

Heritage Centre, IIT Madras presents

Volume 3 - Issue 3



Glass Panels

May
2025

"I don't think the blackbuck is as safe anywhere outside the Bishnoi community areas in the whole of the country as it is in this place."

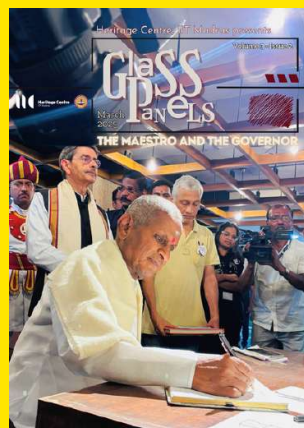
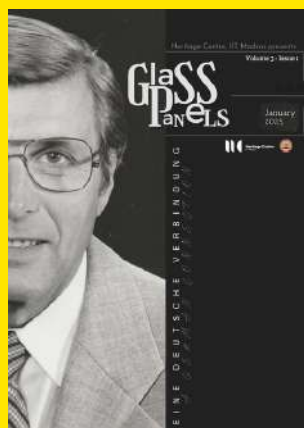
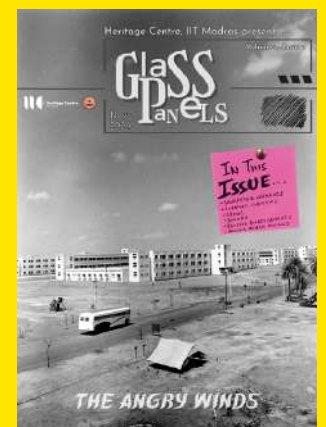
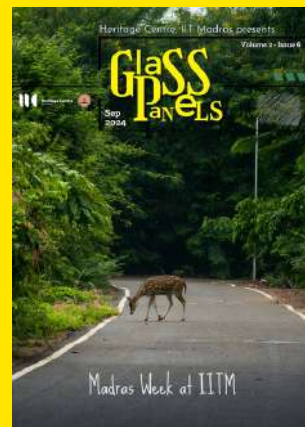
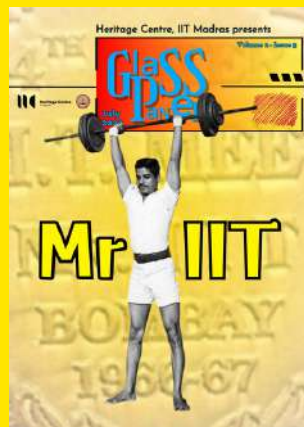
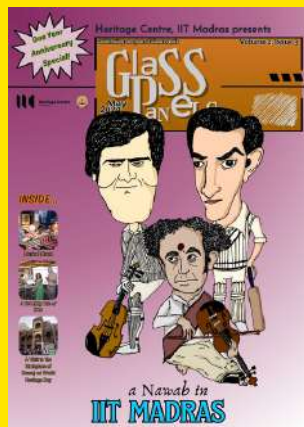
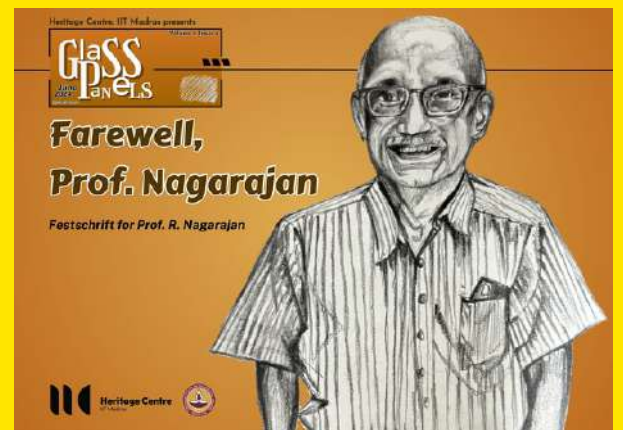
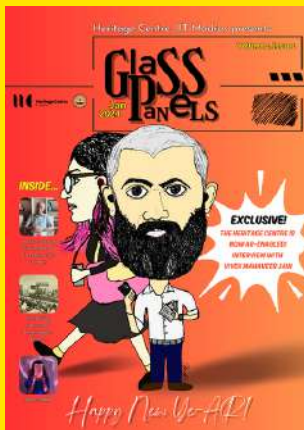
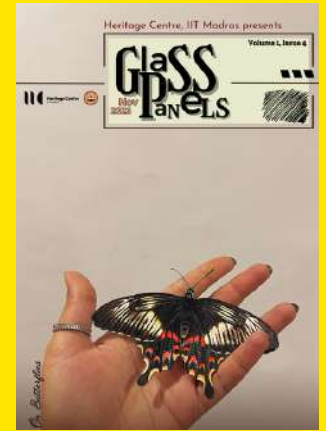
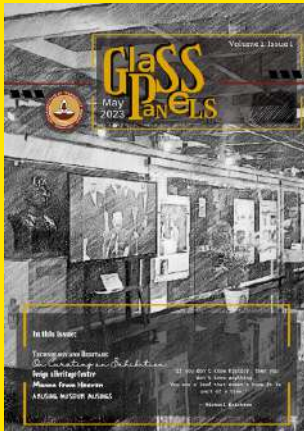
- Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh

The Happiness Project

IIT Madras's happiness course is changing the way students look at life. Find out how!

Also in this issue:

/ Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh /
/ IIT Madras on Canvas /
/ Classified Divertissements /



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Acknowledgements

The Archive of IIT Madras for the photograph of Mr. K. Sashi Rao

B. S. Ganesh and Aryan J. M. for their artwork



The Heritage Centre was formally inaugurated by Dr. Arcot Ramachandran, former Director of IIT Madras, on 3 March 2006. It is a repository of material of heritage value and historical significance to IIT Madras. "Heritage Centre - Reimagined" was inaugurated on 18 December 2022 by Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman, Honourable Finance Minister of India.

Located centrally on campus, the Heritage Centre has an exhibition space that enjoys an abundance of natural light. The Centre also has a small theatre and a particularly pleasant reading area that offers incomparable views of the green campus.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Heritage Centre or IIT Madras.



Panel of Contents

01

Letter from the Editor

Bhuvanesh Santharam

The Heritage Centre has been buzzing with events the last couple of months...find out why!

