

THE BITS&&A EDITION

# Sandpaper [2.0]

BITS PILANI ALUMNI MAGAZINE, SUMMER 2008



## BITS&&A bowls a Royal googly!

✚ BITS&&A joins the IPL frenzy, cheers for Rajasthan Royals

### IN MEMORIAM:

- ✚ MEERA BANERJEE
- ✚ LAXMAN MOHANTY
- ✚ K.K. BIRLA
- ✚ C.R. MITRA

### FROM THE ANNALS



G.D. BIRLA'S POLITICAL CAREER

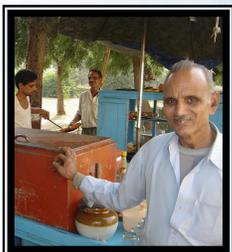


**BITS of the 70s: Strikes, murders & suicides!**

### VERBOSITY

- ✚ CROSSWORD
- ✚ TRIXIES

**Chimaera!**



✚ Nagarji

## Quarterly BITSians

✚ B. Sandhya



## UNDER THE BANYAN TREE

BY DILEEPAN NARAYANAN (2000 MECH)

“When I am dead, I hope it may be said: ‘His sins were scarlet, but his books were read.’”

~ Hilaire Belloc

“My favourite Tinkle,” my little niece announced, “has the *best* stories.” And she went back to blankly staring at her Tinkle, running her tiny hands over the sketches and getting a ‘feel’ for the characters. Like her, we all yearn for good stories; from the past, from across seas, of achievements, of business deals, of invisible lines, of gossip, canards... comedies, tragedies, inspirational, thought provoking. Stories.

When I took over Sandpaper, the biggest challenge I had to surmount was whetting the appetite and memory of contributing BITSians for good stories. Months after, when I read the script in its final form, I feel content (*pun intended*).

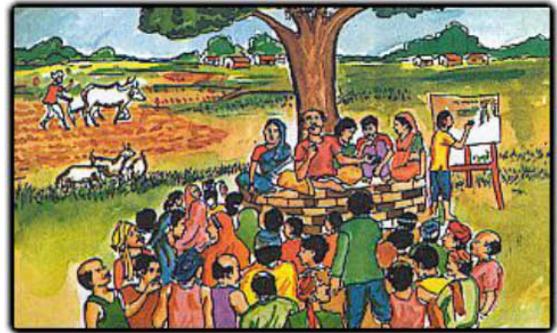
The Summer 2008 issue is, more than anything, an ensemble of some good writing: creative, investigative and journalistic.

The team had been dabbling with a few ideas for the cover story, but when BITSAA forged a deal with the high-profile Rajasthan Royals, we decided we wanted to showcase the BITSian’s passion for cricket. Hence the cover story is a focus on BITS alums who have translated their passion into significant contributions in the field, like Venu with DreamCricket. Murari being one of the architects behind CricInfo, the one stop shop for cricket news, makes us swell

with pride, while Uday Kari’s passion for the game in picturesque Maui is sheer romance.

Every editor’s challenge is to bring in a whiff of fresh air, while retaining past successes. It is no mean feat. In that vein, we’ve taken a couple of steps. This issue, for the first time, features four columns from four vastly different personalities, Dilip D’Souza – writer extraordinaire, Anupendra Sharma – a BITSian VC full of energy, Anuradha Gupta – BITSian social activist and writer, and Rahul Misra – a poet full of promise. Also, tales from the sleepy town of Pilani, largely untroubled by passing eras, never cease to fascinate. To kindle those embers still glowing in our hearts, we’ve introduced a new section, *From the annals*, which features two articles of some literary quality from Aparajith (G. D. Birla’s political career) and Sandhya (the BITS strikes of the 70s).

While this is an exciting time to be a BITSian, it has also been a sobering time for the BITSian community. This year, we have witnessed the rite of passage of four stalwarts representing the four edifices of BITS: an ex-faculty and warden, a Chancellor and founding member, a former Director, and a respected alum. Sandpaper



pays homage to Prof. Meera Banerjee, Shri. K. K. Birla, Dr. C. R. Mitra and Laxman Mohanty.

On a lighter note, every time the discussion shifts to choosing *Quarterly BITSians*, the witty ones nominate themselves, citing that they work only *quarter* percent of the time. This time, the team was unanimous in choosing B. Sandhya and Nagarji. The interview with B. Sandhya, the Inspector General of Kerala Police, painter and writer and has authored a few published books is inspiring while the interview of our dear old Nagarji leaves you pining for more. “*Aur ek samchaat, ji!*”

Replete with skilled writing and carrying a fresh new look and feel, this issue is likely to tickle the BITSian’s taste buds for good literature. A committed team has worked on this BITSAA product for months on end. We’ve nurtured hopes of having the reader glued to his seat under the banyan tree with gripping narratives of tales not often told. I suspect we have succeeded. ♦

THE BITS&amp;&amp; EDITION

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# Sandpaper Online

<http://sandpaper.bitsaa.org>

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- ✚ Cover Story: BITSAA and IPL
- ✚ From the annals: G. D. Birla's political career; BITS of the 70s and 80s
- ✚ Columns: Dilip's jottings, Anu *rather* scrawls, The Anu pen draws, Misra's missive
- ✚ Quarterly BITSian: B. Sandhya, Nagarji

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<b>THE BITSAA DIARIES</b>	Pritiwiraj Moulik, Suresh Kumar

## JOIN THE TEAM

Sandpaper 2.0 is created by a global team with members spanning seven countries in four continents. It's a great place to gain organisational leadership experience, network with the alumni community and enhance your writing skills.

Please send your articles, nominations for Quarterly BITSian, letters to the editor, feedback and requests to join the team to:  
Dileepan@bitsaa.org.

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# BITSAA SANDPAPER VISION

Focus on the BITSian community - alumni, students and administration.

Build a close knit BITSian **community** by promoting

Increase BITS brand equity

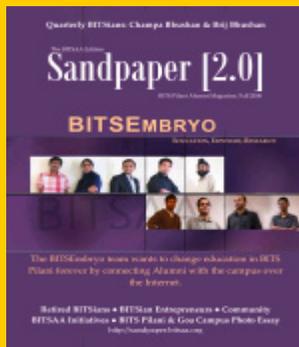
**participation**, evoking feelings of nostalgia, **pride** and

An emphasis on building engagement through awareness and debate

connectedness by keeping everyone in the community **informed**.

Our news, achievements in academics, business and in the community. What's happening at BITS and at BITSAA chapters around the world

To read past issues visit the website:  
<http://sandpaper.bitsaa.org>



## FROM THE DESERT SANDS ...

*While hunting for BITSians involved in the strike we chanced upon Sridhar Rajan who, along with a few others started 'Sandpaper'. So here's some more history.*

*As of 1980, the campus magazine was called CamelPost but there weren't many issues for a couple of years after. Around 1983, a few BITSians, including Sridhar revived it under the name of Sandpaper. Sadly, not too many issues came of that either.*

*The most prominent publishing initiatives back then were The Sunday Dialect, the Cactus Flower, and the Oasis mag.*

*The Sunday Dialect was the idea of Ahmad Danish Afroze, who then recruited 7 others for the cause. A weekly tabloid-sized newspaper, printed on a letter-press and on newsprint, it was cutting edge technology for Pilani in those days. It made a regular appearance for 8 weeks till logistics and other campus obstacles played havoc.*

*The first Cactus flower issue was released in 1984. This was printed on an offset press in Delhi, again, a quantum leap. Sridhar edited the creative section for that issue. However that was the last issue seen for quite a few years.*

*The Oasis mag was apparently a lot of fun in those bygone days. Fuelled by raw energy, banned substances, and the shenanigans of the visiting teams, it was quite the vibrant nerve centre of the festival according to Sridhar. "For the last few years that we ran it, we called it the Oasis Press Magazine - a pretentious name conceived entirely to spawn the acronym OPM, itself a not-so-veiled reference to one of the aforementioned contraband. The editorial tone was, of course, lurid yellow, and nobody was spared." Too bad that changed to a sober and plaid EPC - English Press Club.*

*Acknowledgements to Sandhya Krishnan for tirelessly unearthing these Sandpaper trivia.*

*~ Ed*

## BITSAA AND IPL: HOWZZAT!

BY ASHISH GARG ('97 E&I)

One of BITSAA's biggest wins this year has been its partnership with Rajasthan Royals. It speaks for the organisation's weight and ability to forge deals and mobilise support for the best. Ashish Garg takes us through how it happened.

Cricket is India's soul. Cricket is the fabric that binds us Indians together across constructs of languages, religions, foods and cultures.

With the entire country (and NRIs like me) in the grip of a cricket fever, BITSAA decided to jump into the fray.

Emerging Media owners of the Jaipur IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals, announced a first of its kind global fan alliance by signing an exclusive relationship with BITSAA. This deal came to BITSAA through Dreamcricket.com (founded by BITSian Venu Palaparthi).

By the time I read the following email, my heart was pounding. IPL was the happening thing, and BITSAA was going to be a part of it; this was big!

“ Ashish,

“I want to introduce you to Pavan Kachibhatla. He is ex-IMG and is closely involved with IPL. He wanted to see if Rajasthan Royals can partner with BITSAA.

### BITSAA & RR: WHAT WAS THE BIG DEAL!



As a result of the BITSAA – Rajasthan Royals deal BITSians around the world were able to avail of the following benefits:

- 50% discount on all season tickets for all home games (played at Jaipur)
- 20% discount on purchase of 10 or more tickets for specific games (i.e. not season tickets).
- Free tickets for home games that BITSAA will raffle to its members for specific promotions
- 50% discount to BITSians who may want to purchase a VIP box for the season
- Special tickets to RR away games like the ones in Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata
- Discounts on RR merchandise

“The relationship will trigger contests and marketing incentives aimed at BITSians and alumni. A special box for BITSians and alumni in the stadium is an idea. And free tickets for BITSians too. I especially like the latter idea. It is worth trying out, especially for Jaipur and Delhi chapters.

“Time is short, but perhaps, next year, we can invite Rajasthan Royals to actually play some wing cricket? Now we're talking!  
Venu”

Venu's email hit my Blackberry on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2008.

Rajasthan Royals and BITSAA signed the partnership deal on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2008.

The BITSAA-RR deal was announced in a press release on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. SP Kothari (BITSAA Chairman) announced to the world, “BITS Pilani alumni around the world are rooting for Rajasthan Royal's victory in the IPL. Go Royals!”

Rajasthan Royals won the first IPL edition on June 1, 2008. ♦

# BITS AND CRICKET: A PERENNIAL CAMARADERIE

BY VENU PALAPARTHI ('87 ECO & CS) AND SATISH POLISETTI ('02 MECH & EEE)

From the common room to Centurion Park, the BITSian breathes cricket. India's favourite sport, cricket and India's premier student community... when two favourites align, the creative spark that results is pure magic! Or should we say, a match well played!

## Prologue:

Ram Bhawan, March 3, 2003.

I was trying hard to visualise orthographic and isometric Views for my Engineering Graphics exam scheduled the next day when fresh breeze carried frenzied exclamations from the common room to my GHOT pad: *"Anyone still having dinner might as well*

*BITS Alumni  
Murari  
Venkataraman  
was the co-  
founder of  
CricInfo, giant  
in Cricketing  
Web World  
today.*

*throw their plates and get back into their seats, its happening at Centurion, and Sachin is doing it".*

*India vs. Pakistan. ICC Cricket World Cup 2003.*

I did throw my books away for the nail biting encounter. I am able to vividly remember how we screamed, cheered and

hopped on top of chairs to rejoice India's victory. Engineering Graphics went into the Centurion kitchen sink but it did not matter. You could feel the adrenaline flowing. It was cricket at its best. I could not have asked for more.

Every one of us has one anecdote or another that he/she can relate to when we talk of BITS and cricket together. Most of us wistfully reminisce about *cricket at BITS played either in the QT, GymG, C lawns, or the EA Sports stadiums!* BITSAA recently saw the connect between BITSians and cricket assume larger than life proportions with the BITS fan base cheerleading Rajasthan Royals all the way. When we at Sandpaper 2.0 investigated to see this intimate connection between BITSians and cricket, some fascinating stories saw the light of day.

## Story 1:

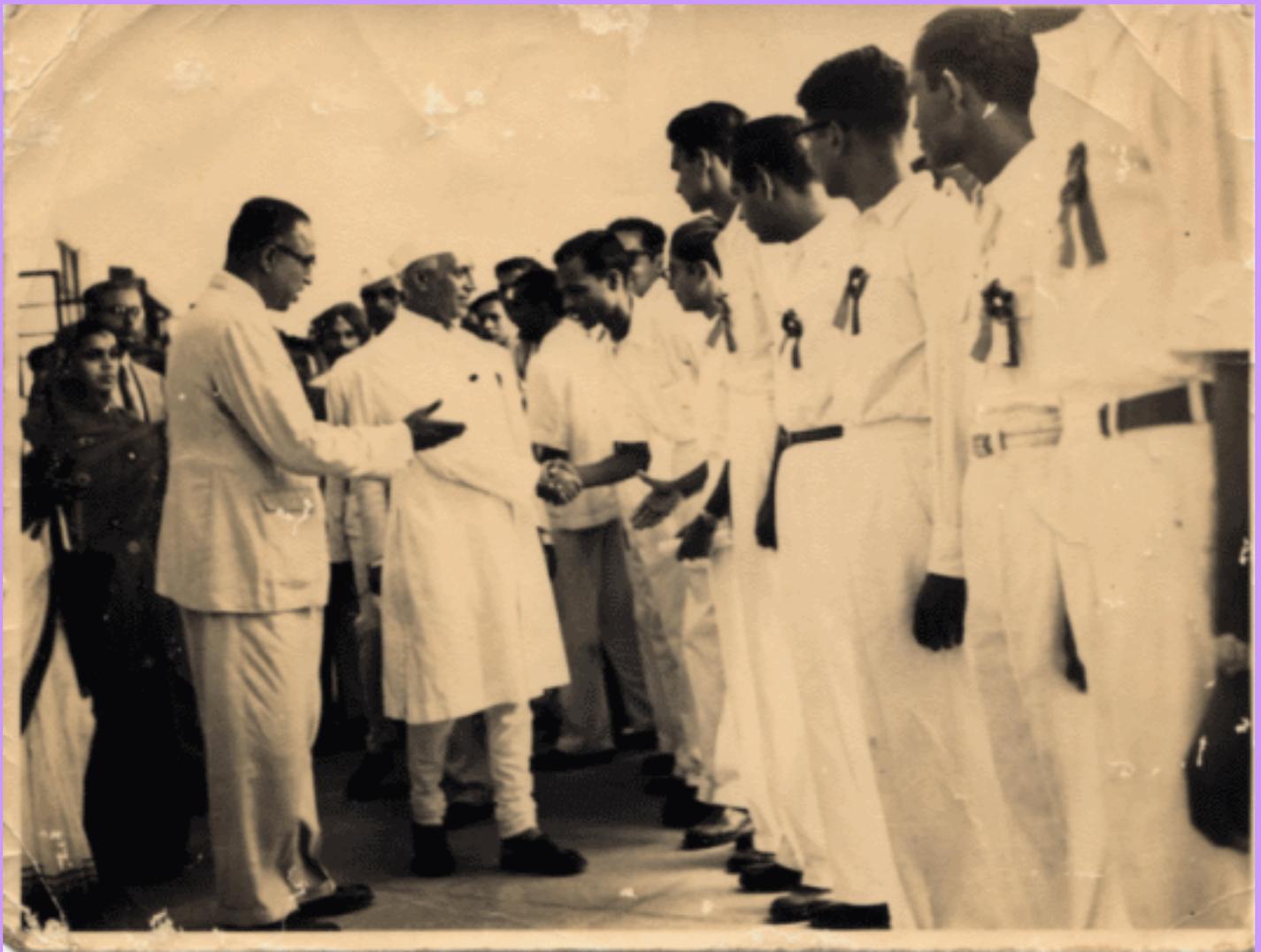
**DreamCricket: BITSians transform a Fantasy Cricket website into a bigger Venture**

DreamCricket started off as a Fantasy Cricket website idea of Ara Pararajasingham and Mahender Bohra friends and

DreamCricket has some rare memorabilia including a bat used by Gary Sobers and some signed by Don Bradman. Their book collection includes *Maharaja Ranji's Jubilee Book of Cricket* and the extremely rare *Felix on the Bat*.

colleagues of Venu, at Reuters. Mahender designed key portions of the original DreamCricket fantasy cricket website, which happens to be the first of its kind. For what started as a limited advising in marketing strategy, the BITSian connection strengthened in 2005 when BITSians helped the site to shore up the finances and set up e-commerce operations. Two other BITSians Shiv Kumar (NTS at BITS) and Jyothi Myneni extended their interest by investing into the firm. Currently, the website has expanded into content, gaming and community tools such as cricket league management

**In New Jersey, the only cricket radio show has been co-hosted for close to 5 years by Aravind Ramachandran (Class of 1991).**



A rare collectible: Jawaharlal Nehru meeting BITSian Cricket Team in 1954. When was I born?

software. The team has engaged with BITS Alumni by organising events such as BITSAA “wing cricket” events in USA and India in 2004. They were instrumental in the BITSAA affiliation with Rajasthan Royals.

DreamCricket supports a professional team in USA. Further, DreamCricket Fooglies was a semi-finalist at Los Angeles Open Twenty20. The team had many former Ranji and U19 players from India. Plans of having two graduates of the

DreamCricket Academy as overseas players in England are being sorted.

DreamCricket has some rare memorabilia including a bat used by Gary Sobers and some signed by Don Bradman. They also have the most extensive collection of match footage anywhere in the world. Recently, they bought a huge book collection from the Ridley College in Ontario which had a marvellous collection of old cricket books. Their book collection includes *Maharaja*

*Ranji's Jubilee Book of Cricket* and the extremely rare *Felix on the Bat*.

DreamCricket is USA's leading cricket related content and community website. Moreover they are the leading supplier of cricket equipment online and offline. Their current focus is on providing a stronger Web 2.0 platform for effective communication of cricketers worldwide.

DreamCricket Academy is their latest expansion this year after

The ICC has promised a lot of neutral venue cricket but the walk has not matched the talk. India has already declared she won't play in Sharjah or Canada or USA for a variety of reasons – no grounds, match fixing, etc. So we said, how about the Moon?

Where else can fielders dive without worrying about getting injured!

the inauguration of their first indoor nets and Pro Shop in NJ by Chetan Chauhan. The team is all excited to be part of the cricket revolution in America.

It is little wonder that they are eyeing expansion into the Indian market, which is the centre of gravity and primary hub for cricket.

The passion and innovation at DreamCricket is threatening to break all shackles and become a top e-commerce venture into cricket.

**“Have you ever wondered of buying a ticket and going to the Moon to see a cricket match?”**

This is what the team at Dream Cricket has to say about what they call a “Lunar Cricket Field”:

“We did it as a joke; the DreamCricket Lunar Cricket Field is the first property on the moon exclusively for playing cricket.

The ICC has promised a lot of neutral venue cricket but the walk has not matched the talk. India has already declared she won't play in Sharjah or Canada or USA for a variety of reasons – no grounds, match fixing, etc. So we said, how about the Moon? We actually quite like the idea; where else can fielders dive without worrying about getting injured! Our Lunar cricket field was featured in 2008 edition of Wisden”.

For what started as a Fantasy Cricket website, DreamCricket has made tremendous progress.

DreamCricket Academy is DreamCricket's latest expansion this year after the inauguration of their first indoor nets and Pro Shop in NJ by Chetan Chauhan. The team is all excited to be part of the cricket revolution in America.



*Venu Palaparathi, Founder, DreamCricket*

**Match: Girls vs. Female Faculty****Date: 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2008-08-13****Venue: C-Lawns, Pilani, India****Match Referee: M.M.S Anand**

**Toss: Sangeeta Sharma, Captain, Female Faculty won the toss and elected to bat first**

**Match Bulletin:**

The good old adage 'there is no substitute for experience' took a backseat during the maiden cricket match between a team of girls students and one of female faculty and wives of staff held on the occasion of Republic Day. On a cloudy afternoon, the spirit of the two teams was worth appreciating right from the beginning. Teams showed their commitment to a rather serious affair by warming up with a lap around the ground before the start of the contest. Contrary to the organisers' fears, both sides were full strength, with some deserving ones having to miss their chance. Sangeeta perhaps could not foresee the pitch and the prevailing conditions. The amount of swing the Girls team bowlers were getting with the new ball was proving to be more than a handful for the Faculty batswomen! Poonam Goyal, Usha Manjunath and Sangeeta Sharma, the captain, put up some resistance by holding fort for a while. When, at one point, talks of a one-sided encounter was beginning to do the rounds, in came Pushp Lata and bailed the Faculty out with her flawless and unshackled batting. She remained unbeaten on 33 with 2 sixes and 4 fours. Pushp Lata not only scored some important runs for her team, but also helped in increasing the run rate. At the other end, she received able support from Poonam Vyas, Amrita Pancholi and Ruchika Sharma in the last few overs. In the end, Faculty had done quite well to finish at 76 / 8 from 10 overs, and had moved ahead as the favourites.

Not many would have imagined the aplomb with which the Girls took the challenge. By the fifth over the fate of the match had been sealed, and by the sixth over the Girls had wrapped up the match! Blistering knocks ensured that the Girls sealed a well deserved victory and sent out a resounding statement: the future of the country lies safely in the hands of today's women not only in areas of technology and education, but in cricket as well!

Prof. Raghurama handed a Virtual Trophy to the winning captain in a presentation ceremony held later. Pushp Lata was declared the Batswoman of the Match and she attributed her splendid batting performance to the immense support of her team members. Nikita from the Girls team was unanimously declared the Player of the Match and also the Catcher of the Match. Nikita thanked her friends for helping her discover her cricketing skills.

***Result: Girls team won by 9 wickets with 3.2 over to go***



**Lead batswoman of Female Faculty, Pushp Lata poised to face a delivery against the Girls**

### *Story 2:*

#### **Cricket Stock Exchange: another start-up driving 5 lakh hits in 2 weeks**

Karthik Laxman (IIM - 2005) and Kaushik Muthuravichandran of BITS 2004, both *sidies* for 4 years, teamed up with a couple of friends to start CricStock.com, a virtual stock exchange for cricketers. The website was launched for World Cup 2007 and became an instant hit among India's cricket fans. Over the next month, their website captured the imagination of the media. They were featured in Financial Express, The Telegraph, Rediff and Daily Times of Pakistan!

Traffic soared and the media speculated whether shares of Sachin Tendulkar would yield returns comparable to Infosys. *"Move over Dalal Street, here comes the 'Cricket Stock Exchange',"* wrote Rediff. *"Watch out FTSE and NASDAQ,"* advised CricInfo. They even got their own Wikipedia entry! ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cricket\\_Stock\\_Exchange](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cricket_Stock_Exchange))

But just as a falling stock market scares away investors from trading stocks, the downturn of Indian team's fortunes in that completely forgettable World Cup caused folks to drift away from the cricket exchange. Traffic dipped and what started off as a fun way to learn about

the stock markets ended up as a lesson in the ebbs and flows of capital markets.

Of course, there is a silver lining to this cloud. The company has since found a buyer for their invention and they can still claim to have spawned several new cricket games with dubiously similar names - but none with the same success as CricStock.com.

The founders have now started a PR company called Pi Communications in Ahmedabad. Sandpaper caught up with Karthik Laxman and Kaushik Muthuravichandran about their cricket adventure and their newest venture.

## COVER STORY

“The thought of having a Cricket Stock Exchange was a throw up idea during informal post cricket match discussions in IIM-A,” says Karthik. Later, he took it more seriously along with his classmate. Karthik admits to have taken an ideal pool of electives to leave him

The BITS cricket team frequently gets players who have represented their states in different age categories. Not always is BITSian cricket restricted to the QT!

with sufficient time to think about the venture and work to take it forward. He slowly pulled in Kaushik, who was working as a programmer in an MNC during that period.

Kaushik himself was inclined into diverting his full attention to CricStock and developed interest when he started helping Karthik informally with some web related problems.

“No one expects to start a website and get 5 lakh hits within a couple of weeks. There was an adrenaline rush nearly every day in the first couple of weeks and we thoroughly enjoyed it,” admit K & K.

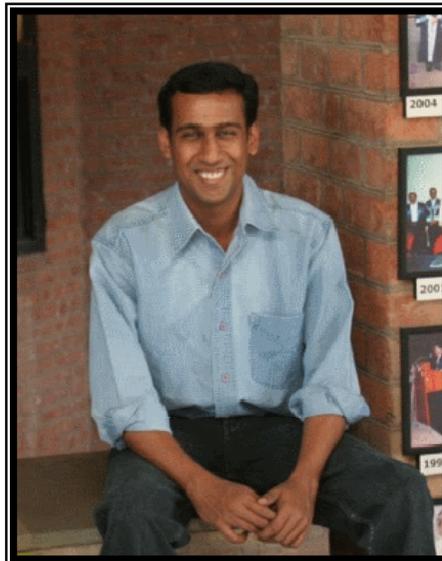
The main success for revenue generation for CSE was they were spot on with their timing and offered a great product. The team tied up with a media partner, a national news channel, to make a half hour show on CricStock hosted by some former cricketers. One aspect

they did not focus was innovation after India’s debacle in 2007 World Cup. It put CSE in a weak position unable to tap the revenue during the 20-20 World Cup in South Africa even though India emerged winners.

Other improvements the team is looking at is making the site global and more aggressive tournament launches.

Currently the team has dispersed and is involved in different ventures. They got together for one last time to host the site for IPL and CricStock did well during IPL by bringing back significant traffic. They have identified an equally motivated and excited team and working CricStock reach higher potentials under them.

Karthik is now associated with Pi Communications which comprises IIM-A, BITS & IIT graduates and people with extensive media and Public Relations experience. ♦



**Karthik Laxman, Founder,  
Cricket Stock Exchange.**



*Does anything ever change at BITS?  
Left: Wing cricket during 1955. Right: QT cricket in 2006*



*Left: BITS Cricket Team 1953-54.*

*Right: BITS Cricket Team 1954-55*

*ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Sandpaper thanks Venu Palaparathi, who has been instrumental in getting all the information about the BITS cricketing ventures and the rare photographs for this Cover Story. Avaneendra of 2005 batch helped with some information about the Girls vs. Female Faculty cricket match.*

# MURARI: THE MAN BEHIND CRICINFO

BY VENU PALAPARTHI ('87 ECO & CS)

“The moving finger types CricInfo, having typed moves on...” In an uncanny allegory that rings true for Indians, CricInfo determines the fate of office-going cricket lovers for those 100 overs. Would you believe it if you found out a BITSian is behind CricInfo’s advent? Murari Venkataraman ('82, Mech), one of the students who started CricInfo, opens up to Venu’s evocative queries.

*Murari Venkataraman, an '82 batch BITSian, was one of the group of grad students that started CricInfo, the one stop shop for all cricket news today. He was a graduate student at the University of Texas when he tirelessly organised their databases, adding information, soliciting contributions. He was also instrumental in organising the fund drive for new servers. He served as the CEO of CricInfo, India from 1999 to 2001.*

*Venu caught up with Murari for an exclusive tête-à-tête, the result of which is a candid insider view of a rags-to-riches story for CricInfo:*

How did you get involved with cricket? Did you play any cricket at BITS? Were you in the BOSM cricket team or were you the more casual wing-cricket sort of guy?

“

I did not play any cricket in BITS, except for a smattering of wing-cricket. My interest in cricket though was from much earlier; my school days. The interest remained latent, until it was revived by CricInfo, I suppose.

”

Is your family into cricket?

“

Not really. My paternal grandfather was a decent player at the club-level in Madras in the late 1920s for Madras United Club (MUC) while studying at Presidency College. He knew and played with M.G. Gopalan (double-international for India, Hockey & Cricket). He knew C.

K. Nayudu and a bunch of other first class players of that time (there were probably only 30-40 First Class players in all of India then!).

”

What other activities were you involved in at BITS? Take us down memory lane for a bit.

“

Music Club was my one big love. After taking part in the

Fresher's Night I did nothing until my second year, second semester. After that my involvement was steady – I playing the keyboard a little, sang, and took part in various Music Nights in a couple of different bands, and did the CulFest circuit with the BITS team. I was Music Club Secretary in my Final Semester.

”

What did you do between 1986 and 1989 when you joined UT Austin?



