

# Dil Naukri Chahta Hai!

*The economy's gone for a toss. Companies are feeling reluctant to recruit people. Job security is waning. But is that all that has contributed to the dull placement season in IIT Bombay this year? Siddhartha Srivastava explores.*

Companies aaeen companies gaeen, par hum hain wahin hum the jahan. Jeena yahan, marna yahan... Well, so goes the placement story of many of us here in IIT Bombay. This year, in particular, presents a dismal picture of the state of placements. It is not, therefore, surprising to find everyone suggesting how the placement cell should work and also, to a greater extent, how it should not. For the first time, perhaps, something that has always been taken for granted, has been given due attention by everyone....everyone??

Students - California Dreamin'

What has brought us to this junct ure? Is it only the recession that our economy is going through or is it the apathetic attitude toward placement as well? Ask any final year student, still looking for a job, and the first "excuse" cited for not having been successful as yet, will be the economic slowdown (his knowledge about the economy, though, is immaterial). A chat with Nischaya Gera, the TnP nom, revealed that despite this slowdown, he has not felt any change in the attitude of the students. The desperation to grab a job is more vocal than heartfelt. The laid-back attitude during PPTs and the general complacency still rules the mindset of the students. He claims that PPTs are not exploited to the extent they should be and that could be one of the contributing factors for the shrinking numbers of the recruited.

Perhaps, we are suffering because of the sins of our seniors. A job, more often than not, is taken for the sake of security. The first priority, for most cases, has always been, and still is, apping. Call it free market or simply the quest for the best career option, the result is the same. This year, ITC took only two students from IITB as compared to seven last year. It recruited five from IITKGP. TISCO which used to come till three years back has refused to come this year despite several requests by the TnP noms. It still recruits from IITK and IITKGP. Perhaps a look at the kind of experience these companies have had with IITB students (not) joining them will explain the reason for their unwillingness our suffering.

More than 70% of the students who've been offered an 'A' group job this year say that they will apply to universities abroad for MS despite having a job offer in hand. A few students, having a strong inclination towards apping, have still taken 'A' group jobs, just for "security" reasons. It is a philosophical question to ask whether this is right or wrong, and whether there is any lesson to be learnt from the attitude of companies towards us. Perhaps it is the law of nature - the survival of the fittest. But the fact remains that IITB, a premier institute of technology, has less than 50% of its graduating students placed, when the placement season is about to end. It is high time we realised this and did some rethinking of our career plans.

There are many more factors which have affected the placement scene. The TnP noms, Nishchaya Gera and Shantanu Rastogi, and the Asst. Placement Officer, Mr. Rathi, are of the opinion that the institute is not giving placement the attention it deserves. That a place allotted to placement cell in the new cafeteria building (ref. page 6) is now being used for opening a restaurant, shows where placement features in the institute's priority list. Shantanu complains that the institute expects all the initiative to come from the noms and the placement officer. In other IITs all the placement work is handled by the institute with no student involvement !

A Placement Advisory Committee comprising a few professors, the placement noms, the placement officer and a placement in-charge is responsible for overlooking all placement activities. According to the noms this committee has contributed very little compared to what the placement cell expects it to. They add that people such as PICAA (Prof. In Charge of Alumni Affairs) and the PRO (Public Relations Officer) should find a place in the committee as a lot of networking could be done through them but such inclusions have never even been thought of by the institute.

Proposals for increasing the workforce in the placement office have been turned down consistently for the last several years. Mr. Rathi has had no appraisals for over seven years now and requests for some incentives to the staff at the placement office, who work night and day to ensure that the companies are attended to in the best possible manner, have received similar disappointing replies. Though the entire placement team has been working with great enthusiasm and has fetched fabulous results, it has no motivation to continue the work. The institute's nonchalance towards the achievements of the placement cell is annoying. In 1996, the placement figures went up from 64% to 89%. This increment was observed despite the introduction of the placement fee for companies, which generated a revenue of 30 lakhs for the institute. Still, not even a single word of praise came from the authorities.

One can easily infer that the institute derives little pride from a successful placement scene. Or at least it doesn't feel the need and the responsibility to make certain adjustments to enhance the job prospects of students. In IIT KGP companies visit the campus only during working days, not on weekends. The academic timetable is adjusted in such a manner that the students are free for their placement procedures. There are no such provisions for the students of IITB. All that is expected of the institute is a little co-operation, if not complete support.

Every cloud has a silver lining

What we miss out in all this complaining is that the placement office manages very well even without any help. Mr. Rathi takes pride in the fact that not a single company coming to IITB has ever complained about the reception that it gets here. Kudos to the TnP office! In fact, they are all praises for how professional and helpful the placement office is. IIT Bombay has one of the best placement scenes as compared to the other IITs at present.

Another point worth noting here is that we have a good system of ranking companies (something that's not there in most other IITs) which makes things simpler for students, especially in the present scenario in which they have to apply for jobs with a lot of restrictions.

IITB is the only IIT which has implemented the placement fee rule completely. (IIT-D implemented it for some time but now seems to have withdrawn the scheme). Companies still continue to visit the campus and recruit students. This simply underlines our worth. This scheme also means more expectation by the company as far as hospitality and functionality is concerned. Our placement office has lived up to it and the staff, along with the nominees, has left no stone unturned. Moreover, the placement fee scheme has been altered to make it more favourable for companies that intend to recruit more students.

As an after thought all we can understand is that what is required perhaps a sense of responsibility in people who enroll for TNP and take up jobs. The institute is of immense help and hence we hope that the administration also is more active in the years to come.

# At the Crossroads..of Life

*Abhishek Mishra talks about the rampant indeciveness in the minds of a majority of IITians over their careers and the need for career management in the institute.*

This is not a multiple-choice paper in which the time limit is fixed. This is a paper, which should ideally be done only after you have completed a thorough analysis of yourself as a professional AND as an individual. This is a paper where guessing wildly may lead to your disadvantage; for there is HEAVY negative marking. This is a paper in which, the negative grading would stay even if the question is not attempted. In fact in such a case the negative marking would be heavier. This is paper with just one question and NO you cannot repeat the test the next year, so take all the time in the world to \*think\*, do all the calculations in \*your mind\* and come up with an answer only when you are convinced.

## **Question 1. What career option are you pursuing?**

1) Schol 2) Job 3) Management 4) None of these...

All of us have asked ourselves the same question time and again. Some reached a conclusion quite soon but most are still unsure about whether the job they got, the scholarship decision or the management exam result they are waiting for actually leads to what they really want from life. Confusion reigns. Crucial career decisions are not made on the basis of aptitude or interests but are governed by the actions of the people in the near-CPI range. THE decision is not arrived at after long-laboured deliberations but is the result of an informal peer-group survey and what the majority does becomes the unwritten rule for the undecided majority. Why is there such sheer apathy towards thinking and making a decision all by oneself ? Why don't IITians actively pursue their career options ? Most importantly, why is the cream of the nation (!) so unsure about "what" to do with their lives ?

In a survey of final year undergraduates conducted by InsIghT, nearly 64% of those asked said that they either were yet to make their career choice or were not sure whether the career option they had chosen was the best for them. The two basic steps in decision making that are most commonly ignored by the current lot of IITians are

1. An assimilation of well-researched and relevant information in order to make an informed decision.
2. More importantly, a greater awareness of the self, one's abilities, strengths, weaknesses and a clear and coherent thought process to choose the best career for oneself.

The student community has, for a long time, felt the need for counseling and greater information availability during the process of career selection. History bears witness to the fact that our administration has rarely participated in the career-shaping process of the students that graduate from the institute. To what extent the institute can or should

participate is an issue of contention but there seems to be a universal consensus that students should be counselled for deciding their professional lines.

### **A Career Management Centre ?**

In the survey we conducted, an overwhelming 96% of the people felt the need for a body for career counseling in IIT. It is perplexing to see that such a wide-felt and urgent need has not been addressed at all over the past four decades. Now that we have such questions being raised, why not look for the right solutions ? In keeping with this line of thought, we propose a model for the a Career Services Centre for IIT Bombay. The ideas presented here have been derived from various discussions with members of the student community, including some alumni who had made attempts in this direction two years ago.

**Not just a counseling center** - A career services center should not just comprise of counselors who provide students with advice on choosing their career lines. In the structure we envisage, the cell should have a permanent body of professionals who can administer a series of aptitude tests to check your hard skills. Equally important is a team of professionals who can test your softer skills on various parameters using a battery of psychoanalytical tests (like the one the candidates for Capital One were made to answer this year). These tests can help students take decisions purely on the basis of self-evaluation. Also, students should be able to go and talk to psychologists about anything related to their careers.

**Alternative Careers** - Besides counseling, lectures and workshops should be conducted for the students, not only on the “popular” careers, but also alternative careers. It is not uncommon to find a student interested and enthusiastic about a field which seems quite unrelated to his courses of study. A career center should provide information about careers which could form a good blend of engineering with hobbies of the students.

**Institute regulated permanent body** - Regulation by the institute is most desirable and necessary. The activity is too sensitive and the demands are too intensive to be taken care of by students alone as another Gymkhana activity. The institute should try and employ full-time professionals and specialists for the same and run it as a regular office. There should be student nominees but the bulk of the work has to be within the administrative framework of the institute.

**Imparting basic resume writing/interview skills** - The career center should give individual feedback to students on their resumes. It should also conduct mock interviews and help people realise their strengths and weaknesses in the interview and GD procedures. The student body made a notable attempt in this direction this year when a few experts in the area of public speaking and communications were called in to conduct a GD workshop. Such attempts from the side of the institute and on a more regular note will go a long way in helping students analyze their skills and in preparing them for facing professionals in their line of choice.

The idea is to give a personalised and highly specific feedback, which would aid students in choosing the right option, depending on their aptitude and attitude. An IITian should be able to walk into the Career Services Center and leave with more information, greater self-awareness and a clearer idea of his options. It should be able to stimulate his thought process and make him sit down and deliberate rationally over the choices. If this is done well, such a body would have justified its existence

***According to the Dean of Students' Affairs (DOSA), the initiative for setting up a career counseling cell or body in IITB should come from the students' side and then the institute authorities should back it up with the requisite infrastructure and human resources. According to him the best model for a career cell on campus would be a group of consultants or counselors who come to the campus every week and are available for help to the students during that time. "In an area as dynamic as career counseling, we should not maintain a fixed group of counselors, but keep employing newer and more knowledgeable people from time and time", says he. "An issue to be kept in mind is that the purpose of a career cell cannot be converted to conduct mock-CATs and mock-GREs in this place. IIT is essentially a technological institute and if a career cell is setup, it should cater to the technological aims and ambitions of students."***

*In order to capture students' opinions on the need for career counselling "in IIT Bombay, InsIghT conducted a survey of 4th yr BTech. and 5th yr Dual Degree students. Following are the results of the survey and some of the feedback we got with the responses (Sample Space Size = 91). Survey conducted and results compiled by Premal Shah.*

Most of the people take up a branch in IIT's thinking that they would get a stamp of this place, which would help them later on to get a job or pursue anything else in life. This is where the problem lies. These very people, as they move into their departments, realise that their departments are not worth what they had expected them to be. I feel IIT's should not fix departments right from the beginning. We can ask students to choose their stream at the end of the first year after they have been exposed to lectures and study material from various departments.

\* We tend to be driven by peer pressure. There is a need to set a culture where each person thinks for himself/herself as to what exactly he/she wants. Career counselling will aid this because we would then be able to "think together" . It would be good to be able to bounce ideas with someone who is experienced in these areas and who can warn us one against common pitfalls.