05

The Happiness Project

Bhuvanesh Santharam

IIT Madras's unique courses have paved the way for students to look at life in a completely different way.

08

My Traumatic First Year

K. Sashi Rao

What was IIT Madras like in the 1960s? An alumnus recounts his days as a fresher at India's premier technological institute.

11

Memoirs of Workshop Training

H. K. Panigrahi

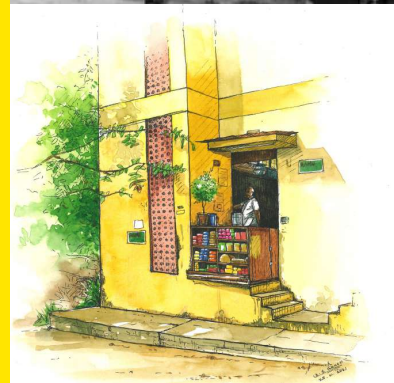
From khaki uniforms to character building: A glimpse into IIT Madras's hands-on legacy.

13

A Campus in Colours

Diya Mariam Satheesh

The Making of IIT Madras on Canvas





A CV so Long

17

Kumaran Sathasivam

Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh at Heritage Centre Day 2025



The Heritage Square

23

Kavin Chakaravarthy, Baladitya Suri, Bhuva and others

Classified Divertisements, Poems



Amusing Museum Musings

25

Bhuva

Fun toons from the staff room of the Centre.



Visitors to the Centre

26

Diya Mariam Satheesh

Ministers, entrepreneurs, authors, Nobel laureates...the Centre is never short of stories of dignitaries gracing it. Glimpses of some distinguished visitors.

News Bites

30

Snappy the Snail

Latest news from the Heritage Centre.

EXPLORE THE HERITAGE CENTRE, VIRTUALLY!



IIT MADRAS

Heritage Centre



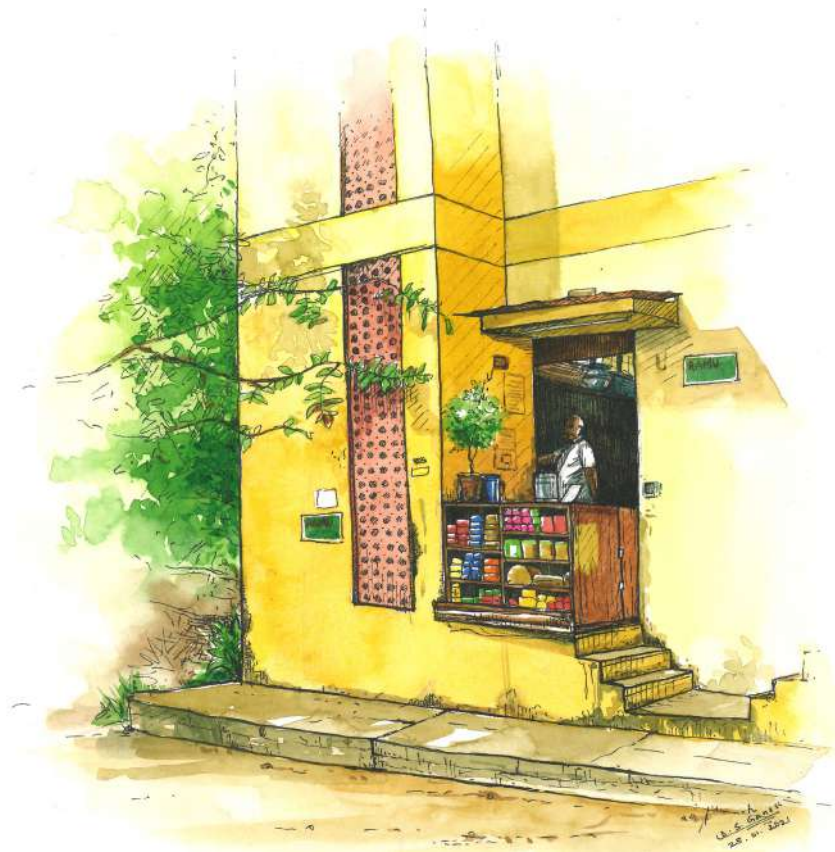
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Explore the Heritage of IIT Madras

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Ramu Tea Stall by B. S. Ganesh

Letter from the EDITOR

It has been an eventful few months. Heritage Centre Day was celebrated with conservationist Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh's talk at IC&SR. Kumaran Sathasivam's article in this issue covers the event in more depth. The art exhibition *IITM on Canvas*, curated by Diya Mariam Satheesh was hugely popular, with many visitors appreciating the paintings on display made by campus residents B. S. Ganesh and Aryan J. M. Diya writes about her experiences curating this exhibition in this edition of *Glass Panels*.

K. Sashi Rao (1969 alumnus) shares a 2013 article about some of the setbacks he faced in his days at IIT Madras. H. K. Panigrahi (1970 alumnus), our regular contributor, writes a funny little story about the workshop and his "father-mother" shoes.

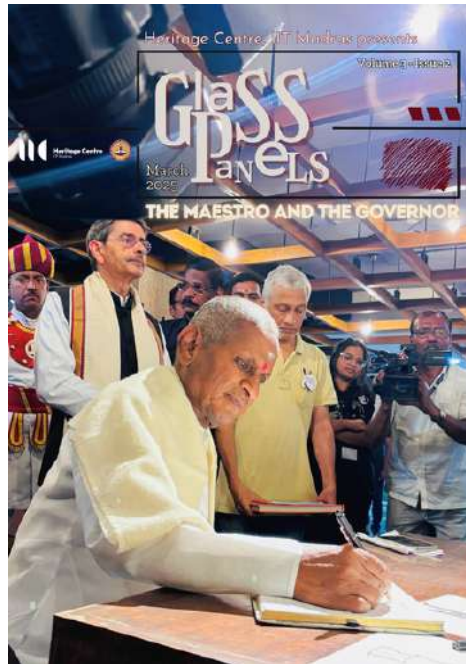
I decided to cover in this issue, an important and trending subject; happiness and mindfulness. IIT Madras offers a course titled '*Habits, Happiness and Success*', which aims to encourage students to pick up healthy habits in order to lead a more balanced life. Find out how this course is shaping a new mindscape in the lives of students at IITM.