*Music Nite '83: Murari, with KP and Ganesh*

“

I graduated from BITS in June 1986. I was debating whether to go the U.S. or work in India. I took up a job for a while even as I applied to the U.S. Since the job (selling photocopiers) was not really interesting, I decided to go the U.S. with the first available opportunity I got. I joined Oklahoma State University for an M.S. in Mechanical Engineering in Jan 1987 and finished up with that in Dec 1988. I had got interested in analytical work by then

(computer modelling and the like). I decided to carry on in UT Austin for a Ph.D. with the rather nebulous idea that I would eventually join academia.

”

In 1992, when I came to USA to do my MBA, there was already near-live coverage of cricket matches. Can you walk us through the transformation of the Usenet group to #cricket to CricInfo?

“

The same group of individuals who created rec.sport.cricket (in 1990) also started hanging out on #cricket on IRC. There were folks like K. S. Rao (greater claim to being the ‘Father of Cricket on the Internet’ than the individual who proposed rec.sport.cricket to be created). K.S. Rao and a few others got audio commentary of the Ashes in 1992 I think piped from the U.K. to the US (using some tech on the SUN - I forget now). There was also "coverage" of

the 1991-92 World Cup in Aus/NZ on rec.sport.cricket & #cricket on IRC. This would involve someone watching the matches on TV giving ball-by-ball updates and then somebody else piecing together a scorecard and posting on rec.sport.cricket.

It took Simon King to make that big leap of deciding to create a repository of all of this information to be queried at will. K.S. Rao was good enough to provide a machine (an IBM that ran a rinky-dink version of UNIX) sitting in his office in North Dakota. This happened in March 1993, just prior to the Mosaic browser I might add. Simon wrote the first bot that sat on #cricket in IRC. Users messaged this bot with specific commands and keywords. The bot then went and searched the text files on the machine and scrolled the files whose names matched the keywords.

From the outset Simon envisaged the effort like an Open Source project, where people contributed information about cricket from their part of the world (any kind, all levels; we were agnostic about the type of cricket we covered from the beginning. Hence the breadth and depth of cricket on CricInfo). Simon took on the role of benevolent dictator.

Simon caught me on IRC around April 1993 and conned me into helping out since, as he put it, ‘I was such a heavy user of CricInfo, I needed to give something back.’ Simon was always great at goading people into doing stuff. (Smiles.)

Thus started my involvement with CricInfo. In the early days I managed the database, adding stuff to it. I remember starting the India section, going to

library and transcribing Ranji and Duleep scorecards. Plucking stuff from rec.sport.cricket and putting it on the database. Talking to people to contribute. Making sure the machine was up (it used to crash a lot). Piecing together scorecards of live matches and general bootstrapping stuff.

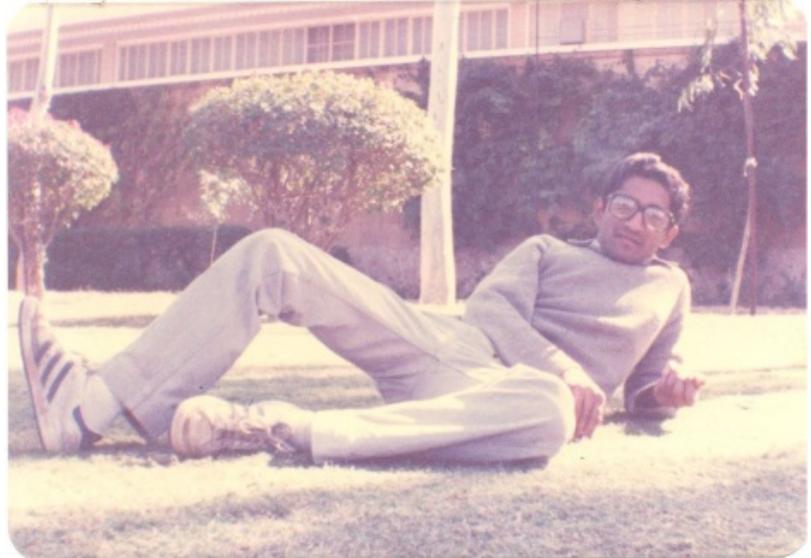
When Simon had to return to the U.K. in late 1993, there was pretty much me and Shashin Shah (Sash) who did the hands-on day-to-day stuff with CricInfo. There were contributors who sent in stuff and we put it on the database, polled people for contributions, etc.

This was all text-based and largely pure information – scorecards, schedules, stats, some match reports, no real editorial – and hence the name CricInfo.

Neeran Karnik, who was at the University of Minnesota (like Simon), home of the Gopher program, talked Simon into putting CricInfo on Gopher. That was transition number one from IRC bot to Gopher.

The IBM machine repeatedly crashed; we had to get a better machine. Etienne Barnard volunteered to buy a 2nd hand SUN machine. We started a pledge drive in late 1993. I had folks send me money. I cashed all of it and sent a cheque for around \$2500 I think to Etienne. The new SUN was housed on the network of the Oregon Graduate Institute (OGI) which was brought down during the World Cup of 1996 causing another shift for CricInfo – this time to the U.K. – but that is another story.

Simon had moved back to the U.K. while I was collecting these cheques. Somewhere around April-May of 1994, I found that my Ph.D. was slipping. I had got Badri into working on the database with me. I mailed Simon that I will take a backseat and let Badri handle more of the day-to-day stuff since I just had to be done with my Ph.D. (My advisor was getting antsy, Ph.D. funding was close to drying out, and a long list of reasons.). This was the state of affairs till I left in June 1995 post my Ph.D. I continued to tend to the CricInfo database from the background.



*Murari at Skylab, 1985*

”

In 1996, you moved back to India. And just before the World Cup, CricInfo announced that it was going to be the 'official' website of World Cup 1996. Did you move back to help with this deal? Or was your move coincidental?

“

I had nothing to do with the deal. I was not active in

CricInfo between June 1995 and July 1997.

”

Where did the money come from for CricInfo's transition from a community to actual for-profit company?

“

The World Cup 1996 was a watershed of sorts for CricInfo. I was away from the Usenet, but there was a lot of back-and-forth among the CricInfo regulars as to the way forward. CricInfo had created a fair amount of value, i.e. it was being used by lots of people. Some folks wanted it to continue as a

volunteer-driven initiative. Simon wanted it to run as a non-profit (hence the first domain registered i.e. [cricket.org](http://cricket.org)), where folks who worked on CricInfo would be paid market wages. There was also a notion that we could talk the ICC into taking CricInfo under their aegis.

With the registering of [cricket.org](http://cricket.org) came the first tentative steps to the web. The first real money Simon got was

a sponsorship for One-day series in South Africa in 1996. CricInfo was incorporated in the U.K.

Mick Jagger and Jagged Networks gave some money. [In 1997 he set up Jagged Interworks and in partnership with CricInfo acquired Internet broadcast rights to a number of cricket matches.] The Mick Jagger money was not so much an investment but a sort of JV to do audio/video for the 1998 Sharjah series along with Realmedia. This was CricInfo's first attempt at cricket streaming. Three of the Sharjah matches streamed made it to the top-4 hosted events by Realmedia. The other event in the top-4 was the Monica Lewinsky hearings!

Michael Watts of CSI (now with Octagon) funded us in late 1999 - he took a 25% stake for GBP 3 million. The Michael Watt infusion could be considered a sort of seed round - just to keep us going. CricInfo was already a multinational operation at this point - so the next round had to be big. We were well past the 'VC Funding' stage by then.

”

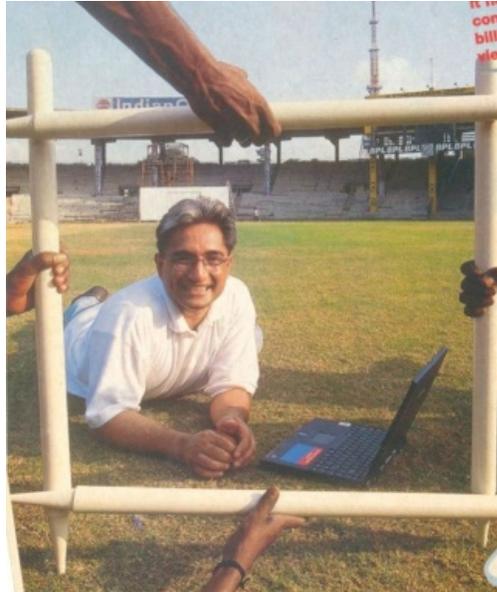
In 1996, you went back to India after your PhD. Did you join CricInfo upon your return?

“

I returned to India in June 1995. I joined L&T R&D in Vadodara a few months later. I quit in July 1997 to move back to Chennai with my folks. I took a job in a software house that wrote automation software. Between June 1995 and 1997, I did not do any CricInfo work.

Meanwhile, Badri had returned to Chennai in 1996. I met him in Jan 1997, which was when I

found out that Simon had gone and incorporated CI in the U.K. in 1996 with him and Badri as Directors.



### ***Murari with CricInfo, posing for Outlook, May 2000***

The (consumer) internet arrived in India in August 1995. After returning to Chennai, I bought a PC and started working on CricInfo again. I went full-time with CricInfo in May 1999. I babysat the conversion of CricInfo India Pvt. Ltd. in a subsidiary of CricInfo Limited for the SIFY deal and did whatever else was necessary to grow the India operations.

”

Why did you finally leave CricInfo in 2001? What have you been doing after CricInfo?

“

Peter Griffiths was heading the mother ship CricInfo Limited at that juncture. I jest, but the short story is that Sify advanced a loan to CricInfo at that time under stringent conditions. They also took more management control, keeping

the CricInfo regulars they liked, and easing out many of the old-timers including Simon, myself and a bunch of others.

”

I read somewhere that a person known only by his email [s293@cs.utexas.edu](mailto:s293@cs.utexas.edu) requested and obtained the rec.sport.cricket newsgroup dedicated to cricket on 17 April, 1990. And the first post was made by another student of UT (VC Tirumalai). To date, not many people know who this 'Father of Internet Cricket' is. You were at UT at that time. Did you, s293 and VC Tirumalai actually know each other on campus?

“

Oh, the wonderful days of the Usenet when useful information was exchanged on it! I did not know either of them. There used to be 450+ Indian students when I was there. I had forgotten about the above story till you brought it up. One will be going overboard conferring the title of "Father of Internet Cricket" to this person. Prior to the formation of rec.sport.cricket, cricket scores and news were exchanged on soc.culture.indian and IRC, I believe.

”

Where are you situated now? Tell me a little bit about your current role.

“

I live in Bangalore these days with my wife and young son. Post-CricInfo, I have been working independently, with start-ups and larger companies in media/technology.

”



## SAY 'ALOHA' TO CRICKET

BY VENU PALAPARTHI ('87 ECO & CS)

Uday Kari ('83 Civil) fuels the passion for cricket at the most scenic cricket ground on the planet... at Maui, Hawaii.

On a balmy afternoon, Honolulu dominated proceedings against Maui Cricket Club on the ground but the June 7th weekend truly belonged to Maui. The day marked the inauguration of Maui's brand new and spectacular astroturf pitch at the H.A. Baldwin Beach Park on the Hana Highway in Paia.

The new ground attracted plenty of interest with all the local newspapers carrying news of its opening. These included [The Maui News](#), Maui Time Weekly and [Pacific Business News](#).

The inaugural weekend marked the first Friendship Cup tournament. The inter-island tournament was named Alexander Liholiho King Kamehameha IV Ipu Pilioloa O Hawai'i after the cricket playing 4th king of Hawaii who reigned from 1855 to 1863. The king was an anglophile and his favourite game was cricket. He had English tutors and advisers; travelled in England as a teenager; and was married to Emma Rooke - a British descendant, and Queen Victoria was his son's godmother.

### MAUI'S CRICKET - ON ROAD TO HANA

Maui has had a cricket club for some time now. Uday Kari ('83 Civil) who has been at the helm of affairs says, "Until 2006, we just played for fun and sometimes hosted teams coming off cruise ships.

"In 2007, we felt that we needed to establish an astroturf pitch in the central part of the island so that everyone can have easy access.

"Cricket is the second-most-popular sport in the world after soccer," Kari said, "We've got 100 baseball fields on Maui. Why not cricket?"

### Maui's cricket ground with Mt Haleakala in the background. Better than Lords?





**When in Hawaii, umpire like the Hawaiians do**

Uday Kari, a software engineer for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, was spending his own funds for cricket on the island until then. But the ground needed more resources than an individual could afford.

Kari first pitched the idea to Alexander & Baldwin Inc., which owns the H.A. Baldwin Beach Park and obtained their nod. On July 5th, 2007, Kari made a presentation to Maui County Department of Parks and Recreation. The Parks department agreed to provide the materials needed to erect a permanent pitch at the park in Paia.

On Saturday, May 31, 2008, his dreams came to fruition as players of the Maui Cricket Club poured concrete for a first class cricket pitch. "Much thanks to

Maui cricketers and support from family and friends. The entire team came together as never before to complete the work smoothly and in record time. We owe this to the Parks Department who not only just allowed, but encouraged us to build the pitch to the exacting standards of a first class ground," Kari said.

A week after the pitch was poured, the MCC, now equipped with a home ground more beautiful than its namesake's ground over in England, hosted the Honolulu Cricket Club for a weekend of cricket.

"Maui Cricket Club just doubled in size over the weekend thanks to all the hoopla. It was a blast! Mahalo to Maui News for all the



**Rev. Kedar blessing the Maui Cricket Ground**

publicity," Kari said. "Cricket has come alive in the Hawaiian isles! Now you have another reason to vacation here."

Reverend Kedar from the

Temple of Peace in Haiku blessed the new pitch. He must have forgotten to bless the Maui Cricket Club. Because HCC dominated the proceedings on both days, as befits an island with 10 times more population and greater bench strength than Hawaii.

Maui's players enjoyed their cricket despite the losses. Maui's Daniel Lovell was best player and Andrew Wallace remained unbeaten in both games, top scoring with 58 runs on Day 2 - making him the top batsman.

Besides cricket, there was plenty of food, drink and, of course, music. "Fresh catch-of-the-day came straight out of the Pacific Ocean thanks to Wakhimba Mills and his friend Lucky," Kari wrote. Irie Aloha's Baz Cumberhatch provided cricketing whites and hospitality was provided by club members

Joel Luong and his new bride Tanya, as well as Andrew Wallace and his wife Joanne.

## HONOLULU CRICKET CLUB HAS BIG PLANS TOO!

The Honolulu Cricket Club (HCC) was established in 1893 when Hawaii still was a territory of the United States. In fact, the club is featured in The Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest sporting organisation in the Pacific. The game was first played in Hawaii by Scottish engineers working at sugar companies in Oahu and Maui.

Cricketers in Hawaii today come from all walks of life. HCC includes doctors, professors, military personnel, business entrepreneurs, artists, musicians and construction workers. According to Honolulu advertiser, Rick Pike, an Australian who first moved to Hawaii in 1995, was riding his motorcycle past Kapi'olani Park when he saw a game of cricket being played. "I did a double take," Pike said, "I nearly fell off my bike. I couldn't get over there fast enough."

Mark Berwick, the Hawaiian captain of the Honolulu Cricket Club is district manager for the Australian Trade Commission in Hawaii. Most of the cricketers in Hawaii have similar backgrounds as Rick or Mark - they are either immigrants from cricket playing countries or Hawaiians who took an interest

in the game on their travels overseas.

Berwick realises that the next generation of cricketers would have to be from the local schools. He is keen to make Hawaii a centre of gravity for cricket in the region and believes corporate sponsorships would help create local leagues



**Uday Kari ('83 Civil)** played a lot of QT cricket at Pilani. Apart from playing cricket, Uday did not do a whole lot at BITS. He came to Maui in 2003 on a belated honeymoon/vacation and never left. In 2004, Uday and his friends started playing cricket with people from ships. Then action died down for a few years both on Honolulu and Maui. Uday, however, kept the cricket flame alive and his efforts came to fruition with the creation of the Maui Cricket Club (MCC) pitch in March 2008. When Uday is not playing cricket he can be found at the Maui beach – which is not very far from the gully boundary at the MCC.

and attract visiting teams.

Berwick has had preliminary discussions with the Hawaii Tourism Authority. He is already talking with island schools to promote the sport. He thinks Hawaii has an important

role to play in Pacific Rim cricket. Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga and Japan and Vanuatu – all play cricket and a youth tournament might be a big draw. "If we can expose Hawaiian kids to new interests, then we have already accomplished something," Mark says.

With the efforts of Uday Kari, Mark Berwick and their fellow cricketers, a lot more Hawaiians could soon be saying *Howzaat* to cricket!



## BACK TO THE FUTURE

BY DILIP D'SOUZA ('76 EEE)

Alam Ali: BITSian once, BITSian again.

College is a uniformly young idea. When I got to BITS, I was 16-and-a-half, younger than a lot of my classmates. Not all, though. I still remember how astonished I was to find that one lad was nearly two years younger than me. At the time, two years seemed like a vast gap.

Yet I was more astonished when



I got to graduate school in the USA. Among my fellow graduate students, two were ... not younger, but older. And not two or three years older either. Caroline and Kirk were their names, and after several years in the workforce, they had chosen to study for a Masters degree. They were fully fifteen years older than I was.

If two years had seemed like a vast gap at 16, fifteen years seemed like an unbridgeable chasm at 21. Yet of course we

all quickly became friends. Caroline and I even worked together on an assignment, though I seem to recall that she did most of the work while I fooled around. Kids...

I've always thought of older students attending university as a largely American phenomenon. It probably reflects the opportunities that country affords, I thought, the greater access to education for more people. In India, I imagined, it's harder to go back for a degree.

Then there's Alam Ali.

On a given BITS morning, you might find Alam scurrying from Malviya Bhawan to somewhere in the institute. Later that given BITS morning, you might find him, as I did, drinking cup after cup of *chai* in the cafeteria. If you didn't know better, you'd think he was on the staff, and maybe he was just visiting a 16-year-old nephew, perhaps, in Malviya Bhavan? Because Alam Ali is not that age, certainly not two years younger; nor, for that matter, is he about fifteen years older than other BITS students. Yet he is a student like them, attending classes, taking tests, eating in the mess like them ... but get this: in his late forties, Alam is close to thirty years

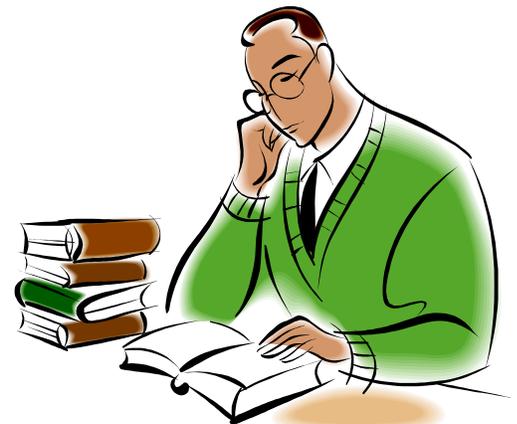
older than his fellow BITSians.

When we meet, what strikes me about Alam is his enthusiasm, his infectious grin, his -- well, let me say it -- youth. On campus again after 27 years, he has a certain wide-eyed delight about him, as if he's discovering everything for the first time.

Which he is not.

The first time, you can summarise in three sentences. After topping the Rajasthan school board in 1977, Alam was admitted to BITS. He spent over three years towards his EEE degree. Then something happened -- he won't say what -- and Alam left BITS, degree incomplete. Not only did he leave BITS, Alam seemingly dropped off the face of the earth, lost even to his family. They put ads in the paper, to no avail.

Several years passed. Alam says he travelled through north India, worked as a coolie, in construction, in shops and apple



fields in Kashmir. Once in Pahalgam, he was even elected the leader during a fruit workers' strike. On his own through that time, he studied Indian mythology, the Vishnupurana, all four Vedas, and learned about Buddhism. Indian culture, he found out, lives in the most remote of our villages. A *sadhu* he befriended told him: "You have two paths before you. One is evil. The other is to go to Himachal and do some road construction work. But work hard!" That practical advice sent Alam to Shimla -- he particularly remembers the train from Kalka into the hills, the lovely country all around, the impression that he was leaving the world behind and entering some abode of gods and goddesses. He would sleep on railway platforms. "I had one blanket," he tells me, "that I bought from Khadi Bhandar in Shimla."

After nearly a decade, Alam returned home -- to Ranasar village in Churu District. The little community still remembered his board performance, so he was welcomed like the long-lost son he was. He got married, and then got a job as a lab assistant in his own school. The BITS years helped him: he soon found himself teaching mathematics and science to the school students, and eventually took a B.Ed. from Jaipur's Adarsh Vidya Mandir. At one point, he was asked to perform a *havan* there; and a Muslim woman was also involved in the ceremony. People there thought, he says, "These are the people that we fight so much, yet look at how they are in this *havan*!"

That last observation is not incidental. At several points in

his narrative, Alam tells me the lessons he has learned: there's goodness in everyone, all scriptures say the same things, nobody is superior to anyone else because of their faith, and whether Hindu or Muslim, people are the same to him. Do good work, and nothing else matters.

Along the way, Alam was blessed with two daughters, the



older of whom is now 16.

In the cafeteria, I have been nursing my chai through all this, nearly overwhelmed by the story of this twinkle-eyed man's life. Yet what amazes me is that through everything, Alam says he kept a flickering hope going -- that he would one day return to BITS and finish his studies. Not that he needed to, but it remained a dream.

In mid-2007, the phone rang. It was a BITS batch mate, Nemichand from Delhi. While not a close friend, Nemichand was from Rajasthan too, and like so many others, remembered Alam topping the board and had always wondered what

happened to Alam. In the early '90s, he heard that Alam was back home, but then lost contact again. In preparing for the 1977 batch's silver jubilee reunion, Nemichand tracked down Alam again, and this time made the call. He asked Alam, "Do you want to complete your degree?" "Yes," said Alam.

One thing led to another. His batch mates approached BITS about Alam's case; a meeting was arranged with Dr RK Mittal and the Vice Chancellor, LK Maheshwari. "I felt God was putting his hand forward for me," says Alam. He turned up for the silver jubilee and told his story. The 1977 batch decided to offer him the financial support he needed. And starting with the second semester of the 2007-2008 academic year, Alam Ali is back on the BITS campus, working towards the EEE degree that he first came there for in July of 1977. Attending microprocessor and signals classes, eating in the mess, shooting the breeze with his Malviya Bhavan mates. Thirty years younger than him, those mates. "They call me sir!" he says with a chuckle. Meanwhile, his daughter has applied for admission to BITS. If she gets in, he looks forward to being likely the first father-daughter pair to be students there together...

I find I'm breathless, and moved. Moved by the courage, the affection, and the bonds that I have heard about in the couple of hours I have spent with Alam.

"I think sometimes that this is a dream," says Alam to me in the cafeteria, still twinkle-eyed.

"But I am living it." ♦

# G. D. BIRLA AND PRE-INDEPENDENCE POLITICS

BY APARAJITH RAMNATH ('01 EEE)

Aparajith serves up a chunk of history by unlocking the fascinating persona of Shri Ghanshyam Das Birla, the founding father of BITS, Pilani. His research brings to light the political career and the personality of the visionary industrialist who was an institution by himself.



Many a BITS Pilani rookie, pining for the bright lights of the big city, has

had the following conversation with his or her roommate:

‘Why did they have to build the Institute in this godforsaken place?’

‘Seriously! I mean, I know it was G.D. Birla’s birthplace and all, but we are the ones who have to spend four years here.’

That, however, is the limit of the knowledge many of us have about the founder of BITS. Yes, he was Pilani-born, a major industrialist, and founder of a chain of educational establishments. But G.D. Birla was much, much more than that.

Not only was he an active spokesman for Indian business, but also a vigorous and influential figure who played a crucial role in pre-Independence politics. His was an intriguing personality – one that always defied categorisation, and

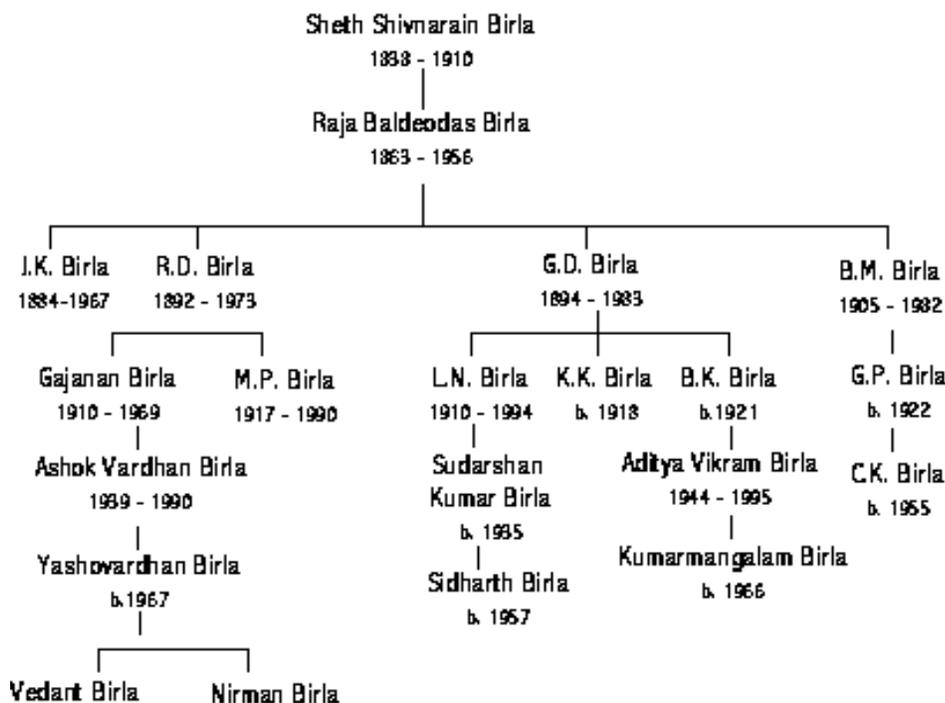
gloried in contradictions. Birla was committed to making profits, yet spare in his lifestyle; nationalist in his outlook, yet on intimate terms with key players in the British Indian establishment; right wing in ideology, yet a major donor to the Congress under the socialist Nehru; conservative at heart, yet supremely adaptable to changing scenarios. This article highlights these aspects of his character and the important part he played in politics in the years leading up to Independence.

## Early years

G.D. Birla was born in Pilani in 1894 into a Marwari business family. His childhood was spent in his hometown, where his grandfather, Seth Shivnarayan, started a *pathshala* in 1901. Ghanshyam Das (the name denotes a servant of Lord Krishna) was profoundly influenced by the religious milieu he grew up in: he was born unto a staunch Vaishnava family. His learning at school, however, was desultory, and his academic career unremarkable, so that while still in his teens he started out as a jute broker in Calcutta, that hub of Marwari business.

Here Birla endeavoured to set up his first major business, a jute

## THE BIRLA FAMILY TREE



mill. He faced several hurdles, most of all the strong opposition of the European capitalists who then had a monopoly over jute in India. Birla eventually succeeded, but the experience shaped his future career in an important way, marking the beginning of a decades-long commitment to the cause of indigenous Indian capital and big business, and, in a wider sense, making him politically conscious. In later life, his concern for Indian business often motivated his politics, just as the success of his businesses enabled him to plough funds into political causes. A third element in his mental make-up – his religious and cultural moorings – also played a part, as we shall see. However, Birla's pragmatism meant that in the long run, this element took a back seat.

In the years that saw his rise as an industrialist, Birla had been growing powerful in the local organisations of the Calcutta Marwari community. His stature was further validated when he was nominated a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, a post he held for a year. However, his nationalist ideas had begun to irk his community, whose business interests, they believed, were best served by adopting a loyalist stance. It has also been suggested that the Birlas' rapid success invited the envy of some sections. Whatever the deeper causes, matters came to a head when the marriage of G.D.'s brother Rameshwar Das was arranged with a Kolwar Marwari. The status of the Kolwars as 'pure' Marwaris was a subject of dispute, and the alliance was interpreted as constituting a loss of caste for Rameshwar Das and his family. When the Birlas stuck to their position, they were

excommunicated by the Calcutta Marwaris.

### Mainstream Politics

This was the beginning of a sequence of subtle shifts in G.D. Birla's perspective. The excommunication obviously bothered him, for he now turned for help to the prominent politician Madan Mohan Malaviya on the one hand, and to Gandhi on the other. The Birlas remained outside the fold of their community for several years, but these new associations showed G.D. that his vision could extend beyond the realm of his kinsmen.