\* The only hurdle in career choice is that the student is not able to appropriately assess his aptitude. And the reason for this is that he is not aware of the professional lifestyle he will follow, if he chooses to take up a particular field, in the short term as well as in the long term. Yes, he does come to know about them by hearing or reading from somewhere. But there IS some difference if the person in question is from IIT. Career counseling is a must for IITians.

As of today, students refer only to their seniors for career plans and in many cases it may be the case of half-baked knowledge being dished out. A professional career counselor in IIT is very much needed to make the student aware of ALL his opportunities.

Career counseling will definitely be a positive step but I don't think it is going to make a very big contribution. I think you are old enough in your third year of B.Tech. to decide what you want to do. There should be a conscious effort by the person to sit down and think for himself, what he wants to do and not expect some counseling sessions to work miracles for him. Counseling can dispel doubts and clarify things. It can't \_motivate\_ a person to take up option A or B. That is for the person to decide himself.

I have seen that in IIT people start thinking very late about their career paths and end up taking the wrong decision in a hurry. I personally feel that the second year of your stay here is the best time to decide upon your career. And the third year to materialize your decision.

After the dull placement season this year, students are quite disillusioned about what their next move should be in terms of career prospects. Till last year, there was a set pattern, about what one can do given his/her standing in the department, and since the trend has been broken this year, I think the institute should provide some rescue by counseling the students.

This year very little choice has been left to us - as a chemical engineering graduate very few options for a technical or managerial job are there for me. So I am having to settle for a software job under these circumstances.

ou spend four years in such a premier institution depriving so many others of this opportunity. So, the least you can do is utilise all the knowledge you get here to do something in your field. I have been in a different engineering college and I have seen that most of the people there just wanted to make money and cared little about job satisfaction. Now, I find, much to my chagrin, that a good number of people here feel the same way.

# Curry(ur) Sells

*Career management for students in foreign universities receives much greater attention and investment than it does in any professional institute in our country. In all foreign universities, we find that there is a greater proactive role that the administration plays in helping students decide their careers, something we find non-existent in the IITian setup. Sachin Sancheti elaborates, with the help of inputs from some ex-IITB students including Debraj Basu Mallick (BTech. EE, Batch '99), Kashyap Deorah (BTech. CS, Batch '00) and Vivek Singhal (BTech. EE, Batch '99).*

Career planning in the Indian context is something unheard of. Most college students embark on an unknown journey after their graduation, just following the herd, unsure about their aims, ambitions and most of all their own interests. What it breeds is discontent and frustration when one does realise it. This is perhaps due to the lack of knowledge of various career options open to a student and ignorance of one's own strengths and weaknesses.

We find a marked difference in the American scheme of things. Most American universities have career planning and management cells that serve students in more ways than one. The primary motive of having such a body is to assist the students in making an informed career decision based on their aptitude and liking. Besides helping students find their niche, these centers help them to identify their weaknesses and improve upon them. All this being done by trained counselors hired/employed by the university, there is little doubt about the quality of service provided. The staff working at the Office of Career Services are all employees of the university and the part-time positions are filled in by students as their on-campus jobs.

*Around 1200 schools of the US avail themselves of the services of MonsterTrak Inc. (<http://www.monstertrak.com>), a company devoted to managing placements and co-coordinating between the employers and students. The employers post their job requirements and the kind of students they seek, on the server of MonsterTrak. Students can log onto this server and post their resumes, if their qualifications match the criteria set, for perusal by companies. Once the students get past this, the employers fix dates for interviews. Purdue University has its own CCO (Center for Career Opportunities) Express system which uses the services of MonsterTrak. This makes Purdue student resumes available to more than 1,000 companies each year that are not able to visit campus but want to hire Purdue students.*

Besides counseling facilities, a career center also houses a library having a plethora of information on career exploration and opportunities. in the form of books, periodicals, guides, et al. Such an information storehouse also maintains profiles of various companies along with complete job listings. The placement cell is integrated with the career services center. If a student wants to go for higher studies, the career center helps him by giving information on different schools and by writing letters on their behalf to get application packets. Some universities also have a fellowship and scholarship search



service that helps students find financial aid to pursue their course of study. Many provide internship search service as well.

*In the words of Kashyap Deorah, “There are only so many people who do the unconventional and take up alternate career options such as performing or fine arts, journalism, accountancy; after an engineering degree. Although there should be a policy allowing these people to go through with their alternate aspirations, encouraging them proactively does not seem relevant. This conflict is not felt by foreign universities since they are universities in the true sense and have resource rich departments encouraging each of the fields listed above. The reason for specialised formal education (as good as say the computer science department) in film, music, etc. in turn is a product of the market demand. Owing to the social respect of those careers and the personal wealth one can accumulate making a life in them, it makes sense to have an educational system for them in foreign countries. In a country like ours, since the market demand for such professionals is missing fundamentally, alternate careers are a misnomer. They are more of an extension to a hobbies club. and just by creating quality supply we cannot create the demand.”*

Since nothing teaches more than experience, career centers maintain a proper database of alumni along with their career decisions and experiences for reference. Talking to alumni through this channel can be an enlightening experience for the students.

To prepare the students for the real interviews, career centers conduct mock interviews and provide constructive feedback on their performance. They also provide the students with an insight into the nitty-gritty of job interviewing. Apart from this, students have access to a variety of sample resumes and are given tips for writing their own. In many cases, career counselors sit with students and refine their resume.

Another major function of a career center is to organise career fairs where students get to know of the opportunities outside their microcosm. A career fair in the US typically has workshops on career related subjects, lectures by prominent people in various fields, exhibitions by companies and universities, followed by counseling sessions. This opens the doors of a world of opportunities for the students.

Bringing such changes overnight to the system existing in our country seems far-fetched. Nevertheless, we can make a start. Though we have a long way to go, even a single step in this direction can prove beneficial for the student community.

To learn more about how career centers work, visit the following URLs :

<http://www.careercenter.uiuc.edu/> <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/CDC/>

<http://www.career.caltech.edu/> <http://web.mit.edu/career/www/students.html>

<http://www.cco.purdue.edu/>

# Appropriate Apping

*Kensy Joseph talks about the lack of co-ordination among students in the current procedure of apping and the need to centralise the apping process through a higher studies cell.*

The idea of a Higher Studies Cell for IIT-Bombay has been floating around for quite some time now. Following the “phenomenal” success of the IITM App Cell it has been felt that coordination in apping is the solution for ensuring the most satisfactory schols for the maximum number.

Many students who have received schols from lower univs do not withdraw their application as soon as they receive a schol from a higher univ, delaying (and sometimes destroying any chance of) the admission of a fellow student

## Coordinated Apping

Coordinated Apping is still a relatively new concept in IITB. Only the CS Department has had a consistent history of coordination in the apping process for the past three years. The EE department took a giant leap in the right direction last year with the coordination of apping in its Btech batch and the building of an extensive app database. Departments like Aero and EP have seen some level of informal coordination in the past because of the small class size. In most other departments, however, coordination (if at all) is usually limited to within research groups and some specialisations. Thus far, coordinated apping has been something of a success story, with the majority of students who went abroad for higher studies expressing satisfaction at the outcome of last year’s process.

Nevertheless, the present system still has several crippling limitations. Such coordination is usually conducted on an informal basis and limited to the batch - with little information about other department students who may app in the same field. Students from EP regularly app in Elec and Bio-tech, for example. Another concern is over the lack of coordination between BTech and DD batches in the same department.

The conning process is also, by and large, a highly uncoordinated and free-for-all situation. While the efficiency of conning is open to debate, the need for transparency as to which students have approached which faculty members is not. It is not uncommon to hear of students who have been building up a relationship with a Prof. suddenly finding themselves in the lurch after a classmate approaches the same prof. Perhaps a matter of greater concern, many students who have received schols from lower univs do not withdraw their application as soon as they receive a schol from a higher univ, delaying (and sometimes destroying) any chance of the admission of a fellow student.

What a Higher Studies Cell can do This is where the proposed higher studies cell should come in. The main functions of such a cell should be to:

a) Ensure transparency at all stages of the apping process.

- b) Coordinate the allocation of univs and ensure timely withdrawal.
- c) Build an extensive central database with relevant information and documents for future batches' reference.
- d) Create awareness for the possibilities of higher studies in India and the requisite information for the same. The cell need not be limited to this. Time spent surfing the net for information can easily be avoided if the requisite information about a particular univ were available at a central, easily accessible location. An App Cell should also be able to coordinate the sending of application packets and filling up of application forms.

### *Factfile*

The average IITB apper :

- apps to 8 universities
- spends about 30K in the process
- receives 4 schols
- doesn't receive a schol from the highest univ he/she apped to

The average department has:

- 37% of the class apping
- 2 students who don't receive any schol

The average US university:

- receives 5 applications from each department
- accepts 2 (Statistics computed on the basis of last year's apping records)

*There is little an App Cell can do in the absence of accountability. Transparency and complete information will be to no avail if individuals use this information to their own ends, stepping on the toes of their classmates without remorse.*

### *What a Higher Studies Cell can't do*

However, there is little a higher studies Cell can do in the absence of accountability. Transparency and complete information will be to no avail if individuals use this information to their own ends, stepping on the toes of their classmates without remorse. The idea of RG is so entrenched in the IITB mindset, that any call for accountability and regulation would be shot down at once. Even at a time that jobs are in such short supply, it is not uncommon to see individuals hedging on choicy A-group jobs even when their top priority is apping (and many of them largely certain of a schol too!) - foiling the chances of less fortunate batchmates. A Higher Studies Cell cannot help people who are undecided about their career either. The practicality of such a cell is a matter yet left unresolved. More importantly, the co-ordination of such a cell with an all-encompassing Career couseling/management unit in the institute is a question worth considering. In the meanwhile, CR's and DGSecs across the institute send out frantic mails in an attempt to get the class together for a meeting on the issue.

# MY CAREER DECISION

*Kashyap Deorah, BTech. Computer Science and Engineering, Batch of 2000, along with two IIT batchmates, started a company called Righthalf while in his final year. Righthalf, the first campus-startup of IIT Bombay and of any engineering institute of India, operated for a year before selling out to a California-based startup, PurpleYogi. Subsequently Kashyap worked with PurpleYogi for six months from their Bangalore and California offices, before leaving them to move on to explore other career opportunities. He is now working with another California-based startup as a technical marketing engineer. Kashyap talks about his experiences with Righthalf and the facets of life entrepreneurship has exposed him to.*

IITians share at least two common characteristics. The ability to question (the why) and the instinct to attack a problem till solved (the how). This observation does not come as a surprise since JEE requires one to persistently apply one's learning to problem solving and the academic environment created in IIT requires one to keep questioning what is taught in order to learn. Fortunately, this tradition has been kept alive by the system over many decades. This combination of qualities is probably essential for success in any career one chooses - as a teacher, researcher, engineer or manager - and of course, an entrepreneur is no exception.

It was probably in the 6th semester that I began any serious thought about my career options. My thought process at that stage was influenced by certain trends and events in my life. Techfest'99, in which I was passionately involved, had just concluded and the ideologies with which the core team had driven itself for 10 months were still fresh in the mind. My interest towards academics was dropping as a direct consequence of my lack of discipline, and the resulting decline of SPI was not in any way helping me motivate myself. I confess that I did feel intimidated by my contemporaries when it came to academics and my intermittent efforts to compete could never match their focused approach. This was also the time when the recent surge of the Internet made it thinkable for young entrepreneurs to start new businesses with cool ideas. It was not surprising to hear of many examples across India and the world, and of the kind of money and talent supporting this amazing growth.