Campus resident Srividhya has arranged yet another poem for this edition of *Glass Panels* through her college friend Baladitya Suri, from the 2006 Engineering Physics batch. His wonderful poem inspired by a morning walk down Madras Avenue will give you "insti" feels through and through! Don't miss it in The Heritage Square. Speaking of which, The Heritage Square has some hilarious Classified Divertisements yet again!

The Classified Divertisements published in the previous issue received some rave responses. We even had some people thinking that some of the divertisements were for real! My sincere apologies to those who thought that the wood apples were actually for sale. I shall make sure to inform our regular visitors; the monkeys, to throw down a few wood apples from the tree behind the Administration Block for connoisseurs of the fruit the next time somebody asks for them.

On 15 May 2025, we lost our valued Advisory Committee member, Prof. S. Santhakumar, who was actively involved with the activities of the Heritage Centre. Team *Glass Panels* offers our heartfelt condolences to his family. May his soul rest in peace and power.

- Bhuvanesh Santharam



Our
readers
write...

"I could see - through the *Glass Panels* the visibility of the Past, Present as well as the glimpses of the Future of IIT Madras ."

Prof. S. N. Majhi
Retired Professor, IIT Madras



Send us your
feedback!



*It is with great sorrow that we mourn the
passing of our beloved alumnus and
Professor S. Santhakumar*

The Happiness Project

IIT MADRAS'S UNIQUE COURSES HAVE PAVED THE WAY FOR STUDENTS TO LOOK AT LIFE IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAY



Students take part in the 'Habits, Happiness and Success' course



Students engaging in discussions during the course



Students showing their illustrations they made as part of a course activity

What is happiness? Tough question, isn't it? Are we really happy in today's world? We wake up, rush for classes, rush for work, rush our meals. We seldom eat—we consume. When I go to the campus café for lunch, I see well over 60% of the crowd having their meals with a phone in their hands. This constant, perpetual need to have a buzzing device in your hand while carrying out an activity has changed the way we go about life. Attention spans have reduced. Focus has diminished. We are hurtling at full throttle toward a future we think will bring us 'success'.

What is success? That's a whole other discussion. I know there are people, still, who enjoy living the slow life—cut off from the rat race, living at their own pace. One such initiative at IIT Madras is led by a dedicated course facilitator, a professor from IIT Madras.

I first met the professor at one of his course sessions. The course, titled '*Habits, Happiness and Success*', is one of the most popular at IIT Madras today. It sees close to 1500 to 1800 students enrolling annually. The first activity that the professor had us do was interesting. He gave all participants (including me, an

observer) *chikki*—peanut candy. I wasn't particularly hungry. Was I supposed to eat it? I looked around. Nobody had opened the wrapper yet. Once everyone was armed with their *chikki*, the activity began. It was a mindfulness exercise. Little did I know that one could savour a small *chikki* not in five seconds, but over five minutes! He guided us through a mindful eating practice.

The exercise involved closing our eyes, taking time to feel the wrapper, showing gratitude to the people involved in making the product, eventually opening the wrapper and exploring the sticky texture of the *chikki*, smelling it, bringing it to our lips and tongue and finally—after a few minutes—placing it inside our mouths. The professor instructed us not to bite it immediately. He asked us to experience the burst of saliva in our mouths as the *chikki* danced about like a ballerina. After our mouths were salivating and ready to burst like a brimming dam, we were instructed to take one bite. Eventually, after much tantalizing, we finally consumed that one piece of *chikki*. I had not enjoyed food this way in ages!

What followed this exercise was a discussion among course participants about the various habits they would like to inculcate in their lives to live better. They also spent time noting down things they appreciated about their peers. After the session, I met the professor personally. He explained the basic concept behind the course: “Most people try to find happiness through success. What we do here is to find success through happiness.”

How did this interesting course begin? It traces back to a course titled *‘What They Don’t Teach You at IIT, But You Ought to Know’*. Introduced in 2013 as a “life skills” course, it initially struggled to attract student interest. Around that time, a professor from the Civil Engineering Department, Prof. Devdas Menon, had already started offering courses unrelated to core Civil Engineering. Discussions ensued, and Prof. M. S. Ananth, the Director at the time, agreed that offering non-technical elective courses would be a good idea. These courses came to be known as General Category courses (GN courses)

Later, when the current facilitator of the happiness course took over student affairs, he introduced several more GN courses. He also initiated the Leisure Time Activities Programme—better known as L-TAP. This is the tenth year of L-TAP, which sees an annual enrollment of 1200 students. Recognizing the role of play in student wellness, he also opened up and upgraded campus sports facilities, making them accessible to all students for free. Previously, access was restricted to members only. Around the same time, he introduced the National Cultural Academy (NCA), alongside other compulsory programs such as NCC, NSS, and NSO. The idea was to introduce students to classical and western music, dance, filmmaking, arts, dramatics, and design.

While the NCA fostered cultural appreciation, the professor felt a need to boost students’ confidence in their own creativity. Courses like *‘Discovering Creativity’* were introduced to help tap into this dormant potential. All the while, the professor kept a watchful eye on student wellbeing. Were they happy? Progress was evident—but not enough. He wanted to introduce something more directly rooted in happiness.

2018 was a big year. Wanting students to truly *experience* happiness, he worked with like-minded alumni and introduced the course *‘Habits, Happiness*

and Success’. The course drew inspiration from studies at Harvard, MIT, Stanford, and other leading institutes. It began humbly, but over the years has grown into a much sought-after course.

In all these efforts, a strict policy of “no preaching, only facilitating” has been followed. This means a departure from traditional classrooms—students are not idle listeners but participants in constructing their own happiness. The concept of self-discovery appealed deeply to students. As registrations grew, the team realized more help was needed. They brought in alumni as resource persons—who better to understand student needs than former students? The team now includes 30 guest faculty members, among them caring alumni, wellness coaches, and psychologists—all key to the course’s success.

One major aim of GN courses is to reduce exam-related anxiety by replacing tests with activity reports, assignments, and projects. The assignments come with no rigid deadlines, allowing students some breathing space while balancing regular responsibilities. In this course, one such responsibility includes cultivating positive habits.



