

WATCH OUT



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EDITOR'S NOTE

ONE LAST TIME

Knowing that this must be the last time I write for Watch Out, I feel a little suffocated. Having spent hours trying to write this, I am still at odds with the obscurity of my thoughts. Three years with Watch Out, and this - the tangible product you hold in your hands - would be the culmination of our journey with the group. If I had been writing this article on paper, my trash box would have already been filled with dozens of crushed papers. Not because the genius gets better ideas every time to write on, but because empty vessels make more noise and more trash in the process. So dear reader, if you are expecting this to be a Pandora's box of ideas and thoughts stirred with GRE-esque words, I have already failed you.

Well, life has not been harder and things go wrong every time; Murphy made me understand that. It's all made to go wrong. In the event of making things right, you just keep creating more problems and exacerbating them. Indeed nothing is ever so bad that it cannot get worse. Every time you bad-mouth someone, there he is right behind you. Even when you *really* like a girl, she doesn't reciprocate. You start liking something and it's stolen - suddenly - from you. You make a well-researched decision and buy something; you realize there's a better model out there. No matter where you go, there you are.

Oh no! I am not trying to enforce the harsh grim reality of life on you. All I am trying is to remind you of a musk deer inside you, with a sweet elegant aroma in its belly, yet on the run for the smell not knowing where it comes from. What we lose in this run is the 'present', which ironically is all we have. We just need to *Stop*. And start looking at the present with no preconceptions. And then, all those little things of beauty which never had any meaning will find a new worth embodied in them. We seize the moment.

"If you aren't in the moment, you are either looking forward to uncertainty, or back to pain and regret." —Jim Carrey

Coming back to the small world we are, IIT Roorkee has indeed become more happening than it has ever been. No doubt the previous semester witnessed great changes in our campus ecosystem. But, from accessibility of our departments and labs at night, better messes, a 24*7 library, to revamping the academic curriculum and research atmosphere, exchange programs and industrial collaboration, there is much left undone and many questions unanswered. In this issue of Watch Out, we present a comprehensive analysis of the research ecosystem at IITR through the Big story, 'Perils of Research at IITR'. The Cover Story, "WONA Time Machine" is a time travel through the evolution of IITR. And there are the usual columns of Pheking News, Comic Strips, Editorials and more.

By the time this magazine reaches you, a new batch would have taken charge at Watch Out and things would have started rolling again. With a new organizational structure and more autonomy at work, the team is in the best of shapes to attend to the greater responsibility entrusted to us in serving the student populace and being the voice the campus needs. Looking back at these three years, Watch Out! for me has always been its people. To my team for the year '16-17, the friendships and memories we made,

Cheers!

Renju K Kokkatt
Editor-in-Chief, 2016-17

IN SEARCH OF GREAT INDIAN LITERATURE

Editorial

*“Literature, which is art married to thought, and realization untainted by reality – seems to me the end toward which all human effort would have to strive, if it were truly human and not just a welling up of our animal self” – Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet**

Methods/means of communication have evolved simultaneously with our species; what began as gestures and symbols grew into languages, each with their innate grammatical logic and vocabulary. A desire to store information led to the creation of dialects. These twin inventions, when used in conjunction - to address the need of expressing oneself - was baptised “literature”. Today, literature is not merely a means to preserve knowledge; it serves to express the writer’s ideas, opinions and beliefs. It is this body of work - thus derived - that is used as an instrument for the infusion of ideas on a large scale.

Literature – by nature – is subjective; any effort made to sift good literature from the mediocre, the bad and the

useless will tend to elicit mixed responses from its readers. Nevertheless, for purposes of this editorial, the term “good literature” needs to be defined and elaborated upon.

If there is such a thing as good literature, its categorization is largely dependent on opinions of select scholars. Notwithstanding this observation, one of the primary characteristics of a great book is its universality - the ability to engage a wide range of audiences, each with their own complexities and taste. The story and the quality of expression – the yarn and the way it is spun – are also definitive attributes. The fourth – perhaps lending it the added advantage of relatability – is insight; a commentary, reflection or discourse on the human condition; oftentimes, this may be implied rather than direct, deduced from the actions of a character or correlations in characterisation. Most importantly, however, any great work of literature should distinguish itself, being unique in at least one way: in Julian Barnes’ *The Sense of an Ending*, it is the unreliable narrator with his

seemingly malleable memories; in Elanor Catton’s *The Luminaries*, pivotal characters are assigned each of the twelve zodiac signs or associated with one of the planets, and the narrative is based on the lunar cycle. Richard Flanagan’s *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* enchants the reader with its hauntingly beautiful narrative, employing no direct speech.

Listing these characteristics does not liberate literature from the wrath of its subjectivity, for these parameters are, in themselves, subjective; several books deemed abhorrent upon release have gone on to become classics (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde is one such example); perhaps this is due to the delayed acceptance of unpopular opinions. Tastes also differ from one person to the other, scholarly or otherwise; *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* was reportedly rejected outright by a jury for a national prize, but went on to win the Man Booker Prize.

*“For some, English-language Indian writing will never be more than a post-colonial anomaly, the bastard child of Empire, sired on India by the departing British; its continuing use of the old colonial tongue is seen as a fatal flaw that renders it forever inauthentic.” – Salman Rushdie, *Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing**

Essentially, there seem to be two types of Indian (English) literature: the first, originally written in English, and the second: written in a vernacular language, and thereupon translated to English. With both, several shortcomings become immediately visible.

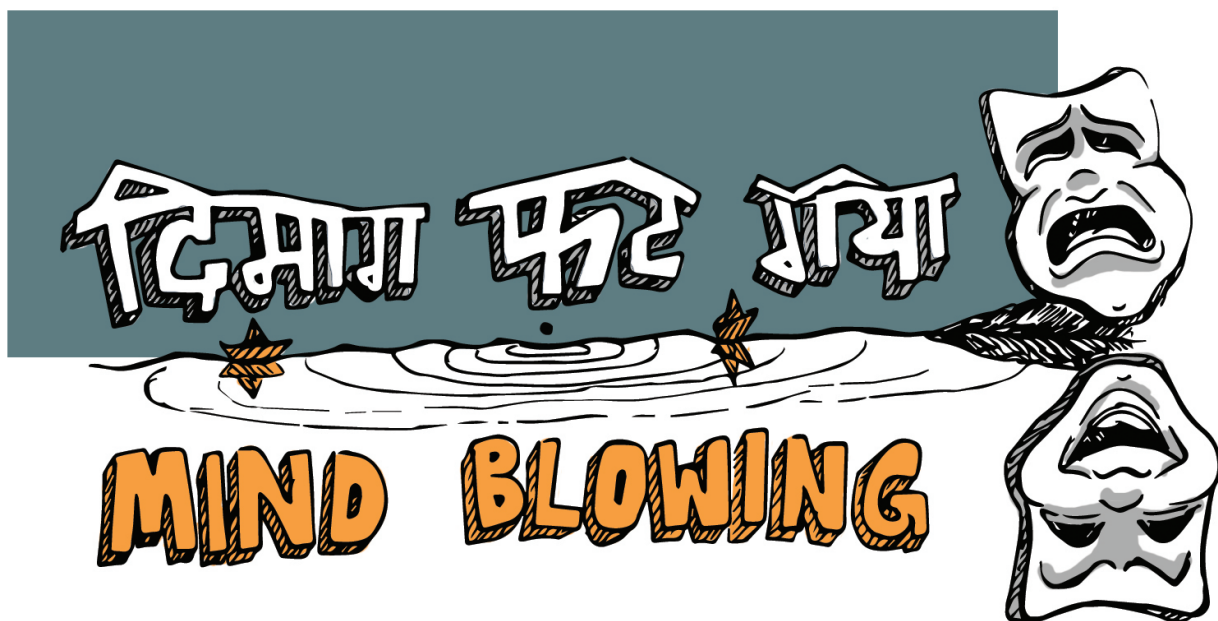
In the same passage as the source of

Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is one such work.

