of the *bastiwalla* (one who provided a room), *kistiwalla* (moneylender) and *khistiwalla* (the labour contractor whose choice expletives ruled his world). This continues to be repeated in today’s modern Indian context.

In any case, let us leave history aside and move back to the present. If you have ever walked around areas inhabited by the poor, you would know that just as there are subtle gradations in poverty, there are similar gradations in the shelters that they build. The walls of the campus shut out the slums of Phule Nagar on one side. Here, there are relatively stable structures made of brick and corrugated iron with sloping roofs and tiles, imitation houses with some basic amenities like toilets, water or electricity. Step to the other side of our boundaries near L&T, and shelters become more insecure places made of tin, tarpaulin and rags bleached colourless by the dust and sun. Our temporary shelters within IIT seem to be more fortunate. The company which employs them provides them with a place to stay and also takes care of their water and electricity charges. It also provides them with a mobile phone.

Step inside the confined spaces (that are their living quarters), and the first sight that greets you is of a few skinny kids playing in the mud, while the workers who return back from their shifts can be seen cooking dinner or washing their clothes. Some of them are humming an old tune, singing along with radio. Another group sit yonder preparing dinner, their sweaty faces glowing in front of the cooking stove.

The hutments are built with prefabricated corrugated metal and lined up on top of each other like slots on a slot machine. When living this close to each other, the only privacy lies in the self-absorption of others. The homes with families are easily recognisable as there is a perpetual overspill from within their crowded interiors. Look inside and there is a bed in the corner,

Illustration by Regan Raj, IDC



a couple of shirts and a pair of trousers hanging on a nail over the bed. The walls are of a breeze-blocking metal with the odd picture of Krishna and Lakshmi gracing them. The yard outside is beaten earth, the preferred place for both rest and recreation.

Work continues on all days of the week after which the workers retire to their hutments to complete their daily chores. The day ends in exhaustion with very little time left for thought. For recreation, most listen to FM radios or watch TV (for the lucky few who have that provision) or travel into the city – Thane, Vikhroli or Ghatkopar when the chance presents itself. Few also take recourse to alcohol. Tarun, one of the workers points out, “it is for a respite from the long hours of work, that they use it [alcohol] as a relaxation, but it has never led to anything disastrous (fights, etc)”. Their round-the clock schedule doesn’t allow for frequent visits home, and most of them visit only twice a year, either at a convenient time or during major festivals such as Deepavali.

Amongst the families, one can find that there are some women who accompany their husbands to work, while others stay at home to look after kids who are too young to be taken along to work or left alone at home. Most children stay back, the older lot babysitting the younger. Others accompany their parents to work, playing outside in the dirt. A lucky few attend Marathi-medium schools and there are those that dream big – like Krishna, who would one day like to become a doctor. Even among the



Photograph by Venkat Dhamara, IDC



Photograph by Venkat Dhamara, IDC

workers there are those who have passed their 12<sup>th</sup> grade and some like Tarun, Deva and his group of friends near H-13 who are BA dropouts are willing to learn more, if given an opportunity. They were the only people who knew anything about IIT and the fact that this place might have a few laboratories!

In general, most of them seem satisfied with their lot, but some disparity exists mainly with respect to payment. This exists between groups (₹200 for the general worker and ₹300 for a mistry) and also between genders, with women earning as little as ₹80 a day. There was also disparity between old and new workers, with some of the new workers being paid ₹200 a day while other older workers continued to work for as little as ₹100 a day.



Illustration by Ankita Roy, IDC

Educated ones like Tarun talked about hygiene and the absence of good sanitation. Rats abound in their homes and there is trash everywhere. Even the site near the drinking water tap is unclean and the contamination has the potential to lead to widespread diseases and casualties. There were concerns about the availability of good medical facilities nearby. There are many among them who would like to get an authentic PAN card. Most don't have any address proof so they cannot get SIM cards. Nor do they have bank accounts, although they would like to use ATMs, since keeping money at home as well as carrying a lot of cash while traveling to their hometowns becomes risky.

These then are some of the figures within our landscape - 'otherlanders' - who work, live and then leave, always with their outsider status intact. The institute is a little-known, distant but benign authority, while the workers who live within it inhabit a world so far removed from the institute that they might as well not figure in it at all. The living spaces of these construction workers was an uncharted realm, where we stepped in to bring you a small glimpse of their world. There is a strange irony in the fact that people who build large, permanent structures that stand the test of time, live and work for most of their lives as exiles. For instance, people like Haffizullah, who has been in our campus in Powai for more than six years and would like some proof of address, a SIM, a PAN card, a bank account – anything. He will move



Illustration by Ankita Roy, IDC

on and live and work somewhere else for another six years, still with no address to call home. In fact, the only place that gives them a sense of rootedness is probably the villages they abandoned in search of work and better prospects. We cannot bring the 'otherlanders' closer to home, but we can hope that we have managed to take them out of their relative invisibility and put them under the spotlight for all of us to 'see'. So, the next time you take your morning walk along the lake, look to your right and do not wonder. You know who they are now, right? ■

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this article are those of the authors' and do not necessarily represent those of IIT Bombay or of Raintree

## THE WAY WE ARE

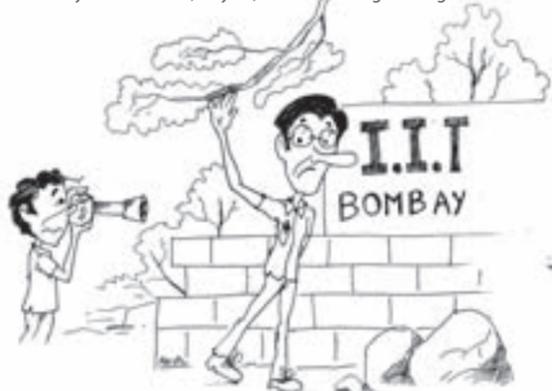
# Of Slumbers, Panthers and the World of our Dreams

■ SUMAN RAO and BODHI VANI First Year Undergraduates

We were, on the dawn of July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 a troupe of young, delusional dreamers, seeing visions of a glamorous world of thinkers and technological advancements... except none of these thinkers thought to tell us of advancements like weak telecom signals, LAN bans and washing machines that dirty clothes. Locating what we've dubbed 'the sweetspot' in our rooms has been on our list of top concerns, surpassing all quizzes and events here at IIT. Walk into a room and it will not be unusual to find a person performing a complicated dance trying to catch signal. Anyway, going back to the candy-coated glamour of July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the morning when we were greeted by a ramshackle gate with no indication that we were entering, for the first time, the country's greatest engineering institute. I know quite a few people who'd dreamt of posing nonchalantly for Facebook photos in front of a nonexistent signboard that announced the institute's name, but alas, no such photogenic opportunities were offered to us. Oh no, in fact the deglam experience continued into dingy rooms and mess food that stole all appetite, cows that crowded the infinite corridor at night and the mysterious conspiracy that the said corridor has with the gods of rain — it will only ever rain when you've just stepped out.

The wonderful sense of belonging that we now bask in came only later — we can probably pinpoint it to the first few orientations. Yes, the day we started screaming our hostel names deafeningly into

Illustration by Akvil Sakhare, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, Mechanical Engineering



the crowds at orientations was the day we nerdy little disillusioned kids fell in love with IIT all over again. We were awed, we were spellbound, and we were loud. One month into IIT, our dingy little rooms are endearing, the mess food is supposed to be bad, and the cows fit into the scenery. I won't talk about the rains, I'm still investigating why the infinite corridor has an issue with me.

Two months into our half a decade long stay at IIT, our lives are more hectic than ever. If our grueling academics weren't enough, we have seniors closing in on us with warrior-esque enthusiasm instilling 'hostel spirit' into us — a euphemism for shoving us head-first into events that take all-nighters to complete. To top it all, the NSO programme, with great pompousness, expects us puny nerds to metamorphose (in the span of a semester) into beefy athletes. What we will probably end up with is hunchbacks, bending over the piles of material the professors very magnanimously hand out to us during classes (classes, in which we invariably fall asleep). We don't blame the professors — many are engaging to say the least — it is the air-conditioned classrooms with plush chairs that induce more sleep than our hot, humid and not to speak of dusty rooms.

An unspoken truth remains though, that we revel in the hectic nature of our lives, we revel in our hostel identities... and a few of us might even revel in the newfound beefiness or brilliant marks — a few of us, being the keywords.

Another recreational activity of our esteemed sophomores is telling us tales which have resulted in us fearing hostel food, rats, ostracism, sleep deprivation, alligators and a certain professor we shall not name, famed for indulging in the activity of failing as many students as possible (none of these being unfounded). In fact, their influence has extended to a point where we have often jumped out of our skins with fear caused by a supposed panther's roar while walking back to hostel during dusk, only to find that it was an overfed cow's

Illustration by Akvil Sakhare, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, Mechanical Engineering

loud belch. Ah yes, as the seniors would like us to believe: Panthers eat freshies for dessert.

All in all, IIT life is a lot crazier, harder, and well, stranger than we expected. And it's a whole lot better than anything we could ever have imagined. ■

## SALT AND PEPPER

■ PROF. ARUN INAMDAR



# Sophies And Three-Fourths

■ SALIL ARGADE First Year Postgraduate

It was a dream come true when I got admitted into IIT Bombay for my PG, and my joy was doubled by the fact that I got Design — the specialisation I wanted. I would better not mention my previous effort (JEE) to get into IIT. That got me into NIT for my B.Tech.

I expected a lot from IITB but I was shocked on the first day itself. The hostel room allotted to me was extremely small, and on top of that, we were expected to share everything in the room except the beds! Even a jail cell would have had more space. Anyway, hostel life is all about adjusting. It might help for life after marriage, I guess.

We have UGs in the hostel. One day I saw a notice on the board and I wondered what “Sophie orientation” was. I knew that Sophie was a girl’s name. I was curious about it. I went to the lounge hoping to see a girl, maybe giving a PowerPoint presentation. To my dismay, it turned out that sophie stood for



Illustration by Jim Mathew Kochitty, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, Civil Engineering

second year, and I went back to my room cursing these guys for making up such confusing slang.

It took a while for my mind to register the fact that students were in fact called “junta”. I saw this on posters, notices and people shouting on the PA system, “Junta, last five minutes for voting”. When I first came across this word, I thought, what has the junta got to do with IIT? But things got clear as I settled down. Another thing that caught my attention was that students came to college in shorts and three-fourths! In my previous college, the professor would have thrown them out and asked them to change their attire, imposing a fine no less. But it was common here. So, I asked a senior who said, “*kuchh bhi pehno yaar, koi kuchh nahi dekhta* (wear what you want man, nobody looks at anything)”. Done. The next day I put away all my new trousers and jeans (which I had bought specially for IIT) back into my bag and took out all the shorts and t-shirts I had. I even told my mother to buy some new three-fourths. From a collection of jeans I changed over to a collection of three-fourths.

As the days progressed, I became aware of more rules. Girls were allowed to visit the boys’ hostels. In NIT, girls were not allowed to move out of their hostels after 7:30 pm. No cycling in the ‘Infinite Corridor’, a professor told me when he caught me. But as soon as he turned his back, I was on my way. No need to stand up when a professor enters a classroom. My previous teachers would have thought this disrespectful and would have handed out punishments. Also, the ID card is your life. Don’t let it out of your sight. I didn’t even let my parents touch it! Life begins at night. If you sleep by 10 pm, you are not fit to be in IIT. And skip breakfast, because you are late for class.



Illustration by Ankita Roy, IDC

Another new thing I found here was travelling by the Tum-Tum. But these kind of things are always funny. Just when you’re getting late for class and you need the Tum-Tum, it is not there or it is so full that you can experience a journey in Mumbai’s local trains for free. The only place the guys haven’t encroached is the top of the bus. And finally, cram all sorts of activities in your schedule. Even if you don’t have time for them. You want to play volley-ball, and you also want to go swimming. But there is a test tomorrow and an assignment to complete. There is also a Linux workshop and the carrom GC. But I have registered for PG sports. I have to practice! And I also want to visit the library. But before rushing out of my room, I also want to update my Facebook status to “Life’s a hoot @ IITB”. ■

## IN THE WILDERNESS



The **Garden Lizard** or **Changeable Lizard** (*Calotes versicolor*) is an agamid lizard found widely distributed in Asia. It has also been introduced to many other parts of the world. It is an insectivore and the throat of

the male turns bright red during the breeding season, leading to a commonly used but incorrect name: ‘Bloodsucker’. On the campus, you can see it if you are walking on a road with trees and shrubs on either side.

Source: Wikipedia

Photograph by Mr. C. P. Joglekar, Coordinator (PT&D) ■

# Green Thumbs-Up!

■ BHAKTI JOSHI Research Scholar

**V**enue: EE Department, Ground Floor Laboratory  
 Time: Afternoon, just after lunch (when efforts to suppress sleep are at their peak!), and as an added attraction, I have just realised that in a four page derivation.

I have made the mistake of a sign somewhere, for which reason, to my great irritation, no term is getting cancelled at all and the best action I can think of is banging my head against the wall. In desperation, I look out of the window, wondering whether I'll find any answers there, just to find a man holding the water-hose in his hands and in a very contemplative manner, watering the neatly planted shrubs and Money plants. Water droplets shine on merry, colourful leaves and I can actually see them dancing. For five minutes, I just stand at the window looking out, wondering how blissful it must feel to water those plants. The sight is enough for me to get back to work, forgetting my earlier frustration.

Frankly, till the time I did not take the responsibility of writing about our Electrical Engineering Department gardener, Balu Bhavar, for the upcoming issue of Raintree, I really did not know him, let alone the fact that his elder brother, Ratan Bhavar, has also been planning, nurturing and maintaining the garden near SYSCON Department for the past several years. Now, when I have carefully looked at the variety of shrubs and bushes planted in such an artistic and systematic manner, both in EE and SYSCON gardens, I have no words to express the gratitude towards these brothers, who do their work diligently everyday. The surprised-questioning look they gave me when I first told them that I would be writing about them and their work in a campus magazine, was enough to tell me — "We are really doing our work. It's no big deal, you see!"

As is aptly said, 'Gardening begins at daybreak and ends with backache!' These brothers commute from their house near Aarey Colony to the IIT campus everyday at 9:00 am, to stop working only at 5:00 pm. Essentially self-taught, they have learnt gardening with enthusiasm, and still learn a thing or two, whenever they happen to pass by any neatly cultivated garden. Honestly, I did not know before that there are two types of shrubs, those that need sunlight and those that need shade. It is one of the main factors to decide the types of plants, and is the reason that the shrubs one sees near EE department are different from the ones planted



Illustration by Regan Raj, IDC

near SYSCON. Everyday work ranges from removing weeds, trimming the hedges, cleaning the ground in case small tree-branches fall, examining plants for an onset of infection, etc. In the summer, watering the plants regularly adds to their work. Summer is the season when their work reaches its peak.