How do habits help students lead happier lives? From my limited interactions, I’ve observed that many students stay up late, compromising their sleep for academic or personal reasons. Physical exercise and timely meals are often neglected. This is a recipe for disaster. College life is often chaotic and wild—students sometimes operate on little to no sleep, and

little to no food!

So how does one navigate all these twists and turns and still find happiness? Who is responsible for it? The government? Teachers? Spiritual leaders? The students themselves? I read somewhere that “...happiness is not a thing to be pursued; it comes. But if you seek it, it will evade you.” The writer, J. Krishnamurti, a renowned educationist, draws a contrast between childhood and adulthood. He says, “When we are young, we enjoy and take delight in things—in games, in clothes, in reading a book or writing a poem or painting a picture... As we grow older, the things of life lose their meaning; our minds become dull, insensitive, and so, we try to enjoy, we try to force ourselves to look at pictures, to look at trees...”

In the happiness course at IIT Madras, one of the key ideas is to nurture the ability to observe with full, undivided attention—in other words, mindfulness.

Anxiety, fear, and other emotional pressures often prevent us from being mindful. This unique endeavour is one of a kind. It encourages students to look inward and discover happiness not in external or materialistic things, but within themselves. Everyone deserves to be happy and at peace. Here’s to hoping this course continues to scale new heights and revolutionises the way IIT Madras students approach life.



Students engaged in an activity during the 'Habits, Happiness and Success' course at the Student Activities Centre



Students keeping fit through exercises at the Manohar C. Watsa Stadium, as a part of the 'Habits, Happiness and Success' course



Bhuvanesh Santharam

is a Senior Content Writer at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras. A poet and cartoonist, he published his first collection, *Silence Binds Us*, in 2022 and is working on future volumes. When not writing, Bhuva enjoys boxing, basketball, and long runs that spark new ideas.



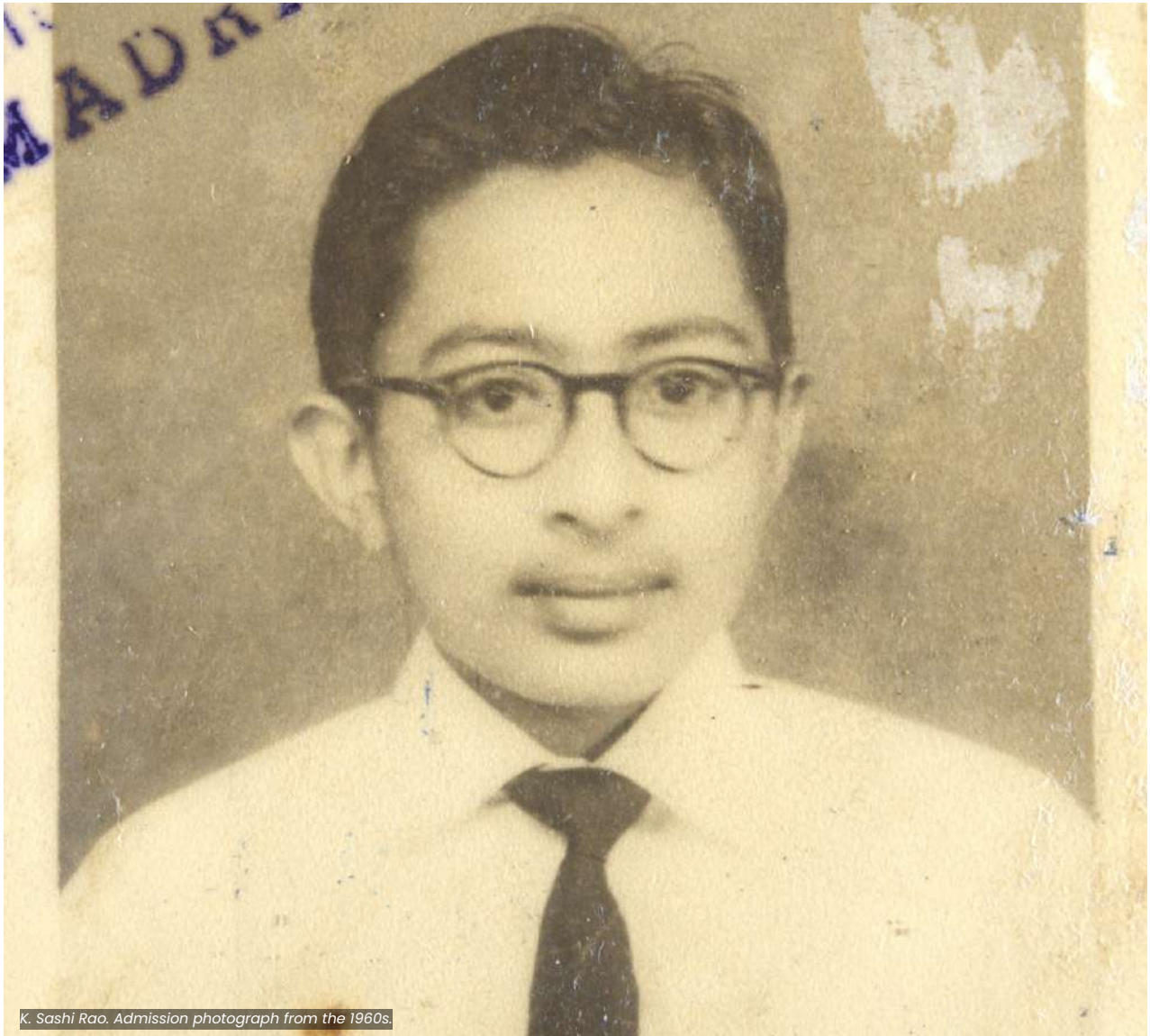
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My Traumatic First Year

WHAT WAS IIT MADRAS LIKE IN THE 1960S? AN ALUMNUS RECOUNTS HIS DAYS AS A FRESHER AT INDIA'S PREMIER TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE



K. Sashi Rao. Admission photograph from the 1960s.

This article was written for my batch reunion in 2013. But I think the subject is still alive and relevant to all incoming students. It's just that in our days we had no support at all to cope with the serious psychological adjustment problems we faced. Of course, today you have many student counsellors support groups and buddy system. Back then, we had to fight within ourselves or seek help from close friends only. We just could not afford to fail as our parents and family had very high expectations from us.