India. His vision was of an Indian people who would discover the potential that lay buried in their cultural inheritance, a people educated and modern in their outlook but spiritually governed by *Sanatana Dharma*, proud and independent in spirit but loyal to the Crown. As part of his efforts to realise this mission, Malaviya had spearheaded the movement for a university in Benares. G.D.'s father Baldeodas, who had retired in early middle age to Benares, was enthusiastic about the project. The Birlas came to be actively involved in the financing and setting up of what became the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), and G.D.



G.D. Birla accompanying Mahatma Gandhi on his stroll from the Birla House, New Delhi. With him are Mahadev Desai, and Mrs. & Mr. Kriplani.

The Birlas' friendship with Malaviya was a close and long-standing one. Malaviya, who had given up a career in law in order to devote himself to public life, was concerned with awakening a Hindu nationalism among the people of North

even became a member of the University's Court (an advisory body to the University) in 1925. G.D. Birla's association with the BHU was to be an important factor shaping his educational endeavours in Pilani. To give one example, when the Birla

Education Trust (BET) was formed (it was registered in 1929), Birla obtained the services of its founder-secretary Sukhdev Pande (whose bust now stands in the doorway to the BITS Pilani auditorium) by approaching Malaviya for an experienced man from BHU.

In the early 1920s Birla came to see Malaviya and the other prominent Hindu leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, as his political mentors. They, on the other hand, saw in him a potential future leader of the Hindus. During the same years, Birla began a regular correspondence with Gandhi, whom he admired deeply for his religiosity and strength of character. However, Birla frequently disagreed with Gandhi on points of ideology and politics, adopting him more as a spiritual guru. Thus, while Gandhi advocated a policy of non-cooperation and non-participation in the legislative councils, Birla felt that working from within the legislative framework was Indians' best option. In 1926, under the banner of Malaviya and Lajpat Rai's Independent Congress Party (ICP), he contested the Central Legislative Assembly (CLA) elections from Benares, and won handsomely.

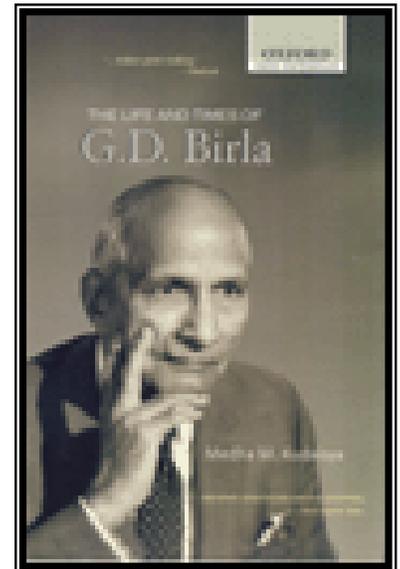
Soon after, Birla was widowed for the second time, and his children placed under the care of relatives. Faced with emptiness in his personal life, Birla appears to have thrown himself into his various works – commercial, political and educational. In 1927, he was nominated by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), in the creation of which he had been instrumental, to attend the Tenth International Labour Conference at Geneva – a first for an Indian

businessman. Demonstrating that for him business and political needs were interrelated, Birla took a bold nationalistic stance at the conference. He asked that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) correspondent to India be an Indian, and that the ILO's literature in India be issued in a vernacular language. At home, Birla took an active part in Central Legislative Assembly debates, particularly those of an economic nature. On one occasion, he took the side of the Tatas, opposing the policy of imperial preference (lower duty on British steel as compared to imports from elsewhere) which would be disadvantageous to them.

As a public figure, Birla had begun to come into his own. He became adept at tailoring his message to his audience. In his presidential address to FICCI in 1930, he appealed to the industrial class to work for Swaraj, not because it was 'a question of sentiment' but because it was 'a question of bread'. The prosperity of the country depends entirely on the amount of political freedom we get, and I think that not only in the interests of the country but in the interests of the capitalists, the employers and the industrialists we should try to fight and strengthen the hands of those who are fighting for Swaraj.'

He put his money where his mouth was. In 1928, when the various political parties came together under Motilal Nehru to attempt to frame by consensus a draft constitution for India, Birla worked actively to increase the chances of its success. He funded the propaganda in various regions for the Nehru Report. His work on the Nehru

Report project was important in two respects: first, it convinced him of the need for the country to throw its collective weight behind constitutional reform; secondly, it pitchforked him into a wider, national political arena where he learnt to transcend the Hindu nationalist interests of his political mentors to work alongside a range of politicians hailing from different parts of the country, including those of a more secular persuasion. He



now disapproved of what he considered reactionary forces standing in the way of constitutional reform.

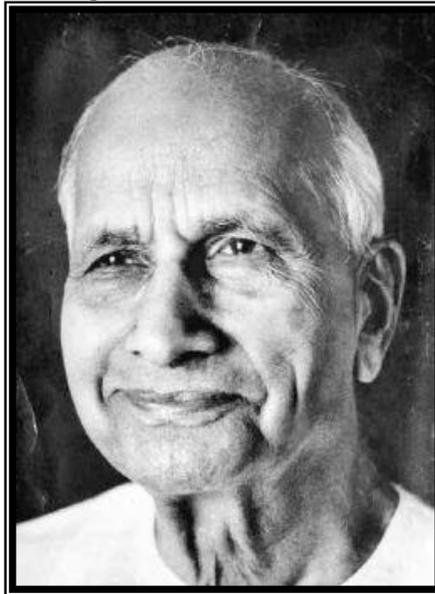
### **Political mediator and supporter of the Congress right wing**

Birla continued to be a major spokesman for Indian business, and was nominated by FICCI to attend the 1932 Round Table Conference in London. In these years he grew closer to Gandhi, convinced that on him rested India's hopes for constitutional progress. He severed political ties with Malaviya, who had begun to show impatience with his colleagues in the Independent Congress Party,

although he remained a close friend. In this period, Birla focused on the need for constitutional advancement and representative government for Indians. This, combined with his natural aversion, as a businessman, to leftist ideologies, made him become a staunch supporter of the Congress right wing comprising Gandhi, Rajagopalachari and Vallabhbhai Patel. In 1935, Birla undertook a tour to England, meeting several influential figures in the British establishment to lobby for the passing of the Reforms Act (or the Government of India Act). An energetic mediator and a great believer in personal contact, he liked to say that he defended Englishmen before Gandhi and Gandhi before Englishmen. 'Kaka' Kalelkar likened him to Lord Krishna, attempting to broker a settlement with the Kauravas – an apt image for one named Ghanshyam Das! Birla's effort did not go in vain, for the Act was passed, giving India a precursor to its post-Independence Constitution.

The next major threat to Birla's political vision came from within the Congress. It arose in the form of Jawaharlal Nehru, who, elected President of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow in 1936, lost no time in making a speech which was a strong declaration of his socialist ideals. The rise of Jawaharlal Nehru was naturally a cause of dismay to the capitalist class, a number of whom issued a manifesto expressing their disagreement with his ideas. Birla was not one of them: his political acumen suggested to him a more subtle strategy. He chided one of the signatories of the manifesto, Walchand Hirachand, pointing

out that it appeared 'very crude for a man with property to say that he is opposed to expropriation in the wider interest of the country.' To another signatory, Purshotamdas Thakurdas, he wrote that Nehru did not pose an immediate danger: 'Jawaharlalji's speech in a way was thrown into the waste paper basket because all the other resolutions that were passed were against the spirit of his speech.' Furthermore, 'to the



credit of Jawaharlalji ... he fully realised his position and did not abuse his powers. The Working Committee which he has constituted contains an overwhelming majority of "Mahatmaji's group". The strategy Birla favoured was simply one of strengthening the Congress right wing. As for Nehru, he would continue to maintain cordial relations with him, hoping to win him over in time.

### **The War years and beyond**

The years from the outbreak of World War II until independence were, for Birla, as eventful as the previous decade.

As we have seen, Birla had always been a difficult actor to categorise, but in this period his juggling of various roles became even more complex than before.

The late 1930s saw the setting up, under Nehru, of the National Planning Committee (NPC), formed on the principle that India required a planned economy. Various subcommittees were set up, and they met with the aim of drawing up reports that would set down the direction of national policy in the era of self-governance, which they felt was imminent. The rhetoric employed by these subcommittees was a socialist one: the themes of centralisation and nationalisation of key industries figured prominently.

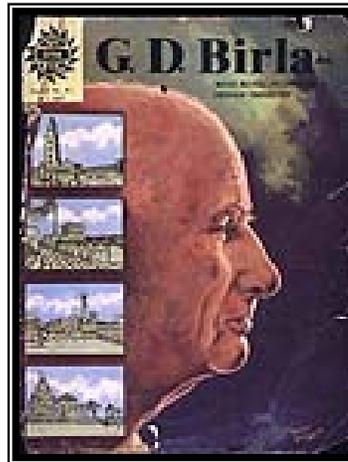
What was the response of prominent Indian capitalists to these ideas? On the one hand, their current business depended on maintaining relations with the colonial government, which placed orders with them for war materials. In Birla's case, the wartime relationship went further: a Technical Training Centre (TTC) had been set up by the colonial government in Pilani in 1941, especially to train the Royal Indian Navy. On the other hand, the capitalists were conscious of the rising power of the Congress, especially its left wing. Who, Birla asked rhetorically, could rightfully plan for the country's post-war reconstruction policies – the colonial government, or those who were set to take over the governance of the country after the war? As it happened, J.R.D. Tata, G.D. Birla, and other prominent industrialists including Purshotamdas Thakurdas, brought out an economic plan of their own. A Memorandum Outlining a Plan

for Economic Development in India, which came out towards the end of the war and was known as the Bombay Plan, was in some ways a compromise formula. It did not dispute that in the future the government would control many aspects of the economy, yet it described a legitimate role for private capitalists.

In a way, this middle path was emblematic of Birla's larger role in the war years. He and the FICCI were boldly critical of the colonial government's wartime economic policies, yet the colonial government's war material orders were important to Indian big business at the time. Pilani was being used as the base for the Technical Training Centre for wartime training, by the colonial government; yet Birla was visibly supportive of the leaders of the movement that asked that very government to withdraw: he was by the side of Gandhi on the day when the Quit India resolution was adopted by the All India Congress Committee. He was not enamoured of the National Planning Committee's Nehruvian socialism; yet he emphasised that it was the Indians, as opposed to the colonial government, who would need to plan for post-war reconstruction. As in the past, Birla refused to be firmly stationed in any one camp and continued to be an independent actor.

In the post-Independence years, political power was split between the two towering figures of Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. Birla, who had always been close to Patel, was naturally on the right wing of this power structure. But Nehru was Prime Minister, and with the passing away of Patel,

Birla made efforts to build a working relationship with him. He continued to be a major financial contributor to the Congress even though the right wing he had always supported no longer existed in the form it once had. He wrote to Nehru regularly. The Birla-Nehru correspondence was carried out sometimes in English and sometimes in Hindi. In the former language, the Harrow



and Cambridge man was marginally more at home than the home-bred industrialist; in the latter, the positions were reversed. Both must have had in mind their fundamental ideological differences; yet neither seems to have borne any personal animosity towards the other. When Birla embarked on a foreign tour in 1954, he wrote to Nehru asking him to clarify the Indian position on various international affairs, as he would be regarded by many as an informal representative. There was even room for a little humour. The same year marked Nehru's sixty-fifth birthday. Birla wrote in Hindi,

*'On the happy occasion of this your sixty-fifth birth date ... I am sending a cheque of [Rs.] 25065 to be spent on some good work. Take the number 65 to signify your birth date, and the*

*fact that I have added the number 65 to 25 thousand instead of sending you 65 thousand as a sign of my miserliness.'*

## Conclusion

That G.D. Birla was a stupendously successful businessman, founding manufacturing units of nearly every description, is well known. Equally well known is his indisputably momentous contribution to education in India. But to understand the impact he had on the unfolding of events in India, one must also consider the influential and energetic role he played in politics. Leaders of the stature of Gandhi, Patel and Nehru were, of course, in the forefront of political developments. Yet in several ways the role of people like Birla provides a missing link in popular understandings of the history of their time. Whether as negotiator, spokesman, or financial backer, Birla was an active player in politics. At a personal level, it is interesting to observe the evolution of Birla's worldview. Always aware of what was going on around him and ever ready to adapt, Birla in his political career was continually transcending previous horizons. Thus he moved from an active role in the Calcutta Marwari community to a larger political constituency under the mentorship of Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, and in time outgrew their Hindu-centred worldview to enter the larger, all-India political arena. Above all, though, he was the quintessential mediator, the link between various interest groups, a man who believed in sitting across a table and talking things over. ♦

## 70S AND BEYOND: THE BITS-PILANI OF YORE

BY SANDHYA KRISHNAN ('99 INFOSYS)

Sandhya's investigative piece on strikes, ghosts, murders and suicides of the seventies and beyond paints our collective imagination crimson and we are left with haunting murmurs and shudders of the seventies and eighties, flashbacks of which era have developed a coat of a disturbing sepi.

**G**hosts, murders, suicides, lovers caught red-handed, manipulated clock towers and MB trespassers. We've been exposed to all sorts of legends during our times at Pilani. Some were morphed, some were made up, some heavily decorated – yet they all survived far beyond anyone could imagine. For this issue, we decided to dig a little deeper and unearth some interesting stories from Technicolor Pilani.

Thus, after relentless spamming of some veteran BITSians from the late 70s and early 80s, we bring you this flashback. Of course, while most of the following are facts, do remember that an old memory can play tricks.

The 70s and early 80s was certainly an eventful time for BITSians. Unimaginable as it is today, there were three different strikes in BITS in the short period of a decade. The first one was kicked off by the death of a Vidyapeet student by alleged negligence of the Medical Officer. Rumour has it that marathon *bhajan* singing sessions were held in front of the Director's office and home in support of the protest. Tempers flew and as a result the Chief Medical Officer was

pretty badly beaten up. This strike is said to have been the one which restored the Students' Union. Considering those were the days of the Emergency and many unions and groups were broken down, it's our guess that the feeling of youth power was brimming up.



The second one started circa 1980 and reached quite shocking proportions. Being the juiciest of them all, this is obviously the one we researched on. The third one was in 1985 and, I suspect, merely an excuse to bring in some excitement to the general BITSian life.

**B**ITS during those days used an 'unassigned' system of

admissions. If one passed the cut off, you would just be admitted as a BITS Pilani student. After the first year, the students were divided into Humanities (presumably the guys with lower CGPA in the first year) and the Engineering/Science stream. After the second year, the Engineering/ Science group got further separated, again with Science going to those with the lower CGPA. At the end of the third year, various disciplines of Engineering were allotted. So not only did your ID number change every year but there were also funny instances like students getting straight Ds in math courses ending up with MSc Mathematics. On the darker side, since most students who joined BITS during then expected to become an engineer, more than half could not. This led to frustration, disappointment and, sadly, even suicides.

The principal demand of the students was assigned admissions, knowing what stream, course and discipline you were getting into. Flexibility in dual degrees was called for, giving Science students a chance to take up Engineering as their dual. There was also a request for a student representative nominated by the Students Union to be added to the Senate

and a motion against the hike in tuition fees.

Humayun Hayat Khan was the President of the Student Union during 1979-80 and Arvind Sharma was the Secretary. After a couple of meetings with the then Director, a war of words arose and he threw them out of his office. Following some heated discussions and a formal referendum held by the Election Commissioner, it was found that 85% of students were in favour of a strike. That was the beginning of what would change a lot of things.

The basic agenda of the strike revolved around ousting the director. Since the local Pilani cops were too few and ill-equipped to deal with 2000 students, the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary moved in. There were fiery speeches, marches and some 'interesting' chants. Faculty members who tried to keep things normal were locked up in rooms for hours. There

was constant protesting outside the Director's house to block food and provisions. One such event, aimed at stopping the milkman from going in, resulted in a *lathi* charge and landed a very petite lady BITSian with a broken arm.

The SFI (Student Federation of India) leaders from Jaipur dropped by to offer support. They delivered some fiery speeches in Hindi and went right back after the BITSians resisted politicisation. Local newspapers carried the news, and India Today brought out an article titled "Gone to BITS".

The BITSian leaders went to Jaipur and met the Education Minister, and then they headed to Delhi to meet with the UGC. Nothing much came out of that. Time was running out and with the students boycotting classes, courses were not completed. Furthermore, it was becoming difficult to keep the students on campus, more so with parents

from nearby places landing up. For final year students, campus interviews were at stake and nothing much was coming out of the whole strike.

After repeated representations to KK Birla, he finally intervened. Mr. Madelia, known to be his 'right hand' man, came down to Pilani to broker a truce. The final results? The Director stayed, but the students got their assigned admissions and student representation. The students were sent home for awhile to cool off and then a special summer session was held to make up for lost time.

For every person who did try to attend classes amidst all the striking, there were many others who shouted slogans with gusto and joined in just for the fun.

The strike was right there, in the midst of their dry Pilani lives and they enjoyed being a part of history, irrespective of where their loyalties lay. For the bunch of us who have graduated from a more serene and 'uneventful' Pilani, this almost sounds like fiction. Maybe it's time we gave a gracious bow to these batches, who not only gave us relatively more freedom to choose our discipline, but also a great story!

*Many thanks to Dilip D'Souza, Sangeeta Patni, Humayun Khan, Arvind Sharma, Sridhar Rajan, Manaswini Paludugu, Viggie Mokkarala, Ravi Kichloo and Nasir Memon for positively responding to my constant harassment. Given a choice I would have reproduced our interesting email trails verbatim. Sandpaper truly appreciates your enthusiasm and energy in jogging your memory for us!*



## MIRIAM'S LOVE

BY MEENAKSHI CHATTERJEE ('00 PHY & EEE)

Alone and independent, Miriam seeks love and security. When she falls in love, it constantly takes her downwards to its unfathomable depth.

A heavy headedness and throbbing headache woke Miriam up at 10am. It was Wednesday – a working day. As she lay on the bed, deliberately shutting her eyes to the reality around her, sounds of the outside world filtered through. Mothers rushing their toddlers to school, husbands running with



half chewed sandwiches to work, maintenance personnel speaking on their walkie-talkies in Mexican – they all came mingled into her room. She tried getting up.

“Ouch!”

Miriam hit inadvertently her head on the bedpost. She slumped back on her pillow in pain. As her eyes opened slowly,

the white washed ceiling stared back. On its background, it replayed scenes from her life.

*Despite being born and brought up in a metropolitan, Miriam wasn't urban. She was tame, docile and obedient. While friends her age were exploring the forbidden side of life, she had stuck to her books. While people her age were narrating tales of crazy wild nights they often had, Miriam had nothing to share. In fact, she looked upon them in disgust. She wasn't curious. Her attitude soon prevented her friends from telling her anything. It didn't concern her either.*

*A good academic background led her to a decent job. Miriam relocated from her parent's home. With this, along with her separation from parents, came a sense of liberty. An apartment to herself, - it meant uncurbed privacy unknown to her previously.*

“Tring... tring... tring tring...”

The cacophony of her ring tone jolted her. It was her manager. The rings continued for sometime and then stopped. Everything still seemed to be in motion. Miriam grabbed a glass nearby. She was thirsty. The liquid burned her throat.

“Ugh!”

Forcing herself from bed, Miriam went to the sink. As the tap flowed, she gulped down the stream directly.

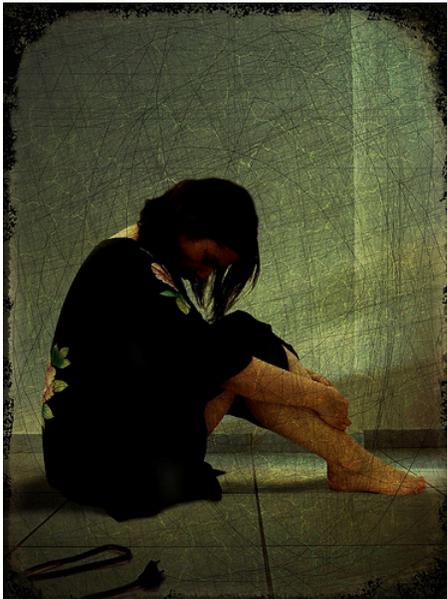
*When she arrived at this place, she liked everything about it. She liked the trees, the roads, the people, the sights, the sounds – everything. Making friends was tough. Miriam wasn't social. She was quiet and introverted. Also she wasn't pretty. Many times Miriam looked at herself and thought, “If my nose were a bit straighter, if my eyes were a little bigger, if my lips were more luscious... I would be Miss Universe!” She always laughed at her own joke and turned away from the mirror.*

*One day her office mate, the plump married gossiping Geetha, invited her to her housewarming party. It was on a Saturday. Miriam bought a present, went to the beauty parlour, bought a new dress*



(she never seemed to have any good ones) and finally found herself outside Geetha's door. As she stepped in, she saw how crowded the place was.

Geetha had organised for snacks and drinks. The snacks weren't great and Miriam didn't drink. So she was stuck with morosely chewing a damp samosa. As she huddled away to an inconspicuous corner of the room, she saw with fascination how men and women laughed happily as they sipped their drinks. Did the drinks make people social or was it the other way around?



"Hey Sexy!" Someone grabbed Miriam by her waist.

"Yeow!" Her yelling turned every face in the room towards her.

The man who grabbed her waist was looking directly into her eyes. His breath stank of alcohol. His looks reminded her of her favourite hero – Tom Cruise. The man was handsome and, for the first time in her life, she was so close to one.

Miriam had never been dated, never been kissed, not even hugged by a man. Men would talk to her, chat with her, but no one felt the desire to come close to her. She attributed it to her lack of looks.

Her beating heart reminded her of the passing time... and where she was.

"Oh my God! Akaash, let go of the poor girl," Geetha's high-pitched voice announced.

Akaash tumbled a little- his lips almost brushing Miriam's, and then he let go of her.

"Sorry."

With a twinkle he was gone from her side.

Miriam forgot to feel outraged by his audacity. Instead the feeling of being in a man's arms was making her heady. She almost wished Akaash hugged her again in his drunkenness.

Miriam couldn't remember anything else from that party. Long into the night she kept creating and recreating her encounter with Akaash. Every time she brought him closer and closer to herself, her face, her lips. It took a while for her to fall asleep that night.

For the next few days Akaash flashed in and out of her mind – at lunch, at work, in her day dreams, in between her conversations with her manager, her mother, her friends; in short, she was besotted with him.

Geetha was her only source of information.

"Hey Geetha, how are you today?"

"Fine! Thanks Miriam. I wanted to tell you something. I am sorry for Akaash's behaviour that night. He asked me to apologise to you." Geetha smiled coyly.

"Oh! That's ok. I didn't get a chance to think about it at all - until you mentioned now. Been so busy you know."

Geetha smiled understandingly.

**The man who grabbed her waist was looking directly into her eyes. His breath stank of alcohol. The man was handsome and, for the first time in her life, she was so close to one.**

"By the way, Geetha, why didn't Akaash apologise himself?"

"Akaash was afraid. The poor soul thought you would beat him up! He cautioned me to check your mood before mentioning his name."

Miriam smiled and then blushed.

"Tell Akaash, I'm fine and have forgiven him. But I would have appreciated it better if he was brave enough to apologise in person." With that Miriam walked away.

"Tring... tring... tring tring." Her manager was calling again. But

Miriam wasn't looking at the phone. All this reminiscing had made her thirsty again. She stretched her hand to grab the bottle.

*Akaash had come to her office - to meet Geetha. Through the corner of her eye, Miriam saw his rippling muscles beneath his blue silk shirt. He had bushy eyebrows, strong calloused hands and long curly hair. The whole image was of a young handsome movie star. Akaash had an air of superior confidence. He dealt with people as if they were meant for serving him. Miriam so wanted him to come over to her. He did.*

*Right from behind, taking her completely by surprise, Akaash touched her shoulder. It's funny how easily he did away with common courtesies about one's personal space. He touched her as if they were long lost friends, not one-time acquaintances.*

*"Hey Sexy! Remember me?"*

*"Of course I do," Miriam muttered under breath.*

*"Hello Akaash. How have you been?"*

*"Good... been thinking about you a lot." He winked his eye as he said that.*

*Miriam turned beet red.*

*"So are you an omnivore, carnivore, herbivore or cannibal?"*

*Hiding her surprise, Miriam said with a serious face, "Cannibal!"*

*"Me too. No wonder I feel like chewing on you!" Akaash laughed out loud.*

*His talk was actually offensive. In similar conditions, Miriam might have even slapped him. But Akaash was different. His touch, his charisma, even his risqué dialogue riveted Miriam.*

*"So Sexy, I have been saving some juicy flesh for you for sometime. See me tonight at 8, here," he handed her a business card, pointing to his residence.*

*When 8pm arrived, Miriam was still sitting at home. All her dresses strewn on the floor and bed - she looked ugly, felt fat and sensed depression.*

*"It doesn't matter. I can't meet Akaash tonight with the way I look," she sighed to herself, "I'll just boil noodles."*

It was one in the afternoon. Miriam's nostalgia made her forget that she had almost sipped the entire bottle. She ignored two of her manager's calls, one of her colleague's calls and her sister's call. What the hell! She would just take the day off. Every person wanted to squeeze her dry. She returned to her bottle with a vengeance.

*Akaash had surprised her again. The very night of their first 'unkept' date, he arrived at her doorstep with a bouquet of roses and a bottle of champagne. Miriam opened the door in her bedtime pyjamas. She was aghast. Akaash was in formal attire, smelling of the latest AXE perfume.*

*"How on earth did you get my address?"*

*"Sexy, I know the address of the sexiest woman in town. I just know it. Now would you please let me in? Or are you going to break my heart for the second time today? I'm freezing here." Without much ado, he brushed past her.*

*That night was the first time Miriam tasted alcohol. It wasn't so bad after all. With Akaash, all her inhibitions just melted away. Holding the glass, looking up to his eyes, seeing, almost sensing a man's love that was forever missing, Miriam felt at the top of the world. After the second glass, in more ways than one.*

*That night Akaash didn't touch her. He sat at a distance, let her talk and after four hours, tucked her in bed and left.*

**Tears welled up in her eyes. She got up shakily on her feet, took the empty bottle in her hands and crashed it on the metal sink. The flying shards cut a deep wound.**

Miriam realised that the bottle was empty. She wasn't feeling the headache anymore. This wasn't the first time she had skipped work. To be honest, she wasn't even sure if her manager was calling her for work or to fire her. Anyways, nothing seemed to matter now. Her mother wanted to visit her in her

new place. She put it off. She had no time for anyone or anything. God knows where all the time went.

As she stumbled across the living room she saw herself in the full sized mirror. She had gained weight. Her eyes were puffy, her hair dry, her face - her face caught her eye. Bloodshot eyes, lines on forehead, a sagging chin - to her horror she looked older than her mother! Was it possible? Her ugliness bothered her the most at that very moment.

She lost balance a couple of times as she walked towards the mirror to get a closer look. Grasping the edges, she peered into her eyes.

*Fifteen days was all it took. Only fifteen days after she met Akaash, Miriam lost her virginity. When she looked back, she realised that the urge was greater for her than for Akaash. Akaash's reluctance to touch her, even when he was drunk, frustrated her. She found herself craving for him.*

*Akaash asked very few questions about her family. Those were mundane. Every conversation had been a collage of anecdotes and jokes. Miriam enjoyed it nevertheless. Maybe once she sensed its shallowness, but dismissed it. Who cares? Akaash adores me. No wonder he always wants my time.*

*In Akaash's company, Miriam lost several of her inhibitions. She felt liberated. She enjoyed herself. She became social, at least when she was drunk. Her jokes made people laugh... or were they laughing at her? As days passed, jokes couldn't*

*sustain conversations. A few glasses were also not enough to feel happy. Akaash seemed aloof many times. Miriam wanted more.*

*"Akaash you never speak of your work. What do you do?"*

*"Honey buns why do you ask? It is too techie for you... you won't*



*grasp a thing."*

*"Hm, ok. Hey I had an idea. Let's get out of this place this weekend. I can book a cottage by the Crescent beach and we can have a great time together. Just us." Miriam rolled the tip of her tongue over her lips to emphasise her point.*

*Akaash grinned in a mischievous way.*

*"This weekend my rich friend Mike will be in town. I need to entertain him. I promised long ago. Why don't you join us? It will be crazy wild fun. You will love it!"*

*Miriam felt disappointed. Mike was more important than her? But what could she do? Every time Akaash did what he wanted. Sometimes Miriam felt that he never really cared. They knew so little about each other. A month old romance? Was this how love was meant to be? She agreed to Akaash's weekend plans.*

*Mike was a hedonist. Pleasure was all he cared for. Saturday evening, when Miriam arrived, she found Akaash, Mike and a few others huddled on a small table on the floor. As she sat down with them, the smoke hit her.*

*"It is weed," Akaash told her, seeing her quizzical look. Miriam still looked confused.*

*"Marijuana, my dumb sweetheart. C'mon, take this. Don't shy away, and don't give me that innocent look. Take it! Take it," Akaash almost growled.*

*Miriam didn't need much pushing. She had found an*

*unknown insatiable desire to explore the forbidden side of life. But she did get upset at the way Akaash behaved. Why was he being so pushy?*

*A haze, a daze, uncontrollable laughter and acute hunger. Saturday passed.*

*Sunday evening Akaash came smiling to her. "Sweetie, you were an angel yesterday. Can*

*"Crescent beach, sweetie," said Akaash as he walked away.*

It was five in the evening. The setting sun threw golden yellow sunshine all over the white walls of Miriam's room. Children were back from school. Mothers were chatting like birds, discussing the best in their kids. They were proud – of themselves, of their kids and of

took the empty bottle in her hands and crashed it on the metal sink. The flying shards cut a deep wound. Blood oozed from her fingers. She stared steadfastly at the red warm liquid. Thoughts flowed back.