India, while tolerant (in the sense that it allows for the peaceful coexistence of several diverse communities, whether divided by religion, state or caste), is eternally averse to unpopular opinions; how, then, do artists – because writers are artists in their own way – express themselves honestly? Salman Rushdie helplessly maintains a safe distance from India – the setting of his Man Booker Prize winning book, *Midnight's Children* – in light of the large protests that erupted after the release of *The Satanic Verses*; M. F. Hussain was rather harshly chastised for his painting depicting a nude *Saraswati*; while India may claim to be a democracy, freedom of speech and expression are only valid unless no sentiments are hurt, which is rather often. Being vocal in opposition of a popular viewpoint precedes social exclusion and ridicule.

A significant portion of the population struggles to feed themselves – what need have they of expression and lofty human thought, if they aren't even literate? The more fortunate ones become escapists; they prefer to dive into an imaginary world where love is abundant, good always wins, and success always follows hard work. Good literature – excluding fantasy and other genres derived from it – must reflect reality; this is obviously burdensome to the latter.

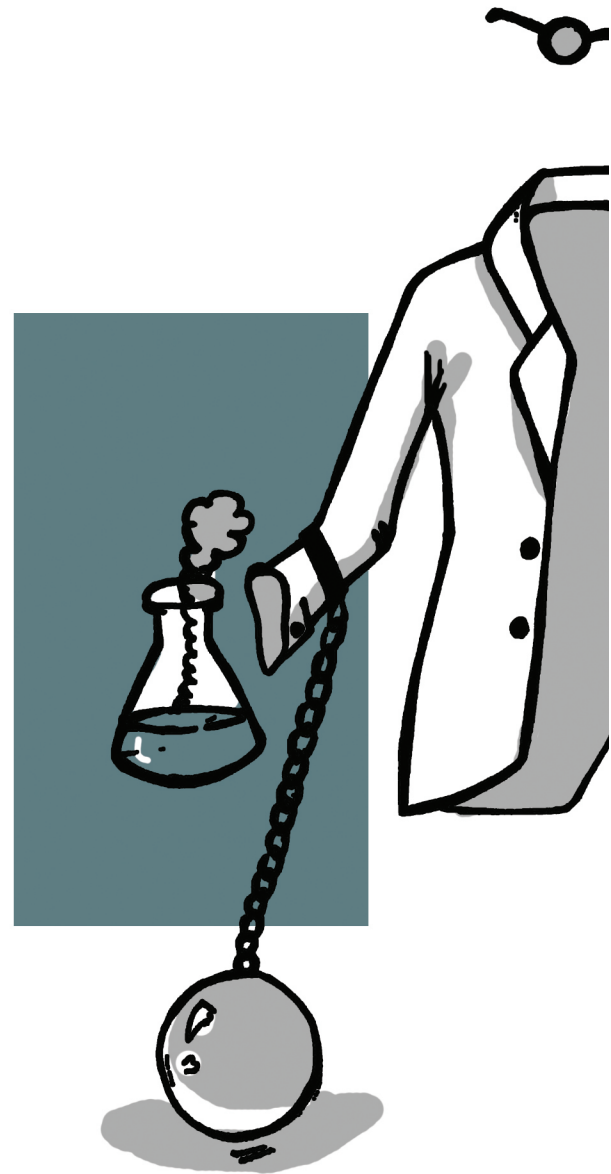
Perhaps as India grows older, there shall be more room for art and literature; for now the picture is rather bleak and uncertain.



BIG STORY

PERILS OF RESEARCH AT IITR

A long haul of struggle started back in the 1950s with regard to providing scientists and technologists of the highest calibre - who, Pandit Nehru supposedly believed would engage in





research and development to help steer the nation towards self-reliance in her technological needs. This was the initial ground to set up the IITs - institutes where students would not brawl for placements and packages; an institute where students would actively contribute their mite towards Nehru's underpinning vision, "Technology". IITs, despite being the most funded institutes of India, have failed to sail into the global top-200 (except IITD, at 172nd place and IITB at 179th) in QS World University Rankings, 2017-18. In view of this, we tried to explore the research environment in IITs and understand the rationale behind the underperformance of IITs - focusing on IIT Roorkee in particular.

Where do we stand?

(Skewed results are achieved when Roorkee's publications before 2010 are accounted for. Roorkee's age tends to pull the total number of citations into its favor. Thus, the current analysis features publications post-2010.)

As far as the rankings are concerned, Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings, 2016-17, ranked IITR at 431st position, a drop of 32 ranks since last year. We stand 231st in QS Engineering and Technology rankings - a colossal 160 positions short of IITD's standing. The research productivity of IITR over the past 5 years has been commendable - we produced an equivalent output on the research front as produced from 1999-2008; the total citations achieved by IIT Roorkee in the past 5 years, is double that of 1999-2008. Although these results show significant improvement, we are still unable to compete with the productivity that our sister

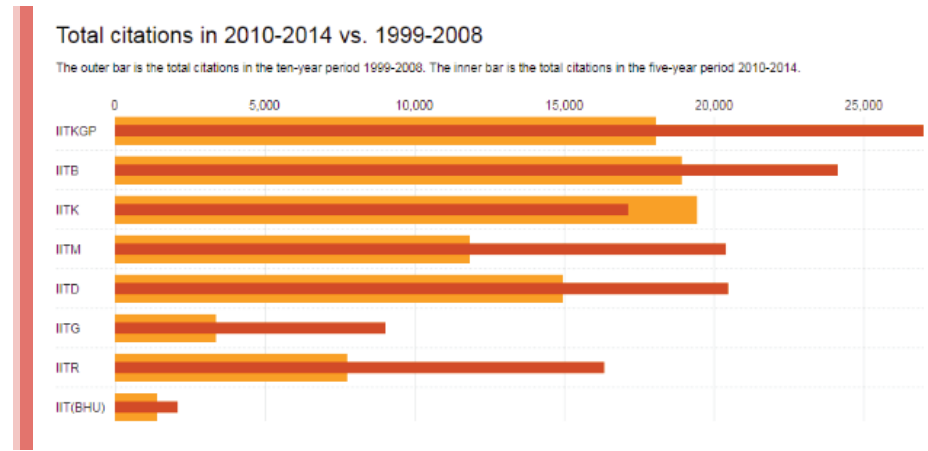
IITs boast of. The total research paper output of IITR from 2010-2014 was 3,452 compared to 5,871 of IIT KGP. We produced only 805 Internationally collaborative papers, while IITB's turnout was an astounding 1470 papers. Per Capita, Roorkee has averaged 7.6 publications - IITB, IITD, IITM, IITK, IIT-KGP have a minimum of 9.7 publications per capita and maximum 10.8.