Today we hear a lot about IIT students dropping out or even taking the extreme step of taking their own lives. All this is attributed to their being unable to cope with the demands of the IIT system of education. The latest development at the IITs Academic Council seems to suggest that the IITs plan to offer such failing students the option of even offering them a Bachelor of Science degree after the completion of three years.

Now let me take you back to our times when we joined the IITM a half a century ago. Much as we look at the rigours of the IIT system itself, what seems to have

escaped attention is how peer pressure has also contributed to the traumas that we all faced especially during the first year at IIT. So, here is my personal story. I am sure this is reflective of what most, if not all, of us went through then during 1964-65.

Getting into the IIT is itself a story of initial ignorance, trepidation and the uncertainty of the entry process; being totally unguided; inadequate preparations; and ultimate performance at the Joint Entrance Examination. Once I was selected, despite the poor performance in the Maths exam, it was like having won a lottery. It was only when I boarded the train to Chennai did it dawn on me about going to an unknown environment away from the safe confines of school and the parental home.

Often, such a drastic change is described as a 'cultural shock'. But this kind of shock was so different and deflating! This I will describe as the "Intelligence or IQ shock". I came into IIT being the 2nd ranked student in my school at the CBSE exams. But now finding that every other guy is a school topper, and most got a higher merit ranking than me in the entrance exam was more unnerving. Every guy seemed to be more intelligent, accomplished and seemingly more assured of making a success of their academic studies than I think I could. This was a real blow to my ego and self-confidence. It took me a couple of weeks to realize what I was up against and desperately tried to work out what I needed to do to restore some calm and composure to my bruised psyche.

My academic journey soon started in earnest, but it took me a couple of classes to realize the challenges to be faced- new teachers and subject matter; peer group associations and trying to make friends with those smarter than myself; and the adjustments to hostel life. The last one was easy as I came from a military boarding school background and had been there since the age of 9. Still, getting used to the quirks of my hostel mates in the Godavari Hostel, especially their toilet routines, their colourful language, the use of cuss words and general behaviour took some time.

I was quite puny in my first year and one of the shortest and lightest guys in the batch. I had yet to reach my adult height and weight then (which may add, happened only in the 2nd year). My short stature gave me more of a complex compared to most others. This posed a lot of problems during the Workshop Weeks. Furthermore, I was not very adept at using my fingers and hands. The Workshop Weeks were a real

physical struggle to cope with the enormous demands made during the Carpentry and Fitting Shop exercises. Looking across the Workshop benches at others with distinctly better hand dexterity made things psychologically even worse. But only after the initial round of assessments, I found that there were many of us sailing in the same dismal boat! In some strange way, the fact that I was not the worst of all, restored some self-confidence.

"Drawing" was another big bugbear for me! This required tremendous concentration (which I think I had) and excellent eye-hand coordination skills (which I sadly lacked) due to a serious internal eye injury to my left eye during my school boxing days. This made each drawing exercise a real nightmare to not only complete on time but for it to look neat and elegant. And inevitably comparing my drawings with others showed me in a very poor light.

Once the academic tests and exams got going, I realized that with the "Intelligence/IQ shock" referred earlier, I will have to be content with being a "middle-of-the-roader" if not at the bottom of the pile as far as grades are concerned.

During that first year in IIT, I was in touch with my School Master from Bangalore who had now taken up position as the Principal, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Heavy Vehicles Factory at Avadi. I visited him on a few occasions for Sunday lunches. While these were nice social diversions, he had some tough things to tell me. He said I made a big mistake by joining the IIT and that I should have done my B.Sc./M.Sc. (in Physics- his subject!) and appeared for the IAS. Anyway, I chose to stick on to IIT and looked upon it as a personal challenge. Moreover, knowing how difficult it was to get into IIT and that my IIT education was being funded by my elder brother only strengthened my resolve to carry on with the B. Tech. course.

Our first year was particularly notable for the fact that the local anti-Hindi agitation took place in January 1965 forcing the IIT to stop classes till early March. Net result was that our final exams took place in the worst possible summer heat of May. Studying then and keeping my focus was again very tough- coming as I did from the cooler climate of Bangalore. I strongly believe my first-year grades were adversely affected by just trying to cope with the Chennai heat.

Anyway, I somehow got through the first year but managed only one A (in English) and rest all Bs. I was

very disappointed with myself and seriously thought if I should quit IITM and still take my School Master's advice. But I somehow stuck on.

It was a different matter altogether that I pulled myself together and buckled up for the next four years and just about obtained a First-Class degree with 65.7% aggregate. Who knows if I had quit IITM after the first year and possibly got into an IAS based career, how my career path and life would have been! This will

always remain my 64-million-dollar question?

Coming back to today's scene, I somehow feel that the current generation of students need to develop more emotional maturity and equanimity and learn how to cope better with setbacks, disappointments and even failures. And this is called for not only by those with genuine psychological or other language and communication problems, but also the IITM student population at large.



A student at the Central Library, 1967.



K. Sashi Rao

is an alumnus of the 1969 B.Tech. and 1971 M.Tech. batches. Keenly interested in sports, he represented IIT Madras in hockey for six of the seven years he spent on campus. He was a member of the gold medal-winning team when IITM secured its first-ever victory at the Inter-IIT Sports Meet in 1970. He went on to have a long corporate career, working with several reputed Indian and multinational companies in areas such as business and strategic planning, project planning and development, and, finally, supply chain management. Giving back to society has been a lifelong passion, and he has been actively involved in numerous societal impact initiatives as an IITM alumnus.

Memoirs of Workshop Training

FROM KHAKI UNIFORMS TO CHARACTER BUILDING:
A GLIMPSE INTO IIT MADRAS'S HANDS-ON LEGACY



Students at the Machine Shop, 1960s

Workshop training was a unique and unforgettable feature of the five-year B.Tech. course at IIT Madras back in 1964. It was hands-on, gritty, and very different from sitting in a classroom with textbooks and blackboards. I still remember it vividly, even after all these decades.