I think it was a combination of all of these factors that made me think of entrepreneurship as an immediate career option. For many months that followed, including the summer and the early part of 7th semester, I tried to focus all my activities towards learning this "new way of doing business", identifying the "next big thing", guessing "what people want", understanding how "the Internet brings value" and of course grasping, along the way, all this jargon. I remember several exciting e-mail exchanges with alumni, Vihar lake walks with department mates, news stories describing ingenious business ideas, waking up in the middle of the night to note down an impulse and meeting at the coffee shack to establish that I was more aware about new stuff than the other guy. Notably, across all the forums, there was always mind share, optimism and eagerness to experiment; apprehension and laze were obsolete. Studying for GRE, making the best lab

project, pointing out the flaw in a Professor's argument and picking up an extra book at the library to know a little more than everyone else; was the kind of fun that I came to ignore and they became an opportunity cost.

I think it was in the middle of all that, that I had unconsciously made my career decision - entrepreneurship - and ruled out the other traditional options. Whether it was the right decision or not was then for time to tell and would now continue to be only a state of one's mind. In the middle of the 7th semester was the time when a series of events converged to a team of three students and a senior alumnus, blessed by two IIT professors and another senior alumnus, deciding to start a company on a business idea singled out of the short-list. This was to become the first "campus start-up" of India. The next one year was a roller coaster ride with the company shifting office thrice, growing to 22 people, getting funded, being frequently mentioned in the media, launching a beta product, transitioning the business idea, shrinking to 13 people, trying to sell a product to customers in a recession, and selling out. This experience awarded me the most valuable learning I had acquired as a professional and as a person. Relatively speaking, in my mind, I have learnt in a matter of a couple of years that which would usually take several. Attempting the gargantuan task of listing down, in black and white, things I have learnt never seemed to end, in the months that I attempted to do so. However I did learn later that many things that I had learnt hands-on were taught in business schools as management rules and I came to appreciate the reason why b-schools insist on students having work experience.

Besides the management rules learnt, the network of people built and some credibility gained, there were two important by-products that came out of it. First, I came much closer to my family after a virtual four year exile at IIT. There was tremendous emotional support and security that I got from my parents. My father had experienced many analogous ups and downs during many of his ventures, sharing which created a very welcome understanding between us. Second, I got a chance to work in the Silicon Valley with a startup that, at some level, was doing similar things as RightHalf only on a scale much bigger and much "real". I realized, the lessons learnt at my startup wouldn't have been complete without the stint at PurpleYogi and the constant deliberation to discover each of those similarities in processes and issues. There were repeated feelings of *deja vu* about each management problem and an "aha" feeling about how there was a thought-out process in place to counter them. As someone pointed out, that very precision or difference in solving management problems is what is called "experience". One of those days, I also concluded that I had just been introduced to what is called "professionalism" and was planted with seeds to the thought of "why the Silicon Valley is what it is".

Living in the Bay Area was, of course, rewarding personally too. Traveling in the US, cooking one's own food, managing a home, pursuing exciting hobbies that were long forgotten, and discovering new cultures. One of the mentionable personal experiences was the time I spent at Stanford after relieving myself of the job at PurpleYogi. It was a time when I was in a land away from home, without much security and in a climate not very favorable for young unemployed undergrads on a business visitor visa. Frankly, once I got myself into that situation, I realized that it was not the best situation to be in

especially when trying to do the following. Striking the best-fit between the options I can make available for myself (a refugee living in a friend's apartment with his computer and telephone as his resources) and what I perceive to be my best career move. I wrote a resume for the first time! I was just coming to terms with the art of marketing oneself and not a product or a company or a team, and I experienced for the first time what it is to be on the other side of the interview table.

My friends from IIT, from work, from Righthalf, and those back in India were extremely supportive and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of making a conscious career choice and decision for the first time, and largely on my own. Fortunately for me, things worked out smoothly and I returned back with the light feeling of a job well done and no liabilities going forward. Fortunately again, my next employment would have - besides the essential elements of best-fit which made me join them - a Mumbai office in addition to its headquarters in the Bay Area where my job would be based.

The lessons I have learnt at the end of this story, from a career perspective are the following. There are so many things you cannot plan for. The most precious learning experiences or opportunities may befall in a manner totally unexpected and are probably appreciated looking back in introspection rather than when one is through them. There is no single point such as the time of graduating that is most critical for making a make or break career decision. Ironically, graduation time is a time when one has little or no experience about each career option since the taste of it is not first hand, and the decision is more likely to be random than the ones taken later in life. The process of discovering

# Looking within to reach out..

*S.P.Arun graduated from IIT Bombay with a BTech. degree in Electrical Engineering in the year 1999. After doing his masters' studies in medical imaging in John Hopkin's University, Arun has now moved on to doing research in computational neuroscience. His experiences in graduate school..*

*The goals we pursue are always veiled. A girl who longs for marriage longs for something she knows nothing about. The boy who hankers after fame has no idea what fame is. The thing that gives our every move its meaning is always totally unknown to us." - Milan Kundera*

Although its very tempting to talk generalities, I shall try and be specific. When I graduated from IITB in 1999, the only thing I knew was that I wanted to do science- and teaching. However, having decided that, it was still difficult to choose what to do in science. I was interested in a host of things Astrophysics, Neuroscience, Non-linear dynamics, Artificial Intelligence. When I began my student life at Hopkins- doing Medical Imaging, something that sounded secure as a career- I quickly realized that most of my interests lie in understanding the Mind.

Then a series of coincidences brought me to do what I am doing - a senior of mine told me that I should go after my passion, and referred me to a very nice professor he knew. I went ahead and spoke to this man, and he offered that I could do research with him, while still being an EE student. He knew a professor in EE, who was also interested in neuroscience. And before I knew it, I was doing Computational Neuroscience with not one, but two advisors. My research is oriented towards how neurons represent and process information, and I use statistical and signal processing techniques to make sense of neural data. Naturally enough, life as a graduate student is a different phase in itself. I was suddenly out there- by myself, cooking my own meals- and even eating them. And if you think its hard to choose a career, try choosing something in a US supermarket! When one of my juniors wrote to me asking about life in the US- I began spelling it out - but then, I thought, why spoil the suspense? There is life after IITB , and we will continue to have the rudder in our hands to steer it into the waters we choose.

While I continue my research here, it has been (and, I fear, will be) a challenge to remember that I'm doing what I am for the fun of it, and not to be famous, or to publish a hundred papers a year. It has been hard to remain focused when I know I would love doing a hundred other things and I am doing only one of them. But I am doing one of them, and I'm being paid to do my work when I would gladly pay to do it.

Big questions always lurk around the corner, waiting for a discussion between friends... I am sure that I will return to India, perhaps 2-3 years after my PhD. What I can't seem to articulate is why. But I do know that if I do find an answer, it will be in India.

During my decision-time about my career, I wished I could get inputs/advice from my seniors. Rest assured that if you do reach out- I, or any other alumnus for that matter, would be glad to be of help.



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# Beating Convention

*Harsh Roy talks to Girish Sant, an IITB alumnus and a member of the NGO Prayas a about his unconventional career line.*

After toiling hard for four long years, armed with a BTech degree, you stand at the crossroads, making one of the most important decision of your life. The choice of a career. For those of you who think that the only options before you, are a departmental or software job or crossing the seas for higher studies, it is time to think again. We have before us a glaring example in the persona of Mr. Girish Sant, an alumnus of the 1988 vintage, who has used his technical acumen in a field which most of us would not consider a viable career option. He is a founder member of “Prayas”, an NGO catering to social grievances, has been associated with the Narmada Bachao Andolan, has been a part of various rural development projects and has also been a member of the central and state power regulatory commissions.

Girish Sant did his BTech in Chemical Engg. from IIT Bombay and went on to do an Mtech in energy systems. He was at IITB recently to give a seminar on “Power Systems - recent trends, protection and regulation of public interest”. Mr. Sant presented a very factual description backed by a lot of data, all of which gave a terrifying picture of how our country’s power policies are skewed, partly due to lack of proper planning and partly to meet political ends. InsIghT spoke to Mr. Sant on his rather uncommon vocation and other related topics.

Elucidating upon his motivation to enter this field and not other supposedly “lucrative” avenues he said that he got interested in power issues by reading reports and books on controversies clouding the policies and methods of power distribution. He felt strongly against the monopoly of the Government in India’s power sector. Moreover, from the very beginning of his IIT sojourn, he had been “motivated to do something meaningful for the society”.

He emphasized on the importance of making students aware that such a venture is feasible and rewarding.”Policy formulation and implementation is a multidisciplinary process.”, he insisted. “Technocracy is at the core” was his unequivocal statement. He reinforced this point by giving various applications in the power sector where technology can be of immense utility. Technology is instrumental in:

- 1) Least cost analysis i.e. distribution and allocation of power in the most cost-efficient manner.
- 2) Improving the efficiency of electrical systems.
- 3) Analyzing the pros and cons of high voltage distribution.
- 4) Deciding the feasibility of new technical initiatives.

He further illuminated this by talking about the techno-economic critique of the Enron project that the Prayas group had prepared, which had helped them predict the Enron

fiasco much before the Dabhol power deal actually broke down. In his words, “Enron, in possession of certain selfish business interests, tried to pull off quite an unfair business deal with our Government and this was quite evident from the very proposal they had presented.”

Mr. Sant admits that constant intervention from the government, nepotism and the lethargy of bureaucrats can become stifling in a government job but then there have to be people to “take the bull by the horns”, to be daring enough to revamp the system from within. “Who suits the bill better than technocrats from the nation’s top technical college?”, he questions. His claim is that it would take just a group of few self-motivated students who are willing to take small initiatives, to make the lot more sensitive and aware of careers directly concerned with the alleviation of economic problems. He further suggests that the various alumni associations should help the current generations by organizing talks and discussions by people who have done some pioneering work in uncommon fields, making use of their technical knowledge and help students broaden their outlook in career choosing.

# EXTRACTION AT ITS BEST

*The Indian industry has a lot to benefit from the Supercritical Fluid Extraction Technology developed for the first time in India by IIT Bombay, report Vibhor Agrawal and Harsh Roy.*

There is good news for all you coffee and tea addicts out there. You can gulp in an extra cup without worrying about the harmful caffeine or nicotine present in these beverages. The chemical department of IIT Bombay has come up with an inexpensive and effective way of removing these substances from their natural sources. The resulting extract is 100% safe, eco-friendly and pure. It is called Supercritical Fluid Extraction (SCFE) technology.

Research, to me, has always meant transcending the vast realms of theory to come up with something that is of practical use to society”, remarks Prof. Mamata Mukhopadhyay, the specialist in this field. She, along with Prof. Sandip Roy and Prof. Swapneshu Baser constitutes the team that is behind this technology. Just check out the S2 Bay near IDC. You will find yourself looking at a maze of silver-coloured fat cylinders and state of the art computerised instrumentation and control system. However, one look at the name plate beside this contraption tells that it is actually a prototype SCFE plant having all features of a commercial plant. Indigenous innovative design, development and manufacture of SCFE plant and equipment so as to optimise the capital investment has been the key element in the SCFE technology development at IIT, Bombay. Recipient of many national awards, Prof. Mukhopadhyay has been featured, along with the other team members, in Femina and Times of India for her work on SCFE.