*That night Mike wanted more than sightseeing. Akaash had been aware. The same cottage which she would have booked*



*you do me a favour?" Without waiting for her reply he continued.*

*"Mikey needs company tonight to see a beach. Can you drive him there? You are pretty familiar with the area. I won't be able to come because of work."*

*Miriam wasn't enthused. Mike wasn't her friend. But this was the first favour Akaash wanted. "Which beach?"*

being married. Marriage... the idea of being married, having kids and a loving husband were childhood dreams for Miriam. She wasn't pretty, but she was qualified. Sitting, half conscious on her couch, at twenty-nine, Miriam couldn't see marriage. Somehow her parents weren't trying either. Her sister was getting married early next year and her sister was two years younger than her!

Tears welled up in her eyes. She got up shakily on her feet,

*that weekend, she was there as planned. Only it was Mike, not Akaash.*

The phone was ringing again. This time it was Akaash. As Miriam picked up her phone she thought to herself, "The bastard must have another assignment for me..."

"Hello, Akaash sweetheart," slurred Miriam. ♦

## MEERA BANERJEE: A TRIBUTE

BY ARUN MAHARAJAN ('99 E&I)

Prof. Meera Banerjee, ex-faculty, BITS, Pilani and chief warden of Meera Bhawan, passed into the ages on January 30, 2008. She was a role model and idol to many BITSians. Arun presents a compilation of thoughts and memories of some BITSian women on an iconic personality, an edifice of an era.

“Meera Banerjee, MBans as she was fondly known by the MBites was an amazing person. She has been one of the few persons I looked up to in my life. I have always admired her for her charisma, boldness and the command she had over the girls, riding her cycle at her age. You name it, I admired it.

“If the 11 PM to 6 AM rule had to be enforced within Meera Bhawan, it could have been possible only with her vigilance. Being so far away from home, she was family to us. She knew exactly when to be mellow and when to be strict - just like our parents. She had to take care of hundreds of us ...that’s a huge number. She was respected not just because she was the warden, but because she was much more than that to many of us at Meera Bhawan. She was a friend and a guide in the true sense. She was always there for the girls whatever the time of the day. Her care and warmth made us feel secure at times of crisis.

“One of my funniest experiences happened in our *psenti-sem* when my *wingies* and I were busy ragging *freshers*. Being *psenti-semites* we just wanted to ‘interact’ with the gals as we didn’t want to graduate of BITS without being able to ask

someone’s ‘intro’. It was almost half past eleven and nearing midnight. We were busy ‘interacting’ with one of the freshers when she started crying. To make matters worse, we got the news that MBans was on her rounds. So we had to make sure that those girls leave before she was in our wing. Everything went smoothly and we managed to send the girls back in time. The next day MBans enquired casually of us, that she had heard a lot of complaints about freshers being ragged by residents of our block. You should have seen our faces then! We replied, “We will surely find out and let you know, ma’am!” She was so confident that we wouldn’t be the ones ragging them and wanted our help. After this we never ragged anyone!

“I am sure each and every MBite would have had their special moments with MBans. There will be none who hasn’t felt her presence. Her loss is incomparable and no one can fill that void. The Meera in Meera Bhawan has left us forever for her heavenly abode.

”  
“May her soul rest in peace.

~ Anuradha Krishnakumar

“Back in 1986, when we entered Pilani with some trepidation, we were told that Mrs. Banerjee was an institution. She had an air of maternal strength about her that made us feel secure, and a distance that kept us in our places! We never hobnobbed with her, like the matron down our wing. We only caught glimpses of her or interacted briefly for rare late night permissions. We knew she was behind a lot of what went on at Meera Bhawan, smoothly and quietly and yet we rarely saw her walk in her resplendent saris, a lady of stature who held herself straight with more than her posture but also with her self-esteem and courage of conviction.

“I was the first lady MASCON (Stuccan) at the 1989-90 Interface and needed permission to stay out late a couple of times. When I went to her with this background she was encouraging with the kind of half smile that was bestowed upon me but yet, it made me feel like I had triumphed at a battlefield without shedding any blood.

“It is strange that even with such little interaction, no confidences shared, I do feel like somebody symbolic has left us. Somebody who reminded us of our carefree, halcyon days, who kept us in check and indulged us only a wee bit. A few years back I lost my batch mate PS Reddy who was with me as my MMS batch mate at BITS,

later at IIFT and then at Stamford, CT, making *dosas* at my house and discussing his plans for the future. It was a big blow. I knew him personally and MBans from a distance but both losses are acute. One because of what PS meant to us and one because of what Mrs. Banerjee meant to everybody at Pilani especially BITSian women.

“And I can't help but feel the sweet sorrow of somebody who watches things go by. I am reminded of the poem ‘I feel like one who treads along some banquet hall deserted, whose lights are dead, whose garlands fled, and all, but she departed.’

“This makes me want to get back in touch with the precious lot whom I take for granted... my gang at Pilani and a couple of Professors who meant the world to me.”

~ Anu Sharma Gupta

“I didn't get to meet Mrs. Banerjee much in my first year. That's usually when the girls are just learning the ropes and trying largely stay to out of trouble. Like many other MBites, most of my vivid memories of her will be of standing at her office with a hurriedly scribbled and forged letter in hand, waiting for that little extra freedom to stay out, and our ticket to the Pilani 'nightlife'.

“I recall my first when she looked at me suspiciously, thoroughly convinced that I was trying to pull a fast one on her. I was requesting for my *wingie* and I to stay up late to practice with the Mime Club, something no girl had done in years. After

Meera Banerjee was as tall, stable and majestic to the students of BITS-Pilani as the clock tower was to the rest of the institute. She represented resilience and passion in a package which reflected all qualities of the quintessential woman. The woman that she was, I am sure she must have been instrumental in shaping many of the BITSian women towards being the shining examples of achievement that they are today.

Thank you for everything.

~ Arun Maharajan

a long explanation she let us off, still hesitant, only believing us when we appeared on stage with motley of boys. The next time we went up to her, she smiled and told us how much fun it was to see girls do mime.

“Her office has seen me several times, with all sorts of requests for late nights, over night Khetri trips, department trips, bills to be passed, MB-nite accounts. It's funny how we all used to scribble down permission letters 'from our parents' at the last minute and crease it so that she would let us go and see the world beyond Pilani. We thought we were smart to outwit her. Now, many years and more wisdom later, we know that she wasn't fooled a tiny bit.”

She just let us believe she was.

~ Sandhya Krishnan

“It was just before the Union Council elections in 2002. I had filed my nomination for the post of President. Amongst various

arguments offered for or against the merit of a woman president, my candidacy was being questioned on account of the fact that I wouldn't be able to step out of the hostel (Meera Bhawan) after 11pm. With trepidation, I decided to meet MBans to see if she could help me find a way around this issue.

“While she was disappointed in not being informed of my nomination, her mood quickly turned to one of pride and excitement. I vividly remember seeing her take off her glasses, gaze back into the history of Meera Bhawan, reflecting on all the progress/achievements made by girls. She passionately expressed her belief in the ability of all girls and a strong desire to see them take on leadership responsibilities in the BITS student community. Such heartfelt support from a Chief-warden and senior faculty member, at such a crucial time, meant a lot to me. As I broached the 11 pm issue with new confidence, MBans, without a moment's hesitation, was more than happy to sign a sheet of paper assuring that I would have permission whenever necessary to work outside of Meera Bhawan and be accessible at all times. This kind of backing was unprecedented.

“When I returned to MB after the results were announced, I was shocked to see MBans out there celebrating with a large group of girls. I was overwhelmed to see that she took immense personal pride in my victory. The sound of cheer filled the air and we were on the verge of a spontaneous procession when there was a momentary pause - the crowd looked into MBans eyes almost as if seeking permission for what we were about to collectively do.

“I remember MBans, almost as if she were flagging off a team on an important expedition, giving her approval – go girls go! On our return, MBans had organised for a special

cake (enough to feed all the residents of Meera Bhawan) in the celebration of this victory. Once again, as the candles were blown, MBans wished the girls of Meera Bhawan, every success. Her confidence and desire to see girls succeed in all forays on campus was touching.

”

She will be missed.

~ Aditi Pany

“As I reached the gates of Meera Bhawan, the fear of hostels gripped me tight. That was the first time I was going to be away from my home, my parents and all my close friends. As we (my roommate Rugs and I) retired to our room, we heard about the warden's visits in the night. Upon hearing the word "warden", I imagined a person who usually appears in many movies. I didn't really understand a warden's job till I saw Mrs. Banerjee.

“It struck us that you cannot look into her eyes for a long while, that constant gaze just makes you nervous. She was an epitome of power and terror for all the MBites. Her rules were strict. I cannot imagine another person who can be like her!

“I remember the times when we used to go for trips to Jaipur. We had to, after showing letters of acceptance from parents, literally beg her to allow us. We had to do this for a week and constantly follow her around, before she let us go.

“During APOGEE, there was work to do on the backdrops and the so-called assoc meetings lasted till 12 in the night. My friend Geetha and I got caught

by MBans once with a bunch of first year girls outside the gates of Meera Bhawan. I was in my third year then. Till that point, I had never skipped the 11 o'clock deadline. My heart raced and mind was not able to conjure up anything convincing to tell her. After a series of scolding, we were let in. These are among some of my cherished memories.

“The manner in which she used to ride her bicycle even at her age, solve our wing fights...the strict look in her eyes...her soft hearted nature... the times when we played *holi* in our wing and accidentally sprayed colours on her... how she always lent an ear to our problems and found a solution. BITS is not going to be the same anymore without her.

“There was an interesting incident, we were in our second year and were just 'intro-ing' two first yearites. There were eleven of us in a single room along with those first yearites. As we were talking to them, one of them broke out crying. We grew panicky when we heard shouts announcing that MBans and Meenakshi Raman were coming on their rounds. We could not say anything that would stop the fresher from crying. As she entered the room in which all of us were literally blinking, the scene so appeared as if we were torturing the poor girl to death! It definitely needed some explanation. The first yearite saved us, explaining that she came to our wing for a timetable help. MBans wanted to know why 11 of us had to prepare the timetable for one person! You should have seen the look on our faces.

“I regret not taking a photo with such a great person who lives in the hearts of all the MBites.

”

May her soul rest in peace.

~ Shalini Muthukrishnan

“She was the very warp and woof of Meera Bhawan. Both the warden and the bhawan bore witness to generations of girls blooming into confident young women. My own reminiscences of life at BITS are full of so many fond memories of Meera Bhawan that I was scared to take the nostalgic trip down memory lane when I started this writing. My earliest recollection is from the very first day that I arrived at Meera Bhawan. I had finished unpacking my suitcase and was still absorbing my situation. I found someone to talk to outside my room and we took a short walk to the BITS cooperative. On the way one talk led to another and she told me about the girl in the adjacent wing whose dad had requested the warden that his daughter's room be changed and she put up with roommates who spoke the same language. The warden apparently had promptly taken that parent to task rebuking him for his lack of understanding of the campus' diversity. “She is a very strict lady – Meera Banerjee. There is no messing around with her!” my new found friend told me. From day one I was awed by her. She was an extremely candid disciplinarian with a soft side that only a few people got to see. To be frank I was afraid of her for most of my first year. My first real encounter with “MBans” as we fondly called her was when she called me out from a group of frightened first-year girls and told me that there was no reason for us to be scared. Ragging in any form was forbidden on campus and we should report to her immediately should any one trouble us. Her confidence and poise were enough to assure us that we were in safe hands!

“During my second year I would often accompany seniors from Meera Bhawan to ask for late night permission. For readers who are wondering what this is, we had a late night limit of 11 PM by which time all girls were expected to be back inside Meera Bhawan. Should there be any reason to stay out till late, we could take late night permission and be out till 12:00 AM (hurray!). Under the appearance of a martinet, Meera Banerjee was a calm, rational person. She had a deep understanding of all clubs and activities and could easily evaluate when there was real need and when we were simply having some fun. She had seen the fabric of life change at Meera Bhawan over the years while she was there and would frequently tell us interesting tales of the past! How in the old days, for movie screenings, girls were led to the theatre in a line and would sit in the upper balcony which was exclusively reserved for them. This was a far cry from the mad dash we

made on our bicycles for the movies and the catcalls during the screenings! One day she found us baking a cake in the mess for a friend in Ashok Bhawan and remarked how girls earlier would knit sweaters for guys! Sweaters! We were in splits!

“All through the third year and fourth year we got to see different facets of Meera Banerjee’s personality. Towards the time when I finished my B.E. there were over 900 girls residing in Meera Bhawan. Every day was eventful. She handled all emergencies with incredible valour, patience and care. Occasionally she would give us a glimpse of her personal life too. How she came to Pilani as a young bride and made Pilani her home. How she went on to get her Ph.D. and eventually start teaching and become such an integral part of BITS. I did not know many women of her age who had such fortitude and perseverance to pursue a career and reach such heights at the time when most women’s roles were

limited within the four walls of their homes! When we finished our education and passed out of BITS, we all carried a piece of her within us. She was a teacher, friend and mother to us. The last time I met her was when I was leaving BITS. She was as usual radiant and full of energy. We talked about her plans after retirement, about my future career and how quickly the last four years had gone by. That’s how I will always remember her – smiling, reposedful

and full of hope for the future. ”

~ Pramila Rani



The 1998 batch with MBans

**BITS mourns the demise of Dr. C.R.Mitra, former Director, BITS Pilani**

The sun set on the life of legendary Former Director - BITS Pilani, Dr. C.R. Mitra as he breathed last on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2008. Dr Chittaranjan Mitra (CRM), also referred as “Dynamo Diro”, headed the institution for 20 years from 1969-1989.

He introduced innovative educational philosophies which made the educational system at BITS Pilani unique, including broad-based, multi-disciplinary approach, semester long course based curricula, practice school, industry-academia collaboration, choosing electives and many other features which were firsts in Indian higher education.

Dr Mitra's administrative acumen, resource mobilisation and resource optimisation abilities resulting in the building of a sizeable endowment for BITS Pilani are folklore among university administrators world over.

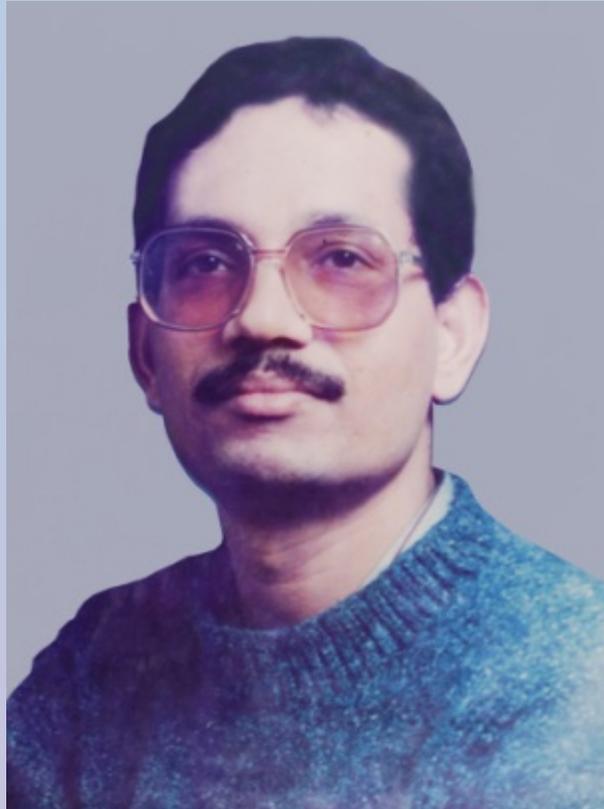
After BITS Pilani, Mitra took yet another round of educational innovation by heading HBTI Kanpur and NIIT Academy, New Delhi. He was a recipient of the Mewar Award, the Watumull Foundation Award and a life-time achievement award from the Engineering Education Foundation, Singhabad, Pune, among others, for 50 years of excellence as an innovator in higher education, as an institution builder and as an educator.

Classes were suspended on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2008 and all BITSians rose to offer condolences for his enormous contributions which were instrumental in moulding BITS, Pilani enabling to project itself as one of the top ranked institutions in India with global reputation. The dynamic leader remains a colossus even in his deep sleep.



*Dr. C. R. Mitra, Director, BITS-Pilani (1969-1989)*

**LAXMAN MOHANTY (1965-2008) TOUCHED OUR LIVES WITH HIS DEDICATION AND PASSION**



*Laxman Mohanty*

LAXMAN MOHANTY, '83 BATCH EEE, A VERY DEAR AND ACCOMPLISHED ALUMNI MEMBER WHO WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE SANDPAPER TEAM PASSED AWAY ON AUGUST 12, 2008. BESIDES HIS EXEMPLARY EXPERIENCE IN THE INFOTECH INDUSTRY, HE SET UP SOCIAL INITIATIVES FOR BETTER SCHOOLS IN INDIA UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE FUTURE FOCUS FOUNDATION, WAS A VISITING FACULTY AT THE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE AT GANDHINAGAR, A FOUNDING MEMBER OF SILICON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, ORISSA AND AN AUTHOR OF ICT STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS. THE FIRST OF THE SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE THAT WERE PART OF HIS VISION, FUTURE BHUBANESHWAR IS ABOUT TO COMMENCE OPERATIONS.

LAXMAN IS SURVIVED BY HIS WIFE, PROF. NEHARIKA VOHRA WHO IS A FACULTY OF ORGANISATION BEHAVIOUR IN THE PRESTIGIOUS INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, AHMEDABAD, (IIM-A). SHE IS A MEMBER OF THE BITS, PILANI FAMILY AND OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES TO HER.

MAY LAXMAN'S SOUL REST IN PEACE.

## The passing of an era: BITS Pilani mourns the demise of Dr. K.K. Birla

August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008 was clearly a black day in the history of BITS-Pilani, as students, staff and alumni bemoan the sudden demise of Dr. K.K. Birla, Chancellor and founding member, BITS-Pilani at Kolkata after a brief illness.

Dr K.K. Birla was a man of many facets, with an equal passion for not just expanding his well-known, and much respected, business empire founded by his father, but also towards philanthropy and education. This educational innovator was the driving and guiding force behind all the achievements of BITS, Pilani.

Born on November 11, 1918, Birla called it a historic day (his birthday) in his autobiography, "Brushes with History", as agreement of armistice for World War I was signed on that day. Dr KK Birla joined Congress Party in 1984 as a life member. He was elected as a Rajya Sabha member in the same year, under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and was a Member of Parliament for three terms from 1984 till 2002.

With his noble vision, Dr. KK Birla took over as the Chairman of BITS in 1983 and re-designated as Chancellor of BITS in 2003. He was deeply involved and closely associated with his visionary father in running both earlier Birla Colleges and BITS, since its inception in 1964. With his spirited involvement in all the activities of the Institute, Dr KK Birla was able to see the vision of his father The Late Shri GD Birla unfolding. Taking over the responsibility of running the Institute Dr. Birla realised the need for promising graduates in the field of science and technology in shaping up the nation's development. Under his patronage, BITS started expanding by establishing three campuses in Dubai, Goa and Hyderabad. His keen interest in the affairs of BITS and Pilani town was reflected in his regular visits which were always eagerly awaited by the students and staff of BITS, Pilani and the local population of Pilani town.

He has lived up to the standards and values set by his illustrious father Late Sri G. D. Birla. Hence we will not shed tears at this irreparable loss, instead pray the Almighty to grant eternal peace to the departed soul. Dr. KK Birla will survive in our hearts and minds forever.



*B.K. Birla, Kumara Mangalam Birla and other members of the Birla family carry the body of Dr K.K. Birla, who passed away in Kolkata on 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2008.*

## WHEN I WAS A JUNIOR IN COLLEGE...

BY THE BITS PILANI TEAM

The climate in the institute is changing. Much has been altered by the change from the board exam system to the BITSAT entrance. Demographics have shifted, the numbers of girls have dwindled, and more students are looking for activities that will directly benefit their CV, if not much else. And in a twist that might not be directly related, the whole phenomenon of 'informal interaction' (read ragging), has less conspicuously disappeared, and in its place has risen a highly competitive recruitment drive for the departments. The amount of attention given to freshers is unprecedented and leads to a very interesting first month in college indeed. Chronicling some aspects of this rush is a series of conversations that follow...

We drive into the sleepy town in the middle of the desert and I can feel my heart pounding. I stare at the broken walls and the rusted gates, trying not to let the idea of living within them daunt me. I begin the elaborate procedure that is 'getting settled in'. Buckets, books, SIM numbers, mattresses...the check-list is endless. I am blissfully proud of my efficiency until an overenthusiastic parent begins a 'When I was a junior in college' story. My mind stops listening at the utterance of the word 'junior': junior implies the presence of a senior. I grow aware of a region in the corner of the pit of my stomach. Senior implies submission of my dignity, and most probably sanity, to a certain omniscient authority. I am now aware of a certain plate of Maggi, occupying the said corner of my stomach. Seniors rag juniors. The fact comes home to

me. The plate of Maggie wants to heave itself out.

"Room 9201: Waste of my time. Room 9202: Waste of anyone's time. Room 9203: Plays basketball, not bad. Room 9204: Argh! Can't even speak English. Room 9205: Let's see." I whisper softly to myself as I slowly knock on the door, "Come on, be something worthwhile and make my job a *little* easier." I make my entry, a sickly smile plastered onto my face.

She is bigger and older; the very idea of her being in my room is scary. I stare at her feet and slowly the gaze shifts upwards,

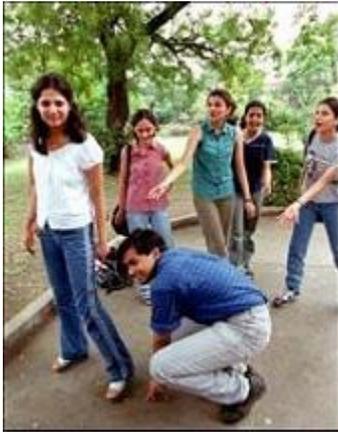
stopping short at her face. My eyebrows rocket upwards in total lack of comprehension as I see her 'warm' smile. She offers to help me with my timetable and she is 'nice'. There is something unnerving about people who are sweet to you for no reason at all. I want her to leave but she has other ideas. She begins to talk about classes and professors, about eating at the right places and drinking at the wrong ones and suddenly, I don't really want her to leave. I start to feel slightly better about myself. I am a worthy companion to her; not just a bright-eyed baby on campus. I hold my head a little higher and laugh a little louder and talk a little more. She sees me for the person I am and I think I have found a friend.

I give her another radiant sweet smile that makes me want to puke and leave. I fish out my cell phone and send a message. "Room 9205: Prize catch. Likes Jeffrey Archer and Dream Theater. Might need some effort. Get to it before anyone else can. We cannot lose this one." I look back down at the list 'Room 9206: Pathetic. Send her to Dhivya, she wanted her room cleaned.' I grin, for real this time.

\* \* \*



I refuse; I refuse to judge a person's worth from a two minute introduction!



But is it that abhorrent? After all, isn't the first impression the lasting impression?

But this is being so objective. I feel like I'm going out each day picking cattle.

Well, everyone wants the crème de la crème, don't they?

In an ideal world, a couple of months to get to know the people before 'recruiting' them on the job would have been so much better. From each according to his ability, to each according to his need – fair enough?

Hah! Don't be so naive to harbour such Utopian thoughts. This is free market – slacken a bit and you lose the edge. But isn't it going too far? After all, aren't we just a bunch of kids trying to have some fun? And do something worthwhile in the process. You learn to take pictures, someone learns to go out and talk to business folk, yet another learns how an event is organised; everyone wins. The seriousness, the hype, the bitching, and the works – aren't they all just parts of a complex machine called culture?

\* \* \*

"So what's your schedule today? I've got Controlz at 7 o'clock, Temple lawns, and then Sponz at 8 o'clock in C'not."

"Backstage in C'not Park at 8 o'clock, that's it. Better than that *ghotu* Ajit though, hasn't left his room since he came."

"Yeah, he says he's afraid of ragging. He's already started studying, I have no clue why. I slogged my posterior off for two years and then got here; there is no way I'm going to start immediately!"

"Hah, maybe it was all some people had, they can't get used to a new lifestyle. Me, on the other hand, I'm enjoying the attention. I just wish I was as lucky as you, getting dinner every day. I've got just one call, I'll probably stick here."

"The ragging isn't as bad as they said it'd be, till now it's almost like they are forced to be nice to us, with this department recruitment and all. For some odd reason I am disappointed"

"Don't try to be macho. My *sidey* had to sing for a senior when he was having a bath, then paper his ventilator and clean his room, he's had a rough time. But on the whole, it's hardly as bad as it was in my brother's time. The horror stories he told me! I was too scared to come here".

\* \* \*

It's been three days and

counting - not a single meal in the mess. And DOT is buying me dinner AGAIN tonight. You're stuck with that lousy mess *subzi*, aren't you? Why can't you at least pretend to be interested in departments? You get treated well...

I can't. I can't be loud and interesting, or suck up to people, you know that.

Trust me, these guys don't need you to suck up to them, they're so desperate.

Watch out, they just might label you one of the '*thadi* ones' and then you won't feel so great, will you? And besides, it's just an ego thing anyway. How many departments are fighting over you? How many people are telling you that you are the most important piece in this gigantic jigsaw? How many people are buying you lunches and dinners, and making your timetables and hanging out with you day and night – and doing everything short of cleaning your room? It makes me sick.

There's nothing wrong with some senior-junior bonding. You're just jealous because no one wants you! Get over it, some people are just destined to be in a department and others aren't. Today that really cute guy told me that I was made- like totally MADE – for Sponz.

Oh sure, but you were BORN to be in



Controlz and that really nice female who's talked to you twice from Dopy tells you that she's SURE you're her long lost sister and DOT-

That girl is really sweet, and she really cares about me. Give it a rest, will you?

What's her name?

Uhm, Shanti. No- Swati. No, no... uh...

Oh don't worry; she cares so much about you that she won't mind that you confuse her with the fifty others who care just like she does.

You're hopeless. Ok, how about we forget about what's-her-name and you can help me make this decision, it's going to affect the rest of my life as a BITSian. <Solemn sigh> So Sponz says I could 'go places' with them. But DOPY says I 'belong'. But Controls says 'I'm special' so...

I give up.

\* \* \*

I'm still not sure. How much work will being part of a department involve? I need to study; I have to get a transfer.

Join us! In our department, you will learn to interact with the corporate world. Establishing contacts will go a long way, especially for someone of your persona. I look at you and I see a bright mind, a brilliant future... with us.

I wonder how much weight this kind of stuff will carry on my CV.

We work round the year, and our work is of a semi-professional nature. You won't

find this kind of exposure anywhere else.

Hm...

You have the *enthu* for our department. It's not about the work; we're a close knit FAMILY. We're bonded. We love each other. We have the MOST amount of fun! We are what make any fest interesting!

Will I be allowed to go home during Oasis? I have already booked tickets.

You communicate at the same wavelength as us. You fit very well into our intellectually stimulating atmosphere. You will flourish in our department. You will....

How many people do they take in each batch?

We are an elite bunch. We handpick each and every one of our cattle- sorry *recruits*. Recruits. We feel you satisfy our criteria and it would be utterly foolish of you to forego this opportunity.

Is it even safe!