In our first year, nearly half the time was devoted to workshop training. The schedule alternated between a week in the workshop and a week of regular academic classes. Quite the rhythm. Academic classes were straightforward—we wore our usual attire and sat in lecture halls. But the workshop was another world. You needed tough clothes to deal with the sweat, grime, and iron dust. Most of us got ourselves khaki outfits stitched just for this, and full leather shoes were a must to avoid injury.

We began our training with the basics: filing. At first glance, it seemed simple—just file a piece of mild steel. But soon, we realized it was a lesson in patience and precision. Each of us was handed a steel channel, secured it in a bench vice, and began the slow process of filing two vertical walls, 50 mm apart, uniformly and

simultaneously. The trick was to keep the file flat and apply even pressure, otherwise one wall would end up shorter than the other. It took some time to get the feel for it.

We used a rough flat file, made of high carbon steel, to shave down those walls. On the first day, we could barely remove a few millimetres. But by the end of the week, with aching arms and blackened shoes, we had filed them down completely. That's when the real test began—filing the flat surface of the channel. This required more finesse. We switched to a finer file and checked our work with a spirit level. The final product was a 50 mm x 50 mm x 5 mm mild steel piece, smooth and flat. It felt like a trophy. We engraved our names and roll numbers on it with steel punches. Some of us even had them electroplated and kept them as keepsakes.

The supervisors at the workshop were skilled and practical men. While their English wasn't always fluent, their instructions were clear through demonstration and body language. Each group of students had a designated supervisor. Ours was strict but fair. He

made sure we followed safety rules—no loose clothing, always full shoes—and personally checked our attire. Filing was done standing, with no chairs in sight. We were on our feet the whole time.

The workshop floor was a mess of fine steel particles, which found their way onto our clothes and shoes. Our clothes went to the laundry each week, but the shoes took a beating. The iron filings ruined the leather, and no amount of polish could bring them back to life. I was worried—shoes were expensive, and I needed them to last the year.

Around that time, NCC training began and we were issued a pair of sturdy black shoes. Heavy, but tough. Perfect for the workshop. I started wearing my NCC shoes during workshop sessions and kept my regular ones safe.

But sharp eyes noticed. One day, my supervisor came up to me and asked, “Why NCC shoes? What happened to your father-mother shoes?” His English might have been unconventional, but the message was loud and clear. I told him my shoes were damaged and out for repair. He paused, then nodded. “Okay,” he said. Permission granted.

Looking back, it’s remarkable how such a simple, physical activity like filing taught us so much—about precision, patience, discipline, and resilience. It wasn’t just about shaping steel; it was about shaping character.

It’s been sixty years now, and I have many pairs of shoes. But none come close to those old “father-mother shoes.” They were part of a formative time—gritty, imperfect, and unforgettable. Just like the workshop training itself.



Ms. Dusyanthi Ramachandra (left) and Ms. Chithra (second from left) at the Central Workshop, 1970s



A person instructs a group of students at the Central Workshop, possibly in the 1970s



A student planing at the carpentry workshop, year unknown



Hiranya Kumar Panigrahi

is an alumnus of the 1970 B. Tech. Metallurgy batch. After a successful career with SAIL, L&T, and Thermax, he now heads a technical consultancy firm as its Managing Director. During his student days, his accomplishments in bodybuilding and weightlifting earned him the title ‘Mr. IIT’. A man of varied interests, he continues to pursue writing, bodybuilding, and singing. He has contributed several articles to Glass Panels and is the author of Odisha of My Times.

A Campus in Colours

THE MAKING OF IIT MADRAS ON CANVAS



Sheds at C2-3, Bonn Avenue. B. S. Ganesh

I have been working as a Project Associate at the Heritage Centre for a year and a half now, though it still feels like I just joined. Time really does fly. Right from day one, there's been one recurring theme in my role at the Heritage Centre: curating an exhibition. At first, the idea of curating an entire exhibition on my own felt daunting. I had no background in poster design, exhibition planning, or curation. But then, I got the opportunity to collaborate with the Archive of IIT Madras for their inauguration; I designed a few posters for their event. That experience gave me a much-needed head start and a clearer sense of the direction I wanted to grow in.

Long before the Heritage Centre took on its current form, there was a strong desire to do more with the space. The idea of adding something different to the permanent exhibition— something that could change, evolve, and share stories more flexibly— was discussed before the Heritage Centre revamp in 2022. As part of the redesign, it was decided to include a space specifically for temporary exhibitions. This would give room for new exhibitions, fresh perspectives, and creative work that reflects the history and heritage of

IITM. This space is now known as The Dome.

In February 2025, I got my first real opportunity to craft stories for an exhibition when Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, the Operational Head of the Heritage Centre, asked me to work on an exhibition about the Central Workshop. The Central Workshop, one of the earliest buildings on the IIT Madras campus, holds a special place in campus history. It is known for its distinctive hair comb structure and is one of the important places in the life of an IIT Madras student. At the Central Workshop, students undergo tough assignments that make them the fine engineers they are today. Additionally, the workshop bench at the Heritage Centre, one of the interactive exhibits where visitors can try their hand at using a vice and a hand file, is an important part of the display. I was initially excited to take on my very first exhibition based on this theme. However, circumstances changed, and we ultimately decided to shift the theme to art.

Mrs. Mamata Dash, Senior Project Officer of the Heritage Centre, who has been living on campus for over 20 years, has a strong connection with the

community. She was familiar with the talents of many residents and knew that Aryan and Ganesh had artistic skills that deserved to be seen. That is when she came across a watercolour painting of the Gajendra Circle by them and felt it would be a perfect fit for an article about the Gajendra Circle that one of my teammates was working on.

The idea of the exhibition sprang up when we thought there might be more IITM-related paintings, and we were sure it had the potential to be turned into an exhibition. We reached out to both of the artists to see if they had more artworks related to IIT Madras that we could include in the exhibition. Though their styles were completely different, both brought something unique and striking to the exhibition. Ganesh's watercolours were rich in detail – intricate, vibrant, and full of depth – and Aryan's works had an abstract, fluid quality, as if each frame carried an emotion within it. Both were extraordinary in their way, and I was drawn to the way they each interpreted their subjects.