## What is SCFE?

SCFE is a two-step process which uses a dense gas such as Carbon dioxide, above its critical temperature and critical pressure, as a solvent for extraction. The feed is a solid (usually beans or leaves) from which natural extracts have to be removed. They dissolve in high pressure CO<sub>2</sub> which is then sent to a separator at lower pressure. The desired product precipitates out leaving behind clean CO<sub>2</sub> which can then be recycled back into the system.

## How is it different from the conventional process? /p>

As Prof. Baser explains, CO<sub>2</sub> under supercritical conditions has both gas-like transport properties and liquid-like solvability. Since natural products are often located in the pores of the raw solid, the gaseous form gives better extractions than the conventional liquids. As such, SCFE finds a wide range of applications. It can be used in the extraction of Natural products such as Oils, Flavors, Fragrances, Colors, Preservatives, Pesticides and Herbal medicines. It is also favored in the de-caffeination of tea/coffee, de-nicotisation of tar from tobacco and in the cleaning of Precision and Electronic equipments.

The peculiar properties of Supercritical Fluids were discovered long ago in the 19th century. However, it took more than 100 years for researchers to commercialise the technology for extracting natural products. By the 1980s, industries started using SCFE based extraction plants. But, the plants were still not economically viable for Indian Industries. This scene has been changed by the recent technological developments at IIT Bombay.

IIT Bombay was the first center for research in SCFE technology in the entire country. Before SCFE was developed here, there was no indigenous food processing industry in India.

< IITB has constructed and commissioned two full-scale commercial plants in Colombo and Ghaziabad with the help of an industrial partner. Another Pilot Plant, intended for further research, has been running in the Supercritical Bay (S2 Bay) on campus for the past three years

How does SCFE beat conventional extraction?

Today, there is an increasing concern for safe, eco-friendly and pollution-free manufacturing processes. For instance, earlier methods of decaffeination of raw coffee beans involved the use of chlorinated solvents like Dichloromethane. Invariably, miniscule amounts of these solvents were left behind in the final extract. Since chlorinated solvents are proven carcinogens, their presence is completely banned.

This is where SCFE comes to the rescue. CO<sub>2</sub>, due to its gaseous and non-toxic nature, is not only completely removed from the extract but also boasts the status of Generally Regarded As Safe (GRAS) for natural products. “Couple that with qualities like longer shelf-life, high potency of the active components and excellent blending characteristics and you have a technology that’s all set to phase out the older alternatives”, says Prof. Mukhopadhyay.

Further, while the conventional method like steam distillation / solvent extraction involve high temperatures degrading the heat sensitive natural products, SCFE operates at nearambient temperatures, ensuring that they are retained to get extracts with characteristics very close to the natural raw material.

### **SCFE @ IIT Bombay**

SCFE study was initiated in IITB by Prof. Mukhopadhyay. She started research on this technology fifteen years ago. In the west, this technology was already at an advanced stage at that time. “My main aim was to have SCFE technology commercialized so that India could reap its benefit”, she said. The efforts of her team got a major boost when the Government of India started identifying and funding commercially viable Technology Development Mission (TDM) projects in 1993. It was then that her team went on to develop this technology indigenously. The whole process from conceptualization to execution was developed in IIT Bombay.

Prior to that, there were no viable SCFE plants in India even though the demands for extracts from SCFE were rising. Few SCFE plants were established based on imported technologies in mid 90s. They were faced with a wide variety of technical and economic problems. Further, the costs of putting up an imported plant and foreign consultancy were prohibitively high. Today, IIT Bombay has come up with a technology that not only caters to the Indian conditions but costs 20-25% lower than its foreign counterpart.

It might come as a surprise to many that IIT Bombay, with the help of an industrial partner, has constructed and commissioned two SCFE plants in Colombo and Ghaziabad. Presently one more commercial plant is being manufactured for M/s Sami Labs, Bangalore (a 100% EOU company) which will go online by April 2002. The SCFE prototype plant, intended for further research and development, has been running in the S2 Bay of IIT Bombay for the last five years.

Further IIT Bombay has been actively involved in marketing the technology to the industry. Prof. Sandip Roy illuminates further, "SCFE was simultaneously advertised on the net through the website <http://www.iitbombay.com> as well as national newspapers like Times of India and Indian Express. Infact, 70% of the responses we got were through the net !"

### **Technology for the Future..**

Traditionally, major exports of natural materials were in raw form. Countries like Germany, USA France, etc. imported this raw material from India, used SCFET to make value added natural extracts and export these back to us at ridiculously high prices. With the use of cost effective SCFE technology developed at IITB, the natural products industry can now effectively tap the rapidly growing international market for quality value-added products.

For more information  
visit the website [www.iitbombay.com](http://www.iitbombay.com).

There is also a book named "Natural Extracts Using Supercritical Carbon Dioxide" by Ms. Mukhopadhyay (CRC Press Ltd. June 2000) which discusses the technique of SCFE in more detail.

# QUESTECH

*By Siddharth Verma and Subramaniam V.*

TechGC got off to a great start this year with FreshTech. It was fascinating to know that so many freshies preferred to break their heads over a logic quiz rather than watch Aamir Khan show off his cricketing skills in Lagaan !!! The winners were:

- 1) Ameya Potdar & Ram Kakkad (H5)
- 2) Surhud More & Paritosh Gupta (H3)
- 3) T.Vineet & Nandan Dixit(H7)

The first Questech was cracked by Jose (H8) in a few hours; remarkable considering a few guys we know are still sweating over it. For all you poor souls who continue to suffer from recurring nightmares with numbers swimming around, the solutions are available on our website: [www.iitb.ac.in/~techgc](http://www.iitb.ac.in/~techgc).

The events lined up in this year's Tech. G.C. are Exposition, The Journalism Contest and The Practical Problem Contest. The topics will be announced shortly. Your suggestions and ideas are most welcome.

Mail address :-[techgc@mitra.cse.iitb.ernet.in](mailto:techgc@mitra.cse.iitb.ernet.in)

Questech returns with some great logic puzzles for you. So awaken all your hibernating neurons, mail us the solutions to all of the puzzles below) and you may find yourself the proud owner of a Tech GC Tshirt. 'Let Your Light Shine!'

- 1) A dull and Rainy Day

The Priest did to the Bishop say:

"Last Sunday met I strangers three

None of which were known to Thee.

I ask'd Them of Their Age combin'd  
which amounted twice to Thine!

A Riddle now will I give Thee:

Tell Me what Their Ages be!"

So the Bishop ask'd the Priest:

"Give to Me a Clue at least!"

"Keep Thy Mind and Ears awake,

And see what Thou of this can make.

Their Ages multiplied make plenty,  
Fifty and Ten Dozens Twenty."

The Bishop had a sleepless Night

To try to get Their Ages right.

"I almost found the Answer right.

Please shed on it a little Light."

"A little Clue I give to Thee,



I'm older than all Strangers three."  
After but a little While  
The Bishop answered with a Smile:  
"Oh, I can answer thee,  
For the result just struck me!!!"  
Tell us how old the Priest is.

2). All of us have stumbled upon those don't-lift-ur-pencil drawings some time in our childhood. Let's grow up a little and analyze their 3-D counterparts. So pick a cube and join all its face diagonals. Can you draw this 3-D "picture" without lifting the pencil i.e. starting at any point, going along an edge or a face diagonal and never overwriting any portion of finite length or lifting the pencil? As if that's already not too much, say what if all body diagonals are also included? Give full explanation, in both cases, of whatever you conclude.

# Parliament @IITB !

*It's been six months since the last institute elections for the student representatives took place and an evaluation of the candidates we had elected is in the offing. InsIghT caught up with the student general secretaries asking them about the work they had accomplished upto the middle of their tenure and their plan-ahead. Excerpts follow.*

## GSAA - Manish Jain

Accomplished..

A) Placements:

More number of companies contacted than ever before.

The placement office will be shifted to the new cafeteria and bank building.

For placements to go online, a software has been developed which will be deployed next year.

B) Apping Databases:

The apping database of some depts. (mech and elec) is up. The databases of all other depts except Chem. will be up within a few days. The database will contain data on the students who apped last year.

A similar profile database is being prepared for those apping this year.

C) Integration of all the technical festivals at IIT-Bombay achieved.

D) SAC Library reopened The SAC Liby has been reopened after a gap of about 3 years. This liby is meant for books concerning SAC activities e.g.drams, mountaineering,sports,wildlife etc.The books are currently in the SAC office.The rules and timings for issuing books will be put up soon.

Failed to do

1) Library e-mail service not yet implemented because Teaching Assistants were withdrawn. Because of this, a number of computer and network related work is stuck.

2) Practical Training took a low priority in view of the bad placement situation.

3) SAC constitution: work has been delayed.

4) Book Bazaar was an organisational failure. Books worth Rs. 3000 sold.

Proposals

1) 50% fee waiver for DD students with  $CPI < 7$  in the fifth year.

2) Course restructuring: To have student involvement in the course restructuring at two levels:

a) At individual course level wherein they can suggest changes in a particular course.

b) In the overall perspective, e.g. a particular course should be in the third year and not the fourth year.

- 3) A quick reference pamphlet containing info about various rules for elective and audit courses will be compiled and distributed soon to avoid any confusion.
- 4) If a sizeable population is enthusiastic, a German language course can be organized in the next semester.
- 5) Library committee has already passed a proposal to open the library till 11 PM on weekends. However, there are some logistics problems yet to be worked out.
- 6) To make the Merit Cum Means and Heritage Fund Scholarships available to 5th year Dual Degree junta.

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GSHA - Anant Gupta  
Accomplished...

A deal with coke struck. This year we are getting 4.5 lakhs from them as against 2 lakhs last year, thus implying better maintenance funding for every hostel.

Water purifiers in all the hostels have been installed on every floor.

The juice-cum-snack bar is on the cards and positive responses from many contractors to set it up in the area between H8 and H7 have been received. Approval of Estate Office is awaited.

(NEWS !) A new shuttle system to provide in-campus transportation to campsites is about to be started. A transport committee, comprising several students of the Civil Engg. department had been formed long back. A deal has been struck with Mahindra and Mahindra according to which initially 5 of the newly introduced 10-seater electric buses will ply inside IITB. Timings will be decided later. There is a proposal for charging Rs.2 for travel from “any point to any other point in the campus”. The tickets will probably be in the form of coupons which can be bought from the hostels and will be charged with the canteen bills.

Networking of all hostels is over, though there was some delay involved in the arrival of all the equipment. Four new machines (2 PIII and 2 PIV)) are going to be added in all hostels. (Special thanks to Prof. Deepan Ghosh).

(NEWS !) Installation of coffee vending machines in three hostels to be started in 10 days' time. Will be done on a test basis. Machines will give six kinds of coffee, two kinds of tea, hot chocolate, cold chocolate, three kinds of soup and breakfast (cereal, malt). Timings - from 4 pm to 7 am. There is a proposal to install such machines in all hostels. For the plan to be feasible the sale should be atleast 300 cups/day.

STD booth in hostel 7 setup almost immediately after being handed over the post.

Mess renovation of hostels has begun. H4 and H7 messes will be completely renovated by Alumni Day.