As shall be sanely argued, the quality of publications matters more than quantity; Roorkee boasts of approximately 16,330 citations for the period 2010-14, a far cry when compared to IITB's 26,991 citations. As the exhaustive review suggested, IITB also had 85 publications in the top 1% most cited papers for all IITs; IITR achieved only 39 publications.

This dearth in productivity, as claimed by many professors, stems from the lack of effective UG research in the institute. The recent budget unveiled that Roorkee receives the maximum share amongst all IITs (and complaints were registered regarding a lack of endowment in the same year).

Whither are we bound?

Although, like many of our sister IITs, we have numerous tie-ups with leading corporate firms - IBM, Adobe, Texas Instruments, to name a few - the administration has failed to give our researchers a world-class environment conducive to quality research. Unavailability of instruments, huge amount of time delay in the repairing of faulty instruments, no proper instructions for operation, tedious process and paperwork for the purchases of new instruments - the hurdles are almost infinite. A



study by the renowned magazine, "Science," shows that around 12% of the US Graduate enrollments were Indians, whilst they comprised only 3% of the total undergraduate enrollments; the author states: "Top-performing Indian students are well-served at the undergraduate level by the country's network of elite technology institutes, known as IITs". It is very obvious that the undergraduate program is just a building block. Undergraduates, however, are never a pillar of research output. Professors, in general, allow them to gain experience by being a part of their groups. Research happens mostly in the Graduate and PhD programmes. The Admission procedure to the way resources are offered - a basic analysis reveals severe loopholes indeed.

M. Tech Admission Procedure:

IITs have a linear admission procedure, and are based on a student's performance in the 3 hours of the GATE examination. It does not have any consideration about what the student has achieved or demonstrated to date. It basically boils down to one's analytical and capacity for mental math in those three hours.

PhD Admission Procedure:

Although the admission procedure

into the post-graduate programme is plain and straightforward, the PhD admissions involve rigorous testing and interviews. Along with clearing minimum GATE cutoff, selection of a particular student depends on the number of vacancies, synchronisation with the research interest of the professor preferred, and how convincing one can be, in your interview. Finally, the fate of all PhD seekers rests at the discretion of the professor, and thus, one's ability to market themselves becomes decisive. But for an undergraduate from IIT - with a "mighty" CGPA of more than 8.5 - GATE score is not a requisite for admission into PhD programme. The snag in this form of selection lies in the scholarship criteria - without a minimum GATE score, you become ineligible for the Junior Research Fellowship from MHRD, and, subsequently, the Senior Research Fellowship.

On a contrarian note, one gets to observe some very vivid differences when the admission procedural of reputed institutions abroad are scrutinized. It is imperative to understand why the research environment in reputed US universities is conducive to their greater output - qualitatively and quantitatively.

US MS/PhD Admission Procedure:

A student, to begin with, chooses a university that he/she is interested in applying to. This is based on his/her interests, the professors in the field of interest, and recommendations. Post GRE and TOEFL results, one is allowed to apply to 4 universities in US. However, one can send their scores to other universities too (with an extra payment). Consequently, the applications are scrutinized on the basis of SoPs and LoRs (usually 3 LoRs are needed for US universities). One's SoP matters greatly; CGPA, publications, patents, the width of the resume are also scrutinized. The procedure for Guide allotment usually varies, however, a generally followed procedure entails a student choosing his/her guide, with the help of a Graduate Advisor, as soon as possible. One is to declare two guides, in an order of priority. At the end of one's first year of PhD, one is allowed to switch to the second Guide, as listed in the aforementioned declaration.

It is very evident that the US procedure is far more critical of a student's overall capabilities, his intentions for a MS/PhD, and the synchronicity between the guide and student. Such a system can very well be deployed in the Indian institutes. It shall allow for higher quality of students, and, hence, better research outputs.

Conundrums for Research Fellows:

Most of the research output from the institute is through the M.Techs and the P hDs. IITR, being one of the premier institutes of the country and having shown high growth in research in past 5 years, nimbly attracts many aspiring candidates.

However, their research experience here is blemished by certain predicaments that they have to face while carrying out their research. A common hitch faced by the students is incompatibility with guides. A guide steers the research towards a certain path, and is the person that students turn toward when they are stuck - making it essential that they have a good rapport with him/her. If a guide is uncooperative and passive towards their problems, it does not help matters; rather, it disrupts the flow of work. The process of changing guides is a long one and it may lead to frosty relations between the professors involved.

The department policies are also not very student-friendly either; QIP (Quality Improvement Program), is a program which requires that the

students take some prerequisite courses, and gives them a chance to earn some extra credits on the way. Although the idea sounds great on paper, it is not a popular option among the students, as the courses may be irrelevant to their area of specialization. Moreover, the necessity of taking this course is left to the professor's discretion.

In addition to the above, one also has to deal with issues that plague most of the Indian labs, especially in regards to the inadequacy and obsolescence of instruments. All the expenses incurred for sending samples to lab testing are borne by the student himself/herself; more often than not, the students are on the receiving end of the professor's



whims and are saddled with the personal tasks of the professors; doctoral research is funded by the MHRD for only 7 years, so, if a student is forced to confront the unfortunate event of being forced to delay his PhD, due to some unforeseen circumstances, he/she is at the mercy of the institute and the professors - most rant by students are not baseless.

Professor's' views on research here and abroad

Research in the European countries and the US has a hierarchical setup - ensuring a smoother flow of work. There are PhDs working in collaboration with post-docs, who, themselves, report to a guide. In India, though, such a setup is lacking in most labs. Says Dr. Jha, "India also lacks competent researchers; Indian researchers are directionless most of the time. What researchers in the Indian context lack, is methodology, efficiency, and result oriented-ness. Most researchers in India publish only for money, and the results are lackluster manipulations and copy-paste jobs. This practice is largely frowned upon in the foreign universities, and considered highly unethical. A common gripe among the professors is the lack of creativity among the Indian researchers; they argue that students bring nothing new to the table."

While the universities in the US are federally funded, the burden of allocating funds to the universities in India falls upon the MHRD. In the present schematic, the IITs are better funded than the state universities, which puts them at a relative advantage when it comes to carrying out quality research. However, a common problem that plagues most

of the Indian universities is that the available resources are mostly digital in nature, with even the print material not being available at times due to financial and spatial constraints.