In the year 2021, Ganesh and Aryan began making these paintings as a fun activity to explore the medium and sharpen their skills. Along with their friends Tanmay and Arudhati, they would cycle around the campus, pick a spot they wanted to capture that day, and start with a rough sketch on site. They would later complete the sketch and add finishing touches. Over time, they covered many corners of the campus, including some places that no longer exist now, like Gurunath Stores.

After receiving the paintings, my first task was to sort

through them and select the ones that best fit our needs, considering both space constraints and relevance to IITM-related themes. Once the sorting and selection of paintings was done, the next big challenge was scaling the original A5-sized artworks to larger formats without compromising their quality and depth. After many trials and errors, we finally managed to replicate, scan, and print the paintings without compromising their quality. During the process, we also discovered and chose to use textured linen paper instead of the regular glossy paper typically used for other exhibitions. The texture of the paper gave the prints the feel of real watercolor paintings, so much so that a few visitors even mistook them for the originals, and the decision to choose a black backdrop for the paintings turned out to be a great idea, as it made the artwork pop against the dark background.

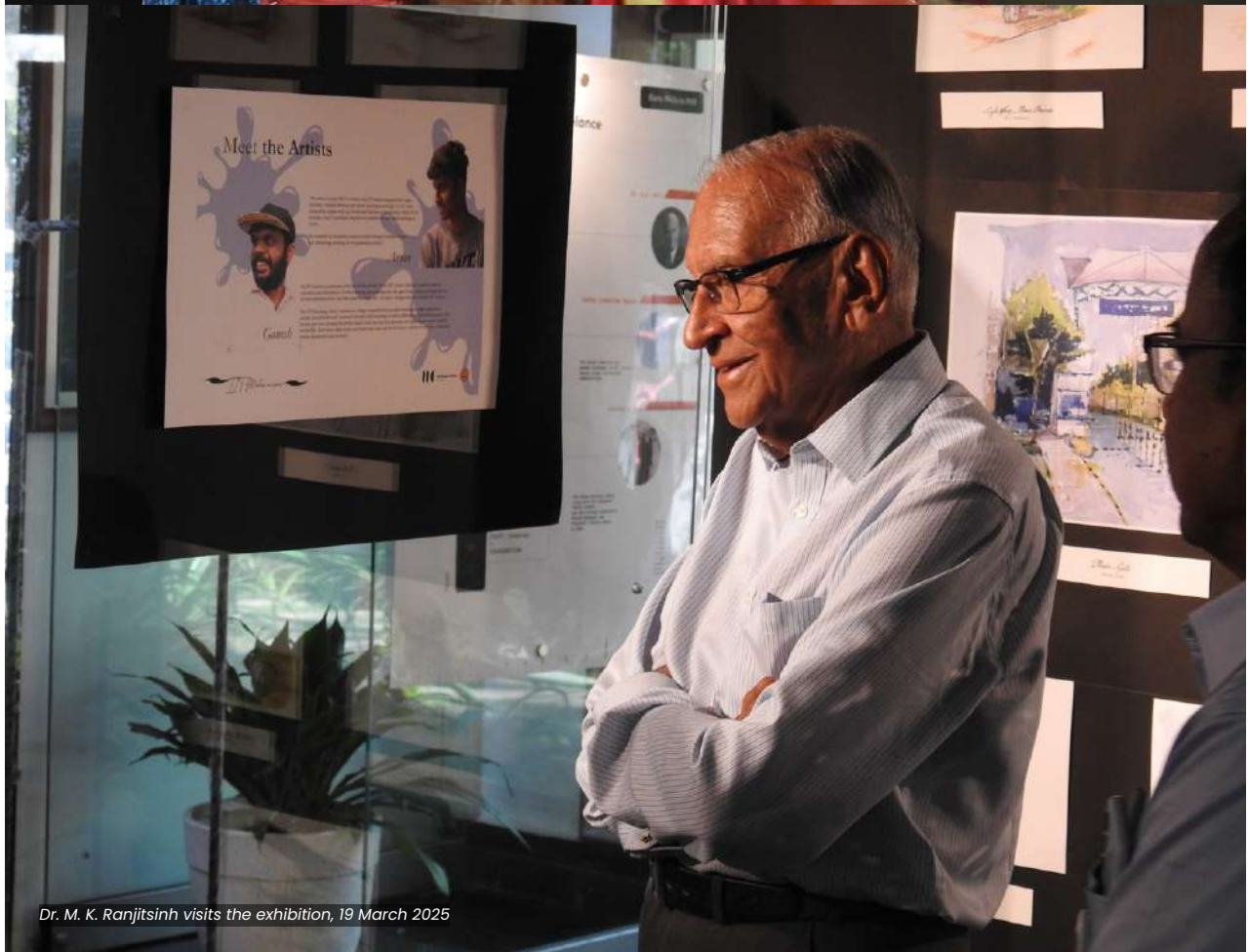
Feedback on the exhibition

*"Truly outstanding and Inspiring.
You have captured the spirit of IITM
campus life."*

*"Dear Aryan and Ganesh, You have
taken me back to the time of 1993
and the memories are so beautiful.
I went back to my early days on the
campus."*



Mr. Etienne ROLLAND-PIEGUE, Consul General of France in Pondicherry and Chennai visits the exhibition on 26 March 2025



Since it was an art exhibition, I didn't follow the usual method of printing captions and placing them under the paintings. Instead, I chose to hand-letter them, by taking immense inspiration from the Copperplate script I had been trying to master for a long time.

We also included a time-lapse video clip of B. S. Ganesh painting a Bonnet macaque. The clip demonstrated the process behind Ganesh's mastery. Starting with a simple sketch, the video proceeded to provide a comprehensive visual covering the various steps involved in the making of a painting. This video garnered considerable attention from visitors to the Heritage Centre.

Curating this exhibition has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my time at the Heritage Centre. What began as a creative project evolved into a successful exhibition that attracted a large number of enthusiastic visitors, something clearly reflected in the overwhelming amount of feedback we received. For many residents, it was special to see familiar corners of IIT Madras captured so beautifully. Freshers got to see parts of the campus they had never heard of—places that were once important but no longer exist.

And for alumni, the exhibition brought back a lot of vivid memories and stories that had been tucked away for years. For me, this whole process has been a reminder that exhibitions don't need to be grand or complicated to make an impact. Sometimes, it's the simple, honest stories told through familiar places and personal connections that stay with people the longest.