Beware of those people; they are into all sorts of shady things. You will be ruining your *life*! You *need* us! You have to – I mean – I think you will be better off with us...

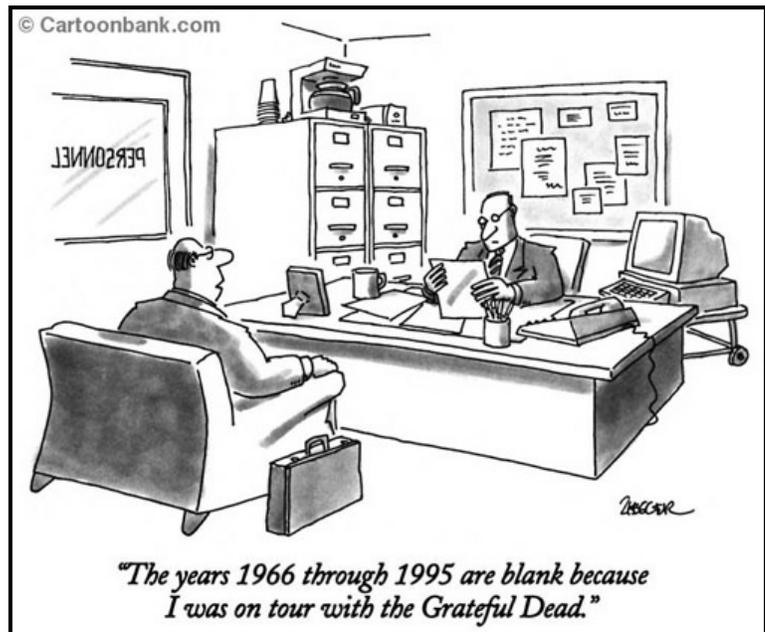
I can't decide.

We have given you enough time, we expect an answer now. So what'll it be, yes or no?

**Three weeks later...**

This whole department drama is finally over and I am left with the prickly feeling that surprisingly is arising from a lot more than lack of free food. I feel like I have just defined who I want to be at this place. And based on what? A bunch of people who looked like they were bending over backwards trying to be nice to me. Only time will tell whether the relationships I have built in the past month are worth anything at all. It will be interesting to see if any of these people remember my name. I will wake up tomorrow morning, no longer an object on a list, but a person. Scary, but I couldn't be happier.

One thing is for sure, I will miss the 24-hour-helpline-service, the laughs at my jokes that definitely aren't



funny, the fighting over walking me back to MB and being told incessantly how brilliant and important I am. Oh, I will miss the dinner treats, the lunch treats, the in-between-lunch-and-dinner treats, the after-lunch-*shikanji*-treats, the after-dinner-ice-cream-treats, the midnight-ANC-treats and the 'gen treats'. Today is my last day of being a coveted princess.

Tomorrow, I wake and I will be normal. How am I ever going to get used to it?

That senior -- the one who helped me with my timetable -- said 'Hi' to me today. I know she didn't remember who I was. And yet I gave her an intro, the same as everyone else who joined her department. Maybe she'll say hi again tomorrow. And maybe later

sometime, she will remember my name. And later, who knows, maybe we'll even have a conversation. Even though she didn't think I was worthy enough before...

As I lie down, my dad's voice pops up in my head, "When I was a junior in college..." The story replays itself. Sigh, things were a lot less complicated then! ♦

## TRIXIES

BY DILEEPAN ('00 MECH), ARAVIND V ('00 EEE) & RAJESH A ('00 EEE)

A word in the hand is worth two in the book!

Crack the following trixies to obtain popular phrases

A few illustrative examples:

AALLLL  
GSEGGSEG  
NEPALED = DEPALED

*Answer: All in all*

*Answer: Scrambled eggs*

*Answer: A friend (pal) in need is a friend indeed*

1. BONNBET
2. CIGARETTE E
3. TONMIN
4. TEEASYREST
5. LWLE USE
6. ENOTS ENOTS ENOTS ENOTS ENOTS
7. B. A. Liberty  
M. A. Independence
8. A T\_\_ O\_ TWO CITIES

ANSWERS ON PAGE 90

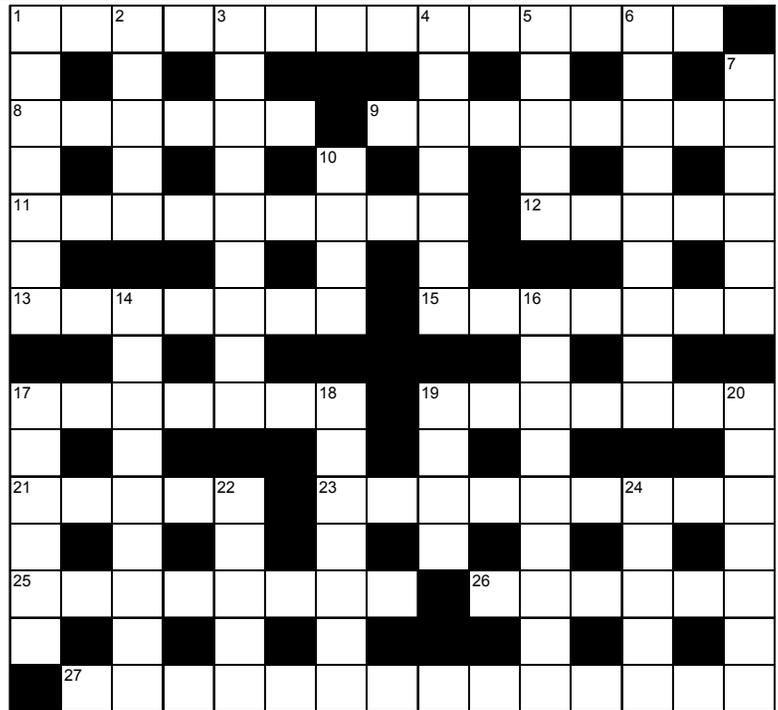
# VERBALISM CRUCIFIED!

SET BY DILEEPAN NARAYANAN ('00 MECH)

Churlish vocable brought in line for a cryptic grid game better than Sudoku! (9)

**ACROSS:**

- 1. Ask the raven the most direct way out? (2, 3, 4, 5)
- 8. Military governor to exhibit rifle, say (6)
- 9. Left always ahead of time – such an advantage (8)
- 11. But moves around you in the wrong stage (4, 5)
- 12. Rod in that direction can be an emblem of vengeance (5)
- 13. Need to kick us quietly to the port (7)
- 15. Deft drinking of ale leads to collapse of hope (7)
- 17. The fool poses awkwardly and helps (7)
- 19. One of the British geese around to assail and crowd around (7)
- 21. Addicts get high on them (5)
- 23. Develop after direction to find yourself wrapped up (9)
- 25. Many rings around AV lead to the yearnings (8)
- 26. The one who owes money makes the French and British rot, supposedly (6)
- 27. Deliver the unbelievable tale about SLR, totally edited (4, 1, 4, 5)



**DOWN:**

- 1. Possibly the symptom in the idiot designates things (7)
- 2. The freshwater fish to tour about after cha (5)
- 3. They are awarded credence for the spread of knowledge (9)
- 4. Forcefully took away weed from the way, somehow (7)
- 5. This is also one of England’s hallowed cricketing turfs (5)
- 6. Elate one carefully worked out orb (9)
- 7. Medical jabber (6)
- 10. You go with the child to spy (4)
- 14. You stop delay in play in an assumption (9)
- 16. Fliers take in us and one to get the infantrymen (9)
- 17. Seaman uses channel to kidnap (6)
- 18. Dexterity of the French within one’s vision (7)
- 19. Partly be in the company of ladies (4)
- 20. Those people much advanced in age (7)
- 22. Expert craft to murder requires direction first (5)
- 24. Make an oat softly in the courtyard (5)

**ANSWERS ON PAGE 90**

## NSS ACTIVITIES

DEBASHISH MAJUMDAR (2006A1PS446)  
COORDINATOR, LIAISON, NSS, BITS-PILANI  
COORDINATOR OF THE AID PILANI ACTIVITIES

“The real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of capacity by all to resist authority when abused.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi

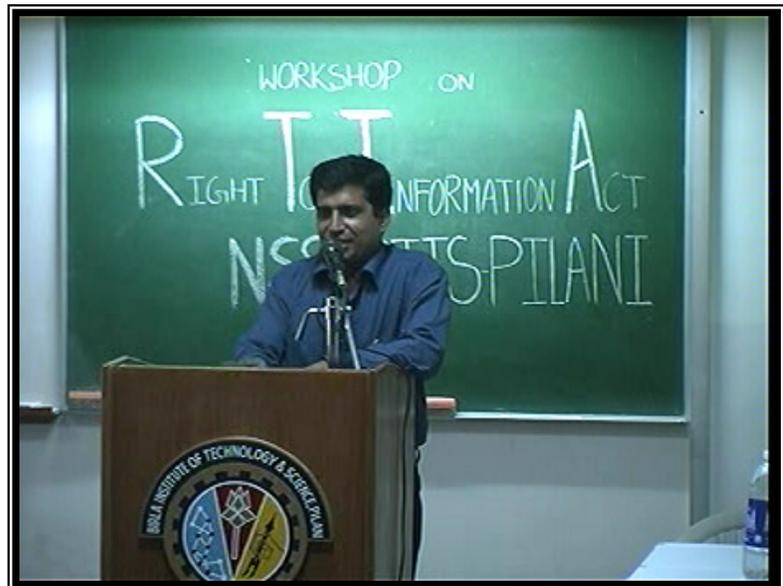
NSS has played a major role in BITS, Pilani, linking students with projects in adjacent villages. It undertook significant initiatives recently and we'd like to elaborate on the details and impact of these projects.

### I. RIGHT TO INFORMATION

The RTI Awareness Cell, BITS Pilani was formally inaugurated on the 13th of April, 2008 for spreading awareness about the RTI Act in all villages in and around Pilani.

For the uninitiated, the key concepts behind the Right to Information Act, 2005 are:

- Transparency & Accountability in the working of every public authority;
- The right of any citizen of India to request access to information and the corresponding duty of Govt. to meet the request, except the exempted information (Sec. 18/19);
- The duty of Govt. to proactively make available key information to all (Sec 4);
- A responsibility on all sections: citizenry, NGOs, Media.



The RTI Awareness Cell, BITS Pilani will try to find out the common grievances amongst the villagers there and aid them in filling up RTI Applications for access to rightful information. It will also update them with ongoing schemes of the Government of India regarding RTI Act. During the formal inauguration, the BITSians were made aware of the RTI Act.

### II. BLOOD DONATION CAMP

The Blood Donation Camp was jointly organised by NSS, BITS Pilani and the Indian Red Cross Society on the 6th and 7th of April. It was inaugurated in the august presence of Prof. L. K. Maheshwari, Vice Chancellor,

BITS, Pilani, Prof. G. Raghurama, Deputy Director – Academic, Prof. Vimal Bhanot, NSS Coordinator, Prof. N. V. Muralidhar Rao, Dean SWD and Dr. Monica Sharma.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony by Prof. L. K. Maheshwari, Dr. Monica Sharma was the first person to come forward to donate blood, followed by Prof. Raghurama. The camp received a healthy response from all the BITS students and faculty, the total coming to 715 units of blood, each unit having 300 ml. of blood. The deadline was extended by an hour to accommodate for the unalloyed enthusiasm of the blood donors.

In all, it was a very successful camp, and BITS, like every year, again topped the list of educational institutions donating the maximum number of units of blood.

Thanks to all the BITSians who turned out in huge numbers to donate blood and who have made BITS the second largest educational institution in South-East Asia in terms of total units of blood donated!

### III. HEALTH CAMP

On the 14th of April, NSS, BITS Pilani, set up a health camp in the nearby village of Morwa, about 5 km. from BITS. Under the guidance of Dr. Pareek, along with a few pharmacy students, a normal health check-up was done. Medicines from the Jhunjhunu Government Hospital was distributed free of cost to the villagers for treatment of pain, fever and other common diseases. The camp focused on creating

awareness amongst the villagers regarding the ill effects of smoking and drinking by making use of banners and posters depicting the same. About 150 villagers were a part of this health camp. With such efforts, NSS tries to drive away the drudgery from the lives of the villagers, and with the success of this and many more such events to be held in future; it can spark a ray of hope, for better lives. ♦

### *Waiting for the storm*

*~ Rahul Mishra*

*They are ruining our world,  
And we watch,  
Silently,  
Scams and crimes,  
Corruption engulfing all,  
Newspaper reports to be read and forgotten  
After a moment of anger,  
Like the few dark clouds that gather  
Only to be blown away by the wind,  
Leaving behind a pale dawn,  
No violent red inflaming the sky,  
Without any hope  
Of a new day.*

*The headlines screamed today too  
And the day passed like any other,  
Discussions in loud voices,  
Feigned anger,  
Meaningless additions to the clatter of spoons,  
Wrapped in an anthem of apathy  
That unfurled with the setting sun,  
Leaving the sky grey,  
But still clear  
For the indifferent dawn of tomorrow,  
If only there were clouds outside,  
If only there was a storm...*

## LIFE AT BITS-PILANI, GOA

BY THE BITS-PILANI GOA TEAM

The spirit of BITS seems to wander from campus to campus creating a subliminal cultural connect in matters like procrastinating, avoiding classes, speaking in expletives, staying out late. Yet, buried in all of this is a nascent intent. Four years down, out of this cocoon emerges a purposeful individual – the BITSian – contributing to technology, science and the society.

Welcome to a student's perspective of BITS-Pilani, Goa Campus; the college where the éclair is an officially accepted form of currency

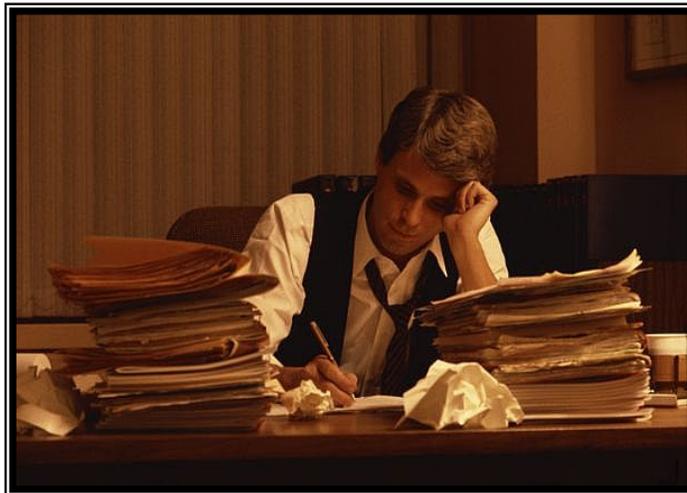
Students here can be classified into the ones who study and the ones who don't bother much. Most of us either belong to the latter by birth, or turn into one after living here. No less than 53% percent of our student population comes from Andhra Pradesh. The sex ratio here is agonisingly skewed at 3.5 guys per girl. Lucky girls; they get a wide variety to choose from.

Students follow timings surprisingly close to the US timing. We'll have the least jetlag when we do eventually (hopefully) take a flight down to the States.

**FACT 1:** A recent survey in the campus has revealed the average BITSian sleeps at 4:00 am and wakes up at 12 noon when hunger finally rings an alarm. And yes, most of us do not attend lectures. Maybe it's just the good ol' Goan climate!

Well, life at BITS-Pilani, Goa is fun. Some go to the extent of

calling this place a four-year all-expenses-paid resort!



**FACT 2:** Another survey conducted reveals the average BITSian attends 7% of the lectures assigned in his timetable. Also, that all of this attendance comes in the first week of every new semester. The average attendance in a class of 300 is 30. So the natural question is: where do all these students go after all?

Well, our days are spent chilling out with pals over coffee at Nescafe or "getting a breath of fresh air" at the shack a.k.a. *jhopdi*. Besides, we have a Monginis Bakery, a cafeteria, and a Juice-Centre.

**FACT 3:** The average BITSian gains two kilos a month while staying at campus.

The campus has hangout places for all kinds of people. We have a huge library (hangout for the geeks), a Student Activity Centre for unlimited sports, games and gymming and even a 'lovers lane' for our home-grown Romeos and Juliets.

Life outside campus is even more fun. Goa's full of beaches, sun, sand and water sports. And then, there is cheap liquor. Just like the good old youth, we too enjoy letting our hair down, getting high and living life unleashed. But within a leash, a 10:30 campus in-time rule that is a controversial topic, a cause of major discontent among students.

Now – we're BITSians after all – our creativity tends to surface one way or another. We might not be terribly interested in attending classes, but for most, with extra curricular activities the schedule is tight. From cultural clubs like the English Press Club, Dramatics Club, Dance Club and *kala* to social service clubs like Abhigyan, Aasra, and Nirmaan to career development clubs like Centre for Entrepreneurial Leadership, Career Development Cell and Wall Street club, we have it all.

Celebration of festivals like *Holi* and *Ugadi*, DJ nights, screening of movies are a regular feature in the campus. There are technical clubs like Linux Users Group, Cypress Club, Bits n Bytes that have regular events.

For self improvement, there is the personality development course, French/German classes, taekwondo, and group meditation sessions. Then we have alumni visits, guest lectures, and MBA, GRE, and GMAT classes. Our annual (national) fests- Waves (cultural), Quark (technical), Spree (sports) cause preparations to start as early as ten months prior! Life thus moves on rather rapidly here, we have so much to do.

There are facilities to boast about, but who can escape the radar of a sceptic human mind. In spite of what is offered, there is much to complain.

**FACT 4:** The average BITSian says “sucks” once every six words. The variety of its usage ranges from “mess food sucks” to “compree sucks”, to even “life sucks ra”. Not all of the complaints are unwarranted though. Internet has been rather erratic in campus, since eternity really. And it’s a constant cringing point for us. Our college does have more than its fair share of power cuts, most of them ‘strategically’ occurring right before exams.

We at BITS-Pilani, Goa live a dual life: a real life and a virtual one, the latter just as rich and diverse as its living counterpart. Students here spend most of their in-hostel time either playing games on the network, or chatting online, or downloading and watching



movies, or browsing the internet/LAN for objectionable content. Our LAN client is like the open chat room cum hub for all BITSians.

A description of BITSian campus life would be incomplete without mentioning the ‘night-out’, an unfairly tarnished activity for which different people have different motives and rationales. Ridding yourself of all the sincerity stuffed in you for classes and lectures is a pre-requisite to be a night outer. The practice is the norm for gaming aficionados who cannot afford to waste their time in a quiescent state in their beds. Games like AOE, Counter strike, World of Warcraft and FIFA keep this lot busy all night. Movies are best watched at night as daylight ruins acoustics and lighting effects.

The in-hostel grounds double up as arenas for intense midnight sports: football, badminton, and cricket. “Executing” rather nasty birthday bums features in sports. The common rooms often turn into stadiums, housing the top matches on TV; watched, cheered, booed, and analyzed by the hostel collectively. The support for teams turns into fanaticism, and rivalry often into intense arguments. Hunger



eventually overcomes all other emotions, and the whole hostel turns into a wild treasure hunt, the gold being food. After a gruelling hunt, one discovers an elusive packet of Maggi... and the world breathes again.

The average BITSian will try in vain to tell you exams were *not* part of the bargain at the four-year resort. And when it does eventually and inevitably come to that part of the semester, desperate student behaviour becomes a subject of study. While some resort to cursing their subjects, even their existence, others vow to start serious studies, attending lectures, do their best to improve their GPA... from the next semester. Caffeine levels go to an all time high, and sleep at an all-time low. In spite of repeated near-death experiences and some terrible performances in exams, we BITSians are firm on our policy: we refuse to work until the eleventh hour. The numerous night-outs during times of peace now find their application at wartime. We do finally manage to stay up through the exam and write the little our sleep deprived brains allow us to. A paper ends, and gaming starts again... Some things never change. ♦

# News corner

## Happenings in Goa!

### Student Achievers



Team GRAS comprising of three BITSians – Shubham Malhotra, Rohan Anil and Gaurav Paruthi – won the [International Online Hacking Competition](#) organised by IIT-Kanpur in association with **Y!**RnD.

[Tycoons 2008](#) was a nationwide personality-centric event where the *individual* with the maximum overall leadership potential to be India's *Tycoon* was crowned winner. In a test of an individual's intellect, organising skills, teamwork ability and communications proficiency, competing against thousands of participants from across the country Nishith Rastogi of Goa Campus came first followed by Abishek Humbad of Pilani Campus.

### Alumni Visits

The students earned a basic sneak peak into the world of Six Sigma, thanks to a 2-hr workshop by Mr Malolan Sarangapani, '92 batch Mechanical. A Black Belt holder in Six Sigma he currently heads the Global Immigration Services at Cognizant.

A Pre Quark Finance workshop by Mr. Ranjit Ranade, '90 A8 was widely attended by budding entrepreneurs and finance enthusiasts in the campus. A Financial services consultant with an MBA in Finance and Economics from New York University, he currently owns a company called ETC Partners and is visiting faculty at Indian Statistical Institute, Bangalore.

### Learning Sessions



The Sun club, which had been formed under the [Sun Campus Ambassador](#) programme, has been active with several lectures, demos and projects that have been done. Recently, a workshop on Sun Java and Solaris basics was attended by around 350 students. Three separate clubs on Java, Solaris and Sun SPOTS™ have also been opened for students to pursue their interests and contribute to the field of open source.



Waves, our college's annual cultural fest was celebrated from 6-8 March. For the first time it went national and saw colleges from far and wide come and participate. There were a wide variety of events to cater the students of all interests. From music, to dance, to fashion, to debating,



The [Cypress Club](#) has been formed to familiarise students with PSoC technology and act as a link between the institute and industry. PSoC kits have been distributed and introductory lectures on software like PSoC Designer and PSoC Express have been conducted as part of an ongoing effort to give students hands on experience in using this new tool.

[WAVES '08](#) had it all.



BITS, Pilani - Goa Campus presented the second instalment of its Sports Festival in [SPREE '08](#) organised during 21st-24th March, 2008 with about 50 colleges from 4 states competing in events like football, cricket, chess, basketball, etc. Spree '08 was the biggest fest of its kind in all of Goa.



### Social Service

AASRA the social service club of our campus is out to merge with NIRMAAN, a registered NGO which had its inception in Pilani. It was engaged in clothes and newspaper collection and also put up a stall during WAVES to collect funds to help local Goan social organisation.

## BITSIANS: GO BEYOND BOOKS

BY THE BITS-PILANI GOA TEAM

The BITS, Goa team illustrates some projects that take the definition of the word project away from mere assignments to inspiring missions with engineering brilliance, lateral thinking and creative genius in a unique hat trick. Be it the counter-intuitive synthesis of anti-ulcer drugs using cigarette butts, or the effort of a team with the blessings of IEEE to make fuel cells using sewage water, the effort is superlative. Enjoy the ride!

A campus of engineers in the making, barely four years old, but the ideas and innovations keep pouring in. The classrooms may be empty, but the young minds are brimming with thoughts and designs. The spirit of engineering is alive and vibrant.

Here, we bring to your attention some of the highly acclaimed work done by BITSians from Goa, in various stages of completion.

*Disclaimer: Not all images represent the actual project.*

### Go-Kart

Not exactly a Go-kart. It's more of a dune buggy. Unlike go-karts, this has a ground clearance, a suspension system and a 150 cc IC engine with



gears.



#### Students:

- Matthew Ebenezer
- Rohit De Sa
- Vaidya Alekh

#### Faculty In-charge:

- Dr. Singru

The entire vehicle was fabricated in the workshop and IC engine lab by the students. The vehicle is 6.5ft long and 3ft wide and stands 19cm above the ground. Some material was obtained from outside, some from the workshop and the rest picked up from scrap yard. The engine is a Honda unicorn 4 stroke 150cc bought second hand. Certain parts were custom designed and had to be made by us in the workshop on the lathe, drilling machine and the welding machine. The rear does not have a suspension and shock absorbing system just like other go karts. It took four full months

to build and right now it's in the final stages. The front wheels and the steering mechanism and suspension have been mounted. All that is left is connecting the rear shaft to the engine output and inserting the brakes.

### Radio Telescope

A single open dipole antenna was initially set up at the campus for observations at the radio frequency of 73.8MHz. An array of four antennas will be installed for carrying out synthesis imaging and the development of the necessary hardware and software is in progress.

The data from the antenna will be passed on through the coaxial cable to the RF amplifier and filter in the laboratory. This RF is converted into IF with help of a mixer and an oscillator. The signal is further amplified and it can be observed on a frequency analyzer.

#### Students:

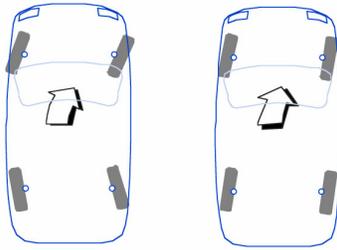
- Onkar Dixit
- Shubhadeep Bhattacharjee

#### Faculty In-charge:

- Dr. Ashish Asgekar

The data from the antennas will be stored on PC using a data acquisition system. Then, the necessary complex correlation will be performed to get the images in spatial domain.

After the project is completed, BITS-Pilani, Goa Campus would be the first educational institute in India to have its own



radio telescope.

### 4 Wheel Steer by wire

In normal automobiles there is a mechanical linkage called the Ackermann linkage that maintains the Ackermann relation between the rotations of the steering wheels to achieve pure rolling. The main drawback of this is that it has only three or four precision points. In this project, rotation of the steering wheel is electronically controlled. The rotation of one motor is via a switch and the other rotates through an angle given by Ackermann relation via a microcontroller greatly increasing the accuracy and precision or pure rolling.

Two wheel steering systems are

**Students:**

- Tejas Chafekar
- Rahul Dutta

**Faculty In-charge:**

- Dr. B. J. C. Babu

universally used in almost all vehicles. But the concept of a four wheel steering system is not so popular. Certain features in 4WS systems offer added advantages over two wheel steering system. The attempt is to design and fabricate a four wheeled vehicle with a four wheel steering system. Instead of using an Ackermann linkage mechanism, we propose to use electric actuators to turn the steering wheels. The actuators are controlled by a microcontroller so that proper steering angle relations are maintained.

### FSAE

FSAE: Formula Society of Automotive Engineers



Every year, the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) organises an international competition in which teams from universities around the world design, fabricate, and race single-seat, open cockpit, formula-style cars powered by four-stroke gasoline engines with mass production costs of less than \$25,000. These student-designed cars compete with each other in the areas of fuel economy, endurance, acceleration and cost analysis. The BITS-Pilani, Goa students plan to participate in this prestigious event in 2009 series.

The team comprises of 15 members from mechanical and electronics stream, under the guidance of the mechanical and electronics faculty. The work is currently in its design stage. The car is expected to be completed by January 2009. The team is looking for technical and financial assistance.

Features include:

- 600cc Super Bike Engine (85 Hp)
- F1 Style (Open Wheel Car) Carbon Fibre Body Aerodynamics
- Student Designed Transmission, Steering and Suspension
- Student Designed Intake and Exhaust Manifold Design along with Forced Aspiration
- Electronics-Modified Engine Control Unit, Gear

**Students:**

- Bhushan Bhutada
- Eeshan Thakar

Shift, Telemetry (Student Designed)

For more details about the competition:

<http://students.sae.org/competitions/formulaseries/fsae/>

### Synthesis of Anti-Ulcer drugs using Cigarette Butts

Won the first place at IIT KGP techfest and has been selected for International conference to be held at Kefalonia, Greece.

Cigarette butts are the most littered thing in the world (5.5

trillion per year), they are non biodegradable, and can cause health problems and marine pollution. It also causes blockage in drains. Solanesol (a pharmaceutically active compound) has a high concentration in the particulate phase ('tar') of cigarette smoke which is deposited in the filter of the cigarette butt. One milligram of solanesol can easily be obtained from a cigarette butt. 5.5 trillion cigarettes are smoked each year



which contains one million kg of solanesol.

**Students:**

- Siddarth

Cigarette butts were collected after 10 days of the cigarette being smoked. Solanesol was extracted from cigarette butts using liquid chromatographic techniques. The solanesol fraction was confirmed using thin layer chromatography. Even with the worst case analysis 3.5 million ulcer tablets can be made in a year! Once an economic value is attached to the cigarette butt, the littering problem won't arise.

Fuel-Cells using sewage water & plants

Microbial fuel cells make it possible to generate electricity using bacteria. This team is making one by using sludge for fuel in the anode and the oxygen released by a water plant or algae as the oxidant. This process has been referred to as a bio-electrochemically assisted microbial reactor (BEAMR) or simply as the bacterial



electrolysis of organic matter because the protons and electrons are derived from the organic matter and not water.