Moving on to undergraduate research, professors are impressed by the quality of students that approach them for projects in the semester, but strongly feel that the number of students actively pursuing research is minimal. Although programs like SURA (Summer Undergraduate Research Award) are present, not many students opt for them. This may be due to the heavy coding-centric culture that our campus has developed over the past few years. In India, research is still not considered a viable career option. With too much time invested, and lower salaries, there is a strong reason why many students shy away from research. However, they say research abroad is highly incentivised, and students are urged toward making breakthroughs in technology and innovation. Perhaps a paradigm shift in the way students view career options is needed for research to boom in the undergraduate section, they muse.

Talking of undergraduate research, it is a common consensus among professors that while the institute offers ample resources and opportunities to the students to carry out research, they don't utilize the same. In our institute, in general, and India specifically, there is a lot more on areas other than research which overshadow the same.

Conclusion

The obvious fallacies in the current systems at the top tier institutions, where promotions are based on the number of research papers a faculty member has published (as opposed to the quality of the work), has led to a research culture which produces a large quantity of low quality research papers. Furthermore, since teaching is not something that the faculty's performance is graded on, the quality of teaching seems to be deteriorating at the top institutions, leading to a disinterest among students. While this is not a fault of the faculty, the administration must look toward implementing changes that foster a conducive environment for quality research, and where young minds are nurtured toward research.

While there are lots of causes of worry in the current research scenario, things seem to be shaping up for the better. The past few years have seen a rise in the number of students in R-Land opting for research, and the number of students applying for SURA scholarships at IITR has increased dramatically. Coupled with governmental policies looking to retain outgoing talent by providing higher pay grades to promising undergraduates (via the Prime Minister's Fellowship Scheme), this will hopefully lead to better quality student-researchers and a higher quality research output, eventually shaping the currently bleak scenario into a brighter tomorrow.

COVER STORY

WATCH OUT'S TIME MACHINE

After some long hours studying (read: pretending to) in the library a week before the end semester exams, we ended up traversing the catacombs of the labyrinth (that is, the corridors of our library), to escape the acute taedium vitae. We stumbled upon a dark humid alley that

opened into a cavern with a strong musty whiff of old books and hidden treasures. Our eyes nearly popped out of our sockets with incredulity when the years on some read 1948, 1853, 1847, and so on. The moulded, half-eaten, and half-burnt books gave off a peculiar odour, accompanied by euphoria and utter disinterest in studying, hypnotized us, pulling us deeper and deeper into the room, when upon hearing a low whirring sound (and being self-proclaimed investigative journalists), we couldn't help but look into.

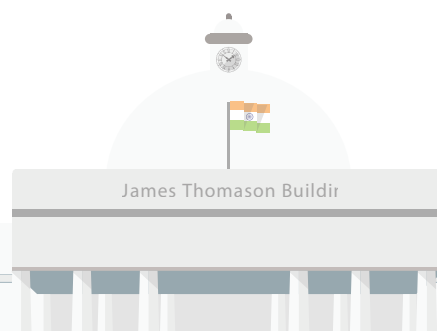
What startled us was the unending mound of ancient books, magazines and newspapers, all crumbling and deteriorating but encompassing 170 years of history..

So, if you didn't take the pains to read that (i.e. tl; dr):

A. We do not claim to have stumbled upon a time-machine in Roorkee (this is not an HG Wells Novel), just some old boilers probably breathing their last breaths (although, what we beheld was definitely a nerd's wet dream).

B. All of the below facts were found after hours and hours of serious, meticulous research by our team, and multiple field trips (which didn't do us any good except help us get in shape).

C. What we found will not help you improve your CGPA, nor will it decrease any of your monetary burdens. But you will have something to amuse your date (notwithstanding the probability of such an



event ever happening).

So here is a compilation of all that we hoarded from this treasure trove. The rich history of R-Land called out to us, and we felt the moral obligation to publish it for the Junta. Some funny, some quirky, most serious and bland - but nevertheless intriguing.

Inception and Early Days

The inception of a civil engineering college in Roorkee was a result of the ambitious project started by Colonel Proby Cautley. The canal was deemed necessary since the famine that struck the desolate plains of upper United Provinces claimed close to a million lives in 1837. Near Roorkee - a small hamlet at the time - the land fell away sharply, and an aqueduct had to be built. Thus, in 1847, under these triple coincidences, the foundation of the college was laid. It was originally started in Saharanpur on an experimental basis.

The emblem was the figure of a lordly Lion, confident in its majesty and power, but showing neither fear nor ferocity, an embodiment of the college spirit. “**Absque Labore Nihil (nothing without labor)**” was the older motto, which we still hope to stand faithful to. The older magazine derived its name from the same motto.

Indians were initially debarred from admissions to the overseers class, established only for the European non-commissioned officers and soldiers. Later on, however, the Indian candidates that were allowed to pass out of this class were consequently given key positions by the English. This was the class of students christened by Thomason as *Lallas*.

The course structure included the following subjects: Mathematics, Civil Engineering, Drawing, Surveying, *Hindustani*, and English. The successful candidates were awarded Higher or College Certificate if they scored at 60% of the total and 50% in each subject, and ordinary certificate on scoring a minimum of 50% and 33% respectively. This provided difficult for the army men, and hence more intellectually demanding topics such as geometry, drawing, and mensuration were scraped. This degraded the quality of the forthcoming batches, forcing the college to virtually go into a period of hibernation from the 1870s to the 1890s.

As testament to the importance of physical fitness, fitness tests and examination of the medical certificates of candidates took place before actually admitting them. The menace that is proficiency grading commenced in 1877. The students were (back then) graded only on their horse riding, swimming, and gymnastics skills. No freedom of choice was given to them whilst allotting proficiencies.

Indiscipline of any kind warranted zero tolerance from the very inception of the Institute. The college witnessed its first expulsion ever in 1885, when two students were caught using unfair means during an examination. When two others were found plagiarising their work, they were disqualified from appointment. **DISCOs** - or their equivalent - then, started off in the 1880s.

In matters of finance, all students were entitled to stipends of either 10 Rs or 5 Rs, reviewed based on periodic tests. The residential and mess fee of 50 paise and a tuition fee of 1.5 rupee per month were

imposed on students.

Along with academic development, the Roorkee college took huge strides in building extracurricular and recreational facilities; it was the first educational institution to introduce squash as a sport in India. Polo was introduced in 1872, and all students were asked to buy or rent a pony, with horse riding becoming an essential part of training here.

In that era, the students celebrated TGIF by taking out their ponies on rides upto Ganga Canal, camping and shooting in the nearby forests and also taking dips in the Ganges. (We need to emulate our alumni, and abstain from sleeping our weekends away).

The pace of expansion of the campus (physically) reflected the precipitous increase in student population. Post-war technology was held accountable for a few mishaps during this period, the most notable of which happened in 1917, with the wooden floor of the Convocation Hall and Gymnasium catching fire due to a fault in the Electric Wing. It was rebuilt at a cost of Rs. 17,000, with help from the engineers of Bengal Sappers.