**For five minutes, I just stand at the window looking out, wondering how blissful it must feel to water those plants. The sight is enough for me to get back to work, forgetting my earlier frustration.**

When asked about the scariest animal on campus, most people would either say snakes or occasionally, panthers. Interestingly, the hordes of cows and bulls are scarier than snakes for these brothers. There have been incidents wherein, the work done on the previous day was totally destroyed by cows. The irritation which they must have felt the next day can only be compared to what a student feels, when he/she has lost his/her somehow-managed-to-complete-after-such-a-pain assignment at the eleventh hour and has to do it all over again!

In the garden near the EE Department, different varieties of Croton bushes are found — the ones with yellow dots on green leaves. There are several big



trees near the bicycle parking area, the trunks of which support several beautiful Money plant varieties. Palm trees are planted neatly in a row near the wall of the GG building. Then there are Zebra plants with striped, dark green leaves. One can also see the Ixora bushes showing off their red-pink flowers. When asked about the scarcity of flowering shrubs, Balu replied that the passers-by pluck the flowers and hence it was decided to avoid planting them altogether. This news was a bit disheartening to me, because I could imagine how beautiful the flowers would have looked there. And we, the campus residents, are responsible for this.

When asked about Balu's work, Prof. M. B. Patil from the EE Department has quite a few things to say. "Balu has been unusually dedicated to his work. He has taken many initiatives (like bringing some bulbs from the hills to plant near EE, making the circle near the corridor between EE and EE Annex, making an arch for creepers near the circle, protecting our plants from cattle by making a little circle of stones around). Balu does not need to be told what to do." He continues further, "he keeps a low profile, so many people may not associate him with the EE area, which is so well-maintained. You will never see him idle. He is also popular among nursery staff. They often come to the EE Department and take cuttings from him for planting elsewhere."

"The garden near SYSCON was a barren land before Ratan started working there," says Prof. Banavar from the SYSCON Department, showing me photographs of the place when there was no garden. Ratan has done most of the work in that garden. "Ratan is a very industrious and sincere worker, who has nurtured this garden since it came into being. He is self-motivated and his work ethic inspires many in our group." Prof. Banavar proudly adds, "Ratan's work got recognition when the garden got the third prize in the category 'Gardens: Educational Institutions, Colleges and Research Institutions' in the Golden Jubilee Vegetables, Fruits and Flowers Show in 2009."

Being uneducated themselves, people like Balu and Ratan are striving hard to maintain the beauty of this campus at its best. In addition to the students, professors and staff, these not-so-well-known and not-so-glorified people are of no less importance. I personally felt very happy to talk to this simple, sincere and happy duo, who add so much colour, beauty and freshness in our day-to-day lives. On behalf of all campus residents, I wish Balu and Ratan a happy and long life. May they continue their good work. And may they feel the presence of God in their garden, as in the words of Dorothy Frances Gurney, an English poet and hymn writer:

*The kiss of the sun for pardon,  
 The song of the birds for mirth.  
 One is nearer God's Heart in a garden,  
 Than anywhere else on Earth.* ■



Photographs by Rangoli Garg, IDC

▲ From left to right: Balu Bhavar and Ratan Bhavar - institute gardeners

## THE WAY WE WERE



Illustration by Regan Raj, IDC

A lot of action took place around the two decrepit, old phones near the entrance of H4, just outside the Warden's office. Much of this action has been captured in history by the countless narrations of folklore handed down through generations. One of these phones was a pay phone that generally did not work, and gobbled up tons of minted metal, before ingenious IIT minds devised contraptions to make the phone believe that it was swallowing yet another coin. This was called the 'external line' and its purported objective was to allow communion with the outside world. In 1977, this phone had the number 581008. The other phone was a more reliable 'internal line', 383, which changed to 583, and which allowed for an intra-IIT communication with a high domination of H4-H10 conversations. Had a secret webcam been installed then, we would have been sitting on a treasure trove of incredible stories. Isn't it amazing that two majorly non-performing assets of the hostel were the centre of so much confabulation?

Lines were either incoming or outgoing. On the external line, outgoing was a no-no expensive affair, so it was reserved mainly for an incoming call. The internal line was predominantly outgoing because H10 had only one line, and there were nine boys' hostels in all, and the first past the post could get a call through. Hence, people with patience and perseverance and strong abrasion-proof fingers would dial away endlessly before they struck gold. It should be remembered that dialling then was a full clockwise motion of a finger inserted in a numbered slot and not a push-button affair.

Now, the question arises that if an incoming call came in (what else can it do?), and the caller asked to speak

## A Day in the Life of Scrooty

■ BAKUL DESAI Alumnus B.Tech. (1982)

to so-and-so from room number so-other-so, who would call the called and bring him to the caller? This story now brings in a creature called 'Scrooty' which was short for security guard, who always wore khaki and more often than not was a Nepali. If you looked at one and addressed him as Bahadur or Singh or Thapa, you were likely to be accorded a royal salute from a beaming gorkha who would wonder how "Shaabji" knew his name. A name generally was Shamsheer Singh Bahadur Thapa or Govind Singh Bahadur Thapa or just-about-anything Singh Bahadur Thapa.

The arrangement of wings and rooms was well-structured but taxing on the feet. The North Wing, housing room numbers 1 to 28 on GF, 101 to 128 on FF and 201 to 228 on SF was maybe 240 feet away from the phone. Similarly, the Central Wing with room numbers 29 to 56 was maybe 160 feet away and South Wing, with room numbers 57 to 84 was 80 feet away. Answering a phone, putting it on hold and walking over to the desired wing to shout out the room number was not a part of a scrooty's job description, but he obliged. A posting in the hostel was highly coveted because of the perks of free meals, watching a daily circus for free (or maybe you could call it Cartoon Network), TV programmes like Chaya Geet for free, and getting a trickled down booty of *daaru*, chocolates, pondies and galis, all for free. The remuneration far outweighed the additional walks up and down to rooms, no matter how far they were. In this idyllic setting, where calls were made to-and-fro, and an informal scrooty calling system was in place, here are some samples of related events:

~ Vikram Modak and friends were outside the Manager's office when the watchman, who had been working at the hostel for over a year, ambled over. They didn't want the watchman to see what they were up to (something that need not be discussed here). They told the watchman that there was a phone-call for room 285.

He promptly said "OK, Saboo" and walked down the passage, yelling "Tooo ettie phaaaaiuu, phooon, tooo ettie phaaaaiuu, phooon!". This bellowing went on for well over five minutes, after which he suddenly stopped, and walked back toward them. He had a sheepish look on his face, and said, "Saboo, Hostel 4 *mei room 285 nahi hai*. (Saboo, Hostel 4 doesn't have room 285)". (In those days, the last room number was 284.)

By this time, they had finished what they were doing.

~ Ashvin Sanghvi (Ghoda) had a cheerful disposition and for a good reason. There was always an incoming call for him on the internal line. The identity of the caller was not known for a long time but Ghoda could often be overheard talking about spring, sunsets and a walk by the lake. He lived in the far-off room 222 – in Scrooty-ese, he lived in "tooooo-tooooo-tooooo". Everyone knew when he had a call because the scrooty's loud announcement and the unmistakable number of his room gave it away. One afternoon, Ghoda spent a lot of time on the phone and had sealed up plans for the evening for a walk to the lake. He had detailed it up to that point, but not after the moonlit part of the date. Ghoda returned to his far out and far up room with his trademark swagger, and he began to get into kurta and pyjamas in order to grab some shut-eye prior to the promising date that awaited him. And while he was in the middle of his changing came the same familiar, loud "Tooooo-tooooo-tooooo, phooon!" Ghoda was stunned. What happened now? Was the date off? Had she come to know about Rekha in his building? Or did she want to change the lake venue from Powai to Vihar? Or did he have to pick up roses on the way? Still speculating on the possibilities and on whether to continue the change to pyjamas or halt and revert to jeans and T-shirt, Ghoda shouted out "*Aata hai!*" to the scrooty. Finally, after re-changing into his old gear, anxious Ghoda went galloping back to the phone in what must have been ten minutes in all. After another two minutes, we could hear Ghoda shout out like a scrooty, "toooooooo-threeeeeeeeeeeee-toooooooo, phooon!" and then suddenly he says, "Oye Shelat, the bloody phone is for you." Then, there was another shout from Ghoda at the scrooty, "*Theek se number sunta nahin hai kya?* (Can't you listen to the number properly?)"

Nobody dared ask Ghoda how his date went.

~ This one was commonly used. If you wanted to call a guy from his room for anything, say a walk or a game of carrom or TT, asking him to join you would not work. Folks were too lazy to slip out from the comfort of their jocks and take a long walk to join you for something strenuous. But the ingenuous IIT mind always found a way out. If you wanted to call out, say Soumitra, pick up a phone, pretend to speak on it for a minute and then send a scrooty to shout "Toooooooo phore shevan, phoon!" and the job was done. ■

*This anecdote is a sneak-preview from the forthcoming book "Madhouse: True Stories from the Inmates of Hostel 4, IIT Bombay"*

## POETRY

## One-stop pharmacy

■ MALLIKA IYER Campus Resident



When illness befalls a forest monkey  
He often turns to the fruit of the Bartondi;  
Healing properties so many in my leaf, root, stem  
It will surprise you if you were to count them;  
If an ailment or pain you seek to relieve  
I might just have something up my sleeve;  
With neither pharma nor medical degree  
I am just a simple yet fascinating tree!

## Kindlers of the Flame... (Chapter 4.4)

As part of our ongoing series, the following is an excerpt from *Monastery, Sanctuary, Laboratory - 50 years of IIT Bombay*, written by **ROHIT MANCHANDA**

*The wide range of services and people covered under the all-embracing umbrella of the non-academic staff category have been equal participants in the institute's journey, from the past to the present — "the lubricants that have kept IIT Bombay's academic and housekeeping engines chugging". They had their own share of stellar performers. Yet, how attuned was the institute to the special needs and concerns of this constituency of our population? Read on to find out.*

### 'We are good people, we won't do that'

They go by the variety of names seen in the previous chapter: support staff, non-academic staff, administrative staff and – perhaps the term that describes them best literally – non-faculty employees. And they have been the real behind-the-scenes 'runners' of the Institute: the lubricants that have kept IIT-Bombay's academic and housekeeping engines chugging. From the very start, while IIT-Bombay has depended on them for ancillary services, it has had reason to be indebted to them also for keeping the campus's pastoral life going. The lines of the original poem speak of the negation of romantic expectation. The first stanza reads

*Expect nothing. Live frugally  
On surprise  
Become a stranger  
To need of pity  
Or, if compassion be freely  
Given out  
Take only enough  
Stop short of urge to plead  
Then purge away the need.*

Narayanamurthy's warm commendation of this facet of their involvement brings it alive for us: 'As a residential institution running a township, we had to attend to every little need. There was a lot of life outside the formal educational sphere we needed to address, and that at a time when almost everything was in short supply, be it milk, bread, sugar, or power. We needed to find problem solvers. We have to thank our non-academic staff for this, they kept all the supplies running beautifully, day in and day out (and they ran the film society too). Only when they ran into very major problems did they go to faculty or

the Director for intervention. It was enormous, what it did for student life, what it did for us as faculty. It gave us a comfort level, kept us free from petty concerns, enabling us to focus on what we thought were our key functions.'

Gradually over the 1970s, IIT-Bombay's non-academic staff, in step with industrial workers all over the country, became 'organized', forming their 'Non-Academic Staff Association' (the NASA). And although the Association did press for its demands from time to time, its most striking attributes at IIT-Bombay, as against the often tempestuous mood in the country as a whole, were restraint and reasonableness.

Former Registrar Ghosh, remarking on this quality, reminisces: 'From time to time the non-academic staff would sit in protest in the Main Building, for instance if all the IIT unions had agreed that so many protests had to be made for so many days, because such-and-such provision had not been implemented. They'd say, "Sir, we have to do this, we have to show solidarity. We guarantee you that one hour out of the two we are supposed to protest, will be the lunch hour and we will only raise slogans once at the beginning and once at the end. At other IITs they raise slogans continuously for two hours, you know, but we are good people, we won't do that"...' and they were true, says Ghosh, to their word, keeping the Institute's best interests in mind while staking their own claims.

Next to Registrars, it's the Directors who have to deal with organized workforces. Sukhatme, too, has no unpleasant memories of these dealings. 'Access to you as an Institute functionary,' he says, 'is important for them. They must know that they are being heard, that the functionaries are concerned about their welfare. That the authorities may not be able to do everything is another matter, and IIT-Bombay's non-academic staff have realized that. Here we never really had extreme situations, like at IIT-Delhi where things get a little out of hand or IIT-Madras where there was more rough behaviour.'

Again, while efficiency of work at some support sections of the Institute has consistently fallen short of the mark, IIT-Bombay can count itself fortunate that, by and large, these services have performed better and more professionally than at most other Indian institutions of similar standing. Part of the credit for this has often been given to the city in which the Institute is situated, the Bombay of yesteryear and the Mumbai of today standing out in Indian urbania as a byword for enterprise, efficiency and cosmopolitanism. As for shortfalls in the performance of support staff, some of them may have as much to do with shortcomings in institutional management practices as with the personnel themselves. Dr K. Sudhakar raises an important point when he poses his predicament: 'If you just talk to support staff one on one, you find they're all very nice people, you simply don't feel like complaining about them. And I have never come across an attitude of negativity that says, "why should I be doing this for you?" They want to help you but sometimes can't, and they seem to be at a loss as to why they can't. Something comes in the way – what it is I don't know, but it really needs to be looked into.'

The question is an important one; and in my conversations with support staff, several 'things that come in the way' were pointed out by them, as we'll see now.