With initial experimental results we got voltage 0.4- 0.7 Volts.

**Students:**

- Covina Upadhyay
- Sowmya
- Anchal

This is supposed to be very good and we are now trying to improve to 1-2 volts. If it is done, mankind will be entering into new age of generating electricity. With sewage water and plants, we can even open mini power generating systems for small community with our set up.

This project is sponsored by IEEE.

Snake-bot



The robot is a completely autonomous land based robot inspired by snakes. The robot is completely mobile on a variety of surfaces excluding very low friction surfaces like glass. The driving mechanism consists of six servo motors which produce alternating motion which is programmed using a PIC microcontroller. The robot can be used in exploration by attaching a wireless camera on the head. Because of the unique motion pattern and mobility the robot can enter relatively inaccessible regions.

This robot mimics the motion of a snake by producing a sine wave pattern in its motors, thus pushing against its own body and moving forward. Various articulations of the snake can be produced by programming the

**Students:**

- Lalit Mohan
- Bipin Kumar Singh
- Damodar Vajja

**Faculty In-charge:**

- Dr. B. J. C. Babu

microcontroller. An infrared emitter and receiver give the robot its obstacle detection and path charting capabilities. The snake moves forwards and turns left or right when an obstacle is sensed. Other routines like sidewinding can be developed.

With further customisations, snakey can be used in applications like search and rescue, tunnel inspection, archaeological surveying, oil line surveying, mine field disarming and tank inspection.

### BITS Digital Mobile Map

BITS Digital Mobile Map is a positioning and map navigation system designed for the BITS Goa campus to be used in mobile devices and handhelds.



It's an ongoing project and a prototype for the ultimate aim of making this software useful for the tourism oriented state of Goa. The purpose is to design and implement an automated

**Students:**

- Abhinav Raj
- Rishi Agarwal
- Arun Reddy

**Faculty In-charge:**

- Mr. Nitin Upadhyay

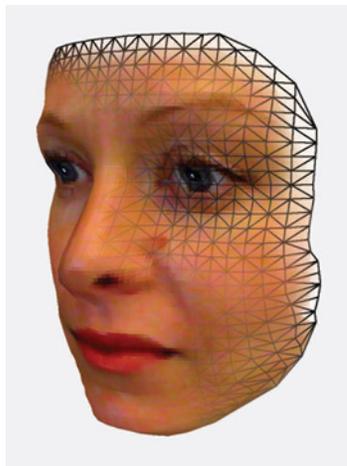
tourism-oriented mobile application that would be capable of guiding the tourists

from one place to another with various navigation features like shortest route between places, exact distance between them, nearby hotspots etc.

### Face based authentication

Face recognition is a very natural way of identification. In fact, we have been using this throughout our lives. The project aims at providing stable Face Recognition & Authentication where the system would detect the face even if the guy gets lost on an island and comes back with a beard or detect if the face recognised by the webcam is actually a human face and not an image shown in front of the webcam.

So why enter a password when



the system can recognise you as the admin? Selected for Google

**Students:**

- Rohan Anil

Summer of Code for the organisation OpenSuse and is being mentored by Alex Lau Chun Yin.

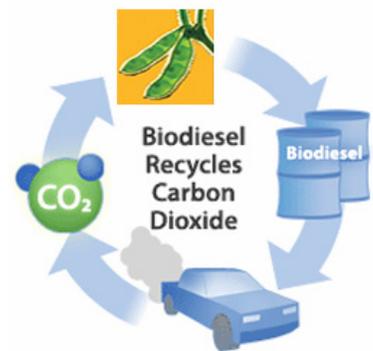
### BioDiesel

Biodiesel production being economical is still a question. However this project gives an insight in this regard. The project mainly emphasises on biodiesel production using waste vegetable oil in the lab scale.

The Biodiesel which we had prepared was tested in a vehicle and the test was successful. Pros and cons in the production of biodiesel in large scale were studied. A process flow sheet for its production was made which also includes the extraction of oil from Jatropha Plants. Detailed economic analysis has been done in which the following are the main results:

For 10,000 MT per annum of oil seeds,

- Total expenditure: INR 256.889 million
- Total Returns: INR 342.1 million
- Net Profit: INR 85.2



million per annum

The report concludes with the effect on the Indian Economy by the production of Biodiesel on large scale. ♦

## QUARK 2008: ENGINEERING PERFECTION

BY THE BITS-PILANI GOA TEAM

Quark, the annual technical festival of BITS-Pilani, Goa was a stately, international exhibition, attracting 2,000 participants in 32 events. The technical excellence was complemented by creative mimes, dramatics and Rock clubs. An event organised in truly BITSian fashion.

Three unforgettable days of exciting technical competitions, valiant efforts by participants and exhilarating revelry best sum up Quark'08 ([www.bits-quark.org/quark08](http://www.bits-quark.org/quark08)), the annual technical festival of BITS, Pilani - Goa Campus, held from 9th-11th February. Quark is the fastest growing technical festival of any college in India, and it proved itself by becoming the biggest tech-fest in Goa. Quark'08 had a budget of around 20 lakh with Cognizant, Thermax and Cypress Semiconductors as associate sponsors, followed by event sponsors like Microsoft, Aditi Technologies, National Instruments, National Semiconductors, Bosch, NVIDIA, Red Hat, i-Flex Solutions and Zuari Industries.

After 5 months of preparation, Quark started off with the event Contraption. Workshops that were held include Nex Robotics

workshop, a finance workshop by Reuters – the leading news agency, a LabVIEW workshop by National Instruments, Rubik's cube workshop, an Origami Workshop, a telescope making workshop by IUCAA, and an aeromodelling workshop by Mr. Ansari Wasi, three-time National Aeromodelling champion and manager of 'Wings India'.

Quark'08 became an international festival with participation from international institutes like BITS, Pilani – Dubai Campus and Rutgers University. There were also more than two thousand participants from Goa as well as places all over India, who participated in 32 events spread over engineering and scientific fields. The event Schoolbag invited over 60 schools from all over Goa. The enthusiastic schoolchildren were shown around the exhibitions and also took a trip through the galaxy in

the inflatable planetarium courtesy IUCAA.

Quark '08 also featured a Corporate Exhibition, where various organisations including corporate power houses like Microsoft, Bosch, NVIDIA, M-Tech Innovations, Red Hat and others showcased themselves and reached out to the students. The BITS Research & Development Exhibition showcased the ongoing research and development at the Goa Campus.

Some special events included Sudo-Q, the Sudoku competition, Sci-Tech quiz and Quizotic, the business quiz. An event that left the audience in splits were the Ignoble awards, featuring quirky presentations on topics like the necessity of a machine to identify dogs by their bark! And of course, Matka, the mega-gaming event with prizes worth half a lakh. Other events included Binary



Pirates, CodOlympics, Wall Street Raider, Optimus, Krypt-en-Krypt, Wavefront, Imagine, Simanupulate, IP-Bot and many more.

If the days were full of hard work, the nights had special shows that left the audience speechless. Quark'08 presented "Aurora", over the three days with a wide range of entertainment which included mind-blowing performances by Dramatics, Mime, Music and Rock Clubs. On 10th, there was an air show by Mr. Ansari Wasi, who displayed myriad aeromodels, gliders and helicopters performing tricky manoeuvres. This was followed by a magic show performed by Mr. Saras Chandra, a National award-winning magician. A touch of grandeur was added to the evening when the juggling troupe "Feeding the Fish" from London, performed "Flux", where excellent precision, brilliant skills, radiant colours, cutting-edge technology and graceful choreography intertwined in perfect symphony

to entrance the audience in a one of a kind, unforgettable performance that symbolised 'Engineering Perfection'. The jugglers used state-of-the-art props programmed precisely to create myriad colours using lasers. The performance reached a crescendo when the performers danced to Vande Mataram, and used their props to create never-before-seen special effects, for which the audience gave them not one, but two standing ovations! The last day of Quark saw the finals of most events, such as the All-Terrain Transporter being held in a colourful arena with screen projectors streaming out the battle between the bots live to the audience. The festival came to a majestic end after a music and rock night with a mesmerising display of fireworks lighting up the sky in Quark's glory.

Quark '08 has been innovative and unique in many ways. The Corporate Exhibition and Schoolbag have been one of the first steps to connect the campus

not only to the industry but also reach out to the School Children who will be the future citizens. The entire schedule of events and information coordination was done through an online software system 'Natasha' developed especially for this purpose. The Structure of a dynamic Organising Committee coordinating with the various departments and clubs provided flexibility and impetus for the Quark'08 team to reach higher in ways that a traditional rigid system could never provide.

Quark'08 has become one of the biggest tech-fests in India thanks to the sponsors for their support, the Organising Committee for the organisation and conduct of the festival, various departments and clubs for their hard work, the participants from outside, the support of the BITS faculty and the alumni, and the colossal efforts of every BITSian. This has been one Quark to remember, for all of Goa and India. ♦



(Left) B-Dome: The Scene of action, (Centre) Plaza-Garden: lightings at Night, (Right) The Quark Mascot

## EAST MEETS WEST –THE GENERASHUN GAP

BY ANURADHA GUPTA ('86 MMS)

Two BITSAA members from two different generations and two opposite coasts of US hobnob in the midst of a heavily *Panju* gathering with pandemonium in the background. Shall the twain meet?

I was all prepared to handle my separation anxiety. I had decided to leave my five-year-old bundle of joy, Tannu with my husband Pankaj and was off on a brief jaunt with my sister, to the glorious Muir woods of San Francisco and to my Aunt's house at Walnut Creek, where her granddaughter's first birthday was being celebrated on a lavish scale.

years ago, she is frozen in time and tradition. Everybody has moved ahead -- the world, Indians world over -- but they're still the way they were thirty years back. Two of their sons reside with them, one married, and the third has now moved away. A very nice family who would not empathise at all on why my sister and I wanted to spend the day at Muir woods. So we didn't lie; we just didn't tell them. We would bell the cat

time over the phone. I had no clue about what the people looked like but had gotten very pally with them, most of all Sandeep (we laughed more than we talked and were on the same wavelength, both being people of substance, ha-ha). He even enjoyed my Tannu jokes, and it won him rave reviews.

Sid had recently gone to Pilani to hobnob with the campus folks. When he came back after eating *kari chawal* at a Prof's house, satiated and full of praise, we pulled his leg, and every time we spoke to him, we would refer to the frozen *kari chawal*. Since he had visited India, was ten years my junior and single, I quizzed him about whether he had gone to get hooked. Sandeep added that he must have been honeymooning in Pilani. Sid commented wryly that that will indeed be the last straw -- of all places, why will he choose Pilani! "To share your Shiv Ganga escapades with her," we teased.

Sid lived in the Bay Area. So when my plans to go to SF fructified and my tickets were irrevocably booked, when it was too late and I was on tenterhooks, I asked him whether he could land up for the party. My sis and I decided that some bright company on our own wavelength would be a welcome change. (Whether Sid would feel the same way about us, we had no clue. That we



“Our proud gaddi ji!”

Now, my sister and I have concluded, based on a limited sample size, that everybody has a dysfunctional Aunt in US. Her son has me, my daughter has her, and we both have our Aunt, my Mom's sister, who is really very nice but, being a *Panju* who came to the US over thirty

when the necessity arose, and I could always hide behind my elder sis.

As if it weren't complicated enough, I planned on inviting somebody I had never met before. I had interacted with the BITSAA team for a very long

were bright was mere conjecturing. Ignorance was bliss). Sagarika (also on the BITSAA team) and I touched base but with her family and work commitments we couldn't meet up. To Sid, I painted an attractive picture, of a grand free meal (and an opportunity to hobnob with me), the former of course being the fish that I dangled.

And he gladly acquiesced – a bachelor has a magnetic pull to a meal --, and so I was flying down from the East Coast, from Connecticut and my sister, already at the West Coast, was flying down too, with Sid driving down to my Aunt's house. And we were trying to get the twain to meet – East and West, I mean.

The D-day of departure arrived. I had been sternly warned to wean myself off from my kiddo, give her the opportunity of being independent and myself a chance of experiencing freedom. Who was I kidding! I boarded the plane remembering her sad face as she said that she would miss me and her ecstatic face when Pankaj told her they would do lots of fun things together. I sat like I had sat innumerable times on trips around India and the globe, once a hotshot in the corporate sector, poring over files and books. I had a book with me and some research material for a new book I was writing. Listlessly, I glanced at them. A little boy wept incessantly in the seat next to me as his Dad sat helplessly. I finally went over, sat and chatted about Superman and soothed him. The book lay unread as the hours – six, to be precise -- passed interminably.

I reached the hotel next to the Airport at night where my sister,

who had flown down from Seattle, was waiting for me. We hugged and then sat brooding, compulsively overeating the dinner that she had ordered. She was missing her son, I was missing my daughter. "Let's go back," we conspired. But it was too late, too much money spent, we were terribly middle-class. "How about we sleep over it and decide in the morning?" We had struck a steal deal with the hotel, one of the best rates ever. In the morning we realised why: the



### *Panjab da dhaba?*

dump truck loading garbage right below our window woke us up rudely at 6 AM. So, like old times, we sat and had tea in bed, except that Mummy wasn't there fussing over us.

But soon we were tickled pink at the prospect of the glorious Muir woods, and when we rented a car with "Two Hot Mamas Caught in a Van" written behind it, we knew our fate was sealed. We had our old Mohammed Rafi CD (from our generation) and *Simon and G* playing, and my sister was driving while I was navigating. It was a glorious day when we set off. When we reached, I promptly got a couple of

unsuspecting guys to click a photograph of both of us posing in front of the woods and the caption about the 'Two Hot Mamas,' much to my sister's horror. Our Aunt had painted a morbid picture of the unsafe Muir woods, which was totally unfounded and probably based on fairy tales -- we were burly women who would have probably made other people feel unsafe but thankfully didn't, despite our appearance.

cousin thought I looked cool and my Aunt screamed blue murder, and soon I donned the traditional attire. With no footwear.

I could not wear boots with my *salwar kameez* so I went around hopping on one foot, muttering, “Cinderella’s slippers – find me my slippers,” and another pompous cousin I was meeting after eons looked at me strangely since he caught me doing that twice. There were lots of people whom we were meeting after ages, and my sister and I tried to escape them by helping with the party, doing errands outside the house and being obnoxious.

We even decorated the poolside while my sis chatted with this naughty 6 year old (the best company in that party) who was pretending that the pool was attacked by Darth Waider (I kept saying Dark Raider much to my sister and the little boy’s chagrin as they tried to educate me). My sis is totally tuned into bugs and raiders and soon we were really missing our kids immensely and sniffing only slightly.

The afternoon faded into the evening and here I was, with absolutely no clue about how Sid looked. It helped even out matters that he had no clue about how I looked either. Meanwhile, the party was on in full swing. My sis and I found that our banker brother’s friends were on our wavelength, so we tried to escape and talk to them. The cake was being cut and I proudly pretended to help. Pandemonium ensued as I made a big mess while handing out pieces, (licking my fingers occasionally) and had somebody yell at me because my cousin wasn’t being served at which I declared, “I have fought with him all my life: will not start



pampering him now. Will not, will not.” I didn’t say I will hold my breath but I wanted to. Much to the horror of some guests, having had the desired impact, I grinned and introduced myself as the prodigal sister.

In the midst of all this excitement, Sid arrived. So here I was, over the hill, done it all and seen it all, and Sid, green behind the ears arriving in the midst of this heavily *Panju* gathering with my radical sister still dressed in a skirt, yawning, and me fighting. We quickly engulfed him because we sensed escape. My sis chatted a bit and then looked unashamedly asleep. Every now and then she would rouse herself and say, “Let’s escape to Starbucks,” but being the more family-oriented one, I would shoot the idea down.

Sid was living the kind of life I had lived 8-10 years back, when I had embarked upon my career with stars in my eyes. And then he quizzed me about what I was doing. A deep, philosophical quest, an existentialist question, who am I, what am I doing, what is the purpose of life, how

### *Annu-ji aur Tannu-ji!*

do I define myself. Right now I am conversing, eating, watching the sunset, otherwise, writing a few books, dabbling with an NGO, looking for a cause – definite mid-life fun. I am raising a little one who is about to fly away. I was once a hotshot fast tracker in Levers, I was once teaching at a B-school, I now read philosophy with a group every week and I like writing funny stuff. To avoid basking in past glory, I honestly told him about my current life. When he looked unconvinced about my identity, I had to fish into my past, just to build credibility.

I then gave up and decided to be myself. My daughter had been asked what she thought was the funniest, silliest thing in the world for her yearbook. And she had declared, “My mommy.” My core competence thus defined, that part of me emerged at the poolside party, much to Sid’s chagrin, I suspect.

My other brother, a software engineer is also a Tennis player and coach. His coach was there with his girlfriend, and Sid and I chatted with them about

everything under the sun, and some measure of sanity was restored. But not for long. That was not meant to be.

Another of my brother's friends is a soothsayer and soon my sister, (ex-XLRI, a writer but basically a Math lover) who was at crossroads between her three paths was consulting him, while I was consulting him about our uncertain adoption. Sid looked like he wanted to flee. So we made a beeline for the rather sumptuous dinner to assuage his ruffled self and I compulsively overate. "I overeat when I am happy and I overeat when I am sad," I guffawed loudly.

Suddenly, my Auntie G, who was our neighbour at Noida and whose daughter works in the Bay area, descended upon us. We had avoided her all our days at Noida but here, by the poolside, there was no escape (save to jump in). She was unabashedly jolly and loud. (I think part of me cringed because I was in denial about that part of me which resembled her.)

Our exchange with her took the cake, baker and bakery. Her son was from IIT and when she discovered that Sid was from Pilani (I tried to remind her that I was too, but she scarcely heard me), she stood there, Panju accent and flowing hair, laughing wildly about her *Babe da experience* at Oasis. It sounded uncannily like *Babe ka dhaba*. "Babe and his friend were together in school and Baba always stood first which brought them close," the proud Mom went on. "Now when Baba went from IIT to Oasis, his friend was at Pilani and as she spotted him she made an announcement for Babe (his official name was respectable) during a stage event, much to his

delight." I mouthed, "Thank God she didn't say: Babe, come backstage."

Not noticing, Auntie G laughed her high-pitched laugh, delighted at regaling us with her tale. Sid wiped his brow and my sis looked mildly bored, having heard the story before. "A kind of Panjabi gathering, isn't this," Sid quizzed. I was just as dazed. One can choose one's friends but not one's relatives, which is why I was at that gathering. Sid has avoided me since!

We suddenly realised that the *Devi Pooja*, scheduled for the same day, had begun. Now, this is a *pooja* I have done twice a year since I got married. Religion has always held a deep fascination for me, I have studied all the religions of the world, written an article comparing Indian and Chinese religion and philosophy and find some traditions (that one chooses, and doesn't impose on anyone else) interesting, soothing and fun. Soon I was discussing my pet subject which holds the greatest import for me -- the difference between faith and superstition.

As there were lots of little girls there reminding me how I always do the *pooja* with my daughter, Tannu, the discussion petered away and I was soon weeping. My worst fears realised, here I was, another loud Panju Mom, turning out like my neighbour Aunt G. Suddenly a lady appeared out of the blue and told me, "Now you know why your Mom misses you." "Yes," I bawled. My sister just looked up mildly amused but I suspect Sid was definitely perturbed by then (an understatement). I then went and sat in the *pooja*, and prayed for my little kiddo fervently. I tried

to breathe deeply and do a bit of creative visualisation to collect myself. I suddenly saw myself a few years hence, dressed like the Aunt G, complete with flowing tresses, talking proudly and loudly about *Tannu da dhaba*. I fled the scene, both in my mind and in person.

As I returned to where my sis, Sid and a few other people were ensconced in sofas in the living room also possibly creatively visualising that they were in other places, Sid ventured an opinion, "I don't think I and my girlfriend can maintain these traditions." "It's okay, we Mothers are just dodos," I sobbed. "You will find your own path. I was an Army brat, my Mom never practiced any tradition, and I just do some out of choice. But I'm not sobbing 'cause I am touched by the Pooja. I miss *Tannu di company*. Bah!" "Starbucks," my sister hopefully intervened.

Suddenly we could see that Sid wanted closure. He clicked a few photographs. He gulped something about watching a cricket match. (I wanted to watch a cricket match too.) He fled. Not without his *mithai* that I plied him with militantly at which he looked almost relieved -- there was some return on the investment of coming all the way. Poor kid.

*Generashun* gap. I have a *generashun* gap with how I was ten years back. Sid has a *generashun* gap with me. If it is any consolation (and you will all empathise), of course the unsuspecting guy had not met me under ideal circumstances and I had not put my best foot forward (lack of appropriate footwear notwithstanding). ♦

## NIGHTMARE ON CRYSTAL PEAK A (13,852')

BY PRAKASH MANLEY ('98 E&I)

“The more improbable the situation and the greater the demands made [on the climber], the more sweetly the blood flows later in release from all the tension. The possibility of danger serves to sharpen his awareness and control. And perhaps this is the rationale of all risky sports: You deliberately raise the ante of effort and concentration, in order, as it were, to clear your mind of the trivialities.”

~ A. Alvarez, *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide*

Crystal Peak A<sup>(1)</sup> is a 13,852 foot (4222m) peak, ranked 82<sup>nd</sup> highest in Colorado. Under normal climbing conditions in summer, this mountain is a popular hike. As mountaineers our intention is to climb as much as we can in Calendar Winter, often in the middle of blizzards with -40F temperatures and winds of up to 80mph.

Powerful Polar storm systems had laid several coats of snow on Crystal Peak between December and February '07. As a result of the pattern of snowfall, the Colorado

Avalanche Information Centre had placed the range containing this mountain under 'Red' for High Avalanche Danger<sup>(2)</sup>.

My alarm clock went off at 2:30AM and I arose, showered, ate some oatmeal, 2 eggs, waffles, syrup, orange juice and a litre of water and stumbled out into the cold February morning, feeling nauseous. It was snowing, heavily, as it had been for the past seven weekends in succession. Thrice we had climbed despite the storms and thrice we were lucky enough to summit. My climbing partner Joe and I had decided the

previous afternoon that we would try our luck once more.

I drove down to his apartment and picked him up at 4AM. We would drive the 115 miles to the Mayflower Gulch Trailhead from where we would begin climbing. We were both quiet, partly because I was concentrating on keeping my Jeep on the Highway, but mostly because we were worried sick about the avalanche forecasts. Several abandoned 2WD vehicles lay buried in snow banks all along the side of the highway and there was not a soul driving in the storm.

We reached the trailhead at daybreak and geared up. We were carrying hiking poles, snowshoes {3} (attached to the base of your mountaineering boot to permit you to walk on snow without sinking), ice axes to arrest our slide if we slipped, avalanche beacons (a transceiver attached to one's person which aids in search/rescue of an avalanche burial victim), a 'probe' and shovel (if, God forbid, you need to find and dig out your partner if he is trapped under avalanche debris), several layers of winter clothing, balaclavas (facemasks that also cover the head to prevent convective loss of heat from the scalp), helmets, dual layered



High winds on the ridge



**Joe breaks trail up to the ridge leading to Mayflower Hill**

mountaineering mittens, emergency shelter, Tylenol, first aid kit, goggles, food and 4 litres each of water/electrolytes. Each of our rucksacks weighed 20-25kg.

We set out along an old mining road that would take us to the base of a ridge that would take us to 'Mayflower Hill'. Past Mayflower Hill we would follow the ridge, skirt below the Northwest Face of Pacific Peak and gain the ridge to Crystal Peak. It is common practice to stick to ridges on days of High Avalanche Danger since ridges are often blown free of snow relative to mountain faces and gullies.

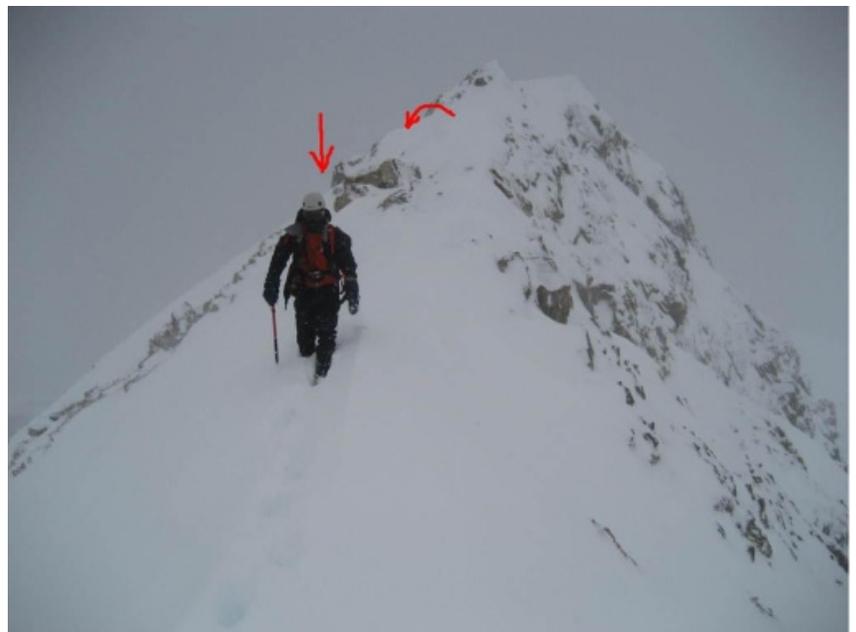
At the base of the ridge we left the road and walked into the forest 'breaking trail' with our snowshoes. Breaking trail involves ploughing your way up the mountain through knee to waist deep snow (see figure 1). Snow accumulation was significant below timberline (the line beyond which the atmosphere is so oxygen

depleted that trees do not grow anymore. Typically 11500 to 12500 feet, depending on latitude, soil quality and other factors) and we struggled to break trail under the weight of our rucksacks.

The ridge above the timberline was relatively free of snow because heavy winds had blown

off most of it. This eased our travel a little bit although bitterly cold gusts of wind threatened to blow us off the ridge crest at any moment.

We soon reached our first objective, Mayflower Hill. At 12,420', this hill is dwarfed by its more illustrious neighbours, Crystal and the 13,950' (4252m) Pacific Peak. The ridge descending off Mayflower however, is an exposed, heavily corniced<sup>[4]</sup> rib which is a delicacy for most connoisseurs of Winter Mountaineering. Descending off this ridge was when I made the first mistake. Heavily pre-occupied by the avalanche chute we were traversing over, I lost footing and slid. Joe who was climbing down the ridge ahead of me heard me bellow his name out loud. I swung my axe wildly and managed to connect with a rock 15 feet later, and steadied myself at the head of a large avalanche chute. I heard Joe's yell feebly through the squall although he was a mere 10 feet ahead of me. "Ho... \$#%#@ A... you ok?" I figured it was futile



**Holy smokes, are you okay? The vertical arrow is where I arrested my slide. The other arrow mark is where I slipped. Below me to my right is the avalanche chute**



**Avalanche chutes on the NW Face of Pacific Peak**

to answer since he wouldn't hear me. I cautiously stood up and waved.

I walked down to where Joe was. I was pretty shaken. The daze imposed by high altitude dangerously skewed my sense of judgment. Joe, apart from being a very dependable climbing partner has been an Extreme Skier/Mountaineer for a few years now and I trusted his judgment when he turned around and started continuing towards our main objective. Descending from here would entail the same amount of risk because we would either have to re-ascend the ridge to Mayflower Hill or cut across through serious avalanche gullies. Mountaineering is all about Risk Management.

We soon reached the base of the West Ridge of Pacific Peak. From here we would traverse across the base of the NW Face of this majestic mountain, attempting to stay above avalanche terrain. Joe, moving

ahead of me triggered a minor slide. These minor slides if backed by a sufficient mass of snow can break slabs several feet deep and several hundred feet wide which move at up to 200mph downhill. To be trapped in one carries a significant risk of death.

Some may claim that watching this minor slide and yet



**Climbing up to the false summit with Pacific Peak in the background**

continuing was my second mistake of the day, yet turning back and returning across uncertain terrain would have been far more foolish. Most of all, abandoning a climbing partner/team in face of adversity is the most contemptible act a Mountaineer could commit.

From the base of the ridge we took an avalanche safe path over low-angled slopes less than 30 degrees. Avalanches are most likely to occur on slopes angled between 30 and 45 degrees. Following the safe path and staying as far away from the avalanche gullies on the NW Face of Pacific Peak, we made our way to the base of the Southwest Ridge on Crystal.