Both the wars had a devastating effect on the Institute, particularly the first world war, where a lot of alumni lost their life. Most of the faculty and students served in the war, leaving the college lacking the requisite number of faculty and students. Surprisingly, however, the number of students appearing for the Entrance test increased exponentially post each war. This, in addition to the parting gift of new academic departments by the British Government post-Independence eased the

transition of Thomason College Of Engineering into University Of Roorkee. Thenceforth, it ceased to serve exclusively as a college to educate Engineers seeking careers in the Armed Forces. For the next 50 years it sought to continue its legacy and the period was marked with swift development of the campus and vast changes to existing buildings and grounds.

Post Independence Era

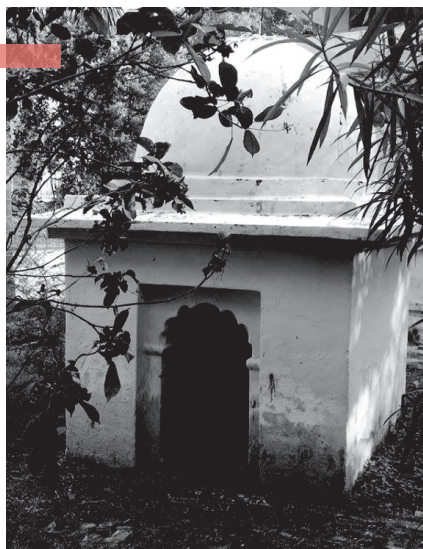


This flag, flying high over the Main building lawns is often an object of curiosity for guests and new-comers to the campus. It was adopted as the University flag in 1949 at the inauguration of the University on 25th November, 1949, known thereafter as Charter Day, celebrated with much pomp till a few years ago. Now, it is marked by a lit-up main building. The college had, by then, expanded its field of teaching to include courses like Electrical and Mechanical engineering; the old

engineering and overseer courses of Civil engineering also remained.

The upcoming period was marked in both the physical and intellectual development of the institute. In 1954, AN Khosla, arrived as the Vice Chancellor, and brought with him a forward thinking attitude, and a desire to bring change to the stagnating campus. He believed in *Shramdaan* and students were encouraged to help out the masons in construction of new buildings and structures. If done today, this stunt would obviously be seen by the angsty junta as forced labour or slavery. Between 1955 and 1961 Govind, Ravindra and Azad Bhawans were built. Some years later, Jawahar was built for PG students. A 50*15*5 m swimming pool was constructed and an open air theater was made out front.

A temple, now dubbed the Saraswati Mandir, was constructed along with a yoga hall. It played host to an annual fair on *Nagapanchami*. The place has various tales associated with it: it is believed to be the site of two Satis in the past. It also served as some sort of memorial to a *Pehelwan Baba* (wrestling coach). The University dealt with this by constructing

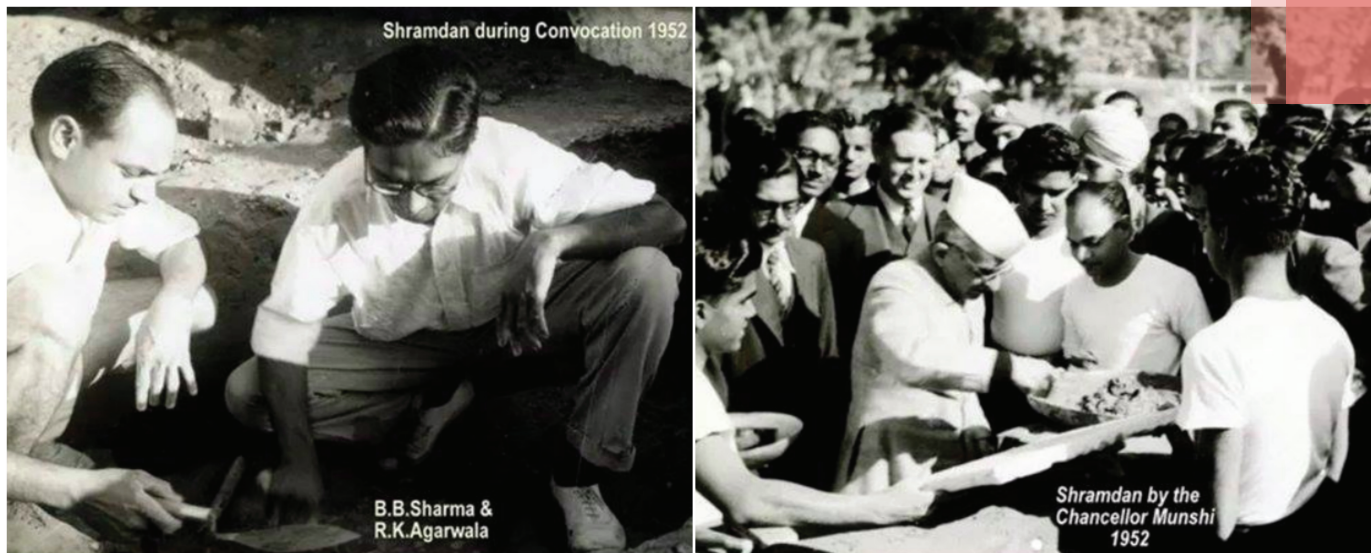


two chhatris as memorials for the satis and a spot as the *pehelwan babas* memorial. This mandir still serves the needs of the professors' families and the God-fearing junta during exam time. The wedding feasts held regularly in the temple grounds attract quite a few disguised students seeking somewhat-edible food.

The intellectual change in the University was a reflection of the newly-independent India, with students becoming increasingly involved in college life, and taking a stand against pretty much everything. We wonder if they had to attend mandatory yoga sessions after this audacious outburst (wink wink):

The students at this time felt agitated and angry at the lack of job opportunities available to them after graduating with an engineering degree. In 1967, Indira Gandhi was the guest of honour at the annual convocation. As soon as she got up to give her address, they all got up together and shouted thrice with one voice, "We don't want speeches, we want jobs" and everyone walked out of the hall noiselessly, in a single file. The PM was visibly annoyed but later, regaining her composure, she ruefully but gallantly remarked: "It was the most disciplined walkout I have ever witnessed".

In March 1968, over 200 students left for Delhi to join nationwide protests against the rising unemployment. **53 of them were arrested and put behind bars.** Two teachers and an assistant, pegged the "Rescue Team" got in touch with the DC of Delhi and met the students in Tihar jail. They were let off after signing an apology letter (after much restraint



and protest). After coming back, a victory march was held with slogans of “**Roorkee University zindabad, Chopra** [Vice Chancellor at the time] **Saheb zindabaad!**”

Despite changes in the attitudes of the student populace, the old order and college culture still continued. This interesting story accurately describes some of the nuances that students still exhibited:

A new, young lecturer, not brought up in Thomsonian tradition came to class with an open collar and no tie. After repeated hints from the students, he refused to change his attire. One day a student came late, and the lecturer allowed him to enter. However, the class senior (old era CR) said “No, you can’t. You are not properly dressed” and told him to come in with a tie. The lecturer too fell in line the next day onwards.

We can now make a sufficiently well-educated guess with regards to the origins of this “no slippers in my class” rule.

At the times when rock ‘n’ roll accounted for a major portion of music, students of Roorkee Universi-

ty were at par. Groups of music enthusiasts assembled in the open space in front of Motel Polaris and held open concerts. The same motel - visited by The Beatles twice - became a hotspot in UoR times. Legend has it that UoR students played more English songs than Hindi ones.