Hospital facilities have been pepped up. A vaccination campaign for hepatitis-B is about to be organised. Diet distribution system improved in the wards. UV light mosquito repellent re-installed. New dustbins placed. Nets in the main ward repaired. Extra lighting is to be done in all wards. Hospital orientation for freshies has been done. First-aid kits and cough syrups to be introduced in all canteens with the help of health reps (now introduced in all hostels). Frequency of eye specialist will be increased to 5 days a week. Hospital website is operational now and a booklet of information about the hospital is to be released for reference by all campsites.

PUC (Pollution Under Control) checks performed early in the tenure and RTO called in to issue driving licenses to students. Next month permanent licenses will also be made by taking junta to RTO office.

License control checks started off with the help of ASO's (assistant security officers) and speed limit boards put up.

Insurance policy of institute kicked off.

Flooring and water-proofing of Chinkos done in time. Aqua guard installed. Washbasins put up. Some renovation of kitchen carried out. No permanent construction is possible there because the cafeteria building is going to be brought down in some time.

Failed to do...

1) No attempts as yet towards improvement of Chinko's quality of food. But 3 GSecs of hostels are going to be assigned the job of making recommendations w.r.t. Chinko's food soon.

2) Security enhancements are still awaited. No increase in the recruitment of security officials. No follow-up of proposals. Security nominee was absolutely inactive for the first one and a half months of the semester, when the pan ther menace was most prevalent on campus. A complaint register for security, though, has been made available in all hostels.

Attempts for private security have been abandoned due to practical difficulties created by the workers' union.

Isolation ward of hospital is still not ready (reason - lack of funding from the institute).

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GSCULT - Maneesh Kumar Singh

Accomplished..

A) Dual concept of Sophies and Freshies GC

The Secys. did a commendable job. The schedule was stuck to, to a large extent.

B) Workshops

held in 3 sub-categories

Music fundaes sessions were held

Literary workshop for freshies was organized

Debating workshop was organized

GD workshop was organized

Dram, photography and fine arts workshops are planned in the near future Modified the judging process a lot to try and ensure judging is done in as fair a manner.

stopped discussion between the judges and marked on the basis of points given by the judges after normalization. The process was discussed and explained to the Cult.Cos. in the first Cult. Comm.meeting

eliminated inter-judge biasing

score sheets are made open to the hostels.

C) Speakers club has been active with:

JAM sessions

fundaes sessions (publicity for the Speakers club is done during the previous GC event)

D) Hindi front

Sahitya Sandhya was organized on the 14th of August with artistes such as Nida Fazli and Rajendra Gupta. An informal Hindi cell has been established and debates and other activities are planned.

E) Spic Macay held successfully

Marketing done to some extent. Intend to conduct regular club meetings throughout the year in the form of Lec-dems. and Baithaks.

F) Annual Production:

Work has been going on in full earnest. The attention is not on having big sets and an elaborate setup but more on acting, direction and music.

Failed to do

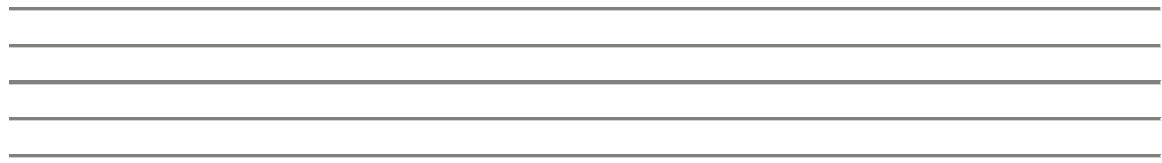
Film festival planned in the first week of the semester, but didnt work out.

Music Room: there is no problem with the Music Room, all the groundwork has already been done. Problem is deciding where it will be made. After discussions with Appaji and the Dean (SA) it was decided that the best place would be the current Canara Bank premises, will be done when it shifts out to the Bank and Cafeteria complex.

Photography club: Amit Kaushik has been nominated as the Photography Secy.

Workshop is planned shortly.

Wildlife Club: work needs to be done and planning is required.



The fourth general secretary, Saurabh Sodhani (Topi), refused to give an interview to InsIghT, despite repeated persuasions.

# Welcome the e-litists...

*Kartikay Rai and Saurabh Garg talk about the successes and failures of the entrepreneurship cell in IITB and propose improvements.*

## HISTORY OF E-cell

*The Entrepreneurship cell was conceptualised as a part of a career management center (CMC) for IIT Bombay way back in October 1998. As stated in the proposal for CMC, the purpose of such a cell would be to “promote entrepreneurship as a career option for students” and to “assist any product or venture” initiated by them with the help of the Incubation Center and School of Management. Thus, the initial motivation was not to run e-cell completely as a student organisation but under the umbrella of an institute-monitored CMC.*

The concept of entrepreneurship is not new in IIT Bombay. Since its inception it has been producing people like Kanwal Rekhi who have pursued entrepreneurship and have been highly successful. The number of people venturing into entrepreneurship had been quite low till some time back and a growing need was felt to make students in the IIT community realize the viability of the field as a career option. It was with these ideas that the Entrepreneurship Cell (more affably known as `E'-cell by the current lot) was envisaged in IIT Bombay. Back in December '99, Prafulla Krishna took the initiative to launch e-cell as an autonomous students' activity - an attempt to surface the latent enterprising spirit of the venturesome IITians. Others jibed in and soon a `team' came into existence.

E-Cell planned to provide a conducive atmosphere for students to venture into the market through various events whose purpose would be to harness a vibrant and dynamic community of entrepreneurs on campus. One of the main purposes was to make people aware of the whole journey of a startup, right from the germination of the idea to the realization of the dream. Another point that was intended to establish was that entrepreneurship is a serious career option and not a fad, as mistaken by most antagonists.

Things have come a long way since then. E-Cell is now in its second year and at this point in time, it is apt to look back and assess how far the organisation has been able to attain its aimed objectives. Such is the purpose of this article.

## **The Brighter Side of it**

The fostering of the spirit of entrepreneurship had to be a continuous process and to achieve this a number of events were planned, some of which were immensely successful, some were not so successful and there were others which never went beyond the stage of conceptualisation. The biggest and the most publicized event conducted by E-Cell has decidedly been Eureka. Eureka was supposed to serve a two-fold motive - first, to act as a bridge between the potential student-led startup teams and venture capitalists (VCs) and, second, to serve as a learning experience for those who would not be interested in venturing the market right away but might be awaiting future avenues. A

deluge of participants from more than 200 teams and sponsorship from some of the world's leading companies were indicative enough of this fact. Eureka was able to achieve its first purpose well and six out of twelve finalists teams are in the process of launching themselves at present. The second purpose, though, was not fully achieved owing to the insufficient time for doing extensive research given to participants after the first stage submission.

One of the most debated elements of Eureka was the prize money. The total prize money of Eureka was Rs.10 lakh, incentive enough to entice teams to take part just in the hope of raking in some moolah and not as potential startup associates. It was felt later on that such a huge amount in cash was not justified simply as a token of appreciation for a business plan. The winners should, instead, have been offered part (or whole) of the prize in kind in the form of services especially meant to support a company. There is a need to host a Eureka session in which various teams get a chance to meet VCs, present their ideas and get personal feedback from them. Eureka should also serve as a platform for making VC funding directly available to startups.

A certificate program in entrepreneurship which aimed to instill managerial qualities in addition to entrepreneurial ideas was organised in March-April 2001. The course was immensely successful in terms of participation and the participants felt that the course provided them with ample value addition. Enterprise was organised during Techfest 2001 and various teams from IIT who were already involved in startups shared their experiences with the rest of the crowd. One of the main purposes of Enterprise was to make students from outside colleges realise that some of their peers had made it big in the market and that there was ample opportunities for everyone in this field.

**The Darker Side of it**In spite of all these successful events, it appears that e-cell has not been able to make an impact on the mind of an average IITian. This could have been because of the discrete presence of e-cell. A number of well-spaced events like DLS (distinguished lecture series) and a networking workshop (by Mr. S. Keshav) had been planned but such events never materialised completely. Only two of the lectures under DLS could take shape. The only possible reason for this seems to be the lack of proper planning and co-ordination among the team members. The work was being allocated to people without any discussion contributing to the distribution of the same

The objectives of E-Cell were not well-defined and the previous teams' focus seem to have been only on organising events. There was an inordinate emphasis on creating a hype for events. According to Dean SA, E-Cell can do a wonderful job for the student community but one thing that it requires is a dedicated body to monitor it. He says that a body like E-Cell should work as a student organisation since students can be the best organisers for events like a business-plan competition and others that E-Cell has undertaken in the past. The institute is always willing to provide infrastructural and other support, though.

### **A new year begins**

As E-Cell makes a new start this year there are a number of points that should be taken



into consideration to improve its profile as a students' activity. The objectives should be well-defined and their feasibility should be worked out well in advance. Care should be taken that the focus is not lost mid-way. In addition to the bigger events a number of small-scale events should be organised, which help bring out the creativity and independent thinking of the average IITian. A good insightful event that can be organised is a series of lectures by the professors from various departments highlighting the scope of entrepreneurship in their respective fields.

This article has been composed after discussions with various members of the present & past E-Cell teams namely Prafulla Krishna, Vikas Jain, Amol Parkhe, Maninder Gulati, Sameer Shetty, Rahul Gupta and Abhishek Mishra. We hope that it helps them make E-Cell a better student body and wish them all the best for the future.

# Resplendent in Pessimism... !

- *Tarkeshwar Singh*

The world shook the day the WTC was made the worst ever terrorist target in recorded human history. The response from around the world was one of outrage and sympathy. There has been much discussion about the way the Americans have responded to the tragedy and comparisons have been drawn in the Indian media about the way Indians reacted to analogous catastrophes on their land. People have come up with various arguments which claim that we, as Indians, have defied the very concept of the existence of a nation...

Let's sit back for a moment and analyse what encourages such an approach by the Indian people. I was recently going through a book by one of the most renowned psychoanalysts in the world. He states that Hinduism is a pessimistic religion as compared to Christianity and other religions, which have a firmer belief in God, in values, in religion, which define a man's existence.

I disagreed. How can a religion followed by one billion people around the world be pessimistic? Is pessimism really a negative way of living life? What prompted a man to brand an entire religion, an entire way of thinking, as pessimistic?

I heard a man in New York say on television that he wished his son who was on one of the crashed planes died fighting to save everyone on board rather than just praying for something to happen that could save him. I see a nation light candles in the memory of all those perished for no fault of theirs. I see a leader telling his people that no innocent life lost will be wasted. I see a 70 year old retired fire fighter rejoin the services to find any survivors. I find an entire nation united to support one another in this moment of grief and gearing up to fight the perpetrators.

The comparisons have been made. We all have witnessed our pathetic reaction to the Kargil and Kandahar fiasco. Nothing left to say and see. However, I did see the widow of a Kargil IAF pilot appeal to the entire nation to show solidarity with the government at the time of the Kandahar crisis and implore the people not to press for the release of the terrorists. I still remember her pleading that the life of her husband and all those who sacrificed it in Kargil should not go waste. I didn't see a mother or a wife of one of those killed in operation Vijay cry as if they had lost their world. They did cry. But the tears they shed were not of a loss, but of honour, the honour one achieves only after making the ultimate sacrifice. I find retired armed forces officers willing to rejoin the forces to drive out the infiltrators and get back every square inch of our soil. Yet I find a man sitting somewhere in the west say we as a religion are pessimistic, that we can't fight. Is it really true?

No religion in this world is pessimistic, for it cannot be. For nothing on this earth can kill the fire burning within a man's conscience, nothing in this universe can stop a man from

lighting that last ray of hope when everything around him is encompassed in total darkness. I refuse to believe that ANY religious scripture, can possibly tell us to look at life negatively. I refuse to believe that the human spirit cannot triumph when pushed to the extreme limit.