There was one 13500' false summit (Crystal Peak B) to be scaled before the actual summit of Crystal Peak A. We looked up at it from the base of the ridge. Clouds were dipping dangerously low. Snow was falling fast and the winds were incessant. The arctic chill got through the 5 layers of clothing we wore. Two layers of thermals, a climbing shirt, a sweatshirt and a heavy duty Mountaineering coat felt like

nothing. I was also feeling the cold penetrate my balaclava and helmet. My goggles had now fogged over and droplets of condensation had frozen to the glass, blocking my vision. We were also high enough now that the altitude started messing with our breathing. Above 11500' breathing becomes significantly harder, especially in winter when the air is very dry. This means that in addition to having to stop every 20 feet to catch your breath, your throat is irritated by the dry cold air leading to what is termed "Climber's Hack", a dry whooping cough and persistent throat irritation. In this condition, we started working our way up the ridge to the false summit.

The wind was strong when we reached the false summit. Here I lost motivation and decided to wait for Joe while he tagged the true summit of Crystal. I found a pile of rocks that provided shelter from the wind, and crawled behind it. A huge cloud sunk down over the summit and I watched as Joe disappeared into it. For the last 100 feet of his ascent I had no visual

because of the dense cloud cover. This was bad because I had no idea how long it was going to take him and had no way of knowing if he were to need my help. In the interim the wind had viciously changed direction and my wind shelter was not a shelter anymore. I began jumping up and down to generate body heat. An eternity (which was in reality 15 minutes) later I regained visual contact with Joe. I was ecstatic and waved to indicate that I was going to start moving down slowly to allow him to catch up with me. He waved back. The return journey was immensely painful. The day's snowfall had created extreme avalanche potential and at one point I had to wait with my beacon in 'Receive' mode while Joe ran across a 100 yard avalanche slope to a safe zone. He then waited with his beacon in Receive while I sprinted across to the safe zone. Rescuing a friend buried in an avalanche is one duty I hope and pray I am never called upon to perform. The descent down the forest to my Jeep was extremely difficult in the unconsolidated snow.

Every step we took we would sink to our waist. We would have to dig ourselves out and set the other foot forward and sink again. I even sank into the creek disguised in snow once. I then had to lie back and try to float to the surface of the snow. We got back to the Jeep at 7PM after an 11 hour ordeal. We were extremely tired, cold, hungry and cantankerous, but within us hid a kind of strange inexplicable satisfaction, the kind that makes one happy to wake up and walk tall the next morning.

#### Links:

{1} <http://www.summitpost.org/mountain/rock/153041/crystal-peak.html>

{2} <http://avalanche.state.co.us/Education/About+the+Forecasts/Avalanche+Danger+Scale/>

{3} <http://www.backcountrygear.com/images/MSRDenaliEvoAscent04.jpg>

{4} [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornice\\_\(climbing\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornice_(climbing))

{5} More Mountaineering Trip Reports:

[http://www.14ers.com/php14ers/tripuser.php?parmuser=maverick\\_manley](http://www.14ers.com/php14ers/tripuser.php?parmuser=maverick_manley)

{6} More BITSians on Colorado's High Peaks:

[http://www.14ers.com/php14ers/tripreport.php?trip=3492&parmuser=maverick\\_manley&np=2&cpgm=tripuser](http://www.14ers.com/php14ers/tripreport.php?trip=3492&parmuser=maverick_manley&np=2&cpgm=tripuser)





to poetry by their dire need for an emotional outlet as they fought for their countries. The evolution of World War 1 poetry in particular is characterised by a spontaneous effort on the part of the poets, generally very young and impressionistic and even participants in the war itself, to evolve some means of contact with a particularly ugly and violent revelation of contemporary reality. Every poet who had some prospect of publishing his work considered his mission to communicate his sense of futility of war to the millions who did not share his disenchantment. An example is Owen's own poem *Dulce et Decorum Est* (the title is in reference to a Latin phrase which stands for "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country") where he addresses the reader and points out the obvious lie:

“  
My friend, you would not tell  
with such high zest  
To children ardent for  
some desperate glory,  
The old Lie:  
*Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.*

”

Even poets who were not directly connected with the war effort used the metaphorical imagery to drive home their points about the erosion of values in our society. W. H. Auden often invoked images of war to comment on various aspects of society. In his poem, *O What Is That Sound*, he writes in the words of an inquisitive child who can hear the soldiers marching. His guardian patiently answers his questions while at the same time becomes more and more guarded as he realises that the soldiers might be headed for their own house. When he is sure of this fact, he runs away



leaving the child at the mercy of the soldiers. Apart from conveying the plight of civilians when they cross paths with soldiers, Auden also effectively conveys to the reader the selfish nature that now pervades all of society:

“  
O where are you going?  
Stay with me here!  
Were the vows you swore  
deceiving, deceiving?  
No, I promised to love you,  
dear,  
But I must be leaving.

”

Towards the latter half of the 20th century, the world started getting affected by conflicts of a different kind. Hatred and differences in various parts of the world boiled over and the terror knew no limits. More than at any other time, innocent populations got caught in the crossfire and such occurrences found their echoes in the poetry of the land as well. The irony that many of the most heinous acts were perpetuated in the

name of God wasn't lost on the poets. Yehuda Amichai, an Israeli poet who wrote in Hebrew, speaks of this irony subtly in his poem, *The Diameter of the Bomb*:

“  
And I won't speak at all  
about the crying of orphans  
that reaches the seat of God  
and from there onward,  
making the circle  
without end and without God.

”

Many poets of the present generation continue to raise their voices against the horrors in the many conflict zones. From being a tale of valour, war poetry has evolved to being a realistic mirror showing what a war truly is – a horrifying reality. The one conclusion that is obvious from all war poems, whether patriotic or otherwise, is that the circumstances which lead to their creation are best avoided. Unfortunately, the painful truth is that in the present world, that does not seem to be happening anytime soon. ♦

## TRUE MEN

BY BHARAT CHINTAPALLI ('01 COMP SCI)

The futility of war on one hand and the simplicity of purpose, giving and integrity that nature's bountiful wisdom teaches us on the other... That the life of a giving tree can inspire a hero is the kind of tale that emerges from the womb of truth.

It was a lazy New York afternoon. The kid was not really into watching news channels. But then, when he was just surfing the channels for some good cartoon shows, Fred came across a news broadcast – a live feed of a war-ridden Asian country. Fred, just seven years old then, was shocked to see people being carried on stretchers with bruised faces and hacked off limbs. In another frame, huge piles of burning dead bodies were visible and Fred winced with agony.

He could not fathom why so many people are made to suffer in a war. His little mind could not understand why people waged war against other people. He liked films where people fought aliens and huge monsters. But even when watching Godzilla, Fred felt a terrible pain in his gut when he saw the U.S. fighter planes take down Godzilla with their missiles.

Teary eyed, he ran to his dad who was tending to his garden in the backyard. He told his dad about what he saw on television to which his dad replied that he had read about it in the newspapers. Frustrated, Fred told his dad that he did not like people killing each other. His concerned dad wiped his tears off with the back of his hand and told him that such wars have

been common place ever since man evolved. He showed Fred, the little green plant he was watering and said, "Son, no matter how old you get, do not forget to look at this plant everyday. Take the time and come here to sit near this plant. This tiny plant would grow into a big tree just like you would. Water it and enjoy its shade during hot summer days. This will be your friend."

To which Fred replied, "But dad, this is only a plant."

"There is a lot to learn from plants, Freddy boy" his dad said. "If you sit under them, they give you shade, if you water them and keep them green, they give you fresh air to breathe. Even

when you cut them up and mutilate them, they give you wood and your family could stay warm during the cold winter. They provide shelter. But then, they also try to grow back.

"That is exactly how I want you to be. I have grown old trying to live the same way and I know my ways are quite different to that of the world. But though, I am not very rich, I am happy. I can provide for my family and protect it. I want you to be like this plant. If everybody would have been like a plant without fighting for land, money and power, there would be no wars in the world Freddie boy. And that is exactly why I want you to observe this plant. So, promise me now that you shall take care



of this little plant from today."

"Yes dad. I will," Fred promised. But he wondered whether he meant it.

Life went on. After a few years his dad died in an accident. A few more years later Freddie grew up to be a fire fighter. The real estate prices were very high and though he had a big piece of land for himself now, he refused to sell it. He had his tree there. And it was his friend. He was proud to be a fire fighter. Proud of saving people.

Just like his tree did.

We, his friends, had well paying jobs and good insurance. We had family too, and we were richer than Fred. Edwards works for a software giant and I am a Wall Street broker. But whenever, Edwards and I met Fred over a beer, we failed to see Fred's happiness in our faces. Fred was blissful, we were content. He was eager, we were dry. He had time for loved ones. It seemed as if we hardly cared. He had good ideas. He worked for an NGO during weekends. We were either slogging our guts out or trying to cajole our families with a picnic. We would not have met Fred so often too. Just that he

was so magnetic and vibrant all the time that we felt blessed to be with him, talk to him and tell him concerns about our jobs. He always listened without a hint of boredom. He had life. He was alive. Talking to him was like going to church. He was the refreshing difference in our sedentary lives.

When we asked him why he was fire fighting instead of a being in a better paying job, he used to tell us about his dad's words. We must have heard those words a million times. "You should look at a tree", he used to say. Whenever he told us to look at a tree, we could actually feel how much he meant it. He had that contemplative look in his eyes then. He would stare into infinity. I guess he thought about his dad. He sat with his tree everyday. And once in a blue moon when Edwards and I were free, we used to go to Fred's place and eat food under the tree. His wife cooks well.

One morning, while we were grabbing a bite in the nearby restaurant on our way to office, Fred received an emergency call. The World Trade Centre was struck. All hell broke loose. That was the last time we saw Fred. He died during the rescue operation. Freddie boy.

It has been seven years since. Edwards and I still go to the place where Fred is buried. We put a flower on his grave and pray for him. After his death, we planted saplings in our gardens too. They have grown. Every night when I go back home, I spend some time looking at my plant. I just wish I will grow along with it. Grow like it. Like

Fred did. ♦



## PARADIGM SHIFT

BY ANURADHA GUPTA ('86 MMS)

Jolt yourself out of your sense of complacency in life; examine your paradigms and dare to shift them to places that will make your journey on this planet exemplary. With a leap of faith, turn this profound theory into a practice that charges you up and the world around you. The time is now!

We first started using the term *paradigm shift* with a lot of flair at Gulita, Hindustan Lever's training centre in India in the early '90's, our (much) younger days!

And we hit jackpot!

It was the mantra of the season, every business wanted a *paradigm shift* and every vice president was hankering after one. Other fads paled in comparison; lateral thinking, chaos theory and process re-engineering were oh, so passé!

During a two-week training course at Gulita, we would get up in the morning, change our attire, and don *paradigm shift* as our star accessory, our proud piece jewellery. With studied casualness we would drop the term during conversations, mealtimes and parties, in restrooms and parking lots, strolling down Juhu Sea Face and hobnobbing with the bigwigs. We would saunter into training rooms, determined to force fit *paradigm shifts* into our measly supply chain or marketing case studies and presentations though not many radical shifts lay therein!

But to separate the grain from the chaff, *paradigm shifts* have

occurred in businesses whether the term existed or not and there have been plenty of instances where we can be proud of them, like the current Unilever iShakti project which is transforming the lives of people in rural India and empowering people with income generating opportunities. In such a context, this is no name-dropping fad.

### The origin of the term

*Paradigm shift* isn't an alien concept to us in our ex-BITSian avatars; it is a term derived from the hard sciences. Thomas Kuhn

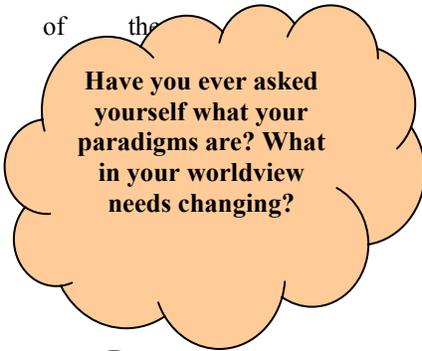
coined the term in his 1962 book, the Structure of Scientific Revolutions where he used it to describe changes in basic assumptions within the ruling theory of science. Extraordinary science or revolutionary science (in contrast to the idea of normal science) like the Theory of Relativity actually epitomise *paradigm shifts* (though the transition can be painful and much debated, with evidence being offered and countered till a new and better, befitting theory is accepted). An absolute theory exists only until it is challenged.

The earth was never the centre



Thomas Kuhn

of the



world and neither is it flat though Giorgio Bruno was burnt at the stakes for pointing that out. Likewise, as experiments reached the atomic level, classical mechanics could not explain basic things like energy levels and sizes of atoms. Hence, Gibbs paradox and other such problems were bound to usher in quantum mechanics.

Interestingly, Kuhn's ideas, like Einstein's were in themselves revolutionary in their time, causing major changes in the way that academics talked about science. They caused a 'paradigm shift' in the history and sociology of science. *Paradigm shifts* normally need change agents like Kuhn, Einstein, Copernicus, Gandhi, George Washington...and you.

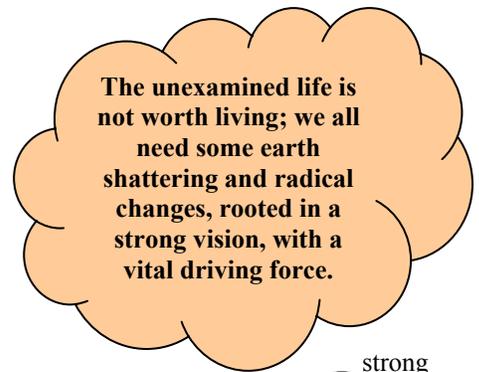
Initially, they were never meant to be applied to other realms of human experience by Kuhn because in science, once a theory is disproved, we do not have the luxury to go back to the old one. We do not have competing solutions to problems, we lack options and possibilities. We do not have the leeway that humanities, social sciences and for that matter, businesses have. Regardless, the discovery of fire, the advent of agriculture and internet are all *paradigm shifts* in society and

its functioning. An extension to other fields was easy enough!

In marketing and businesses, instead of calling something an "Emerging Trend", we have loosely referred to it as a *paradigm shift* and we need to be a trifle more careful. Was Harvard's foray into distance learning degrees in 2003 a *paradigm shift* in the field of online education? Maybe, maybe not. Was the purchase of airline tickets on the net by consumers, instead of going through travel agents a *paradigm shift*? Probably true. We just have to be more guarded and rigorous in using it.

**So why bother?**

**P**aradigms are typical patterns or examples of mental pictures, thoughts or behaviours in our life. And *paradigm shifts* could be the stuff that good things are made of. Have you ever asked yourself what your paradigms are? What in your worldview needs changing? Not small, reversible changes that we go dithering over. The unexamined life is not worth living; we all need some earth shattering and radical changes, rooted in a



strong vision, with a driving force, grasped like a person of metal by the leader that is - us.

Abstract so far, right. Take an obvious paradigm that junta from a successful institute like BITS-Pilani are bound to struggle with, defining oneself by one's accomplishments and such standard parameters or should I say hogwash. Till sometime back it really mattered to me that I be known and noticed. A few weeks back, standing beside my desperately sick child in hospital made humility wash over me; I am one with humanity. It does help to work hard so that one can provide for one's child financially, emotionally and intellectually, it does help to be connected if those connections matter, it is our duty to do our best but most importantly, in that moment of life and death, one is in the hands of doctors, well wishers, God and everybody who loves and prays for our child. Life is a great leveller.

**Moving examples of paradigm shifts**

**D**r Stephen Covey had a lovely example of a *paradigm*



*shift* that I'd like to quote; two kids were rambunctious and horribly unruly in a train while the father did nothing. Finally, he could bear it no more and he asked the Dad to step in. 'They just lost their mother an hour back and I guess we don't know what to do', the father explained. Everybody was moved; the people on the train experienced a *paradigm shift* in their attitude towards the children that was rooted in compassion.

**G**andhiji saw a lady struggle to cover herself with her torn sari while washing her clothes at a riverbank. He was so moved by her poverty that he decided to dress and live a simple life consistently after that. He had an infinite capacity to empathise; he was a leader grounded in firm principals who freed our nation with an ideology and an unparalleled vision.

The important thing to realise about *paradigm shifts* is that one's situation may remain the same, but our perception, understanding and approach in that situation can become radically different. Delta shifts don't qualify. If Gandhiji had bought more sophisticated firearms; well, that would be one approach. If he had launched guerrilla warfare, that would have been another. Instead, Gandhiji gave us a vision of non violent non cooperation that freed our country and inspired many people and revolutions world over and in the years to come.

### **An example from my life**

As I hit forty I am more willing to make radical shifts in my own life. A simple example was my decision to shift gears in my career and follow my calling, viz. writing and non-profit work

though that meant my income plummeted. But there's another sweet example that changed my life irreversibly which I'd like to share.

**I**nter-race adoption is a leap of faith: A few years back, while living in America, we decided to adopt a baby but couldn't adopt from India since we aren't citizens. I was told that the probability of being able to adopt an Indian child here tends to zero and that's because (most) Indians do not have teen pregnancies or financial issues in the US. Suddenly and rather surprisingly we had two parallel situations, an Indian birth family and a non Indian one. It was at that point we made our biggest leap of faith. We loved the non Indian birth family. They were bright and funny and brave and sad and honest and loved our son and ached for him like we did and had a great sense of loss

but wanted the best for their unborn child, which they felt we could give. We just connected with them in some kind of inexplicable way. We also knew that the Indian situation had a lot of people waiting so there is no right or wrong; just that from always being the adoptive family being evaluated, we were in this situation of making a choice. Adoption is a blessing and I know that from the four adopted children in our extended family. I believe our life with our children was pre-ordained and a part of God's plan for us.

At the hospital, we knew that our child may or may not have some resemblance to us but when we set eyes on him, we were dumbstruck; Siddharth looks like a clone of my husband's twin. My son is being raised Indian and Hindu but we now feel an oneness, we actually experience it instead of just talking about it. We belong to something much bigger than ourselves, not just the human race but the collective unconscious rooted in compassion, humility and love. Having a little baby clutch your finger trustingly in his own tiny paws makes that hit home like no amount of reasoning can!

### A befitting tribute to the need for paradigm shifts:

I'd like to end with the most befitting tribute to *paradigm shifts*, an example that is quoted



in US Naval records. And this I feel is the most inspiring of them all as we all need to introspect who we identify with in this story and draw parallels with our life...

During World War II, a US Naval battleship was patrolling the Pacific Ocean. The seaman perched on top of the observation mast suddenly radioed the Captain that he saw a light to the starboard side.

The Captain asked the seaman, "Is it stationary or moving," to which the seaman replied that it was moving. The Captain asked the seaman to signal using lights, asking the other ship to change course by 15 degrees as they were on a collision course. They received a signal almost instantaneously asking them to change course by the same amount. The Captain asked the seaman to repeat the instructions to which they received the same reply.

The Captain asked the seaman to send a signal saying that he was a Captain. To that they received a reply that the other sender was a seaman - second grade.

The captain became angry and told his seaman to send a signal that they were a battleship. To that they received a reply from the other light source that it was a lighthouse. The Captain changed

course...

### References:

1. Wikipedia and other internet resources for brief references
2. Article on Paradigm Shift written by Madhavan T. Gopalachary
3. Stephen Covey's book, *7 habits of highly effective people and other works*.



## DESH DESHPANDE: LESSONS FOR LIFE

BY ANUPENDRA SHARMA ('87 ECO & E&I), RAJIT KAMAL

Anupendra writes, “This blog was written by Rajit Kamal in the TiE Leadership Program when we invited Desh to speak at the Leadership Program. It was such an insightful evening; I had to reproduce the blog here.”

**D**esh Deshpande needs no introduction. He is a serial entrepreneur and founder/mentor to many for-profit and non-profit organisations.

The for-profit organisations include Desh has been involved in include:

- *Cascade*
- *Sycamore*
- *Tejas*
- *A123*
- *Airvana*
- *Sandstone Capital*

The non-profit organisations he has been involved in include:

- Deshpande Foundation
- Deshpande Center @ MIT
- Akshaya Patra

Desh has spent almost 2 hours with the Senior Associates who attended the *TiE Leadership Program* on April 16th, 2008. It was an open session with Desh talking about his life's journey, his entrepreneurial journey and taking questions from the audience.

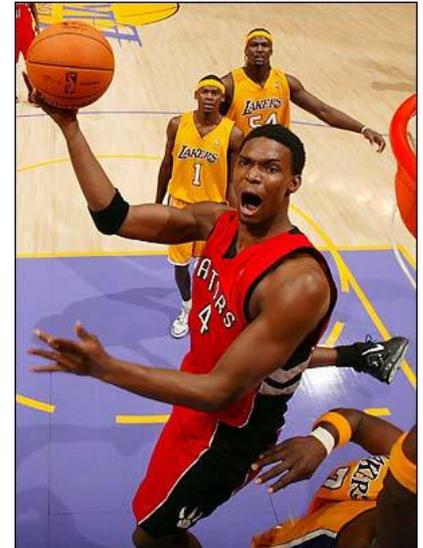
It was a very inspiring session and we were all fast forwarding our lives by 30 years and imagining ourselves in his shoes! But his journey was not an easy one and similarly it will not be easy for any aspiring entrepreneur. However, Desh's

pearls of wisdom would definitely better prepare us to deals with the bumps on the road as we start driving down the highway of entrepreneurship.

### Desh's Pearls of Wisdom

Keep good company

- Remember your mother telling you when you were growing up “make friends with good people”. If you ignored the advice then, it is time to follow it now. Keeping company of good and smart people not only helps you grow as a person but it also opens unexpected doors and creates opportunities. Desh mentioned that a professor whom he met at graduate school offered him a job at



Motorola in Toronto. Desh's experience at Motorola proved to be the foundation for his entrepreneurial journey.

- Big life decisions like marriage, having children,

Have a good gut feeling and GO by it

quitting job to start a company etc. cannot be made by any process as the unknowns overpower the knowns when one is making the decision. It is critical to go by your gut in making these critical decisions. There is no training to “improve your gut feel” but

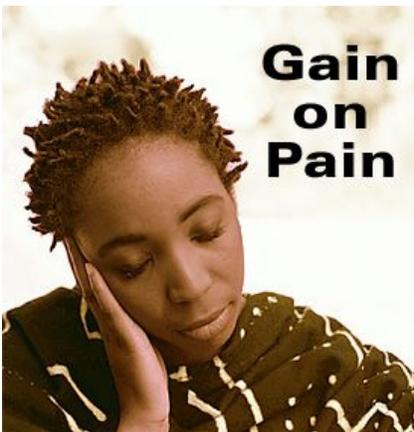


it gets better with experience and also learning from other's experience. Desh talked about his decision to leave a cushy job at Motorola and plunge into the uncertain world of entrepreneurship. It was not easy as he had a family to support (two kids) but he went by

Humility to correct the planned course

his gut instincts.

- Entrepreneurship is not bed of roses. The success stories we read are few and far between the numerous



failure stories. Those who succeed have high tolerance for pain and are focused. Desh talked about ups and downs of his career and the importance of having the guts to take

A high tolerance for pain

risk and the tolerance to take a hit, which is inevitable in any entrepreneurial journey.

Value "Hunger" more than "Experience"

- Entrepreneurs by nature are driven and believe very strongly in their idea and business plan. More often than not, initial plans are wrong. Sometimes one gets stuck in a job or a situation which does not fit the personality or values of the individual. Having the humility to recognise the

Set Deadlines

mistake and correcting it is extremely important for future success and having a fulfilling career. Desh's first start up (funded by a VC) did not go well, but Desh



quickly left the start up and went on to found Cascade systems which was a major success. Enjoying and being passionate about what you are doing: One has to enjoy the journey of

entrepreneurship. Initial days would be tough as you would be short of cash. "You should never feel that you are sacrificing" as that would mean you are not doing where your heart is. One has to enjoy the ups and downs of the journey.

- As an entrepreneur, one should set deadlines and work to achieve them. If you fail then it is the time to step back and change the course. For example, one could say - I will work on this idea and get VC funding within 9 months. If it does not happen then probably the idea is not good enough. It is probably time to look for another opportunity.

"Unshackle" your life

- Desh said that when hiring people, look for people who have "potential and hunger" than experience. He feels that "hunger" would trump experience any day. People who have done things over and over again get bored and that would impact their productivity. Desh has started many companies and not for profits. In each, he looks for someone young and hungry, who has the



potential but needs some mentoring to be successful.



- If you are planning entrepreneurship down the road, it is important to lead a very simple life. In America, people sometimes shackle their lives with huge mortgages etc. Maintaining low cost of living would make it easier to jump into entrepreneurship.
- If you are starting your first company, try to get funding from the top VCs. Even if they take higher portion of equity, having big names backing you would prove to be very helpful in the long run. These VCs are like an insurance policy. They will work hard to ensure that you

are successful and get an exit.



- When asked what soft skills you look for in an entrepreneur? Desh said “Inner Strength: the ability to take risks, tolerate pain and self –confidence”. Soft skills like presenting and selling are important, but it’s more important to have this inner strength. Desh observed that there are many successful entrepreneurs who don’t dress or present well, sometimes cannot put a coherent sentence together, yet are extremely successful entrepreneurs.
- Desh said an MBA is good training, so if one has the opportunity, one should do it. Desh talked about the

success of Brontes, the Deshpande Center Company that was sold to 3M. He said that the company used HBS students to explore 34 different markets, before they came to the one that made sense for the company to enter - and it turned out to be a big success.



- If you are debating between starting a company in India or US, Desh says “India is a great place to be an entrepreneur. There is lot of excitement and activity.” So, those of you who are debating between Boston and San Francisco to start your company might want to add “Bangalore” to the mix!

An inspiring evening. ♦



### Desh`s tips for Entrepreneurial Success

1. Inner strength
2. Good company
3. High tolerance for pain
4. Humility to correct ones course
5. Setting deadlines
6. Valuing *Hunger* more than *Experience*
7. An unshackled life
8. Good VCs
9. The MBA

## CARBON CREDITS

BY DEBASHISH MAJUMDAR ('06 CHEMICAL)

In our quest for sustainable development with a view to protect the environment, we have to heed the warning signs of global warming. In this context, carbon credits have become an important tool for environmentalists, nations, traders, corporations and even farmers. They derive their name from the emission of one of the most significant greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide. But what exactly are they?

Carbon dioxide, the most important greenhouse gas has become a cause of global panic as its concentration in the Earth's atmosphere has been rising alarmingly. This devil, however, is now turning into a product that helps people, countries, consultants, traders, corporations and even farmers earn billions of rupees. This was unimaginable a decade ago.

So what is this thing called *Carbon Credits*? Is it similar to a credit card where the money is replaced with carbon and where spending is replaced by buying? Not quite, but that's not very far from the truth either. Please read on.

*Carbon credit* is a part of an international emission trading norm. They provide incentives to companies or countries that emit less carbon. The total annual emissions are capped and the market allocates a monetary value to any shortfall through trading. Businesses can exchange, buy or sell *carbon credits* in international markets at a prevailing market price.

India and China are likely to emerge as the biggest sellers and Europe is going to be the biggest buyer of *carbon credits*. One

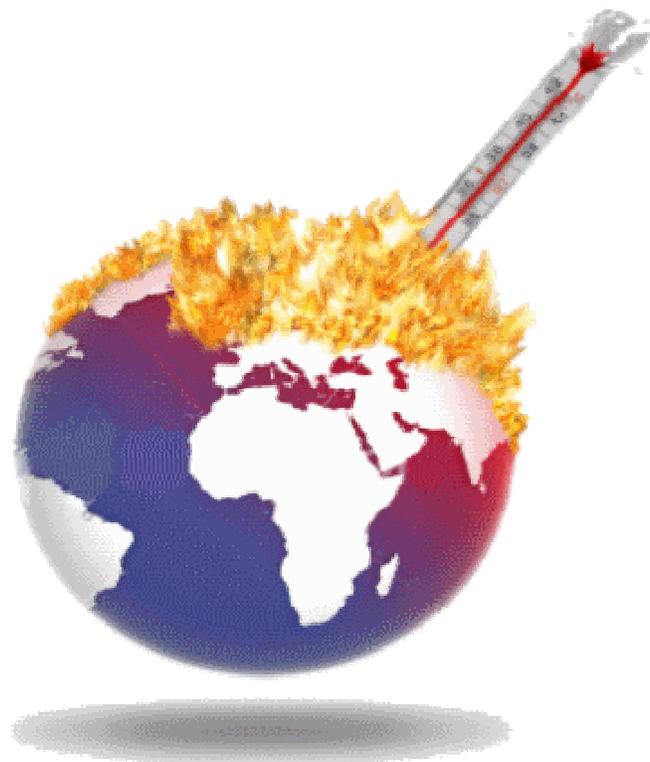
fact which contributes to this divide is the huge populations of India and China which effectively reduces the carbon per-capita of those countries.