Roorkee University was once widely assumed to have produced hockey players for the state and few for the country as well. Roorkee, equipped with the best sports facilities, had a unique way of ordering sports equipment and accessories. A Sports fair was organized annually, with retailers from neighbouring cities and towns exhibiting their stock. Groups of experts were invited to select the best equipment, among the available, and deals were signed.

Ragging was a big part of college culture which became progressively worse. This led to it being formally outlawed and a large no. of teachers being appointed every year (in the opening weeks) to do the required policing. Despite its near nonexistence today, the fears of ragging still exist in the minds of the administration, and the initial restrictions

continue to this effect.

In contrast to the ‘austerity’ of previous eras, the changes brought about a blossoming of student activities and the inauguration of various clubs (notwithstanding their short lived lives). Graduating seniors often failed to instill a sense of responsibility or pride in their juniors resulting in the demise of various groups like ‘Vinimay’, a discussion group started in Jawahar Bhawan. The University started publishing official fortnightly bulletins in 1962. They consisted of some vacuous news and everyday shenanigans of students and faculty. In response to this, some enterprising seniors, whose identity remained hidden, started bringing out a satirical, humorous and somewhat irreverent rag of a paper called “**Razor**”, which for a brief period, provided a small dose of fun to all those who read it.

The 70s and 80s were filled with periods of student unrest. It was not uncommon to see student marches late into the night or for sporadic bursts of violence. After an incident involving alleged negligence on the part of the administration and staff, leading to the death of a student, the

campus erupted in violent protest. The students went as far as setting the Director's bungalow on fire (the Director - luckily - escaped along with his family by means of the rear exit unharmed).

The IIT Days

With the turn of the century and the formation of a separate state for the northern reaches of Uttar Pradesh, a new era dawned upon the Institute: on 21st september 2001, the 154 year old college finally decided to accept the designation of an IIT. With increased funding, the next 10 years reportedly saw intensive infra-structural development of the campus. A lot of structures like the new Library, the LHC, the sports pavilion, housing for faculty, as well as the guest houses were built during this period. The changes weren't just limited to the campus grounds; the rapid changes had an impact on the surrounding areas and changed the fortunes - for better or for worse - of various traders and shopkeepers that relied on student spending.

The student intake gradually increased, and more Masters and Doctorate applicants started coming to the newly-formed IITR. As we went about our market research, we discovered that the traditional book-sellers profited a great deal from the GATE and CAT craze that engulfs most technical institutes today. The once small town saw changes elsewhere too, with the diverse student populace demanding different kinds of eateries and entertainment options. The hundreds of restaurants, water parks and multiplex are a somewhat direct result of the adoption of the IIT name in Roorkee.

The issues that plague the Institute today are starkly different from those of yesteryear, but revolve around a common theme: that of greater student autonomy. Recently implemented reforms - doing away with restrictions for the girls of our campus being the chief example - are promising steps in this direction. However, any significant change can only be brought about in the long run; our four/five years are only a precious few frames in the much longer movie of IIT Roorkee.



APPSENT

Pheking News

The Students' Affairs Council, after its latest meeting, announced that it shall be taking up the proposal for a new app, which shall be developed with the help of the Mobile Development Group of IIT Roorkee. Dubbed as 'Appsent', the app shall help repay the students a congruent amount of their tuition fees if they do not attend a certain lecture, tutorial, or practical of their curriculum. The app shares its premise with the recently launched 'Appetizer', which, upon being notified of your disinterest in enjoying (or subjecting yourself to) the facilities of the mess for a certain meal, helps you get a refund worth the amount you are entitled to.

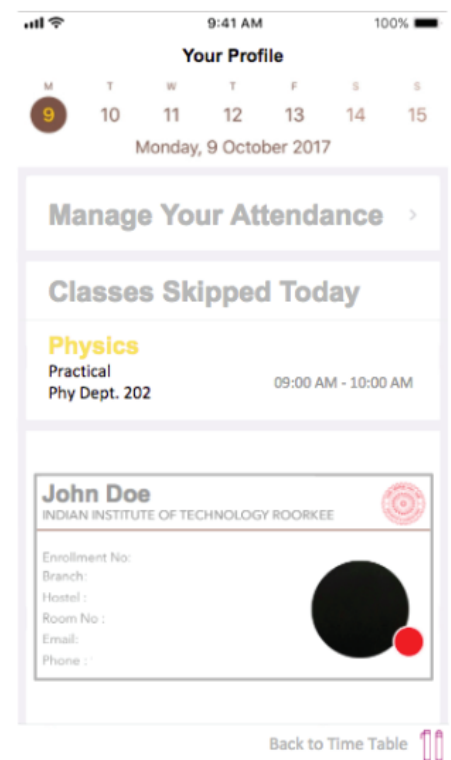
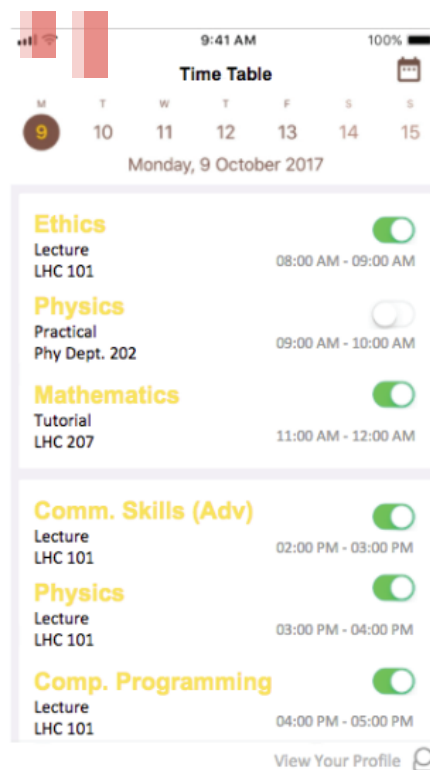
The app was conceptualised after two students from the third year took up a project to explain why an app like 'Appsent' makes sense, under the guidance of Prof. Ahluwalia of the Dept. of Mathematics. Whilst trying to convince us how they took this project up for a legitimate reason and not just to add points to their résumé, the students shared the summary of their paper, which read:

"With the recent hike in the tuition fees for the incoming students, every new admit now pays Rs. 1,00,000 every semester for his/her academics. Considering that there are approximately 5 contact-hours a day; for the 80 odd working days in a semester, a student engages in 400 contact-hours every semester. Dividing the fees by that number, we realised how every student

is paying a whopping Rs. 250 for an hour of lecture, practical or tutorial he/she attends. To put it in another way, for every hour of lecture, practical or tutorial a student misses, he/she effectively loses Rs. 250!"

The app shall come with real-time notifications of the upcoming lectures, display of your weekly schedule and a flagship feature which lets you skip any hour of your time-table you are not excited about. The amount you are entitled to for every week shall be cumulatively deposited directly into your bank account every Friday night. For this very purpose, students shall now have to link their Institute ID Card to their bank account. Every student can, nonetheless, avail rebates only

for 25% of the total classes for every course, which, some believe, might encourage the students to attend the 75% of the classes they have to pay for no matter what.