Yet something seems to be wrong somewhere, something which is not letting our country break free, something which we know is wrong yet we don't want to look at it. Unfortunately what is meant by religion is what we have misinterpreted; religion is perhaps not a cause of conflict or misunderstanding or a medium of associating ourselves with a group of people; it's a culture, a conscience, a matrix. A matrix, which fills every thread of our existence yet we don't feel its presence.

The matrix is there and it's all around us. The matrix is OUR definition of conscience. The matrix is what we want to believe, what we want to hear, the way we want to interpret. The matrix is the resistance of solving itself.

This matrix in our context is what tells us to close our eyes when we see poverty all around. It is the lethargy that stops us from sparing even an hour for our very own people affected by the quake in Gujarat. It is the resistance, which tells us to shut our minds, close our eyes, turn our backs to everything wrong happening around us. The matrix is what tells us to leave our country in shambles for a prosperous land, where the people don't even consider us as civilized human beings. It is what tells us that life is all about living like ants, only for survival and propagation. It is what tells us that love is a noun not a verb. It is the attitude, which says that money, personal comfort and selfishness are more important than a code of honour, dignity, pride and self-sacrifice. Now I understand what that man meant. In one word, "pessimism" is the lack of faith in oneself to change this world and this very pessimism is now our matrix.

Perhaps it is more important to see how over the past few thousand years we have managed to get everything wrong for ourselves, how we have not managed to produce a single man who could help us change our attitude or perhaps what has helped us not notice and get inspired by these kinds of men if there were any.

On second thoughts, I should not answer these questions, because I myself am a part of a way of thinking that has stopped delving deep into the human psyche. Something tells us that that part of the human conscience should remain untouched. This is exactly what pessimism is. Pessimism is what restrains us from solving things thinking we might get lost somewhere. Pessimism is what tells us to define things according to our own convenience rather than the way they actually are. That is how we have lost as a nation. Pessimism is what tells us not to take initiative but to wait until the water level crosses our nose and then to start fighting only for survival and somehow prolonging our tenancy on this planet. To damn all those great men who said that learning is not the filling of a bucket but the kindling of a fire. To let the situation deteriorate till we can't launch an offensive against those people out there in Kashmir who are monitoring the very identity of our country in the world scenario. Our approach is the main cause of our resisting any kind of change, any kind of risk. Dispassion that does not flare up any emotion even

when we see our soldiers hung like dead tigers on a bamboo but instead generates mindless pernicious jingoism when we are defeated in a cricket match. It's this dispassion that kills us. And robs us of the spirit of nationhood.

I was reading an autobiography by Kim Wooh Choong, the founding father of Daewoo industries. He writes about how Korea was torn apart after the Korean war with poverty and unemployment and how his being a devout, optimistic Christian changed the entire Korean economy and put Korea at a stage where it now is. He writes about how he was driven by passion to change his country. How he gave up all personal pleasures to change the future of those who would otherwise have suffered for no fault of theirs. This is exactly what creating a legacy is. This is exactly where we as a nation, as a culture have failed. A legacy is made by men with the power and the determination to change this world. Men who can shape tomorrow. They are not men with special abilities. They are men who have faith in themselves, who believe in the optimistic philosophy of life, who believe that with noble intentions and the will power nothing - and mind you, nothing - in this world can stop them from realizing their dreams. That's not a philosophy, that's an attitude. This is exactly what our parents failed to inherit and impart to us. That is what we have been doing for all these years by losing everything we had, faith, trust, values and most importantly THE FIRE. Our "inherent" pessimism has thrust upon us as a dispassionate culture that tells us to take values and ethics as impractical philosophy.

We, as IITians, have failed to realize that we are the best and the luckiest which this country has to offer. If this country has to change somebody has to rise above all this, somebody has to understand that there has to be something common in this world that should drive the human race, from an MNC executive to a beggar . Why do we have to be pessimistic to the extent that somebody else should create a legacy, a lifestyle for us and we follow it like blind ants? We'll have to understand that the future cannot be shaped by pessimism but it requires faith and the belief that no matter what, somebody is there behind us and will always remain so, the so-called materialistic failures notwithstanding. We need to change now, not for ourselves, but for that helpless section of society that has lost all hope for their future for no fault of theirs. The past is behind us, we have to reshape the matrix, the matrix that will bring us a better tomorrow. It is important that we work hard and more importantly believe that no battle is lost until we accept defeat.

In order to capture students' opinions on the need for career counselling in IIT Bombay, InsIghT conducted a survey of fourth year BTech. and fifth year Dual degree students. Following are some of the feedback that we obtained during this survey. The results of the survey are provided alongside.

- Career counselling is necessary to put at rest the inherent insecurity in most IITian's minds. It is sickening to see IITians fighting for a career like there is no tomorrow.
- We tend to be driven by peer pressure. There is a need to set a culture where each person thinks for himself/herself on what exactly he/she wants. Career counselling will aid this because we would then be able to "think together" . It would be good to be able to bounce ideas with someone who is experienced in these areas and who can warn us one against common pitfalls.
- I have seen that in IIT people start thinking very late about their career paths and end up taking the wrong decision in a hurry. I personally feel that the second year of your stay here is the best time to decide upon your career. Having this kind of counselling at once is not going to help. It should be there at regular intervals, say once in a semester or maybe more frequently.
- Most of the people take up a branch in IIT's thinking that they would get a stamp of this place, which would help them later on to get a job or pursue anything else in life. This is where the problem lies. These very people, as they move into their departments, realise that their departments are not worth what they had expected them to be. I feel IIT's should not fix departments right from the beginning. We can ask students to choose their stream at the end of the first year after they have been exposed to lectures and study material from various departments. Moreover, in today's system, students should be given more challenging individual practical problems to work with.
- As of today, students refer only to their seniors for career plans and in many cases it may be the case of half-baked knowledge being dished out. A professional career counsellor in IIT is very much needed to make the student aware of ALL his opportunities.
- Career counselling will definitely be a positive step but I don't think it is going to make a very big contribution. I think you are old enough in your third year of B.Tech. to decide what you want to do. There should be a conscious effort by the person to sit down and think for himself, what he wants to do and not expect some counselling sessions to work miracles for him. Counselling can dispel doubts and clarify things. I don't think it can motivate a person to take up option A or B. That is for the person to decide himself.
- After the dull placement season this year, students are quite disillusioned about what their next move should be in terms of career prospects. Till last year, there was a set pattern, about what one can do given his/her standing

in the department, and since the trend has been broken this year, I think the institute should provide some rescue by counselling the students.

- This year very little choice has been left to us. As a chem engineering graduate very few options for a technical or managerial job are there for me. So I am having to settle for a software job under these circumstances.
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- What I suggest is that for dual degree students, you should include questions regarding whether their career option had anything to do with their being dissatisfied/disinterested with the specialization they "opted" for (or rather were forced to opt for) after JEE. For a student barely out of school, the contents of mechanical engg. would be as alien as contents of elec. engg. let alone knowing what CADA/CIM/MICRO-E/COMM, etc are all about. This fact has, I believe, led to people choosing career options contrary to what they would have normally chosen.
- The only hurdle in career choice is that the student is not able to appropriately access his aptitude and futuristic vision, as to which of the several fields is best suited for him. And the reason for it is that he is not aware of the professional lifestyle he will be in, if he chooses to enter in a particular field, in short-term as well as in long-term. Yes, he does come to know about them by hearing or reading from somewhere. But there IS some difference if the person in question is from IIT, atleast in the earlier phases of profession. So surely, there is a need of career counselling in the institute. There should be a counselling committee, constituting atleast one well-experienced person from each of the above mentioned fields (may be our alumnus). About their respective fields, they will provide a brief flavor of the lifestyle in general and what exactly is done in that field, at the earlier and the later stages. They will also discuss about the pros-and-cons of the field, on practical as well as ethical and philosophical grounds.
- Yes I do agree that a large proportion of the students just blindly follow other students. But still there is still a significant number who remain vacillating on the actual choice of their career till end and if given guidance, they are sure to explore the dream vision about their career.
- I came to IIT with a lot of security. all my seniors (even my immediate seniors) attitude was very cool. they never bothered abt career etc. i feel it is a very wrong attitude being shown to our juniors who come here. they shud be shown a more serious path by us. they cannot come back to this place once they leave. they shud make the full use of the resources provided to us.
- Aptitude and intellectual satisfaction definitely. Other than this, there is the feeling of guilt attached with ditching your branch [I don't know how many actually feel this way, but I surely do!!]. I mean, you spend four years [in whatever branch] in such a premier institution depriving so many others of this opportunity [It is not that I am blaming you or something]. So, the least you can do is utilise all the knowledge you get here to do something in your field. This is the only thing I feel you could not have done in some other engineering college. Since I was in a different

engineering college, I saw that most of the people there just wanted to make money and gave a shit to job satisfaction/intellectual satisfaction [They would laugh if I even used terms like these]. Now, I am finding, much to my chagrin, that a good number of people here feel the same. The only difference is that they have cleared JEE. So, they are doing what they could have done even outside IIT but now after wasting four years of IIT education which I feel is criminal [I know, I know, this is becoming blasphemous!!].

# Communication Breakdown !

*It's been there all these years. In everyone's hearts and minds. The problem of interaction between the sexes. InsIghT talks to both sides and gets their perspectives.*

[The Girls' Perspective .](#)

[The Boys' Perspective .](#)

[The Girls' comments.... .](#)

[The Boys' comments.... .](#)

The girls' point of view - *Kavitha Subramanian*

It's the proverbial 'ostrich mentality'; you know the problem exists but you do your best to ignore it, turn your back on it and hope that it will miraculously disappear. No, the problem is not going away, generations of IITians have faced the same situation and it is about time we took the initiative into our hands.

The current situation: Interaction between members of the two sexes is minimal in IIT. There is almost an undercurrent of hostility with each side trying its best to ignore the presence of the other. It's all too easy to blame the adverse sex ratio for everything. Agreed the sex ratio comes as a shock but it is a shock to both sides. Believe us, being a minority community is no picnic. And having a classful of guys when you are the lone girl is no girl's dream come true. Picture this scenario: hazaar assignments to be submitted, projects to be done and quizzes to be written - surely these cannot be managed alone and as every IITian knows, require, well, team work. In such a situation it becomes very difficult for the girls to survive as isolated entities.

Let me put this in bold letters: **'GIRLS' ARE NOT RESERVED.** We've established that in this bid for survival, every girl does make an effort to talk to some guys. Some boys have pointed out that one does need a reason to initiate conversation. Alright, here we have the perfect excuse: acads! Heaven help you though if you have the urge for small-talk - a social no-no.

Now imagine this scenario. You look around yourself in class-scores of boys trying their best to ignore your presence in class, lest you get any fancy ideas that you are Cinderella. But you have a goal to accomplish so you have some unfinished business so you muster your courage and approach a suitable target. Provided you haven't approached him in public, he'll talk. He'll be nice to you, explain all the stuff and then cack some. You are relieved-it wasn't that tough-they are basically nice guys.