### Equal participants in the Institute's journey

The term 'non-academic staff' comprises many layers. And we've seen in Chapter 4.3 that their interests haven't, over the years, received the kind of institutional attention they've deserved. Amongst a certain layer of non-faculty employees, those known as the Institute's 'D-Category' staff, resentment against institutional indifference to their needs can be fierce. Speak to them, and a number of live-wire issues find swift and vocal expression. The following impressions are based on a range of interviews conducted, in particular one with the following group: Mr D.J. Bagul (Messenger), Mr R.B. Wankhede (Mess Worker), Mr H.B. Singh (Departmental Library Attendant), Mrs M. Shetty (Clerk), Mr V.L. Kshirsagar, Mr R.R. Deshpande, Mr V. Jetiya, Mr N.Y. Mohite, Mr A.V. Khandekar, Mr K.B. Singh, Mr S. Datta, and Mr V.B. Khapre (all Lab Attendants). Perhaps most embittering is their perception that they are openly, if unwittingly, overlooked. In several realms of the Institute's operations they are automatically considered unfit to participate – often for no sound reason. An example, they tell you, is their exclusion from the list of those eligible to perform invigilation at JEE and GATE examinations – this despite the fact that they help conduct all internal exams, and therefore have the necessary experience and knowledge-set. And when it comes to institutional events of broad interest, they are often the only ones not to receive invites.

Also widespread is the feeling that the Institute hasn't seriously addressed concerns peculiar to them, such as long-standing anomalies in salary structures and promotions. A further grouse is one that's socially tinted. The 'D-Category' label is all-encompassing, staff with varying degrees of technical skills and qualifications being clubbed with, for example, sweepers, watchmen, or messengers. No distinction is made in the official treatment they receive from

(contd. overleaf)



## BOOK EXCERPT



Illustration by Ankita Roy, IDC

the Institute – with obvious blows to the self-esteem of those better qualified or better skilled than others. One of them relates his predicament thus: ‘When my son is asked by a classmate in school, “What does your father do?”, he is ashamed to have to say, “He is a D-class employee at the Institute” – even though I’m technically qualified and experienced. He should have to suffer no such complex.’

Then again on the professional front, they feel they haven’t been given their due. With handsomely funded consultancies and sponsored projects gushing into the Institute in recent times, they’ve seen faculty benefit visibly in many direct and indirect ways – including financially. Little of this benefit, however, percolates down to them through systematic provisions, although they are called upon to do ‘extra work’ to smoothen the execution of projects. In sum, these staff amongst the Institute’s employees have had special cause to feel aggrieved, and have ended up feeling left out and unwanted – and as if they aren’t included in the Institute’s list of its stakeholders.

And when you add aspirations to needs, the grievance is doubled. These staff have signed on at IIT-Bombay with varying levels – sometimes very little – of formal education. In common with others, they have aspired to elevating their social and economic station through their children, by educating and professionally enabling them. But living conditions on campus have tended to thwart these aspirations; housing is one of the greatest concerns. A one-room apartment is the most they get; and no child can reasonably be expected to study effectively in a one-room ‘quarter’ shared with parents, siblings – at times grandparents too – and in an atmosphere where discontent constantly festers.

This is not to say that non-academic staff (including those in category D) aren’t alive to the benefits of an IIT-Bombay job, or the trouble-free lifestyle it affords them in many other respects. They would, however, like their problems to be heard for what they are; and the loudest of their pleas is that the Institute’s Golden Jubilee, while certainly cause for celebration, should also be a stimulus for introspection. In broad terms, they would like to see an end to the (often inadvertent) neglect they suffer by way of institutional policy; better housing; and mechanisms – perhaps a Human Resources unit, which the Institute has so far lacked – to address their professional concerns.

The wider body of non-faculty employees would also like to have a louder voice in decision making bodies. Mr. G. Jayachandran, of the Institute’s Telecom Section, has been active in representing the interests of his non-faculty colleagues, having been President of the Non-Academic Staff Association (NASA). In the same breath as he accords credit to IIT-Bombay’s ‘system of working’, characterized by committees many of which include representatives from several categories of employees, he sees room for improvement in the inclusion of non-academic staff on bodies of higher authority such as the Board of Governors. ‘The Board’s set-up, both formal and informal, needs to be modified,’ says Jayachandran, who has also been a member and officeholder in the All-IIT Employees Union. ‘Since non-academic employees aren’t represented, they normally don’t get to know of decisions taken by the Board until after the event, and feel powerless in influencing the outcomes’. Given the otherwise democratic set-up of the Institute, the Board of Governors too should be made more inclusive, he feels. Reprising another widely voiced grievance of his compatriots, he wishes the Institute would ‘recognize outstanding employees and award them annually just as it does for faculty, and also provide performance-oriented promotions apart from time based promotions.’ There are others who are more forthright in expressing their feeling of being hard done by. C. Viswanadh, Technical Assistant in Civil Engineering, has this to say: ‘The attitude towards supporting staff, particularly the technical category, needs prompt attention. Their share in building the Institute’s reputation is altogether neglected. Pity indeed!’

In sum, nothing less than a transformation of institutional mindset in relation to non-academic staff is what they’d like to see: one that regards them at all times as equal participants in the Institute’s journey towards its avowed goals.

And while these ranks have had their many discontentments, they’ve had their own star performers too. Among those that sparkle in people’s memory from the Institute’s first decades are the likes of Senior Technical Assistant Mr E.T. Randelia, Laboratory Superintendents Mr U.R. Kasbekar, Mr V.K. Tandon and Mr V.S. Vaishampayan, and telephone operator Mr G. Jayachandran. Two administrative officers of the Institute also stand out, the former Public Relations Officer Ms Aruna Thosar-Dixit and former Registrar Dilip K. Ghosh. We glimpse some of them through the eyes of others, a paragraph at a time. Narayanamurthy’s testimonial is typical of the applause Ghosh has garnered from many observers: ‘Looking at one outstanding staff member, I would mention Dilip Ghosh, the Institute’s Registrar from the mid 1980s until the turn of the century. Without trying to play down the importance of others, we had for the first time at IIT-Bombay a thinking Registrar, one who was also academically inclined. He knew what the role was; but he enlarged its scope. He knew the limitations of faculty and non-faculty, what the equations were. Within that framework, he contributed a lot, and also in terms of liaising with the MHRD, where he built up excellent relationships. Money was hard to come by those days in two ways. One was the quantum and the second was its timely delivery. Ghosh made sure of the timely delivery of money, through establishing numerous contacts. He is someone with whom you could, as faculty, as Dean, talk one on one on many problems facing the Institute.’ Dr U.N. Gaitonde sketches E.T. Randelia, who was famed for ‘his’ IC Engines lab, and his cut sections of the engines that explained how they worked. ‘He was someone who could take even the simplest component of a diesel engine,’ says Gaitonde, ‘and tell us detailed stories about what it did and how it worked. He would make the whole thing come alive in front of us. And after that everybody was ga-ga, wanting to work on IC Engines. I haven’t seen any other staff member take so much interest in his work and in explaining to students, hours at a stretch, how each and every component works.’ This tribute from Dr H. Narayanan to V.K. Tandon: ‘He has been outstanding as a laboratory superintendent. I admire him for his technical capability, his dedication, his maturity and sophistication as a human being – the way he faces life. In fact among all my colleagues over all these years I have not met a person whom I admire more. It is to our department’s credit that we manage to use his services even after retirement.’ (Electrical Engineering, valuing Tandon’s commitment and skills, have hired Tandon on a post-retirement stint.) Dr J. Vasi, when talking of the establishment of the microelectronics laboratory, often held up as an example of a lab at IIT-Bombay that has turned heads on the national and international stage, credits U.R. Kasbekar with being the bedrock for this success: ‘I can say without any doubt that without Kasbekar’s presence none of this would have really happened, because he was a marvel in many ways. Firstly he enjoyed a good reputation academically. He had done his M.Tech. from IIT-Bombay, so he was knowledgeable about many things technically. Secondly he had done his M.Tech. on the job, which implied that he wanted to learn more – and that actually was pretty much true throughout his career; he kept updating his knowledge. Third, he was very meticulous, he kept a very good record of things and he knew the processes inside out. Those years, frankly, I used to feel that ordering equipment and so on was quite easy but it was actually smoothened out by Mr. Kasbekar. And when equipment came in he would make sure it was all set up correctly, everything moved so well with him around. Setting up the microelectronics lab was not really as difficult as, unfortunately, I’d expect it to be today. Today I would find it more difficult because I learned from experience that without facilitators like Mr. Kasbekar, things actually don’t move that easily.’ ■

## Three Cheers for Maddu Mess!

■ PROF. H. R. SRIRANGARAJAN Department of Mechanical Engineering

**M**addu Mess is short for Madras Mess. Hardly has a student from IITB got his/her degree without eating at Maddu Mess. Sri Kanakaraj, a cook in the Hostel 9 mess, runs it. His wife, son and an assistant also work there. The mess has served the community for 50 years with cheap and hygienic food. It thrives on the fact that students put in night-outs and are invariably hungry by sunrise. It starts belting out idlis, vadas, dosas for early breakfasts, between 4:30 am and 7 am. This shows superb market analysis and entrepreneurship about which Sri Nani Palkiwala wrote: "Indian entrepreneurs could buy from Jews and sell to Scots, but still make a profit."

Maddu Mess food is healthy, good and splendidly hot, straight from the pan, better than even my wife's food. I have never fallen ill after eating in Maddu Mess unlike my experiences of eating airline food. The approach to the mess isn't appealing, but I always remind myself that the product is more important than the packaging. Staff canteen is a slum mess inside the sylvan surroundings of IITB, whereas Maddu mess is a good mess in a slum. If you feel that eating at Maddu Mess is a little uncomfortable, it is good to remember that most food articles in Mumbai are made in the Dharavi slum. Maddu Mess is opposite the Market Gate, but through a butcher's shop, over a nalla and you may have to duck under walls too. Don't try and find it without a local IITian's help. You won't be able to find it.

Maddu Mess is unique in the fact that it is never advertised. One comes to know about it by word-of-mouth. I came to know of its existence from Prof. K. Sudhakar who used to call them for home delivery. Let me try and give you detailed directions to find it — from the Market Gate, go to the Padmavati road on the right side where there is Hotel Nityananda. A little further, you will find a mutton shop. Just before this shop, take a right turn. Another right turn, and the next left turn, you have found the mess. It is a hall of 3 x 3 metres. Cooking is done here and there is a table for five people to sit and eat. Chutney and sambhar are unlimited. Beware of the sambhar, it is very hot and if you're not careful, it will burn your tongue. Idli, dosas (anda, onion, plain, sada, set, anda and onion), vada (dal, medu), tea, coffee and



Illustration by Ankita Roy, IDC

cutting are available. No board displaying rates here. You just eat and in the end tell them what you ate, they calculate the bill and charge you. Customers are honest and tell them what they have eaten.

One incident shows how intelligent the people who work at the mess are, and how corruption is to be fought. One watchman asked for *ghus* (bribe money), to allow delivery inside IITB. Maddu Mess's delivery guy got a xerox copy of a ₹20 note, back and front and gave it to the watchman after which he called the security officer. The watchman had no explanation for the xerox copy. What an ingenious way to fight corruption! Talk about catching people red-handed.

Another way to locate the mess is to go to the Main Gate or Market Gate at 4:30 am. Follow any group of students, and invariably you will land up at MM (Maddu Mess). MM has customers from IIT, software company employees, NITIE and local people. If you fail

to get there despite all this, contact Sri Kanakaraj of Hostel 9. He will be glad to take you to his enterprise. Sri Kanakaraj has educated his children to the postgraduate level. His son finds it better to work at MM, than in any office, under a boss. One of his sons has gone to the USA, sent by his software company. This is a nice achievement for an enterprising cook. Sri Kanakaraj has also planned MM's succession. He is retiring and will be leaving. His son will be taking over and running the place — it will be a smooth take-over. Business with service to the community is a very satisfying experience.

I wrote a letter to an airline once, telling them their food is hopelessly bad compared to MM. The airlines sent three managers to my office, concerned about whether I would take over their food business. I allayed their fears by saying that I love professorship more than the food business. But the food business is very important, and the government should help entrepreneurs like MM instead of getting in their way. Indian entrepreneurs have thrived, not because of the system set up by the government, but in spite of it. This industry has no recession.

Uneducated young people think of only one business — auto-rickshaw driving. An enterprise like MM is a good alternative for them. All the equipment you need is a dosa-making stove, grinders and a gas stove along with the will to work hard, and get up daily at 4 am.

Generations of IITB students are grateful to MM for sustaining them against the insipid food of the hostel messes. Hostel food always means chapati of 150 BHN hardness and alu. The community has to be thankful to MM for supplying food, hot and tasty, at 4:30 am, a time by which you wouldn't be able to even get a bun inside the campus. IIT students are able to work all through the night because of MM's food. MM has also contributed to the international fame of IITians, making its contribution in its own way.

Hats off to MM! ■

Illustration by Roma Singh, IDC



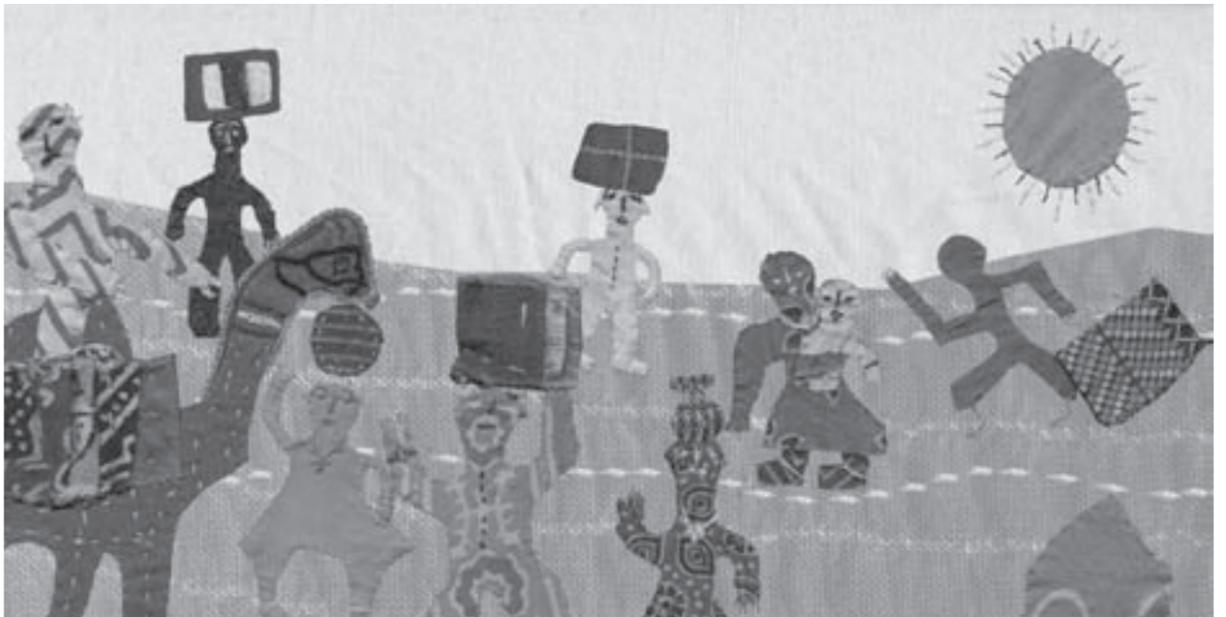
## Tanko Bole Chhe: The Stitches Speak

"You've captured our whole lives in 12 minutes," was the first remark Prof. Nina Sabnani received by one of the members of the Kala Raksha Trust (KRT) who saw the animated documentary: *Tanko Bole Chhe* (The Stitches Speak). The 12-minute film celebrates the art and passion of the Kutch artisans associated with Kala Raksha. The film traces multiple journeys made by the participants defining their identities and forming the Kala Raksha Trust and the School for Design. The film uses their narrative art of appliqué and embroideries through which they articulate their responses to life, including events as traumatic as the earthquake and as joyful as flying a kite. Through conversations and memories, four voices share their involvement in the evolution of a craft tradition.