Last year, the global *carbon credit* trading was estimated at \$5 billion, with India's contribution at around \$1 billion. India has generated some 30 million *carbon credits* and has roughly another 140 million to push into the world market.

Waste disposal units, plantation companies, chemical plants and municipal corporations can sell *carbon credits* and make money. Carbon, like any other commodity, has begun to be traded on India's Multi Commodity Exchange.

### A little history

Now why did someone even think up of this? What was the need?



As nations have progressed technologically, they have been emitting gases which result in global warming. A few decades ago a debate started on how to reduce these emissions. The result of these discussions was an agreement which goes by the name “Kyoto Protocol”.

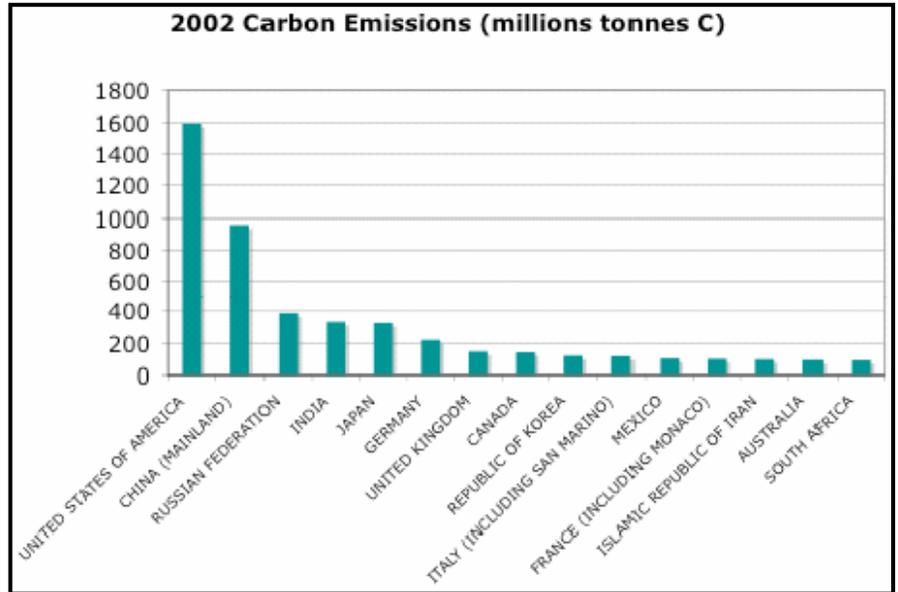
The Kyoto Protocol created a mechanism under which countries that have been emitting more carbon and other gases (greenhouse gases also include ozone, methane, nitrous oxide and even water vapour) have voluntarily decided that they will bring down the level of carbon they are emitting to the levels which prevailed in the early 1990s. The time-span for effective reductions in the carbon emission levels until the final goal has been set from 2008 through 2012.

A company/entity has many ways to reduce emissions.

- Reduction of greenhouse gases by adopting new technology
- Improving upon the existing technology to meet the new norms for emission of gases.
- Tie up with developing nations and help them set up new technology that is eco-friendly, thereby helping developing country or its companies 'earn' credits.

**The process angle**

India, China and other Asian countries have the advantage as developing countries under the assumption that the penetration of technology required for really high emissions of greenhouse gases have not yet occurred on a wide scale. Any company, factory or farm owner in India



can get linked to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and inform themselves about the 'standard' level of carbon emission allowed for them. The lesser the carbon emitted (lesser than the UNFCCC norms) the more the *carbon credits* which could be earned.

The credits could then be bought over by the companies of developed countries -- mostly Europeans. Interestingly, the United States has not signed the Kyoto Protocol.

For instance, assume that British Petroleum is running a plant in the United Kingdom. Say, this plant is emitting more gases than the accepted norms of the UNFCCC. A possible measure

then could be a tie up with its own subsidiary in, say, India or China under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). It can then buy *carbon credits* by making the Indian or Chinese plant more eco-savvy with the help of technology transfer. It could also tie up with any other company (like Indian Oil for e.g.) in the open market.

Every December including December 2008, an audit would be done to ascertain the efforts put in by the signatories towards meeting the norms. China and India are ensuring that new technologies for energy savings are adopted so that they become entitled for more *carbon credits* which in turn would mean that they could sell their credits to the countries which need them.



Thus a market was created. Naturally, since 2012 is the set deadline to meet the norms the coming five years should witness a lot of *carbon credit* deals.

**The business angle**

This entire process was not understood well by many. Those who knew about the possibility of earning profits adopted new technologies, saved credits and sold it to improve their bottom-line. But other companies did not apply to get credit even though they had latest eco-friendly technologies in place. Some companies used management consultancies to make their plan greener. These management consultancies then scouted for buyers to sell *carbon credits*. It was a bilateral deal.

However, the price to sell *carbon credits* at was not available on a public platform. The price range that people were getting used to was about Euro 15 or maybe lesser per ton of carbon. Today, one ton of *carbon credit* fetches around Euro 22. It is traded on the European Climate Exchange.



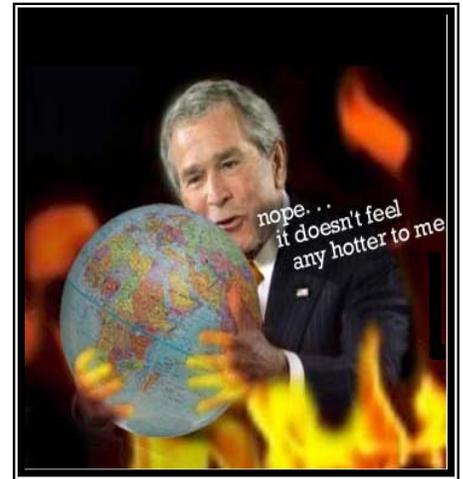
The Indian government has not fixed any norms nor has it made it compulsory to reduce carbon emissions to a certain level. So, people who are coming to buy from Indians are actually financial investors. They are thinking that if the Europeans are unable to meet their target of reducing the emission levels in stages every year till 2012, then the demand for the *carbon credits* would naturally increase and thus would arise the margin of profitability in the whole deal. Therefore the investors are willing to buy now to sell later. The *carbon credits* themselves are in the form of electronic certificates. But only those companies that meet the UNFCCC norms and which adopt new technologies would be entitled to sell *carbon credits*.

There are set parameters and detailed audits before one can get entitled to sell *carbon credits*. In India, already 300 to 400 companies have accumulated *carbon credits* after meeting the UNFCCC norms.

In the short-term, large investors are likely to be the main players in the market and later banks are expected to get into the market too. Quite clearly someone will have to hold on to these big transactions to sell at the appropriate time.

According to the UNFCCC, the polluters cannot buy 100 per cent of the *carbon credits* they are required to reduce. They may buy only 25 per cent of *carbon credits* from developing countries. The rest would somehow have to be made up for by incubating new technologies at home.

**The perspective:**



*Interestingly, USA did not sign the Kyoto protocol.*

However, like in the case of any other asset, the price of *carbon credits* is determined by a function of demand and supply. Since it's already known that the polluting countries must meet the norms by 2012, it is anyone's guess as to how much credit will be available in the market at that time. To what extent would norms be met by European companies? Would they be successful? Do they care enough to make serious efforts?

It is possible that some governments might tinker with these norms if the targets could not be met. If these norms are changed, prices can go through a correction. But, as of now, there is a very transparent mechanism in which the norms for the next five years have been fixed.

But the positive in this whole scenario is that the governments who came together to set the norms and subsequently became the first signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, are the ones who need to work hardest at reducing their carbon levels. Many of their industries are already on their way to meeting the target. ♦

## JAZZ, VODOO, KATRINA AND EARTHQUAKES

BY PRITWIRAJ MOULIK ('05 CIVIL)

Pritwiraj Moulik, a bright 3rd yearite at the Pilani campus, became the only undergraduate from the entire world to get a paper accepted at the American Society of Civil Engineers' GeoCongress 2008 at New Orleans in March 2008. He was awarded the BITSAA Travel Scholarship to attend GeoCongress 2008. Pritwi penned to us his experiences during that trip.

**B**ITS-Pilani has had a profound effect on my growth as a student and a person, like it has for countless others. A month ago, I got one more reason to be proud of my Alma mater and its illustrious alumni.

If I switch back to the fall of 2005, I was studying the latest research paper on the implications of the Parkfield experiment by Bakun et. al. that I had come across during my monthly dose of the Nature magazine. Two years past those "slogging-hard" days, I presented my work at the prestigious A.S.C.E. [American Society of Civil Engineers] GeoCongress 2008, thanks to BITS-Pilani and BITSAA.

BITSAA and the network of countless alumni have fuelled me with their wishes and help, even when I hadn't received the confirmations of funding from DST (Department of Science & Technology), CSIR (Council for Scientific & Industrial Research) or the Microsoft Travel Grant 2008. I was humbled to be conferred the first BITSAA Travel Scholarship 2008, which would help students every year by providing a "BITSian-style hospitality" along with travel assistance. Months have passed and days have whizzed by but

my trip to magical New Orleans remains engraved in my mind.

The implications of that trip on my academic career have been profound as it gave me much more than I expected. I am currently working with researchers in Taiwan on mathematically modelling the landslide phenomenon in the Ali-Shan area. And I will spend one year on a funded exchange from BITS-Pilani to the University of Western Ontario to work on earthquake prediction and seismicity studies with Prof. Tiampo, the well-known proponent of the Rundle-Tiampo prediction method endorsed by NASA in 2004.

Now as I embark on a two-month long research work on Monsoon modelling at IISc Bangalore, I wonder if all these would have been possible without the

conference paper (on filtering large seismic databases for earthquake predictability using geospatial methods and fuzzy logic) and the renowned people whom I was privileged to meet at the conference.

This experience of a lifetime started with the usual chaos at the Delhi airport and my first jet-lag experience (though Night-outers at BITS would know what it feels like, albeit for a lesser duration!). But once I got past my first snow experience at Chicago and reached sunny New Orleans, I felt as comfortable as home. I was helped by Mr. Brij Bhushan and Mr. Ashish Garg from BITSAA throughout my stay, giving me a sample of the hospitality which I was to experience in full measure a few days later. BITSAA had also arranged for my comfortable stay at the Sheraton, New Orleans, and the venue for the conference.

The inaugural "Seed Lecture" by Professor Duncan from Virginia Tech who gave an insight into failure of levees and flood walls during Hurricane Katrina was awe-inspiring. All the attendees then engaged in a networking session with representatives from companies and universities before the sumptuous lunch.



I often got glances of surprise from the attendees as I was evidently the only undergraduate author and the only student from India at the conference. The most fulfilling experiences were the discussions with professors from IIT, Mumbai and IISc, Bangalore who were intrigued by my story. I happened to meet many PhD students from USA, Turkey and the UK who gave me an insight into their cultures and academic structure. Meanwhile, I also managed to facilitate a hotly contested debate between PhD students from Cambridge and UT-Austin on whose education system is better! I must mention that by the end of it, the only thing I understood was the "two brothers in arms" aren't that after all, at least in academia!

The second day was the day of exploration and knowledge overload! I wish I had attended the classes at BITS with the kind of enthusiasm that I was exuding there. A computational study on linear elastic analysis of laterally loaded caissons by Prof. Asimaki of Georgia Tech. and a predictive model for soil liquefaction by Prof. Andrade from North Western were some of the papers which interested me. The third day was the day of reckoning as I had to present my paper at the "Risk Assessment" session. My session saw a really international gathering with speakers from Romania, Brazil and the USA apart from the audience from Japan, Taiwan and other countries. I was nervous at first but it melted away as I started and by the end of it, I got really encouraging feedback and advice on how to extend the work.

I spent the rest of my day exploring the French Quarter,



visiting the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas (the largest one in America!), and contemplating visiting Harrah's, the largest casino in the south (I obviously didn't!). I also tried to gulp oysters but the look of it gave me the creeps and I gave up. I also managed to see a show of mind-boggling aerobics and a jazz show in the birthplace of the genre - New Orleans! I also saw artefacts of Voodoo, another contribution of New Orleans. By the end of my stay there, I had a glimpse of a vibrant city coming to terms with the effects of a disaster that had razed it to its foundations.

I then made my way north to Washington D.C. where I was hosted by the illustrious BITSian couple, Mr. Brij Bhushan and Mrs. Champa Bhushan. They had helped me with my pre-arrival plans and were extremely caring, a hallmark of BITS alums I believe. We visited the various landmarks in the D.C. area like the Capitol, Washington monument, World War-II memorial, Lincoln memorial, Jefferson memorial and the Korean War memorial. We also

saw an exhibition of Orchids at the National Botanical Museum and had Indian food at a restaurant. Mrs. Bhushan also prepared *chaat* and *gol gappe* upon me merely mentioning that I liked them. The next morning, Mr. Bhushan also showed me he construction site of the latest building coming up in his neighbourhood. The construction techniques and materials used there were highly innovative and provided food for my thoughts as a Civil Engineer.

As I made my way to the airport, I could not help but contemplate on my experience and how it had changed me. I had new insights into innovative research, had met pioneers in my field, and caught a glimpse of a distant world. All this would not have been possible without the help of countless BITSian alumni who share the common bond of having spent some of the best years of their lives in a village, far away from civilisation, yet exuding such a proud and unique culture. ♦



# THE MANTRA OF SERVICE

BY SHERIN KURIAN ('04 INFOSYS)

B. Sandhya is the Inspector General of Kerala Police in India. Besides being an exceptional civil servant, she is a painter and writer and has authored a few published books. She is a Ph.D. from BITS, Pilani. For her stellar contribution to the society, she is a Quarterly BITSian.

**B.** Sandhya is the Inspector General of Kerala Police in India. She joined the Indian Police Service, after passing the Indian Civil Services Examination in 1988.

Besides being an exceptional civil servant, she writes poems and short stories in contemporary Malayalam Magazines. She has published five books of literature and several research papers in Police Science. She trained in Human Resources Management from Wollongong University, Australia in 1998. She has also passed the PGDBA from the Pondicherry University in 1999 and also obtained a PhD from BITS-Pilani in 2005. The topic of her research was *Accessibility of Women to Criminal Justice System*.

We managed to catch up with her for a short but insightful interview.

What were your childhood dreams?

“When I was young I had many dreams as any other child.

My dream was to become a doctor so that I'll be able to give an injection to my teacher. Then I thought I would become a teacher. When I was in class 9, I decided to join the civil service. Once upon a time I wanted to be a writer. I wanted to write about my village, the people around me, and my family. It has always been there at the bottom of my heart.

”

After completing your post graduation in 1985, you did a certificate course in Human Resource Management, post graduate diploma in business administration, also courses in French and now you have obtained your doctorate! Do you always have a passion for learning?

“ Yes, I do!

What were your biggest takeaways from the universities and educational institutions you studied? What were the biggest factors that moulded your personality?

“ I studied in a women's college. That, in fact helped me because there was no reason for

fear. Right from my pre-degree days, I used to participate in co-curricular activities. Everyone around encouraged me. I participated in extempore, essay writing, declamation etc. I was in the college quiz team and used to participate in intercollegiate competitions which helped a lot in interacting with many people. Also I was the editor of a magazine in my second year of graduation.

”

Why did you choose BITS for doing PhD?

“

I did my French courses at Alliance Francis de Trivandrum in Kerala. At that time I was thinking about registering for my PhD and started enquiring about many universities. I came to know about BITS through Mr. Ananda Bose IAS, who was my classmate. He also did his PhD from BITS. The programme offered by BITS has lot of flexibilities as well. From the place of your residence, you can pursue it which I found very convenient. Also they give a lot of encouragement to professionals with ten years of experience. My guide was Dr. P. K. V. Nair, Professor Emeritus,



Dept. Of Sociology, Kerala University.

”

Any disappointments?

“

Absolutely none, except the fees (laughing). It was a very rewarding experience.

”

What do you think about programmes like the ones offered by the DLPD at BITS? How effective is it in connecting academia with professions like yours?

“

These programmes are really good. There are certain targets to be achieved, as in to conduct seminars and publish papers. I used to conduct so many classes, but just forgot about them afterwards. I never tried to document any of those. After registering for the programme at BITS, I started recording those and it gave me an opportunity to quantify my contributions. People in academics can give theoretical knowledge about professions like mine. Only we can present a better picture since we have the experience, but most of us do not find sufficient time. So there is a gap and that can be bridged through programmes like this which needs us to conduct classes and do related work.

”

Poet, novelist, artist... Awards for your literature works along with recognitions in your profession (Police Medal from the President of India). What inspires you? You draw



inspiration from work? Or is it the other way round – do they provide you energy to work?

“

Of course my experience at work inspires me in my literary pursuits. In this profession, the diversified experience gives a lot of food for thought when it comes to writing. Had I been a teacher, I wouldn't have had these many experiences. I also gain inspiration from travel. The dedication, work culture and time management I see in western countries inspires me to become a better professional as well.

”

What makes a civil servant different? In your opinion what are the qualities that they should possess?

“

The first and foremost quality is *service mindedness*. If your only motive is to make money, you may be disappointed. So will it be if serving the society is not your

cup of tea. 70% of my batch mates were engineers including those from the IITs. There were also graduates from the IIMs. Out of 70 in my batch only one left the service. People may have their motives as money, power, status or service mindedness. I got into civil service with service mindedness as my motto. That was the best anyone could dream as a girl from an ordinary background.

”

It is a tough job dealing with crime, treachery, mortification and death even. And most of all, it is a thankless job in view of the general public. Have you ever felt like giving up? How do you deal with such immensely stressful situations?

“

I have never felt like giving up this profession. Yes, there were very difficult situations. People may feel it as thankless job, but I owe a lot to my job. We are trained to face stressed circumstances. In course of time, it becomes part of our



daily life.

”

You always work for equity for women. In your profession have you ever felt limitations being a woman?

“

In the IPS Academy, we are always treated as equals; there is no discrimination against women. But when women are not a critical mass, your voice is seldom heard. And that happens in almost every field.

”

You must be having a rich experience in dealing with all the different types of people. Could you mention some incident or something that you would never forget, something that gave you hope and faith in the goodness of humanity amongst the manifestations of evil in human nature?

“

There was a case in a remote village where a husband and wife were murdered. We had to stay there almost for a month for the investigation. It was a very unique experience working with the team during the investigation and also the way the villagers treated us. It was a very complicated case since the incident took place in a small village of just 300 people. Everyone was so scared after the incident that they started suspecting each other. It was a great relief for them once everything was sorted out.

The children of the victims were just in class 9 (girl) and class 1 (boy) at that time. Their uncle took care of them. He did not

even marry until the girl graduated and got married. Also the culprit’s family stood with him during his long years of imprisonment and his wife accepted him when he was released. This saved him from remaining a criminal. They live peacefully now. The touch of humanity in both these cases is noteworthy.

”

When did you feel the happiest so far in your professional life?

“

There is nothing to rejoice. But there are lots of good moments.

”

What do you think is an effective way to make the world a better place to live? Certain tips to those who look forward to doing their part?

“

I remember two lines of a poem which mean ‘whoever wants to reach the sky should have the *mantra of service* with them’.

Don’t go with the mass. Do what you think is right. The only thing to keep in mind is not to harm others while you do something. Instead of going by the trend, you create the trend.

”

I happened to see the website [www.keralapolicehistory.com](http://www.keralapolicehistory.com) conceptualised by you. What made you think of such a venture?

“

We conducted an exhibition last year with the theme ‘50

years of Kerala Police’. We collected a lot of materials – articles, photographs etc. for the same. We got the idea of collecting data from the archives throughout Kerala. And since we had all that data, we thought the website would be a way to recognise those who worked day in and day out for the society.

”

You have a great family to support you. Who all are there in your family?

“

My husband Dr. K. Madhukumar is the Head of Department of the Physics department, M.G. College, Trivandrum. My daughter Hyma is now in Class 10 at Kendriya Vidyalaya. Then I have my parents, and a brother who works in Bangalore.

”

There are BITSians probably in every walk of life: from Silicon Valley and Wall Street to Bollywood. From engineers, bankers and entrepreneurs to writers, artists, caterers, academicians and, of course, students. As part of the BITSian fraternity, what would you like to say to all of them?

“

Everyone should be aware of the responsibility they have to the society. And always keep in mind the *mantra of service*. BITSians can definitely take a lead in making the world a better place to live in.

”



## TWO SAMOSAS, ONE CHAI AND FOUR DECADES

BY THE BITS PILANI TEAM

He stands outside VK every day, fervently attending to a dozen different orders at any given time. The niggling temptation to stop by Nagarji's *redi* for a *chai* and *samosa* has remained irresistible for close to four decades. As has his energy. For his yeoman service to a hungry student community, Nagarmal Saini a.k.a Nagarji is a Quarterly BITSian.

The midsummer rain clouds are uncharacteristically making their presence felt as we stroll outside Vishwakarma Bhawan to Nagarji's *redi* for the usual snack. Working fervently, Nagarmal Saini a.k.a Nagarji mixes two plates of *papdi chat* and in parallel pours out *shikanji*. We struck up a conversation to write this article for SandP2 with the ubiquitous *rediwallah* and in the end; it turned out to be quite a conversation. Check it out.

(With humour) It has been tough scheduling this interview, are you always so busy?

“ It's the last day of the semester and I need to make sure everyone goes back home with fond memories. After all, isn't that why we're here?



”

When did you first come to the campus?

“

The year was 1971. My father worked in the BITS Messes as a *maharaj*. Back then,

my family was in a difficult position financially. I was in class seven at the Bal Niketan School and had to quit in order to support my family. I worked full time at my uncle's *redi* along with my elder brother for a few years, after which I set up my own *redi*.

”

Wow! That is 37 years on campus! You've seen two generations of BITSians already. Is there any difference in the students?

“

Not at all. They were kind and loving back then, and still are. But they definitely seem to be in more of a hurry now!

”





Tell us something about old times. What food was popular on campus?

“ In those days, *rasgullas* were very popular. At Re 1 per plate, *rasmalai* was the most extravagant dish. When I started my own *redi* with my brothers, we used to wait outside Gym G in the evenings since a lot of students were into sports in those days. But later, the students asked me to shift back to Vishwakarma Bhawan. I guess they were feeling left out! Also, I did not serve *chai* in the 70’s as *lassi* was the drink of choice. For 25 paise, you could get a plate of *samosas* or five *shikanjis*.

”

What do your children do?

“ I have two sons and two daughters. My elder son helps

me on the *redi* while my younger son is working in Bangalore. My elder daughter is married. Both my brothers still assist me in daily work. Thanks to the *redi*, I am able to provide my family with food, clothing and shelter. I wouldn’t know what to do had I not ventured into this business 35 years ago. It is all I’ve got.

”

What difficulties are you facing currently?

“ I’ve taken a house loan and still have to repay it. My elder son recently had an accident and since then he is helping me at the *redi*. But I want him to complete his B.C.A. and work in a good company. Also, during summer, I have to close down the *redi* and there is no inflow of money. Still I am happy with the way things have turned out for me. (Emotionally) I have spent

my entire life here at BITS and want to continue to do so till the very end.

”

You have always been very popular with the students. Do you recollect any good or bad experiences involving them?

“

There have never been any bad experiences so far. BITS is like one big family to me. There is so much goodwill on campus – I feel more at home here than in my own house! Every now and then, an ex-student comes to campus and meets me. It feels great to be remembered. It is a wonderful feeling when old students come to the *redi* at the time of campus placements and the 25 year reunions. (He shows us old grainy photographs of students at the *redi*, which are displayed on the cart.)

”

What is the current specialty at Nagarji’s *redi*?

“

(Smiling) I sincerely believe that anything made with love and affection tastes great. As of now *kela rabdi* and *jamun rabdi* are the best I have to offer. My younger brother Ramji Lal makes the best *chai* on campus. Besides that, *samchaat*, *mirchi pakoda* and *samosas* are the all time favourites.

”

What is your message to the BITSian community?

“

Always be happy and carefree and enjoy life to the fullest. *Jahaan bhi raho, sukhi raho*.

”



## BITSAA CHICAGO REUNION

BY SURESH KUMAR ('87 ECO & CS)

In May 2008, the BITSAA Chicago community got together to relive the nostalgia and comfort of belonging to the BITS community. The event is a reunion where, ostensibly, they should feel different. However, they feel just the same... talk about synchronicity!

It was May 10<sup>th</sup> 2008, 12:20 PM, and I was almost nearing the Royal Melbourne club when I realised I did not bring my camera. I would not have turned back if it was any other get together I was attending, given that I am a former DOPY coordinator and the get together was the first one so far in my Chicago life I decided to turn back and get the camera.

When I saw the BITSAA Chicago get together welcome board at Royal Melbourne club, I felt a tad nostalgic and was excited to meet other BITSians inside. The planning and organising committee included Mr. Arvind, Mr. Anand Prabhakaran, Mr. Suresh (DS) and Mr. Rajesh Vasireddy. Around 26 members attended the event, although quite a few BITSians could not make it due to schedule conflicts. Mr. Darshan Singh Teji from the 1946 - 50 batch was invited to share his fond memories and experiences of BITS in 1946.

It was a pleasure to have a first batch BITSian (Mr. Teji) and a Pilani born BITSian (Mr. Arvind) in our get together, they both had great experiences and memories to share with us.

The event started with introductions (not the BITSian



style intros though), followed by BITSAA updates and BITS SAE updates. It was quite interesting to see that quite a few of us were connected professionally but some how were not connected as BITSians. Mr. Arvind, CEO, Utopia Inc., shared his BITSian connection experience that brought more business to his new venture Utopia Inc. Mr. Gokula, Sr. principal, HP, shared his 1976 batch Silver Jubilee reunion celebration updates and a few of the scholarship and funding activities they are performing for BITS.

Before we realised it was already 5 PM, we dispersed with a strong commitment to meet again soon, but this time with more BITSians. With more people showing interest to volunteer, the organising committee is more energised and enthused to conduct the next meet soon.

In typical BITSian lingo, "Junta showed *hazaar* enthuse to connect back with BITS and BITSAA!"

Photos of the event can be viewed here:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/bitsaa.chicago/BITSAACHicagoMay10>

Video of the presentation slides and pictures:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=T Mq1tOP1m2w>.



## TRIXIES (ANSWERS)

BY DILEEPAN NARAYANAN ('00 MECH)

A word in the hand is worth two in the book!

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. BONNBET                             | <i>Ans: A bee in the bonnet</i>                |
| 2. CIGARETTE                           | <i>Ans: The fag end</i>                        |
| 3. TONMIN                              | <i>Ans: Badminton</i>                          |
| 4. TEEASYREST                          | <i>Ans: Simple interest</i>                    |
| 5. LWLE USE                            | <i>Ans: Shake well before use</i>              |
| 6. ENOTS ENOTS ENOTS ENOTS             | <i>Ans: Leave no stone unturned</i>            |
| 7. B. A. Liberty<br>M. A. Independence | <i>Ans: 2 degrees of freedom</i>               |
| 8. A T__ O_ TWO CITIES                 | <i>Ans: To take a leaf out of (one's) book</i> |

## VERBALISM CRUCIFIED! (ANSWERS)

BY DILEEPAN NARAYANAN ('00 MECH)

Churlish vocable brought in line for a cryptic grid game better than Sudoku! (9)



# NOTICE

*Stay connected: we're a family!*

*Classnotes , Chapter Unions and Finding a Purpose*

- *Stay connected, stay in touch! Do keep sending classnotes to your batch representative. In addition, feel free to write to us at [dileepan@bitsaa.org](mailto:dileepan@bitsaa.org) with any new and exciting developments that would do us as BITS, alumni proud.*
- *Stay in touch with your local chapter.*
- *Do apprise us about the details of any batch or chapter reunion.*
- *BITS.Aid in a new avatar: A critical mass of BITSians working for the community can change the world.*

*Watch this space for new opportunities for adding purpose to your life; coming up, a major social initiative where every BITSian can be connected to a social cause or calling and with the legacy of our intellectual, financial, emotional, social and spiritual prowess, we can collectively make a difference to the world...*