But you are in for a rude shock - A very interesting phenomenon peculiar to IIT alone is how after having broken the ice one day and spoken freely to a guy, you discover the next



day to your consternation that things are back to square one with the very same guy gliding straight past you as if the conversation never took place — this has been the experience of almost every girl here! Another talent of theirs which deserves to be brought to notice is their ability to see right through you like you just don't exist. These guys are so clannish, they'll stick to one another like glue and woe betides anyone who dares fraternise with the enemy. They do their best to convey the message "We don't need no girls" as if it is some victory or one-upmanship that they have achieved. Not to mention the litany of obscenities that will come your way disguised as friendly advice about your style of dressing, walking. You name it.

This, then, is IIT today as seen from a girl's eyes. And it is not a pleasant view. It is very frustrating, irritating and depressing, even a minute's piece of interaction takes on the form of a Herculean task.

There, it has been so easy to point the accusing finger at the guys and pass on all the blame — but of course this is but one side of the story. No doubt there are faults on both sides and misunderstandings created through lack of transparency and a lack of understanding of each other's view points.

What we must do then is to put aside our differences and seek a solution to this common problem which isn't as mammoth as it seems. There already do exist some guys here who are pleasant to interact with, with no hang-ups whatsoever. They treat us as we'd like to be treated: as individuals first. It is heartening to note that a few of the classes here have taken steps in the right direction. What we are asking for? - Why can't we be recognised for our worth instead of for our gender? Apart from being girls, we too are individuals with distinct personalities, characters and emotions. There is such a plethora of information to be gleaned by simply talking to people around; my personal opinion is that much of an individual's evolution can take place simply through reaching out to different view points, styles of thinking and experiences. Can't such mental growth take place irrespective of the gender of the concerned parties? It is not necessary for people to launch into long-winded conversations every time, but can't they, at least, be civil? The girls too are very much a part of any class; it is about time they are recognised as such and given their due.

The consensus is that the girls are not averse to friendly interaction; they do not think that a guy talking to them has to be "interested" in them, in case this was a stumbling block. And no, it's not like we're saying that all the guys have to talk to all the girls but just that the general atmosphere be conducive enough for anyone wanting to interact with the opposite sex.

Towards improving the levels of interaction in the institute I would like to suggest something face to face, like a debate, on this subject with some of the guys speaking for the girls and some girls speaking for the guys, it would provide a wonderful insight into the trials and tribulations faced by the opposite sexes !

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The Guys' point of view - *by Prateek Singh, Siddhartha Srivastava and Dheeraj Prasad*

What we have here is failure to communicate. Call it the bad ratio, call it ignorance, call it what you want- the fact remains that we all build the wall. It is just a matter of getting into the groove. As a freshie, I still remember being different, seeking a way- attempting to find an opening, a chance to break through. But my efforts were met with nothing but a cold and indifferent response.

Let's accept this, ladies, you need two to strike a conversation. It is not easy for anyone to come here in a new place, among new faces and find a friend and believe me, the "attitude" doesn't help. I am still wondering why a friendly chat during the orientation could not develop into at least an acquaintance. Since my very first lecture in IIT, I observed a phenomenon. I'll call it "marking your territory". The girls used to come in all at a time. And then they would sit in the front two benches on the rightmost column. The signal sent was, this is our territory. Dare not encroach. Accepted. Guys even (sub)consciously made it a point to leave the seat by her vacant. What is it with us? Do we guys bite?

After some thinking I concluded that perhaps it is the lack of such an exposure in school that results in this really absurd behaviour. However, we IITians like to blame it on the poor sex ratio. One interesting (possible?!!) reason also surfaces. Some suggested that the physical distance of girls' hostel from other hostels is relatively greater and going to the hostel is literally an uphill task. So, one more deterrent.

Let me get into the specifics. The first encounter is not so bad. Though a few girls actually give you a cold shoulder, majority are actually pleasant to talk to. However, the problem lies in the "second" encounter. I remember doing an entire programme with a couple of girls with hazaar interaction, just to meet them the next day as a stranger. I got to know this girl through a TF or MI job we did together yesterday. But then, she doesn't respond to my 'hi' today! Infact, she pretends as if she has never seen me. And even I pretend that way. And to top that, we both know we are pretending! Why do guys and girls stop acknowledging each other's presence when in a group? Peer pressure? Or is it some sense of insecurity? Techfest gaya, baat gayi or Diwali Fete gaya, dosti gayi. Believe me, the most embarrassing situation is to wave to a girl in utmost enthusiasm and don't get even a glance in return. This not only spoils your relations with that particular girl but also makes you sceptical of girl you meet.

The excess attention that is given to them is another reason why they are, at times, very rude and very bitter. I guess the guys are to be blamed for this rather than the girls. Because of a few guys the girls start expecting a lot from every guy they would get friendly with. Not every guy can run from H8 or H6 or whatever to H10 and deliver tutorials' solutions, can he? We are equal. So let's be that way, in harmony. There was an incident in our class when a girl shouted at us left, right and centre and then refused to listen to our defence. Now, however mean and wretched we guys may be, I am sure many girls will agree that this is not expected.

“We are different”. Yes, you are, but is it necessary to emphasise it with every action? How many times have you seen girls in your class actually participate in a group activity? Be it a general cack session during a free period, or dressing-up on a dhinch day. Surely, no one can expect to be “invited” for such activities. And again, sitting there alone on that right hand front bench, she simply sends the message, I am different.

Yes! Another suggestion to our friends- CHILL OUT, yaar! You seriously need to understand that everything said or done is not to hurt or mock you. There may be some really rude things that go your way, but many times a good humoured joke is also treated as war overture. “Don't you dare joke with us.” Frankly, once jokes are out, conversations are hard to make.

However, it's not your fault altogether. I agree that we guys get really nasty at times. It doesn't help especially when the girls are in small numbers. I guess even we guys don't handle this issue of building an environment for good interaction well. Though it's tough to accept, but we are as guilty in building the wall as our counterparts. The so-called “mob-mentality” is not very much expected of the “cream of the nation”. We can try to justify it as a result of frustration, but then it just adds to the processes- the processes that estrange. “All and all it's just another brick in the wall?”

Guys:

- I'll say that you people have sprinkled salt on old wounds. Why talk of such things which make so many guys depressed? Take my suggestion - Open an exclusive college for girls in IIT.
- Some girls treat boys as despos.
- Most of them tend to interact with just a few and avoid others.
- Boys are apprehensive.
- Interaction usually centers around Labs and Practicals...only where the girls need help.
- Girls are timely opportunists.
- They are endangered species in IIT.
- One word - fear (boys towards girls)
- One word - contempt (girls towards boys)
- Guys don't know how to handle interaction with females

- Girls are interested in only those who give them over importance.
- There are very few events where girls and boys team up to do something.
- Girls are treated as being very abnormal / strange / AJOOBA
- Guys should try looking at a girl as a person first, then as an opposite sex member.
- Girls think boys are dirt
- Guys consider IIT girls as pretty unimportant things.
- I don't know about other boys, but girls get some sort of a repulse from me.
- (As answer to Q6.) Where is the option "Girls treat boys rudely ?". Well, I feel girls consider they are too important to be talking to boys.
- Girls have huge egos when it comes to interaction.
- Cautious pessimism, I think, describes it (attitude of girls towards boys) best.
- I know some incidents in which guys have behaved extremely badly. And I feel ashamed to call them fellow IITians. Please explore nicely before concluding anything on the matter. After knowing about these incidences, I really respect and admire the girls who live their regular life at IIT.

#### Girls:

- They are very interested in girls and try very hard to initiate a conversation: an example being this survey of "girl-boy interaction", which is nothing, but just another excuse for talking to girls.
- They would like to interact as equals but are heavily set back by the prevalent mentality - the attitude of their own friends towards them, lest they be treated as 'aliens' - outsiders to the gang.
- Some treat the girls in a courteous manner but some are very indecent.
- They think girls exist in order to entertain them. They don't respect them.
- They treat girls like scum.
- According to them we're non-existent on the campus - so what if we are of the opposite sex?
- They(guys) think we are dumb
- They just consider girls as objects meant for hooting at and for cheap teasing.
- In most cases our interaction revolves around lab journals and assignments ;-)
- They need to be more sensible.
- To get their academic work done
- Not only do (the boys) avoid us, but they also laugh, talk crap behind our backs.
- Seeing the interaction of guys, the girls also try to take interaction to the minimum.
- Most of them (boys) need to change their attitude and contribute towards healthy interaction.
- They (boys) behave well, if alone, but totally ignore girls when they are in groups (in most of the case, some do it always).

- They don't respect us or give us any credit for our brains.
- Dayaa. Does it have to be one of these ?
- So near, yet so far. Sigh !
- Some(boys) act like idiots while other sweet ones make up for everything else.
- They act WEIRD and conduct surveys like these !
- Girls are born well-mannered.
- It's the girl who always initiates the interaction.
- Guys don't give girls any importance or treat them as equals. They act toooo smart.

# Cult Clips

- *Vijay Victor D'Silva*

The institute Annual Production is scheduled to take place on the 26th and 27th of October. Daily practice has been taking place for the last three weeks under the direction of Bharat Garg and Vikram Hamwal. The scripting and casting was completed shortly after the conclusion of the Freshies' G.C. The Annual Production is an event which showcases the institutes dramatic talent. The last Annual Production took place in 1996. Since then efforts to produce it have been made, but have never seen a result. In contrast to most plays which are usually performed in dramatics competitions here, this play features multiple leading female roles. The performance will take place in the lecture theatre. Free passes will be distributed and can be obtained on request.

IIT bested all competition and won the literary trophy at Malhar, the St. Xaviers cultural festival with absolute domination in some events, with 4 out of 6 finalists in the trivia quiz, 5 out of 6 in the logic quiz, 4 out of 6 in Potpourri (an event combining different clueing games) and atleast two finalists in each of the other events. The top three positions in JAM went to IITians and the IIT team came second in the panel debate, breaking the jinx in debating events. The IIT team for Impromptu, our only entry in a dramatics event, placed first.

Last month, IIT won the literary trophy at Kaleidoscope, the Sophia cultural festival. At present, IIT holds the literary trophies of all four main cultural festivals in Bombay. Mood Indigo, Malhar (St.Xavier's), Kaleidoscope (Sophiya's) and Brouhaha (Sydenham).

The IITB-SPICMACAY chapter, Virasat began on 26th September. Over the last two years, there have been some enchanting performances as a part of Virasat. The attendance and volunteering for this year's Virasaat has been overwhelming. The organisers claim that there have been so many people offering to volunteer that they have had to refuse some in a few cases. Attendance has also exceeded expectations. An interesting feature of this years Virasaat is that all the photography was being done by IDC students. Prof. Praveen Nahar who was overseeing a majority of the events, had given SPICMACAY photography as an assignment to his students !

Ballroom dancing classes begin in the first week of October and will extend for a period of 2 months. Indian classical dance training will also be conducted later in the semester.

The Cult. G.C. will begin in the third week of October. This year, there will be only 5 events in each trophy, Debating, Dramatics, Fine Arts, Literary and Music. The cultural body is planning to conduct many events that will be open to all irrespective of hostel. This year's cultural scene has also witnessed the revival of club culture in IIT. The Scrabble Club meets on Mondays, The Quiz Club and the Science Club on Wednesdays and the Speakers Club meets on pre-decided dates. More information can be obtained by contacting the respective secretaries.

# Back with a Bang !s

*After remaining dormant for a stretch of two continuous years, the Film Society is back in campus to entertain all you movie lovers, reports Sachin Sancheti.*

The Film Society, in its earlier avatar, was an integral part of the lives of all campusites. “It was conceptualised to provide localised entertainment to the campus residents of IIT Bombay at low cost. Movies were screened in the Convocation Hall on Fridays and Saturdays. The whole affair had an air of informality, with the students dancing to the tunes of the songs, at times songs being replayed! There used to be a film festival at least twice a year with a variety of movies and stars like Dilip Kumar, Saira Banu, Rakesh Bedi among others coming to the campus.”, says Prof Ravi Hazra, President of the Film Society.