Prof. Nina Sabnani, an animator and painter, is an Associate Professor at the Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay where she is also pursuing her Doctoral Research in the area of storytelling with a particular focus on the *Kaavad* tradition of Rajasthan. She taught at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad in the areas of Animation and Visual Communication until 2007. An animator since 1984, she has experimented in transposing artistic styles into animation. Her movie, *Shubh Vivah*, uses the Madhubani style of painting to dwell on the anti-dowry issue. *All About Nothing*, an early stop-motion film, is a conjecture about the birth of zero in India. *Mukand and Riaz* is an animated documentary about Partition using textiles, embroidery and appliqué. She graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, MS University, Vadodara and trained further at NID in Animation Film Design. She pursued her MA at the Newhouse School, Syracuse University, NY, USA, as a recipient of the Fulbright Fellowship.

"My father was from the textile industry. Consequently I was steeped in different cloth textures, styles and ranges ever since I can remember. So *Mukand and Riaz*, which is based on my father's memories of the Partition and his friend, was made using cloth as the basic canvas for telling the story. At the time of making that movie, I collaborated with many artisans, tailors and small shops in and around Ahmedabad, which eventually led me to Kala Raksha," she says, sitting beside the computer in her little office, the office shelves behind her strewn with the awards that her movie, *Tanko Bole Chhe* has received so far.

The Kala Raksha Trust started in Kutch. It focused on a group of embroiderers in Sumrasar Sheikh village, 25 km north of Bhuj. In 1972, these artisans migrated from Nagar Parkar in Sindh, bringing with them some fine traditional embroideries as well as their skills in *suf* and *kharek* embroidery styles. A permanent collection of traditional embroideries was begun in 1991. A group of 20 artisans was organised and guided in producing *suf* embroidered items for sale. Kala Raksha today works with nearly 1,000 embroidery



artisans of seven ethnic communities and 25 villages. Nina was inspired by their work and cloth which used embroidery to tell their stories. The narrative form is not a traditional art in Kutch. Kala Raksha artisans first experimented with personal expression for two exhibitions that were developed following the earthquake of 2001. "Since 2001, this new form of art has developed as artists embarked on an extraordinary journey of self-expression, and gained confidence and maturity. Each cultural group invented a unique stylistic form, in which each artisan developed a personal style. Once they had a means to express themselves, they found that they had a lot to say. Themes vary widely — from ostensibly simple events like a wedding in the family to complex ideas like the settling down of a nomadic people. Similarly, the scale varies from relatively modest sizes to large pieces that may need simultaneous work by a team of artists. Much like a painter or a sculptor, each artist's involvement with her work is complete, and each piece is characterised by the artist's own inimitable world view — in turns dramatic, touching and humorous. Most significantly, this new focus on the art of craft automatically generated strong feelings of engagement in artisans for their work, and the artists immediately knew that this body of work was valued in a different way."

Prof. Sabnani used some of their tapestries in *Mukand and Riaz*. People from the Trust saw the documentary and were inspired to request her to make a documentary on them and their work. The result was *Tanko Bole Chhe*. The documentary was made between the months of February and November, 2009. Prof. Sabnani interviewed many artisans and also visited *Jurra* (the village where the artisans first arrived at a refugee camp during the Partition) so that she was able to transpose the feel of the lonely place into the film. Her knowledge of Gujarati helped

made the artisans feel comfortable while talking to her. Musicians were hired from Gujarat for sound effects. High-resolution scans were taken of the bed sheets and bed covers designed by the artisans. Their characteristic styles were modelled to create four characters through the voices of whom the larger artisan story is told. The scans were cleaned up and the final version of the film was reached many storyboards later. The process of animating the work of Kala Raksha artisans was an arduous but rewarding task.

"You've put my life in a museum", said Meghi Ben with wonder after watching the documentary, awed at the prospect of being immortalised, caught on camera through a style that defines her life and self. The movie begins with the voices of Rani Ben and Meghi Ben, recorded during interviews, talking about their work and lives. The film opens with a calm starry night, the women talking about how they think best about their work at night: "The stillness of the night evokes thoughts, the day passes in chatter, at night I think peacefully about all that I need to do." *Tanko Bole Chhe* (The Stitches Speak) has won many awards like Jury's special prize for Short Animation Film at FICCI BAF (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry), Best Animated Film on Social Welfare at FICCI BAF (Best Animated Frames Awards), Best Creativity at the International Short Film Festival of India, Chennai and Best Short Film at the Bollywood and Beyond 2010 Film Festival at Stuttgart, Germany, July 2010."

"The short film category deals to a large extent with the living situation in India and the controversy between traditional and modern ways of living. The film *The Stitches Speak* convinces with an entirely unpretentious observation of radical changes, political landslides and dramatic, personal events in the form of miniature stories. The casual narrative style, in combination with the distance created by the animation unfolds to reveal a powerful story. At the same time, the film creates a congruence of form and content. The embroidery is a means of expression for their experiences as well as a path to the future of society. A traditional handicraft is transferred into modernity. In doing so, the film gives the protagonist a voice in this new medium", stated the jury at Stuttgart, Germany.

Towards the end of the film, Meghi Ben says in luscious Gujarati, "This work gives me immense pleasure. I forget whether it's day or night. It is not even work, it's pure pleasure." And I imagine her in her bare house, sitting in one corner with her threads and cloth piece, with ideas floating in her head ready to fill the empty piece of cloth with colour, emotion and story, beginning to stitch for the pleasure of it all, like the lucky few who are addicted to their work.



## NEWS

## This December, Size Matters



As they step into the court, their baby faces belying their agility, you are vaguely amused by their waddling, the fat rippling along the wake of their skin. They flex their pudgy arms and stretch their flabby thighs, reminding you of Tellytubbies. Therefore you aren't ready for what is about to hit you as the atmosphere suddenly transforms itself.

A steely glare meets its opponent — a pair of equally fierce eyes. Knees are slapped; the ring stomped with the humongous feet meant to intimidate. Bent and with bated breaths, the charging is almost instantaneous as the shrill voice which emanates from the referee's throat. Naked skin smashes against skin in one bloodless duel, each giant hell-bent upon owning the other. The bout doesn't take long to end, a body falling smack down, smelling the scent of failure and

dust. The other however, raises his arms in jubilation, acknowledging the cheering from the crowd that is immersed in the experience of witnessing a Sumo. Come December, the grounds of IIT Bombay will be alive with the sound of people exhorting World Champion Sumo wrestlers *Byaamba* and *Naranbaat*, to pummel each other. The temperatures shall soar, as these wrestlers will get into intense battles that are sure to entertain one and all. Interactions will be rife with the audience, coupled with plenty of opportunities to get photographed with these former world champions, while a few lucky ones will also get the once in a lifetime opportunity to go one-on-one with the Sumo!

Notwithstanding the thrill factor that people watch this sport for, it is actually quite fascinating

to gain more knowledge about this traditional Japanese sport. It is a discipline which entails a huge amount of perseverance and dedication. Most sumo wrestlers are required to live in a communal 'sumo training stable' known in Japanese as *heya* where all aspects of their daily lives — from meals to their manner of dress — are dictated by strict tradition. In a match, a wrestler (*rikishi*) attempts to force another wrestler out of a circular ring (*dohyo*) or to touch the ground with anything other than the soles of their feet. Their training sessions last for hours, every single day of every year.

Now it is time for me to take a backseat, and let these giants speak for themselves at Mood Indigo 2010.

Miss it NOT! And yes — do not try this at home!

## Aagaaz – Mood Indigo's Social Initiative



▲  
The Mood Indigo Team 2010

Aagaaz (which means 'a beginning'), the Countrywide Social Awareness Campaign of Mood Indigo 2010, aims to address a series of problems, from the declining status of women to corruption in society.

The MI team realises that street theatre, besides being a regular feature at MI, also has the potential to raise strong voices among youth. Street plays have their own unique and spectacular way of putting forward social issues and hence, the MI team decided to take street theatre back to the place where it originated from – on the streets, among the masses.

Aagaaz was launched in Ahmedabad on 2<sup>nd</sup> October this year, after which it will travel to Delhi between 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> October, and then return back to Mumbai on 5<sup>th</sup> December. Street plays will be performed at the popular Himalaya Mall in Ahmedabad, Dilli Haat in Delhi and several venues with large crowds in Mumbai. About 100 colleges from Delhi and Ahmedabad having already chosen their causes for Aagaaz. All venues have been carefully chosen to maximise the impact of street plays.

It doesn't all end here. The best plays will be brought to Mumbai and featured at Mood Indigo. Of them, the top three shall be provided mentoring by the famous street play organisation Naujawan-e-Hind, and then performed in rural areas, where the topic and relevance of those particular plays is at its peak.

So the next time someone asks you whether Mood Indigo is only a four day, four night ultra-glamorous cultural extravaganza, we bet you know the answer!

## NEWS

## Containing Oil Spills

It's time to start cleaning up the beaches using the Sand and Silt Washing Reactors (SSWR) when the oil spill is freshly trapped into the sand and silt, said an environmental expert from Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IITB). "It is important to skim the oil floating in the ocean but at the same time it is equally important to clean up the beaches without wasting time," told Dr. Shyam Asolekar, Professor, Centre for Environmental Science and Engineering at IITB (who has developed SSWR technology) in an interview for PTI. "The sooner this happens, the better, as the oil will get weathered by various atmospheric factors and then it becomes difficult to dissolve." The SSWR can be of five or ten tonnes capacity, and it will take 36 to 48 hours for each batch to clean up the sand. The cleaned sand will be put back in its place, said Prof. Asolekar.

Americans have approached him to participate

in their efforts to clean up the beaches with his technology, as they have gone through his scientific papers. "In the case of the Mexican Gulf leak, it is not yet plugged. So they can take some time to clean the beaches. But in our case, since the leak has already been plugged, it is important to clean the beaches as soon as possible," he said.

The IITB scientist said that crude oil is a mixture of several petroleum compounds and some of its molecules get dissolved in water, contaminating both lower and higher life forms. "Not only are ocean lives affected, but even birds who depend on sea life are affected due to this contamination. Some components of the oil evaporate and pollute the atmosphere and could pose problems to fishermen, rescue workers and birds." When asked whether he was approached by any agencies involved in the ocean

clean-up process, he said, "No one has approached me so far, except the Americans who wanted to use my technology for cleaning their beaches."

Meanwhile, Director of the Nagpur-based NEERI (National Environmental Engineering Research Institute), Dr. S. R. Wate said that they were not approached by Coast Guard or any other agencies for the clean-up process. "The Coast Guard along with Bombay Port are doing excellent work and are well-equipped. Surfactants can be used for chemical treatment as part of the clean-up process", he said, adding that, "our research team will sample the water and sedimentation for oil contamination. The team will also test the pesticide content, which might have leaked from the containers carrying the toxic chemicals."

Source: Press Trust of India

## Obituary

Mr. Ajay Kumar Mandhyan  
IITB Alumnus

With a deep sense of sorrow, I regret to inform you of the untimely demise of IITB alumnus Mr. Ajay Kumar Mandhyan. He passed away on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2010 in Jamshedpur. He graduated from the Corrosion Science and Engineering Programme with a Masters' in Technology in 2003. Since then he had been working as a Scientist at NML, Jamshedpur. An excellent human being with a poetic personality, he was independent and courageous in his daily work despite being physically challenged. Ajay was suffering from Motor Neuron Disorder, which ultimately took his life at such a young age. He had great commitment to his work and in fact received the Best Paper Award at the Annual Technical Meeting of the Indian Institute of Metals, for a paper which was essentially his M.Tech dissertation, a rare thing to see in an M. Tech student. His demise is a great loss to his family, friends, well-wishers and fellow scientists. I had the privilege of supervising this great, gentle human being; a poet, an excellent scientist, a lovable father, husband, son and a great friend. Ajay is survived by his wife Mala and a young daughter. I hope his family, friends and colleagues are able to bear this great loss, and I pray that his soul rests in peace.

By: PROF. V. S. RAJA, Department of Metallurgical Engineering and Material Sciences

Prof. S. N. Malhotra  
Department of Metallurgical Engineering & Materials Science

I deeply regret to inform you that Prof. Surinder N. Malhotra of the Department of Metallurgical Engineering and Material Sciences passed away on Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2010. He was an extremely pleasant, talkative and cooperative man, ever friendly with colleagues and students alike. He joined IIT Bombay for his M.Tech. in 1967 and after his PhD, became an assistant professor in mid 1970's. Metallurgical thermodynamics was his strong subject. Prof. Malhotra had a long-standing heart problem due to which he could not reach his potential and sometimes was misunderstood by the people around him. At the time the heart problem was detected, the doctor told him that he had about two years to live. After that, he led such a disciplined life that he lived for fifteen years. His death was sudden and we convey our heartfelt condolences to Prof. Malhotra's family on this untimely death. Our department really misses him. May his soul rest in peace.

By: PROF. R. RAMAN, Department of Metallurgical Engineering and Material Sciences

## RANDOM MEANDERINGS

## T and Me

■ MOHIT SHARMA Fifth Year Dual Degree

There is a friendly chap I happen to know. Let's call him T. Frankly, I had never given a second thought to my interactions with him until I started thinking about this article. Now that I do, I see the part he has played in my view of things in the institute and outside. Moreover, I daresay that this view has been rather defining.