Despite this minor snag, the students were understandably overjoyed at the announcement. A resident of Jawahar Bhawan was quoted saying, “We really like sandwiches. However, our pocket money has never been enough to get us through the month. We have either been sleeping hungry, or filling up on the substandard sandwiches from the sandwich-guy across the bridge in Roorkee. Now, we simply miss a couple of lectures and get enough money to buy a couple of really good sandwiches to unwind after a long day.”

Not everyone, however, was happy after hearing about the introduction of the app. Faculty across the college believe that this adds to their concern of scarce attendance in their classes. A representative of the Main Building, who we caught up with after the Senate Meeting in which the app was finalised, said that the administration was planning on rewarding the teachers who drew in a high percentage of students, thereby incentivizing a large turnout to classes. This might also give an additional impetus to the teachers to conduct frequent quizzes in an effort to bring in more students to their classes. Some of the teachers also believe that there is a positive side to the whole charade for them too. *“I have a feeling that I wouldn't have to worry about proxy attendances anymore,”* said a professor of the Chemical Department. *“Students are not going to ask their friends to answer to the roll call on their behalf anymore and risk losing the money they would have been granted, had they not been marked 'present' in a class they didn't attend.”*

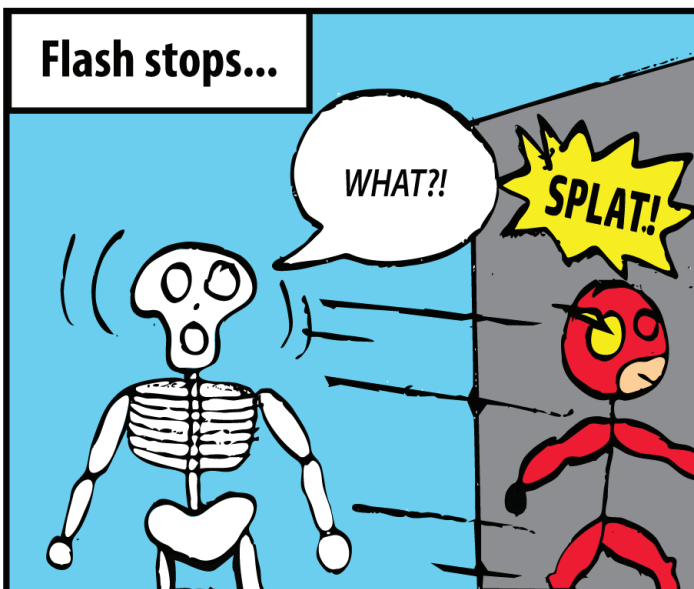
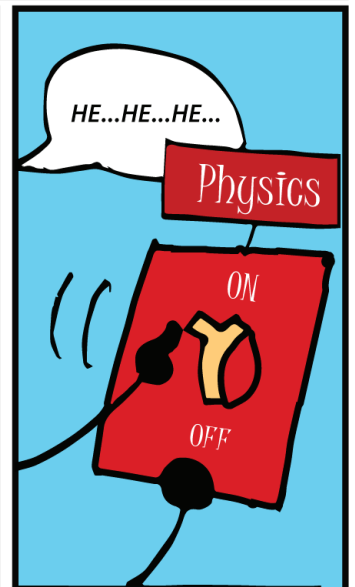
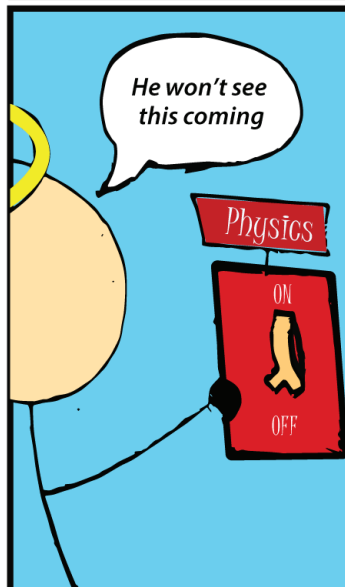
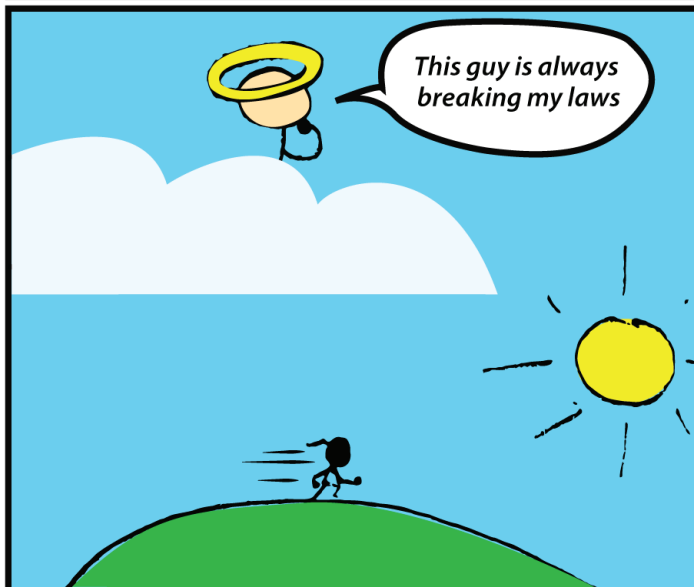
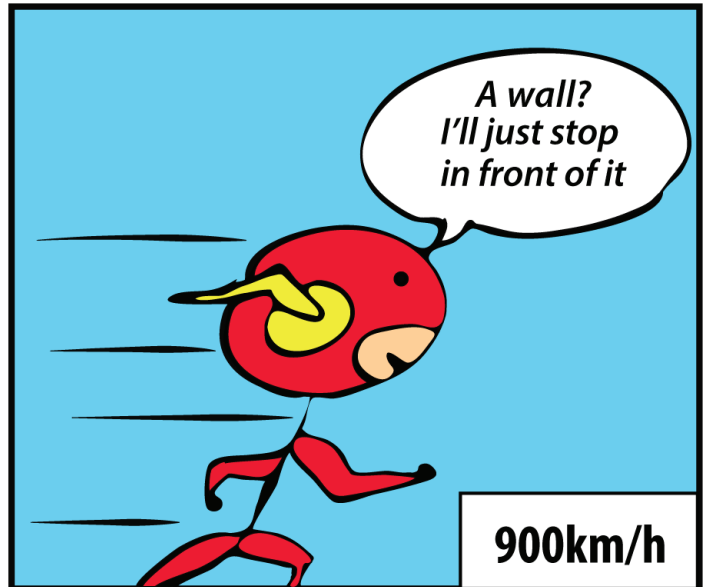
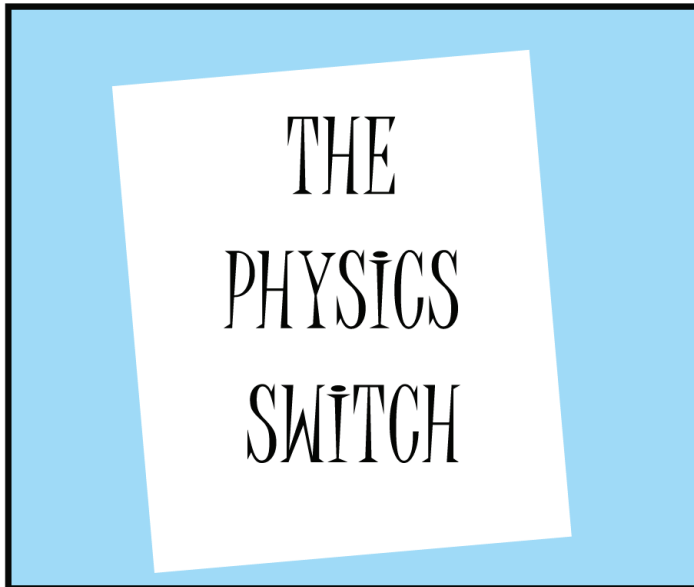
Prof. Ahluwalia, who faced severe backlash from the professors for encouraging such a project, defended himself by saying, *“We were*