Schedule for Oct.

12th (Fri) Gladiator

19th (Fri) Pearl Harbour

27th (Sat) Forrest Gump

All shows at 9:00 p.m.

All that came to a sad end in December 98. First the Convo was closed for repairs and then the Estate Office increased the Convo rent manifold. PRAYAAS, a student group took the initiative and got the hall rent reduced back to its previous figure. The screenings were restarted in Sept.99. However, the crowds that earlier used to eagerly wait for the weekend shows decreased in number. This could be attributed to a number of reasons, like, poor sound and picture quality, the choice of movies screened, etc. The society incurred heavy losses and had to shut down.

Future plans of the Film Society :-

- \*Get a new screen as the old screen has many marks and patches.
- \*Purchase a better sound system, preferably DTS.
- \*Get a high intensity DVD/LCD projector. Though it will be expensive, the picture quality will be a real treat for the eye. The DVD/LCD projector could also be used for special screening of World Cup matches, video conferencing and a host of other purposes.
- \*A canteen facility for the patrons during movie shows.
- \*A week long film festival, screening all time hits and classics.
- \*Showing documentaries & cartoon films.

With a lot of initiative from O.P.Meena, Joint Secretary, Film Society, a plan to start the society was strategised. The plan focussed on aggressive marketing, creative and intense publicity, opinion polls, improved picture and sound quality and, most importantly, good movies. All these things put in place, the Film Society was revived with the screening of the major crowd puller, Lagaan, which was a complete sell-out. The plan also focussed

on achieving a given sales target before the screening, which was realised by the film society members going from room to room to sell tickets and convincing people of the improvement in screening arrangements. Things clicked and the film society was back on its feet. Now, people throng the convocation hall in large numbers. For each show, a high fidelity sound system is hired which enhances the quality of sound phenomenally.

However, all said and done, what is indeed lacking is support from the institute for an activity that is an integral part of our culture. In all other IIT's film societies are funded by the institute. The annual budget of the film society of IIT Kanpur is around Rs.2 lacs and the number of movies screened is 85-100. The membership is compulsory for all students who are charged Rs. 100 per semester. The society is partially funded by the institute. In IIT Kharagpur, the film society is fully funded by the gymkhana. The film society of IIT Delhi is also funded by the institute, though only one movie is screened per month. IIT Madras has two film societies, one funded and run by the institute and the other one run by students.



# Bank and Cafeteria Complex

InsIghT, represented by Harsh Roy, talked to Mr. V.K. Kulkarni, Officer on Special Duty, Bank and Cafeteria building. Elucidating on the necessity of a new cafeteria and bank he said that a cafeteria was needed because people who came from outside could not eat in the guest house (owing to the high rates) or in the hostels (if they had no acquaintances). If anybody wanted to eat out he had to go out of the campus. The present bank premises was too small for the large clientele. Also, the Training and Placement (T&P) office would also be shifted to the new building because it is felt that the present placement area is not enough. When queried on the considerations behind the choice of the particular location for the building he replied that its central location, the fact that it can be availed of both by campusites and students in addition to its vicinity to KReSIT and SoM buildings made the choice of the site an ideal one. The construction work started in February and is expected to be completed by the end of October, as was planned. The details of the structural layout of the structure are as follows:

- Stilts will house parking space and cafeteria stores.
  - The first floor is exclusively for the bank and departmental stores, there will be a 24 hr ATM facility, strong room and pantry for bank employees.
  - The second floor has been allotted to cafeteria and kitchen.
  - The Training and Placement office will occupy half of the third floor and interview cubicles on the fourth floor.
  - On the third floor there will also be a special cafe in the other half.
- In addition the building will have a lift facility, both service lifts and passenger lifts.

# The cubs have now grown up !

*Mahesh Chitnis*

On 24th September, 2001, Mr. Vijaysai, a Ph.D. student from Chemical Engg. Dept., while coming out of his Tulsi apartment, at 11:10 pm noticed a creature of the size of a dog. After moving ahead a bit he realized that it was a grown-up panther cub which by now had started roaring at him. He hurried on his bike towards the QIP quarters and was chased by the animal upto the C-type building. Fortunately, he could escape probable severe injury only because he was on a motor-bike. By now, such incidences have become common to the campusites. But its an alarming situation for us, as the panther cubs have grown up inside the campus and it seems don't know their way back to the National Park.

Prof. D P Roy, Chairman, Security Committee informed us that all the dense bushes in the area will be cleared soon and flood lights will be provided in these areas. Placing some centrally-operated gong bells in these areas is being treated as another potential measure to keep the wild animals away. The Deputy Conservator of National Park has in principle agreed to provide assistance in capturing the panther , but in reality the forest officers keep delaying things by giving some excuses. Campusites are welcome to send their complaints to Mr. A R Bharati, Deputy Conservator of Sanjay Gandhi National Park on his e-mail #park@rolta.net.

# ANJALI- a tribute!

*-a report by Saumya Gupta*

ANJALI, organised by the Students' Gymkhana on 2nd of October in the LT, presented before its audience a collection of classical and semi-classical spiritual bhajans to mark the auspicious day and pay our tribute and homage to Mahatma Gandhi. It was a wonderful event with flawless performances from the students, who had been practising on their bhajans for quite a long time. Some professors and staff members also hit the stage with their performances and that added all the more to the life of the show. There were some campusites who contributed to the show as well.

Co-ordination among the vocalists and the various instrumentalists-with Bhaskar Mukherjee on tabla and Himanshu Nanda on flute - was terrific (Mr. Mukherjee is part of Ustaad Fariduddin Dagar's Dhrupad Gurukul and Mr. Nanda is working as a part-time music instructor in the Gymkhana). Among the other instrumentalists were - Patnaik ji, Hrishikesh Limaye and Onkar Karade (tabla), Kedar Kulkarni and Urmila Kelkar (harmonium) and Vijay R. Shinde (manjeera). The program concluded with the song "VAISHNAV JAN TO ..." (the prayer of the Mahatma).

Dr. Appaji was the overall organiser and Mrs. Manjiri Bapat conducted the program. Mr. Kishore's hard labour from 9 in the night to 6 in the morning bore fruits - the master rangoli, portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, for which he was presented a bouquet by the director himself.

# Letters to Editor

This is with reference to the article “Techfest - Losing its soul” published in the September 10 issue of Insight.

There were a number of issues raised regarding the structure and content of Techfest and quite a few suggestions were offered as well. While we always welcome feedback, critical or otherwise, we would like to point out some issues which we think need to be addressed.

The article mentions the Air Force displays and the Industrial Exhibition which were part of an earlier edition of Techfest. Arranging for displays or demos from industry or from the defense services is not an easy task. This was attempted as part of Techfest 2001, and formed part of the How Things Work section at the HUB. Conducting an exhibition of cutting edge developments being implemented in industry is a difficult task simply because the companies concerned may not be willing to get their best products to the festival. In a large number of cases, these products may not be in the Indian labs of the company and they may not be willing to bring them from outside India.

This does not, however, mean that such displays have been missed out at Techfest or that the team does not work towards them. It is only that they have been re-cast into a different format in which it is easier for the audience to access the information presented (in the form of a lec-demo for instance). Experience tells us that organising an Industrial Exhibition may not be possible every year.

We would like to mention at this point, that we have contacted the defense services for Techfest 2002 and we are happy to note that we have received a very positive response from them. To what extent we are able to take this collaboration to fruition is something that will become clearer with time.

The article does not make any mention of the huge number of competitions that Techfest 2001 conducted while evaluating the event. These included both the pre-defined competitions (which included 8 major competitions) as well as the on-the-spot variety (which numbered over 10). This kind of spectrum was among the widest in all Techfests so far and it is the endeavour of the organisers to broaden the spectrum of the competitions being conducted. There were also some suggestions put forward in the article which we would like to address here.

Can a survey on the perceived utility/necessity of campus events/activities be done among students and faculty to filter out things that may not benefit the largest interests?

The Techfest team already conducts such surveys and receives feedback from a large section of the student community at IIT Bombay as well as participants from other colleges. The information thus obtained forms the basis for deciding themes for the

festival. The Techfest team also attempts to reach out to a large number of faculty members by personal contact as well as through email.

This might not seem evident at a first glance because after these suggestions are taken, the team members have to decide on which events are do-able within the constraints of money, time, effort and most importantly available technology and assistance.

Can the clear role of sponsors (of campus events) be defined after soliciting inputs from interested members of the IITB community? vIn case of each sponsorship deal, the Techfest team signs a written agreement with the sponsor clearly stating what the sponsor will receive in return for the sum of money as well as the mode and dates of payment. In most cases we don't grant the sponsors a say in the content of the event. But for events like a lecture series they invariably ask that a speaker from their organization be a part of the event. This happened in the case of TCS when they sponsored Tech-a-tete for Techfest 2000. Mr. S. Ramadorai their CEO was included as a speaker on their insistence.

The Techfest 2000 team felt at the time that in the interest of the event as a whole this was acceptable. Even though events like Lecture series might not require a large spending on our part the sponsorship money is channeled towards the publicity, marketing, prizes and assistance of the whole event. We managed to put up the exhibition IndigenEx (without a sponsor) in Techfest 2000. Any decisions which may be made on such issues are indeed made after consulting a number of people who would be in a position to provide more perspective on the issues involved.

One instance which keeps coming up in the discussion on sponsors is the event Oorja sponsored by Enron during Techfest 2000. Mr. Wade Cline (their COO if I remember correctly) was invited by us and not linked to the fact that they sponsored the event. We had plans of inviting someone from Enron even before we contacted them for sponsorship. We viewed it as an opportunity for them to lay down their case and also for people to ask questions. The content of the lecture as well as the manner in which the questions were dealt with, as with all lectures, were beyond our control. We had in fact suggested that Mr. Abhay Mehta be a special guest at the lecture and raise pertinent questions.

Another issue that was raised was the panel debate. People had suggested that we invite Ms. Medha Patkar to be a member of the panel. Our reason for non compliance was simple. It was a debate on renewable sources of energy. We had invited academicians from various institutions and Ms.Patkar didn't fit in. Enron didn't have a speaker in the panel and if I remember correctly they never even attended the event!

Can the total budget and some itemized breakups of major events like TechFest be made easily accessible to all and people's comments sought in advance? Techfest is a gymkhana event and is administered by the same body that looks after the sports and cultural events conducted by the Students' Gymkhana. Techfest, in fact, is self-sufficient

unlike most other gymkhana events and when budgets and spending of these events are not made public why should Techfest be singled out?

The only reason why we are unwilling to publish the budgets is that it would lead to a lot of confusion and speculation. Considering that making Techfest happen is already quite a task this would mean that a lot of time would be spent in arguments and clarifications. It would in our opinion lead to something like a parliamentary debate and nothing would be achieved at the end.

Accounts of Techfest are maintained and looked over by the Dean (SA) office. Anyone interested in going through the accounts should contact the Dean's office and can go through the account on the approval of the office.

Just for the record, Techfest 2000 contributed an excess amount of Rs. 7 lac to the gymkhana account for use for other gymkhana events.

Jai Mirpuri and Anand Ramesh  
On behalf of Techfest