T used to be the STD shop operator at my freshie hostel, which also doubled up as a Xerox shop. At any given time of the day, he would have this stack of books and papers to be photocopied, which would invariably result in me having to wait for my turn. It was during such intervals of waiting that I started talking to him.

I doubt if T has ever been to college. All I know is that he is from some place on the UP-Bihar border. And that he, like most guys, worries about his monetary situation and shies away from the talk of marriage. Over time, the two of us had long conversations about the most fatuous things in life. In the beginning it used to be borne of polite interest and my inability to say no to people who talked incessantly. But later, I realised that T was a treasure trove in terms of perspectives and the conversations started getting interesting. He used to tell me about the politics that went on with the Warden and the Hall Manager. Then there were those interesting anecdotes about couples caught in unsavoury situations at unsavoury hours of the night. Every now and then, when he had an audience of more than one, he would regale us with tales of beautiful village girls and their violent brothers. Then there were those serendipitous times when he would be in a sad state because one of the numerous girls he'd had a crush on had got

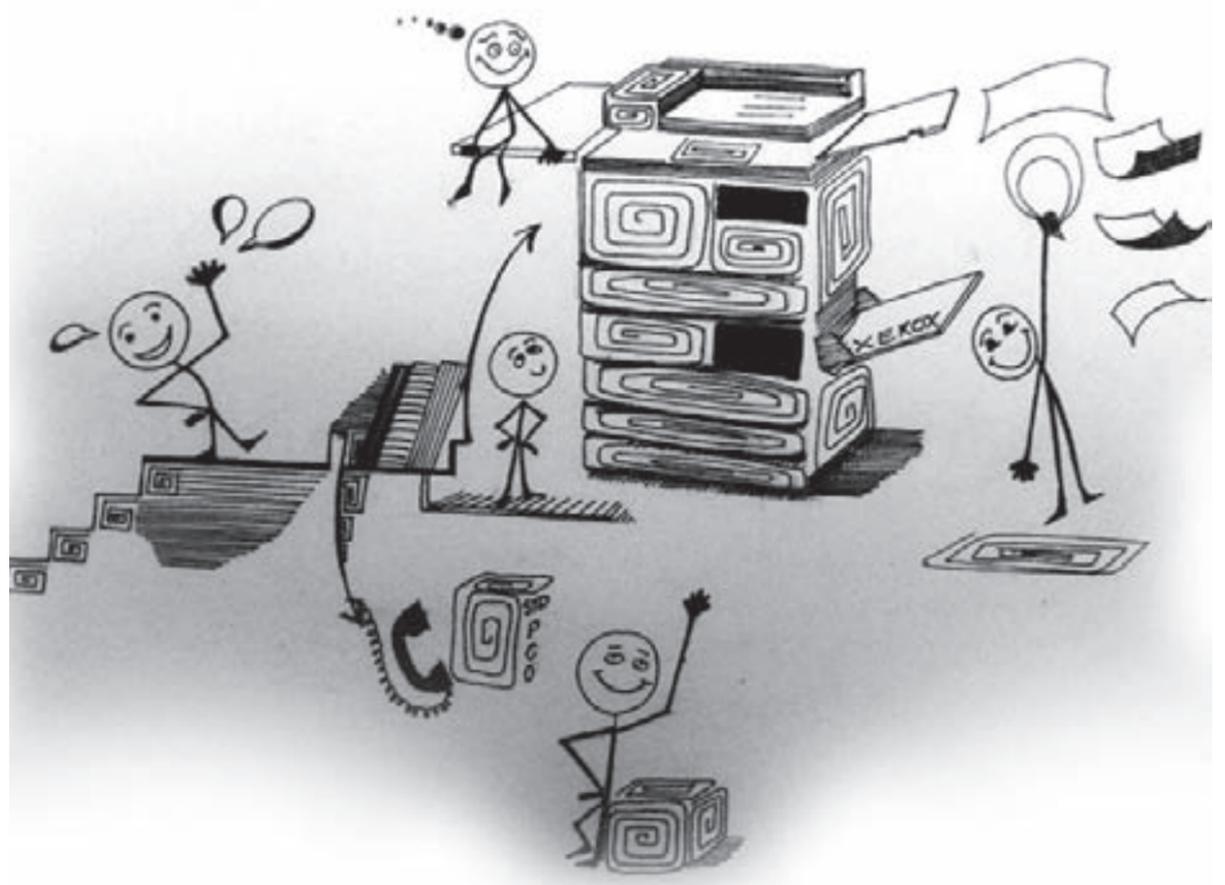


Illustration by Ankita Roy, IDC

married. (And the audience that we were, we used to laugh at his plight, getting him to join in as well.)

Every now and then, he would talk about his difficult life. He left his village and came to Bombay looking for a job. And he did get a job. Not one that we would regard as lucrative in any sense of the word. But a job nevertheless. He used to contrast his situation with ours, and how we'd be going away from college with top jobs and making loads of money. And the surprising bit was the fact that he would say all this without a hint of jealousy or regret. There was this sense of destiny he had. A sort of acceptance of fate and the willingness to fight it without complicating it with undesirable emotions.

It was a humbling lesson. Our lot here at IIT is a dissatisfied one. We attach rather less importance to most things in life. We abuse the system like nobody's business. We talk down our schooling. We almost

believe in that cheesy line written on those IIT Bombay t-shirts: 'I was born intelligent, but education ruined me'. We taint everything in our lives with cynicism. Of course, it is good to expect high standards. But we here have equated high with ridiculous. As a result of which, more often than not, we lose sight of the opportunity we've been given. Our hostels are not air-conditioned like IIT Kanpur's. Our student officials don't work. Our maths professors are useless. Our research is pointless. Our administration is a dinosaur. And anything else we can criticise, we do.

T used to tell me about his village and the difficulties he had been facing. We used to talk about where our lives were headed, our sad love lives and the latest scandals. Like most people who have an idea of what brand IIT is all about, these conversations were constantly punctuated with comments from him like "Aapki life toh set hai (your life is made)", while lamenting about his own prospects.

There are moments when we need to be reminded of the opportunities we have. When we need to be told that people our age do not even get to go to a college. I needed to be reminded of the fact that there was still hope as far as the system was concerned, in spite of how it all looked. My courses were not as hopeless as they had looked and probably it was just a matter of perspective. That I was not going to be a waste in life after all. And looking inwards wasn't something that helped, seeing as all of it had been poisoned with negativity.

Even today, quite a few of my peers are an embittered lot. Most think about the institute as a public milch cow from which everyone is to extract profit and then bolt off. Similar views prevail about most things around us. I would like to think that I'm far more optimistic. And for that, my interactions with someone from the other side of the IIT Bombay wall were indispensable. ■

## EVENTS

### Vanamahotsav 2010

The campus community has celebrated Vanmahotsav for 19 years as an occasion to make the campus a greener space. On this day, staff, faculty, students and all other residents come together to plant saplings at a designated spot within the campus. Vanamahotsav this year was on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at the slope of the hill behind SAMEER at 9.30 am. This time, instead of planting saplings, people planted trees that were at least one to two years old. They were of different species, all from the Konkan region, such as Kokam, Jamun, Cashew and Kanchan. Native species support their surrounding ecology, and one to two year old trees are more robust and have much higher survival chances.



▲ Vanamahotsav 2010 at IIT Bombay

Another special initiative this year was planting *Jatropha* trees. Its oil is a contender for Bio-Diesel, a fuel which can be used instead of petroleum-based diesel. The *Jatropha* plant species is attractive because it is drought-resistant and grows in marginal to poor soils. The tree's average height is three to five metres. Seeds from matured fruits have an oil content of about 35%. A process of 'trans-esterification' converts its seed-oil equivalent to Petro-Diesel. One can use it in 20:80 proportions without any engine modification for motor transport, whereas for stationary applications, one can use it in proportions up to 80:20. For the IITB community, planting *Jatropha* on hill-slopes will not only help in its greening initiative, but will also provide an opportunity for technical studies as a part of the 'Bio-Synth' initiative. A 200 litres per day Bio-diesel plant is in the process of being installed on the campus. *Jatropha* seeds, generated through this plantation initiative, could provide the raw material to study conversion reactions.

### 48<sup>th</sup> Convocation Ceremony: Sessions I and II

The Convocation Day marks the culmination of a student's academic life, for which he has striven so hard. IITB celebrated the first session of its 48<sup>th</sup> Convocation ceremony on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 on its campus. This is the first year that the Convocation was held in two separate sessions, owing to the large number of students graduating from the institute. Ms Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director, Biocon was the Chief Guest and delivered the Convocation Address. In Session I, the institute awarded PhD and Masters degrees.

Prof. Devang Khakhar, Director, IITB said, "The institute has emerged as a leading institution for its technology education and for producing 'research that makes a difference' to the country. IIT Bombay continues to be the most sought-after destination for undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and attracts top performers in national examinations such as GATE, CEED, NET, JAM and JEE. The fact that among 15 IITs in the country, 67 of the top 100 rank holders in JEE 2010 have joined IITB and 16 of the top 20 JEE rank holders have chosen to join us as well is a clear indication that the institute remains the first choice for toppers. The institute has responded pragmatically to the large increase in its student intake by substantially reorienting itself academically, technologically and administratively and using it as a great opportunity to retain its leadership in engineering education in the country," he said.

In her Convocation Address to the students, Ms. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director, Biocon Group said, "The Indian economy has come of age after it was unshackled through reforms and liberalisation. The world has India in its focus, and, as graduates of the world-renowned IITs, you have a world of opportunities before you. As you step

out into the world to build your lives, I urge you to think beyond yourself and aspire to build the lives of others. In the process, you will be building your own lives in a way that you never thought imaginable."

IITB celebrated the second session of its 48<sup>th</sup> Convocation ceremony on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 on campus. Prof. Roddam Narasimha from Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research was the Chief Guest and delivered the Convocation Address. In Session I, the institute awarded B.Tech, B.Tech-M.Tech. (Dual Degree), and M.Sc. Degrees.

In this Convocation, a total of 1,691 degrees were awarded, which also included 196 five-year B.Tech-M.Tech. dual degrees. Of these, 179 were PhD, one was MS (by research), 14 were M.Phil., 706 were M.Tech., 83 were M.Mgt., 45 were M.Des., one was PGDIIT, five were five-year Integrated M.Sc., 139 were two-year M.Sc. and 508 were B.Tech. degrees. In the previous Convocation, 1,616 degrees had been awarded. A total of 32 medals including the President of India Medal to Mr. L.S.V. Tapovan (B.Tech, Mechanical Engineering) and Institute Gold Medal to Ms Gauri D. Joshi (Dual Degree, Electrical Engineering) were given away at the Convocation Ceremony.

Commenting on the occasion, Prof. Supratim Biswas, Dean (Academic Affairs) said, "Being a public institution, IITB is aware of its responsibilities and obligations, and has decided to use the path of research at all levels to enhance national economic competitiveness. Academic programmes, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate level are being reviewed towards intensifying research culture and orientation of the institute. The PhD student-strength has steadily increased and we are on course to achieve our target of 2,775 PhD students on roll, among 9,350 students in the academic year 2018-19. In the years to come, we will be going all out to produce a pool of scholarly talent that focuses on creative research, that directly contributes to the society and economy and adds significantly to the intellectual capital of the nation."

Along with the chief guests, Ms Kiran Mazumdar Shaw and Prof. Roddam Narasimha, many distinguished dignitaries including the Chairman of IITB, Dr. Anil Kakodkar, and the members of the Board of Governors graced both ceremonies.



◀ Ms. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw delivers Convocation Address at the 48<sup>th</sup> convocation on IIT Bombay

## FEATURE

# Uncle Pinto Ko Kabhi Gussa Nahi Aata

■ PROF. KUSHAL DEB Department of Humanities & Social Sciences

All of us have seen him rushing all over IIT campus day and night, picking up people and dropping them off, only to speed off to attend to another call. As he drives, he waves out to people. He has so often greeted me with a very warm "Good morning, sir!" flashing a wide grin, though I have never formally met him nor used his services (thankfully as yet!).

Uncle Pinto drives the institute ambulance, and is a one-man crusader who doesn't wait for any assistance in his task. If a student has twisted his leg badly on the football field or is lying in a daze due to high fever, Uncle Pinto just lifts up the student physically and carries him all the way to his ambulance. He has saved many a life on campus by rushing through traffic, breaking signals, taking short-cuts and even driving on one-way streets to reach Rajawadi or Kaushalya hospitals during emergencies. Just a few days back, a student had passed out in an inebriated state. When Uncle Pinto reached the scene, the unconscious student was frothing in the mouth. Uncle Pinto just picked up the student, ran to his ambulance and rushed him to Rajawadi. He didn't wait for Wardens to arrive or formalities to be completed. He just wanted to save the student's life. Only much later did the institute officials arrive to take charge of the situation. I asked Uncle Pinto why he took such risks, worked 24 hours a day, working 50 days continuously (when he is officially paid for 30 days and then given a 20 day break from service), being paid a measly monthly salary of ₹5,000/- by Rajawadi hospital. The smile disappeared and his face flushed with emotion. He declared, "Jab tak ham hai, ham students' ka seva karega, paise ke liye kuch nahi karega. Mujhe bus

students *ko madad karna hai* (Till the time I am here, I will help the students, I won't do anything for money. I just want to help the students)," he reiterated.

He is highly popular among students, and many have wanted to reward him with cash or treat him to a meal at their hostel because of the innumerable times he has dropped or picked them up from the hospital. Uncle Pinto quietly but firmly refuses such overtures. He states that he gets enough food from the left-overs at IIT Hospital, and as he has neither family nor any responsibilities, his needs are few. IIT Hospital is his home (he has sold off his kholi in Dadar) and he sleeps either inside the ambulance or at some corner in the hospital.

As I chatted with him, I got an insight into his life and could understand why he wanted to serve the students selflessly as long as he lived. Uncle Pinto is 65 years old. He was born and brought up in a chawl in Dadar. His father was a train driver. Uncle Pinto has been driving an ambulance for the last 40 years. He is also a good mechanic, and given both his skills, he was appointed as a driver of hearses which carried corpses from all the major hospitals of Mumbai to far-off places like Bangalore, Mysore, Nagpur and even remote villages in Uttar Pradesh. This enormous experience of driving all over the country have given him the skills and expertise which he now puts to use while carrying emergency patients through Mumbai's traffic snarls.