hoping that the students realise how frivolously they are wasting their money just by not showing up to the lectures and availing the services the institute offers and their parents paid for. However, instead of coming to the classes after some retrospection, the students have simply demanded their money back, claiming that they rightfully deserve it.” The administration, which was wary of triggering yet another peaceful protest in front of the Main Building, had no option but to cede to the request of the students and ask the SAC to collaborate with the MDG to develop the app.

‘Appsent’ shall soon be available on the Play Store and the App Store, possibly before the start of the next semester.



COMIC STRIP



IT'S A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

Editorial

"The gods envy us. They envy us because we're mortal, because any moment might be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we're doomed."

- *Achilles, Troy (2004)*

The value of any commodity in our possession – philosophically or economically – is ascertained by a lack of abundance. Life is universal, but never in perfect competition; the longevity and quality of, as well as the insignificant infinite incidents constituting our lives vary globally. Nevertheless, death is the indiscriminate adjudicator that unites us. Perhaps it is the only reason we ever do anything; a visible eventual end reinforces the value of our life, spurring us on to make the most of each day.

What, then, will we – our attitudes, outlooks and dispositions – make of a significant increase in the average life expectancy?

If the (hypothetical) elixir were to bequeath to us an additional 120 years – that is to say, a life expectancy

of 200 years – one immediately assumes that scientific and technological progress will accelerate by an unimaginable magnitude, for greater work logically follows greater amount of available time. In retrospect, however, it is short-sighted to exclude the talent for procrastination with which we are naturally endowed. The perception of time as an infinite commodity shall incentivize a majority of the human race to recursively postpone autonomous tasks, resulting in collective underachievement.

Counterintuitively, there shall also be a – eventual, if not immediate – decrease in population. Assuming that most countries of the world shall be developed by the time such an elixir is made available, the prevalent family size shall be significantly smaller. Men and women shall hop in and out of relationships – having enough time to find the “love of their lives” – a hunt that shall, perhaps, forever elude and disappoint them.

Meaning is innate in language but never in life, forged by its bearers (in

an attempt) to make sense of the series of circumstances that establish themselves as parts of their lives. It is sought from a definite number of sources – primarily suffering, love and work. Love and work become largely irrelevant in this scenario; very rarely shall these be the sources of fulfilment, and fodder for discerning meaning. By exclusion, we shall turn to suffering to define our lives. What a sad life this shall constitute! With suffering predominating the emotional landscape – and additionally milking it for meaning – an aversion to happiness shall prevail, for it (logically) becomes the antithesis of meaning's forge.

"Living, naturally, is never easy. You continue making the gestures commanded by existence for many reasons, the first of which is habit. Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation, the uselessness of suffering" – *Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus*

Wrought and marred by misery, humanity's faith in the absurd shall be solidified; once the “uselessness of suffering” is established – those that rely on it as the foundation of meaning shall eventually realise that there is none – any reflective, contemplative being shall surrender himself to the reasoning that his/her existence is worth nothing, that nothing will possibly be different on their passing. Employing Adrian's logic (from *The Sense of an Ending*) that one may choose to renounce their life upon examination – since it is a gift given to them and therefore, theirs to reject – intellectually endowed people shall renounce their lives the way Adrian

did. Who, then, shall lead this world into the great unknown that is the future?

Our lives, although flawed, shall never be as disastrous. Perhaps it is conducive – even ominous – to have a life of eighty years. A supernumerary life may arouse gratitude initially, when one has a standard to compare it to; over time, however, it shall be the source of a universally prevalent disdain.



CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

LAST WRITES

There's no denying that the campus has seen more than its fair share of upheavals in the last couple of years. We've done away with the systematized relics of UOR, swiftly and radically, and moved on to creating a thriving campus culture. Or so we like to think. It is in this continual shake up, that I'd like to slip in the last Chairman's Address to be featured in a WONA issue.

It's heartening to think of all that WONA has gone through its 24 years of existence. What started off as an attractive looking poster on Govind Bhawan's notice board has through countless iterations and deliberations survived up until its recent baptism as the Official Student Media Body, switching allegiance to the main building in the process. Apart from the significant administrative and financial implications of this change, I see this as merely ceremonial. Our first and foremost responsibility is - and will continue to be - to reflect the pulse of the campus, in ways and means not congruent to the title of a news magazine. In the last few years itself, we've grown from a 28 page magazine languishing in the corners of a 1000-odd rooms, to becoming an online-first medium for information dissemination and critiques.

It is no doubt that there lies immense scope in campus journalism, more so with the state of constant change our campus is now in. Pardon my saying this dear reader, but it's an open secret that a significant portion of the campus populace suffers from a lack of awareness and an abundance of apathy, reinforced by their very presence. I'll only be deluding myself if I say that Watch Out has the power to make people jump out of their rooms and be agents of awe inspiring change, but our contribution and responsibility towards mitigating this problem cannot be understated. The other half of Watch Out's work is to write for its members. This aspect of our functioning is more in line with our western counterparts, and something which differentiates us from similar bodies across other IITs. There certainly are expectations to manage and billings to fit, but I can count on the upcoming batches to retain this dubious "essence" of the group over the course of this upheaval. As is always the case, there remains much to be done but I am certain that we are on the right track.

That being said, WONA to me has always been something very different from a group holding the beacon of campus journalism in Roorkee. It might not sound right, but this group for me is closer to being a book club. My reasons for joining it were primarily for writing's sakes, all while loafing around with some erudite company. Three years on, I can confidently say that no other activity on campus has had a larger hand in shaping me than this motley crew, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Finer gentlemen have graced this column with their substance and eloquence, and I can only try to do justice to all that toil of 24 years past. I return to my place on the other side of the senate steps, with the smugness of having given my best to this group and optimistic about all that is to come in the future. Thank you for all the learning, it's been a pleasure and an honour. Onwards and upwards.

Utkarsh Bajpai
Chairman, 2016-17



the official student media body of IIT Roorkee

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