He is originally a Catholic from Goa but hardly visits his ancestral home. The reason is that Uncle Pinto had a tragic train accident on the Konkan Railway

line, and lost his entire family — his wife and four grown-up children — while they were returning from Goa to Dadar. He can't bear to see their photographs in his ancestral home. His wife used to work as a teacher in a school at Mahabaleshwar, while his eldest daughter had completed B.Ed and his eldest son was a graduate. The tragic shock shattered his life. His eyes became moist when he revealed that by serving the IIT students he felt that he was serving his own children. It gave meaning to his life. So he wanted to serve the students for as long as he lived.

Another aspect of his life that surprised me was that he is a strict vegetarian. He declared that he doesn't eat in the homes of Christians, Muslims and Parsees. Being a hardcore non-vegetarian, I was taken aback and couldn't believe that a Catholic from Goa didn't touch meat or fish. Uncle Pinto then revealed that he was brought up in a chawl opposite the famous Siddhi Vinayak temple. But during his childhood, there was no huge temple complex (as it we know it today), but a peepal tree under which there was a small mound with a Ganesh idol on it. Reminiscing about his childhood days he recalled that a *buddhi* (old woman) used to look after the idol, and she would give them *pedas* (sweets) every evening and all the children would then sing the bhajan — "Jai Dev, Jai Dev". So from his childhood, he grew up singing bhajans and neither his parents, his family or he ever touched meat. During Christmas in Goa they would cook their own meals so as to avoid non-vegetarian food in other people's homes. He said that he was an ardent devotee of Ganesh and Sai Baba and they had given him the strength to bear the loss of his family.

Before concluding my chat with Uncle Pinto, I asked him if he wished that IIT would give him a permanent job as a driver of the ambulance. He smiled wistfully and declared that it was not feasible, as he was already 65 years old, and both the ambulance and his contractual position were with Rajawadi Hospital. So he would continue doing his *seva* as long as the contract remained.

We had to stop chatting as the attending nurse who was looking for him asked where he had disappeared, showing slight irritation. He was slightly affronted because his diligence was being questioned, specially when I was the one who had taken him aside for my little story. But he controlled himself, flashed a smile, shook my hand and rushed off to bring in another student suffering from viral fever. "Iss Uncle Pinto ko kabhi gussa nahi aata hai (This Uncle Pinto never gets angry)". ■



## EVENTS

## Give One for IITB: Graduating Class of 2010 Set a New Benchmark

More than 735 students of the graduating class of 2010 signed a pledge to donate 1% of their salary to IITB, starting from sometime next year. This would mean approximately 70% of those who attended the convocation on 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> August signed up for the pledge. The initiative is part of a new fund-raising initiative for alumni by the IIT Bombay Alumni Association, in association with IIT Bombay Heritage Fund, branded as 'GO IITB: Give One for IIT Bombay'. This is a voluntary programme for each IITB alumnus to commit to 1% of his/her income to IITB for their lifetime towards supporting overall improvement and excellence here, encompassing the institute, its campus and human resources.

The aim was to engage alumni early, and now the institute has 735 new alumni who are already engaged with IITB in a meaningful way. They have the potential to develop a new tradition for all future batches.

This fund-raising drive was visualised as a soft launch

of a programme with the motto: 'Pledge now and pay later'. The institute realises that graduates striking out on their own for the first time need time to settle down before they can start repaying. Hence, since they have pledged now, they will probably start honouring their pledges in a year's time, when they are more settled into their careers. However, what stood out was the willingness of students to support their alma mater. This initiative is a first for a graduating class not just within IITB, but probably across all IITs. D. Uday Kumar has already ensured that the class of 2010 will forever be etched in the institute's history. Collectively, the graduating class has created another landmark of being the first graduating batch that has pledged to start its payback even before their first payday after leaving IITB.

The funds collected through this initiative will be utilised for various initiatives strictly related to IITB and its community, to make it a leading university in the world and an ideal campus to live and study



in. The tradition of *Gurudakshina* in Indian culture goes back to the age of the sages. Kautsa gave *gurudakshina* to Rishi Varatantu in the form of one crore gold coins for each of the sciences. IITB's alumni have been at the forefront of graduates from Indian universities in re-establishing this tradition of giving back to their gurus. Instead of one crore gold coins, 'GO IITB' will exhort alumni to give back just 1% of their annual income towards supporting IITB's never-ending 'Tryst with Excellence'.

## EVENTS

## Worming its way to a Green Campus: IITB inaugurates first vermiculture facility

Taking another step towards being a green campus, IITB inaugurated its first Vermiculture Facility on 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 inside the campus. The initiative is spearheaded by Green Campus Initiative (GCI), Public Health Office and monitored closely by Mrs. Aparna Inamdar, who has worked extensively in the field of environment-friendly garbage disposal. The aim of the GCI is to take necessary initiatives and devise futuristic models to develop methods for creating an environmentally sustainable campus for future generations. Briefly, the facility will cater to 24 families wherein all wet garbage can be recycled and turned into usable manure. The institute can then choose to use it within its boundaries or sell it.

The facility will use deep-burrowing, indigenous worms making a healthy environment. An advantage of using burrowing worms as opposed to surface worms is that many houses can undertake such garbage disposal since the worms remain hidden under the soil. Also, indigenous species of worms require low maintenance and no additives as opposed to imported worms. Since indigenous earthworms create a porous soil culture (which allows aerobic decomposition), no foul smell is produced during decomposition. The waste is also not required to be shredded. Further, an enclosure has been built, designed by Prof. B. K. Chakravarthy of IDC, to ensure that animals and birds do not dissipate the garbage. It has been designed taking into account the convenience of the staff operating the facility and also the environment — its drainage has been built using recyclable material. The facility will save fuel required to transport wet garbage, make manure available as a by-product and encourage people to segregate dry and wet garbage.



▲ PROF K. V. K. RAO, DEAN IPS inaugurating the first vermiculture facility

Mrs. Aparna Inamdar, who has been developing Vermiculture technology since 1993 has closely monitored the entire project. She emphasised on the advantages of this technology over the traditional Vermicomposting, which emanates a foul smell and needs imported worms. She also added that, "Vermiculture can be carried out in vermibeds of almost any size, even in an earthen pot. The versatility of the bed can be a boon for the application of this technology across India, at the grass-root level."

With the increasing population, IITB, now like never before, needs to look for more integrated strategies for managing water, energy and material resources along with waste-water and solid waste. The vermiculture facility is thus a significant step in making IITB deal with its ever-increasing rate of garbage generation, as more and more people populate the 550 odd acres of this institute.

## VARSHASTUTI: An Evening of Classical Music

Varshastuti, a classical music concert on campus and the annual offering of IIT Bombay Alumni Association was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2010 at 5.30 p.m. in P.C. Saxena Auditorium. This year we were fortunate to have one of India's foremost musicians, Pandit Nayan Ghosh, with a superlative command over two diverse instruments — sitar and the tabla, playing for us.

Born in 1956, Pandit Nayan Ghosh is acclaimed in India and around the world as one of India's foremost musicians, with an unusual dimension — the only maestro with great knowledge of two diverse instruments, the sitar and the tabla. Deeply loved by the senior-most stalwarts of our music scene like Pandit Ravi Shankar, Yehudi Menuhin, Ustad Vilayat Khan and the legendary Ahmedjan Thirakwa, he is already held as an important reference source for a whole new generation of music seekers.



▲ Pandit Narayanan Ghosh performing at Varshastuti

The son and disciple of the 20<sup>th</sup> century tabla wizard, Pandit Nikhil Ghosh and the nephew of Pandit Pannalal Ghosh, "the Father of Indian Classical Flute", Pandit Ghosh has inherited the rich and learned legacy from his many predecessors. He carries it with a dignity and grace that is rare. Having first broadcast his solo at the age of four in 1960, his prodigious talent was carefully nurtured by his great father, with highly restrained exposure. However, it was since the age of 18, in 1974, that his music took him across continents repeatedly, and saw him represent India at some of the most prestigious International Music Festivals and universities across Europe, USA, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand, North Africa and the Far East.

A 1998 recipient of the Achievement Award from the Governor of California, Gray Davis in Los Angeles, Pandit Ghosh has shared the stage with legends such as Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Vilayat Khan and Pandit Nikhil Banerjee, besides a whole galaxy of stars like Buddhadev Dasgupta, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Ustad Rais Khan, Ustad Shamim Ahmed, Ustad Salamat Ali Khan, Pandit Jasraj, Sharan Rani, Rajeev Taranath and L. Subramaniam among others. Like his father who interacted with the Kings of Jazz — Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Dave Brubeck, Pandit Ghosh has also jammed with avant-garde pianist Yosuke Yamashita and guitarist Kazumi Watanabe in Tokyo, and Kidd Jordan and Henry Butler in New Orleans.

Presently, as Director of India's leading music academy, the Sangit Mahabharati in Juhu, Mumbai, Pandit Ghosh is actively imparting advanced training to numerous young professional musicians, besides supporting his father's monumental work, the Encyclopaedia of Music of India which is soon to be published by the Oxford University Press worldwide.

## Navsrujan Ganesh Mahotsav 2010

Navsrujan Ganesh Mahotsav is a unique event which is organised by the Save Powai Lake Team to promote eco-friendly celebrations of Ganesh Chaturthi. The Save Powai Lake Team consists of students and faculty of IITB and other Powai residents. It has been actively involved in conducting public awareness campaigns and drawing the attention of authorities to the pollution and destruction of the Powai Lake caused over the years. This year's public workshops were held in IITB campus at the IDC Design Circle, Industrial Design Centre (IDC) from 7-10 September, 2010. Traditionally, the Ganesh idol was sculpted out of earth taken from nearby one's home. After worshipping the divinity in this earth idol, it was returned back to Earth by immersing it in a nearby water body. This cycle represented the cycle of creation and dissolution in Nature. However, as the production of Ganesh idols on a commercial basis grew, the earthen or natural clay was replaced by plaster of paris. This material is easier to mould, lighter and less expensive than clay but at the same time takes much longer to dissolve. In the process of dissolution, it releases toxic elements into the water body. Also the chemical paints used to adorn these plaster idols themselves contain heavy metals like mercury and cadmium, which are extremely harmful for the environment. To prevent this practice of polluting the lake and keeping in mind the tradition of the immersion of the Ganesh idols, which originated from the philosophy of surrendering to nature what is taken from it, Navsrujan Ganesh Mahotsav marked its beginning in 2003 with the onset of 'Create your own Ganpati' workshops for campus residents and children. The class of 1980, as a part of their heritage project to revive the Powai Lake, sponsored it. This being an initiative to preserve the lake and to protect the environment, only natural colours derived from edible gum and *geru matti* are used to decorate the idols.

## Establishment of the Wadhvani Research Centre in Biosciences and Bioengineering at IITB

The Wadhvani Foundation has funded \$ 5 million to IITB. Furthermore, the Wadhvani Research Centre in Biosciences and Biotechnology (WRCBB) is being established in the campus premises. The WRCBB has now constituted an Advisory Council under the Chairmanship of Prof. Devang Khakhar, Director, IITB, which met for the first time on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2010. Members of the council include Dr. M. K.Bhan, Secretary, Government of India, Department of Biotechnology, Prof. Dulal Panda, Head, Department of Bioscience & Bioengineering IITB, Dr. K. Vijayraghavan, Director, National Centre for Biological Sciences, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (Bangalore), Prof. Inder Varma, Laboratory of Genetics, The Salk Institute, Adjunct Professor, Department of Biology, University of California, San Diego, Prof. Chaitan Khosla, Chair, Chemical Engineering, Stanford University, Dr. M.S. Valiathan, a pioneer in Biomedical Engineering and former President of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), Prof. Vijayan, who is an eminent biologist and currently Chairperson and President of INSA, Dr. Romesh Wadhvani, Chairman, Wadhvani Foundation and Dr. Ajay Kela, President and CEO, Wadhvani Foundation.

Biosciences and Bioengineering is an area of focus for IITB. The institute intends to considerably scale up activities in the area. A new building of 70,000 sq.ft. is under construction for this purpose. The major endowment for the Centre from the Wadhvani Foundation will accelerate the endeavour. The mission of the Wadhvani Foundation and the WRCBB is to establish a new standard for world-class research in India and be the home of all Biosciences and Bioengineering research conducted at or in collaboration with IITB.

## EVENTS

IIT Bombay's 52<sup>nd</sup> Teacher's Day

Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, whose birthday we celebrate as Teacher's day, said "the end-product of education should be a free, creative man, who can battle against historical circumstances and adversities of nature." We've collected the words of students to ensure that praise for their teachers is celebrated and savoured before it gets buried under studies, research and other sundry duties of life.

The function began with a programme arranged by students, which included a short audio-visual film. Students introduced their professors and presented their perceptions of what made them notable teachers. Prof. N. Mukunda, who was our honoured chief guest on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 spoke of his regard for his teachers and how he remembers them to this day. Below are some student comments on the teachers who received the Excellence in Teaching Awards, 2009.

About Prof. Moharir, his student Chandrika, a fourth year student in the Department of Chemical Engineering said, "He has innovative ways to conduct quizzes, and his manner of forming groups for assignment submissions came as a pleasant surprise or as a shock. Moharir Sir has been very concerned about students with backlogs and has gone out of his way to call them personally. He also takes classes for students appearing for placements to better equip them for technical interviews. Such compassion is the reason why we all really respect him."

Prof. Biswal, HoD, Department of Earth Sciences, has a "sanguine nature [which] has made him immensely popular amongst the students and he remains a constant source of motivation. His encouragement regarding various activities besides academics has always been a big boon for us [students]. His consistency in his commitment towards his students can be seen from the fact that this is his second Excellence in Teaching Award in a span of six years," said his student, Sandeep Agarwal, second year M.Sc. in Applied Geology.

Anand Barot professed that Prof. Goyal "teaches the most basic and most advanced courses with equal ease and enthusiasm and makes learning some of the less interesting topics, enjoyable. His expertise in his field is evident by his ability to come up with lucid explanations to satisfy the inquisitiveness of the students. He is ever-approachable and has been the perfect mentor on both academic and non-academic fronts. He is one of those instructors whose company you cherish and whom you look up to as role models."

Bhakti Joshi, PhD, Electrical Engineering Department said about Prof. Chandorkar, "The very first thing that strikes anyone about him is his extraordinary ability to keep calm even when the situation seems to demand otherwise. Such situations include students asking 'arbit' doubts in class, misdirecting the flow of teaching. While giving precise explanations to these doubts, he can still manage to keep on track, without getting carried away. His ability to manage different tasks efficiently without any eleventh-hour hustles reflects in his neatly-formed assignments and question papers. He has often inspired students to learn things which are not in the syllabus."

About Prof. G. K. Lahiri, it was said that "extremely sensitive to his audience, he is constantly sampling the class for feedback. Erratic IITian sleep habits usually give way to classroom sleeping but it's impossible to sleep in his lectures. Prof. Lahiri will ask you if "the chemistry is hitting you here or going there" and by the end of the day, it hasn't much of an option but to strike home. He adjusts the depth of his explanation with great precision, so the students never feel overwhelmed in his lectures. Students also appreciate his incorporation of current research in his course work."

Prof. U. K. Anandwardhan's lectures are "unique because they resemble discussions where each student gets involved. Proving any theorem, any lemma is a brainstorming exercise for us before we learn the standard proof. Consequently, we have learnt to appreciate the necessity of each step, which is lost if served to us directly on the blackboard. His manner of teaching – where he thinks and solves with us in the classroom – helps us to learn to approach a problem logically. Some of his bold attempts to avoid technical details (to emphasise the strength of the result) make us fill the gaps ourselves. Outside the classroom, he is amicable and easily approachable. A visit to his office gives one something new to ponder upon and if lucky, one may even get to hear a mathematical joke," said his student, Radhika Gupta, fourth year, Department of Physics.

"Prof. Kameswari is that rare teacher willing to explain details right from fundamental principles. She will put up questions, allow a few minutes for students to prepare answers and then ask students, ensuring widespread class participation. She embellishes her presentation with intuitive analogies and real-life examples. The latter often leaves students with a curiosity to investigate the working of a concept in detail. She is very particular about work ethics and is a source of inspiration for students to follow

them. Apart from her in-class teaching, she ensures that she interacts with every student during project evaluations," said her student, Prasanna Kartik from the Department of Computer Science.

"Prof. Prof Prabhu Ramachandran," articulates Rajat Chakravarty, a fifth year student, Department of Aerospace Engineering, "has the unique ability to bond with students, to understand their feelings and communicate at their level. No matter how the class responds, Prof. Prabhu maintains a smile on his face and exudes a contagious spirit of positivity. His sense of humour reduces barriers and lightens the atmosphere, specially during heavy classes. He has an amazing ability to acknowledge change. He subtly knows that while there is a place for tradition; there is also a place for new ideas and new approaches. Prof. Prabhu will forever be the window through which many students see their future in the Aerospace Department."

Haripriya, a fifth year student of the Department of Mechanical Engineering elucidates about Prof. Amarnath: "The most striking feature of his classes is that all explanations are in terms of easy-to-understand fundamental principles. Students are left with a sense of wonder that a complex engineering system can be understood using simple physics and geometry. On a personal note, I have learnt three important lessons from him. First, that kindergarten is lifelong; nothing is too silly to fascinate me and I'll never be too old to explore my world. Second, that I should recognise my skills and do the best with them rather than try too hard to be someone I'm not cut out to be. And third that yes, engineering really is, like, you know, beyond cool!"

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Devang Khakhar said, "Teachers are true assets of our society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the future generation and hence of the entire world."

### Class of 1984 Launches Retired Faculty Wellness Fund on Teachers' Day

On 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2010, i.e. Teachers' Day, the class of 1984 launched the Retired Faculty Wellness fund with an initial endowment corpus of more than ₹1.5 crores, to express their heartfelt appreciation for their teachers. A part of their Legacy Project (instituted in December 2009) during their Silver Jubilee reunion, the Wellness Fund is the Class of '84's way of thanking their professors and the institute for a high-quality, inexpensive education, for an indelible experience over the five years spent on campus and for a network of lifelong friends.

Every December, the batch of alumni which has completed 25 years post their graduation return to IITB to celebrate their Silver Jubilee reunion. Each Silver Jubilee batch undertakes a 'Legacy Project' to leave a lasting legacy of that batch on IITB. In December 2009, the Class of '84 identified a set of three initiatives as part of their 'Legacy Project', focusing on the 'Past, Present and Future'.

Until 2003, no medical coverage was offered to faculty and staff after retirement. Many of the teachers, now well into their seventies, lacked adequate medical coverage at a time when they needed it most. The corpus of the Retired Faculty Wellness Fund will now cover close to 150 faculty members, seamlessly supplementing any existing medical coverage they might have. An innovative scheme, the fund will now cover all retired faculty members (and spouses) who retired prior to 2003. They will be provided supplementary medical insurance with an annual family limit of ₹1,50,000. The entire annual premium will be paid out of the Retired Faculty Wellness

From left to right: Prof. Biswas, Dean AP; Prof N. Mukunda, Chief Guest and Prof. D. V. Khakhar, Director IIT Bombay at 52<sup>nd</sup> Teacher's Day Celebration



## AWARDS

Fund. Some other features of the scheme are the extension of cover for all age groups (a feature not provided by many insurance providers), and no medical examination required for joining. All pre-existing illnesses are included and an optional annual medical checkup is reimbursable up to ₹1,500 per couple, within the net float of ₹1.5 lakh per annum.

"We wanted to initiate a relevant, high-impact project that conveyed our gratitude," said K. K. Iyer, an '84 batch alumnus and one of the key architects of the project. "We have spent a considerable time customising this scheme to suit the needs of the faculty group in question. This is a unique health cover which I hope symbolises the bond between our teachers and us." This has now taken its final shape through the Retired Faculty Wellness Fund, and perhaps best signifying that in IITB, neither is teaching a lost art, nor regard for teachers, a lost tradition.

### MoU: TIFR and IITB for the National Centre for Mathematics

Two of the premier institutes of India, IITB and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), have jointly agreed to collaborate to establish a National Centre for Mathematics (NCM) in the premises of IITB. The two institutes entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for an initial period of ten years, to facilitate the establishment of NCM on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2010.



▲ From left to right: Prof D. V. Khakhar, Director IIT Bombay and Prof M. Barma, Director TIFR signing MoU

Mumbai has the largest concentration of mathematicians in India with a majority of them at TIFR, IITB and Mumbai University. IITB and TIFR are therefore, in a unique position to establish a National Centre for Mathematics. NCM will be modelled largely on the famous Oberwolfach Mathematics Research Institute (MFO), Germany that started in 1944. There are about 50 week-long international workshops and conferences per year at Oberwolfach. NCM aims to have workshops, conferences and instructional schools throughout the year for students, young teachers and researchers.

Prof. Devang Khakhar, Director, IITB said, "Research and advanced education in Mathematics are vital for the development of science and industry in India. The National Centre for Mathematics, which we are establishing together with TIFR will contribute to these by conducting workshops and conferences, drawing upon the expertise of leading scholars from India and abroad. We hope that the centre will become a vibrant hub for discussing new ideas and also become a place to catalyse and promote collaborative research."

Dr. Mustansir Barma, Director, TIFR said, "Mathematics and its applications are vital for the progress of our country. We hope and expect that the NCM will make a useful contribution to the mathematical life of the scientific community in various ways, ranging from conducting research conferences of the highest levels, to conducting training programmes for PhD students as well as for scientists and engineers engaged in applications of mathematics. TIFR shares these goals with IITB, and looks forward to a long and fruitful collaboration in setting up and running this joint centre."

#### Awards for Excellence in Teaching 2010

were given to:

- **PROF. ALOK GOYAL**, Department of Civil Engineering
- **PROF. A. S. MOHARIR**, Department of Chemical Engineering
- **PROF. PRABHU RAMACHANDRAN**, Department of Aerospace Engineering
- **PROF. KAMESHWARI CHEBROLU**, Department of Computer Science & Engineering
- **PROF. C. AMARNATH**, Department of Mechanical Engineering
- **PROF. MUKUL CHANDORKAR**, Department of Electrical Engineering
- **PROF. U. K. ANANDAVARDHANAN**, Department of Mathematics
- **PROF. T. K. BISWAL**, Department of Earth Sciences
- **PROF. G. K. LAHIRI**, Department of Chemistry

**PROF. MILIND D. ATREY** and his team, Department of Mechanical Engineering, were awarded the **Dr. P. K. Patwardhan Technology Development Award** for 2009.

**IRCC Research & Industrial Consultancy Awards** for 2008 and 2009 were given in the following categories:

**The IIT Bombay Research Paper Award** for the year 2008 and 2009 went to:

- **A. K. SURESH, R. ANURADHA and K. V. VENKATESH**, Department of Chemical Engineering
- **K. V. VENKATESH, VIVEK K. MUTALIK and PARAG SHAH**, Department of Chemical Engineering
- **M. S. BALAKRISHNA, SRINIVASAN PRIYA, JOEL T. MAGUE and SHAIKH M. MOBIN**, Department of Chemistry
- **VIKRAM M. GADRE and SUDARSHAN SHINDE**, Department of Electrical Engineering
- **C. P. RAO, NITIN KUMAR SINGHAL, BALAJI RAMANUJAM and MARIAPPANADAR**, Department of Chemistry
- **S. BANERJEE and S. JEEVANKUMAR**, Department of Earth Sciences
- **KRISHNA P. KALIAPPAN and VELAYUTHAM RAVIKUMAR**, Department of Chemistry

**The Best Review Paper Award** for 2008 and 2009 went to:

- **ANIL KUMAR and A. V. AMBADE**, Department of Chemistry
- **PROF. S. P. MAHULIKAR, PROF. HEMANT R. SONAWANE and PROF. G. ARVIND RAO**, Department of Aerospace Engineering

**The IIT Bombay Young Investigator Award** for the year 2008 and 2009 went to:

- **PROF. M. S. TIRUMKUDULU**, Department of Chemical Engineering
- **PROF. C.S. SOLANKI**, Department of Energy Science & Engineering

**The IIT Bombay Industrial Impact Award** for the year 2008 went to:

- **PROF. V. RAMAGOPAL RAO and MR. MAYANK SHRIVASTAVA, MS. MARYAM SHOJAEI BAGHINI**, Department of Electrical Engineering

**PROF. VIVEK AGARWAL** has been appointed Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Research Ambassador for the academic session 2010-2011, in recognition of his outstanding commitment and leadership in promoting Indo-German relations in education and research by supporting the goals and objectives of DAAD.

**PROF. RAMASUBRAMANIAN**, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, has been selected for the Prof. R.C. Gupta Endowment History of Science Lecture Award (2010) of the National Academy of Sciences, India (NASI).

**PROF. V. RAMAGOPAL RAO**, Department of Electrical Engineering, has been selected for the DAE-SRC Outstanding Research Investigator Award by DAE-SRC.

**PROF. ASHWIN GUMASTE**, Department of Computer Science & Engineering, has been selected for the DAE-SRC Outstanding Research Investigator Award by DAE-SRC.

**PROF. DULAL PANDA**, Department of Biosciences & Bioengineering, has been selected for the DAE-SRC Outstanding Research Investigator Award by DAE-SRC.

**PROF. R. MURUGAVEL**, Department of Chemistry, has been selected for the DAE-SRC Outstanding Research Investigator Award by DAE-SRC.

**PROF. D.V. KHAKHAR**, Director, IIT Bombay, has been awarded the J.C. Bose Fellowship.

**PROF. U.B. DESAI**, Director, IIT Hyderabad (AP), has been awarded the J.C. Bose Fellowship.

**PROF. S. KOTHA**, Department of Chemistry, has been awarded the J.C. Bose Fellowship.

**PROF. D. CHANDRASEKHARAM**, Department of Earth Science, has been elected to the Board of Directors, International Geothermal Association (IGA). IGA is located in Iceland and has over 6,600 members across all over the countries. He is the first Indian to be elected to this prestigious post.

A paper by **PROF. S. G. BHARGAVA** and his student **Ms. UPASANA AGARWAL**, SJM School of Management, titled "Examining the Antecedents and outcomes of Psychological Contract Breach: Role of Trust and Procedural Justice", has won the Best Paper Award at the 11th International HRM Conference held at the Aston Business School, Aston University, UK, during 9th-12th June, 2010.

**PROF. T. N. SINGH**, Department of Earth Sciences, has been awarded the first P.N. Bose Mineral Award, 2009 by the Indian Mining and Engineering Journal.

**PROF. CHANDRA VENKATARAMAN**, Department of Chemical Engineering, has been invited to give a plenary lecture at the International Aerosol Conference to be held from August 29-September 3, 2010, at Helsinki, Finland. The international conference, held once every four years, is hosted by the International Aerosol Research Assembly (IARA), an organisation of 12 national aerosol research associations. She will deliver a lecture titled, "Using interactions: From challenge to opportunity."

## COLLOQUIUM

**PROF. RAJENDRA BHATIA**, Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi, spoke on 'A Brief History of Fourier Series', at the Institute Colloquium on 3rd September, 2010. Prof. Rajendra Bhatia is a Distinguished Scientist at the Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi. He is a recipient of the S. S. Bhatnagar Prize and the J. C. Bose National Fellowship. He is Fellow of Indian National Science Academy, Indian Academy of Sciences and Third World Academy of Sciences. He is the author of five books, the founder-editor of the well-known TRIM series, and chief editor of the Proceedings of the International Congress of Mathematicians, 2010. His book Fourier Series, originally published in TRIM, was later published by the Mathematical Association of America, and his first book Perturbation Bounds for Matrix Eigenvalues was reprinted in the series SIAM Classics in Applied Mathematics. He is also the author of Matrix Analysis a publication that is cited equally often by mathematicians, statisticians, computer scientists and physicists.

COLLOQUIUM

**MR. VIVEK KUNDRA**, U.S. Chief Information Officer, Office of Management and Budget, NW, Washington spoke on 'Leveraging the Power of Technology' at the Institute Colloquium on 31st August, 2010. Mr. Kundra was appointed by President Barack Obama as the Federal Chief Information Officer (CIO) at the White House in 2009. As CIO, he directs the policy and strategic planning of federal information technology investments, and is responsible for overseeing federal technology spending.

**AMBASSADOR (RETD.) RAJENDRA ABHYANKAR**, Chairman, Kunzru Centre for Defence Studies and Research, Pune, spoke on India and West Asia (Under the Distinguished Lecture Series on India's Foreign Policy by the Public Diplomacy Division, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi), at the Institute Colloquium on 16th July, 2010. Ambassador Rajendra Abhyankar is currently Adviser, The Asia Foundation, New Delhi. He was Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi (from 2001 to 2004). He was closely involved with India's policy on Iraq, a country with which he has had a long association, having been in Baghdad during the Iraq-Iran war. He was responsible for fashioning India's policy on Palestine-Israel issue and for developing India's relations with Israel. He also formulated and supervised India's policy in the field of counter-terrorism and led a number of bilateral groups with countries in the region.

STUDENT NEWS

A student's team consisting of **MR. AMIT PRABHAKAR, MR. S. THANIGAIVEL, MR. NITIN JOSHI** and **MR. MANASHJIT GOGOI** from Department of Biosciences & Bioengineering has won the second prize in a competition organised by DBT and Association of Biotechnology Enterprises – "Biotechnology Entrepreneurship Student Teams – BEST 2010".

A student's team consisting of **MS. DISHA MUNGALPARA, MR. TONEY SEBASTIAN, MR. ABHISHEK SINGH** and **MR. K. THIRUPATHI** from Department of Biosciences & Bioengineering has won the second prize in a competition organised by DBT and Association of Biotechnology Enterprises – "Biotechnology Entrepreneurship Student Teams – BEST 2010".

APPOINTMENTS



**PROF. NARAYAN PARASURAM** has joined as Adjunct Associate Professor in the Industrial Design Centre on June 30, 2010.



**DR. ALOK PORWAL** has joined as Associate Professor in the Centre for Studies in Resources Engineering on July 1, 2010.



**PROF. PRAMOD S. KHAMBETE** has joined as Adjunct Professor in the Industrial Design Centre on July 6, 2010.



**DR. SAURABH V. LODHA** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering on July 12, 2010.



**DR. PRAVESH JUNG GOLAY** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences on July 16, 2010.



**DR. (MS.) MRINMOYI KULKARNI** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences on July 16, 2010.



**DR. SHAMIK SEN** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering on July 19, 2010.



**PROF. KAMLESH B. PANDE** has joined as Adjunct Professor in the Shailesh J. Mehta School of Management on July 19, 2010.



**DR. K.P. RAY** has joined as Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering on July 21, 2010.



**DR. NUTAN LIMAYE** has joined as Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Science & Engineering on August 16, 2010.



**PROF. B. S. PANI**, Department of Civil Engineering, has been appointed as Emeritus Fellow on July 5, 2010.

RETIREMENTS



**PROF. DIPAN KUMAR GHOSH** retired after 36 years of service on July 31, 2010. He worked in the institute as Professor, Department of Physics.

*When I joined the institute, Prof. Ghosh's welcome was very heartwarming. The sense of belonging I have with the department and the institute is in no less a measure due to his caring attitude.*

*As head, I could ask Prof. Ghosh to teach any course and he is more than willing to take it. No job that would take the department and the institute farther is beneath his dignity to undertake.*

*I could go on and on but the space allotted to me is limited. In the end, I would like to say that Prof. Ghosh epitomises the phrase I read somewhere: "that man is creative who makes this place a better place to live".*  
- Prof. Raghava Varma, HoD, Department of Physics



**MS. ANNIE DEVASSY** retired after 38 years of service on July 31, 2010. She worked in the institute as Jr. Supdt., Dean (R&D).

*"Ms. Annie Devassy is a cheerful lady with a positive attitude towards life. The way she maintained the files intact and updated them was admirable. Apart from her routine work, if a task was given to her, she worked with dedication to deliver the end result. The entire IRCC team will miss her."*  
- Sivakami, Senior Administrative Officer, Dean R&D Office, IRCC



**SHRI CHAMPATI S. HANUMANTE** retired after 34 years of service on July 31, 2010. He worked in the institute as Jr. Lab. Assistant, Department of Chemical Engineering.

*Shri Hanumante assisted in UG Lab experiments at S2 Bay Laboratory of the Chemical Engineering Department*  
- Shri S.V. Deshpande, Technical Superintendent

*"Mr. Hanumante worked with a smile and ever willing to do all that he could, sometimes beyond his own responsibilities. His endearing rapport with the students, cheerful attitude and zest will be missed by all. We wish him a happy and content post-retirement life."*  
- Prof. Santosh Noronha, Department of Chemical Engineering



**SHRI RAMBHAU D. CHAVAN** retired after 39 years of service on July 31, 2010. He worked in the institute as Attendant (SG), Academic Section.

*"Shri Rambhau D. Chavan worked in the institute as a Roneo Operator in Academic Office. He took his work very seriously and co-operated well with colleagues. Whenever a job was assigned to him, he accomplished the same efficiently, in a timely manner and with great enthusiasm."*  
- Mr. H.S. Verma, Acting Dy. Registrar, Asstt. Registrar & All Academic Section Staff



**MS. VINAYA N. SARAF** retired after 20 years of service on July 31, 2010. She worked in the institute as Helper (Sr.), Administration Section.

*"Smt. Vinaya Saraf always performed her duty with dedication and zeal. She was very honest and punctual. The section will feel the absence of a good working hand after her retirement."*  
- Mr. C.P. Joglekar, Coordinator, PT&D



**SHRI GANGADHAR P. MURSHILLIN** retired after 32 years of service on August 31, 2010. He worked in the institute as Library Information Officer, Central Library.

*"He was responsible, hardworking and prepared to accept any challenge irrespective of the complexity of work. He was cordial with all his fellow members and helpful to readers. Apart from his best professional contributions he was a singer of light Karnataka music. We all wish him a very happy, healthy and long retired life."*  
- Dr. Phadke, Deputy Librarian, Central Library



**MS. V. V. MAHINDRAKER** retired after 27 years of service on August 31, 2010. She worked in the institute as Jr. Supdt., Telephone Exchange.

*"Mrs. V.V. Mahindraker was very kind by nature. She did all the work assigned to her with dedication and sincerity. Best wishes to her for a happy and long retired life."*  
- Mr. M. N. R. Rao, Manager (Telecommunications)

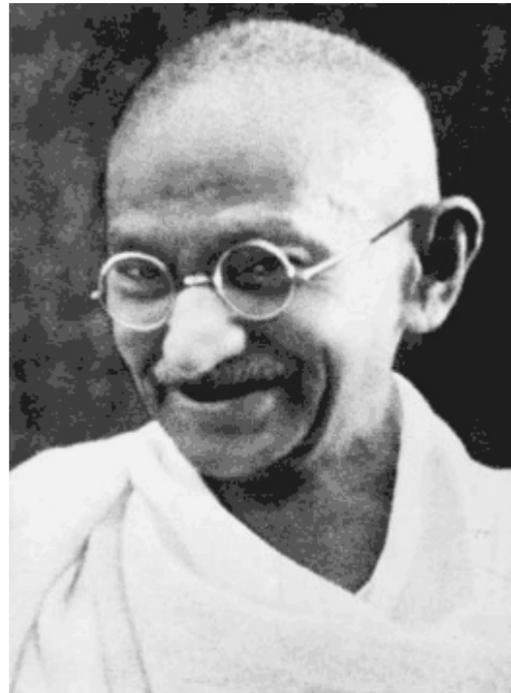


Illustration by Regan Raj, IDC

THE UPSIDE OF DOWN

# Sustainable Saints Quaintly Outdated?

■ Sweetie Ahluwalia



There is a joke that the new India remembers the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October because it is a 'dry-day'. This October I found myself invited for a book-release ceremony and the manner in which those gathered, spoke of Gandhi, led me to read the 'Hind Swaraj'.

Babasaheb, one is more familiar with, in our times. I know that he was instrumental in drafting our constitution, but know little else about his life and work.

The most commonly replicated images of these two remarkable men make a striking contrast. Gandhi almost bare-bodied; Ambedkar dressed in suit and tie.



These external differences fade out if one looks at where they came from. In many ways, Gandhi was privileged and sought to disrobe in order to be one with the masses. Ambedkar belonged to the masses who had been systematically kept out of the system and his choice to be attired in the way he is often depicted is perhaps a statement-of-sorts.

And because of my interest in sustainability, I began to read a little more of what these saint-like figures had to say . . .

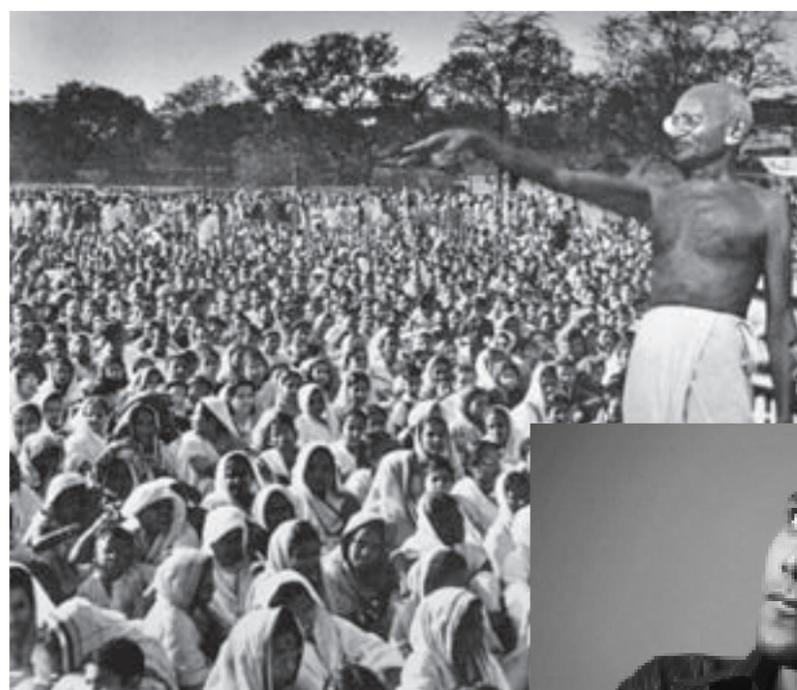
"When I read Mr. Dutt's Economic History of India, I wept; and as I think of it again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared."

**M. K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj**



"The teachings of Buddha are eternal, but even then Buddha did not proclaim them to be infallible. The religion of Buddha has the capacity to change according to times, a quality which no other religion can claim to have...Now what is the basis of Buddhism? If you study carefully, you will see that Buddhism is based on reason. There is an element of flexibility inherent in it, which is not found in any other religion."

**B. R. Ambedkar**



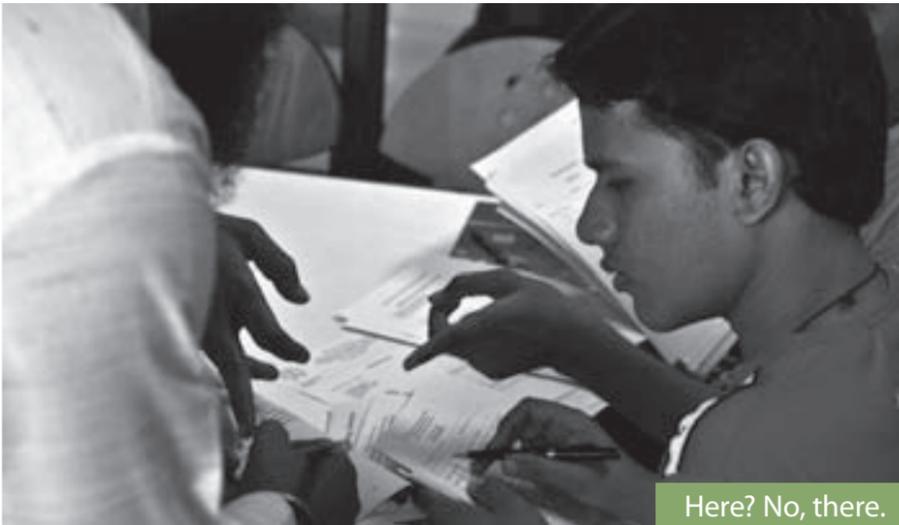
Both these statements make me ponder. Today we may regard these views as quaintly outdated. Paradoxically, it appears that the further we move away from these, the more relevant they become.

PHOTO-ESSAY

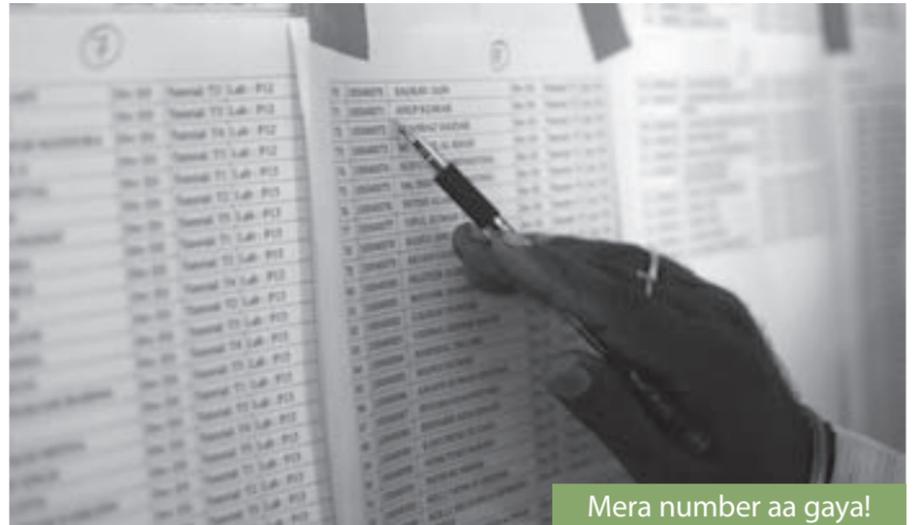
Come July, and the campus starts getting filled in with new, wide-eyed faces walking in through the gates of this elusive, if not mythical, terrestrial

planet. It's an unseen place that has already been the centre of their universe for the last two to three years. With bags and suitcases and 'mummy

papa' in tow, they came this July and gave some art-like, candid shots captured beautifully by our photographer, **Venkat Damara from IDC.** ■



Here? No, there.



Mera number aa gaya!



Going Solo



Ab yahaan se kahaan??



Bas phone karte rehna, Mammi



Yahaan milenge aapko: sone ke liye takiya aur gadde, aur nahane ke liye balti aur mugghe

Claps and congratulations to **HEMANSHU VADEHRA** (First year M.Tech., CSE) for winning last issue's competition! We received a lot of entries, but Hemanshu was the only one who got it right.

The correct answer: **the common characteristic is that all the quotes we used as captions are either pop-culture misquotes, or were never actually said or written.**

(Source: Wikiquote)

Hemanshu, you have won a gift voucher from Crossword book store. Please call us at 7025 to collect it from the PRO's office!

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).

**THE RAINTREE TEAM**

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Jaya Joshi, Damayanti Bhattacharya, Neha Chaudhuri, Raja Mohanty, Rohit Manchanda, Bhavini Pant

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**MAILING ADDRESS**