Feedback on the exhibition

"Exemplary work! Feels like the campus is live in front of us. Each painting has a life and story to say. Good luck to both great artists."

"Such colourful and tasteful celebration of the campus, Kudos to the artistic duo!"

"Awestruck. Can't get enough of it"

"Nostalgic, calm, and peaceful to look at. Amazing!"



German Consul General Dr. Kathrin Misera-Lang visits the exhibition with her son on 11 April 2025



Diya Mariam Satheesh

is a Project Associate at the Heritage Centre of IIT Madras. An artist and a nature enthusiast. Currently working on developing exhibits for the nature section of the Heritage Centre. Diya enjoys exploring different art mediums. Her strength lies in creating portraits.

A CV so Long

DR. M. K. RANJITSINH AT
HERITAGE CENTRE DAY 2025



Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh before his talk at IC&SR

It all started with the question of the white blackbuck of IIT Madras. You do see a white individual on campus occasionally, rather startlingly different in appearance from animals conforming to the normal colour patterns of the species. I had read somewhere that white blackbuck had been introduced to the 'Guindy Forest' decades back by the Governor, who was the Maharaja of Bhavnagar. Was this story true? What prompted the introduction of these snowy animals?

A little research produced some details: 'Twelve head of white blackbuck were introduced into the Guindy Park in 1956,' said the source. But more questions were raised. Maharaja Krishna Kumarsinhji Bhavsinhji had been Governor of Madras from 1948 to 1952. So he could not have introduced the blackbuck into the park during his governorship. What really happened? A search for further information led me to the autobiographical *A Life with Wildlife*, by M. K. Ranjitsinh.

I must admit that my initial browsing of the book was so rapid and so focused on the white blackbuck of Guindy that I missed realising then just how astonishing the story of the author was. Another reading, and reading between the lines, was needed to get a better understanding.

Born in **1939**, M. K. Ranjitsinh hails from the **royal family of Wankaner**, in Gujarat. During a career as an IAS officer, he shaped wildlife protection laws and policies, particularly the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. He created many new sanctuaries and expanded several protected areas, particularly in central India. His book is a chronicle of India's conservation journey from princely hunting traditions to modern wildlife protection.

When Dr. Ranjitsinh worked for a Ph.D., his subject was the blackbuck. He had published a book based on his research, and of course I had to refer to it. I found that the book was out of print. And my search led me to the author himself, who kindly contributed a spare copy to the Heritage Centre.

As I went through Dr. Ranjitsinh's books, the realisation developed that we should invite him—given his achievements and his expertise on one of IIT Madras's iconic wild animals—to give a talk at the institute. And in short, Dr. Ranjitsinh accepted my invitation to address us on Heritage Centre Day.

In my remarks at the beginning of the event, I pointed out a discovery of mine: that IIT Madras and Dr. Ranjitsinh had a connection that went back decades—IIT Madras had developed and tested concrete sleepers to replace the wooden sleepers used in railway tracks, and the initiative to reduce the extraction of timber from forests for producing sleepers had originated from M. K. Ranjitsinh!

Prof. Susy Varughese, introducing the speaker, pointed out that his bio served to show just how much an individual can achieve within a lifetime. In fact, she restricted herself to reading just excerpts from the CV!

Dr. Ranjitsinh began by saying he had been asked to talk about his life but would talk about conservation, dismissing his own life as of less importance than conservation.

“I don't think the blackbuck is as safe anywhere outside the Bishnoi community areas in the whole of the country as it is in this place.”



With Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras

Heartwarming was M. K. Ranjitsinh's message about the blackbuck in IIT Madras: 'I don't think the blackbuck is as safe anywhere outside the Bishnoi community areas in the whole of the country as it is in this place.'

So too was what he said our country: 'There is no country in the world where it is easier to save nature than it is in India.'

He kept the audience enthralled.

Comments from those who had been in the audience after the event indicate the effect Dr. Ranjitsinh's presence and talk had on them:

'Totally floored ... what a man!!'

'Can only agree ... what a giant!!'

'A rare gem .. we may not come across such humans in this generation or in future ... such knowledge, passion and full of life.'







Prof. Susy Varughese introduces the speaker



Mrs. Mamata Dash presents the vote of thanks



Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh delivers his talk during Heritage Centre Day 2025



Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh shows the audience some of his recent photographs



Kumaran Sathasivam

is an alumnus (B.Tech, 1985; M.S., 1989). He is the operational head of the Heritage Centre. Soon after his student days, his prize-winning book *A Forest in the City*, about his experiences with nature on the IIT Madras campus, was published. Kumaran is the author of IITM's coffee table book, *Campaschimes*. He has written a number of other books also.

The Heritage Square

POETRY / CLASSIFIED DIVERTISEMENTS



This poem, written by Baladiya Suri, was inspired by a walk on Madras Avenue in 2023, when the poet visited IIT Madras. An alumnus from the 2006 Engineering Physics batch, Suri began writing poems as a student of IITM. He wrote his first poem when he was in Ganga Hostel.

The Walk

Baladiya Suri

On this misty winter morn,
In the stillness of a sleepy dawn,
As the leaves awash with morning dew
Await the sun, to bask in the golden hue,
Through winding trails of green memories
Of times spent in youthful reveries,
In the shade of the timeless giants,
Their arching boughs and brooding countenance,
My every breath is a whispering prayer,
My every step draws my self near.



The Rain Remembers

Bhuva

How often do you look at the trees above?
We breathe with them, the air around us,
yet we pay no heed to their pleas and cries.
How often do you listen to the sound of rain?

We used to rush outside and play about
under the trees in the rain — but now
we greet it with a weary dread.

When did you last take a
stroll down Bonn Avenue,
soaking in the smells and sights,
under a light drizzle,
hoping the road never ends?

There is a quiet stillness in the dark stretches
of the roads here. A walk is more than just a walk;
it is a meditation of the things that happened
and the things that didn't.

This path holds countless memories —
some still rustle in the boughs of the trees
while others lie trodden under footsteps
Maybe not all were meant to stay,
but the rain remembers them all the same.



The Heritage Square

CLASSIFIED DIVERTISEMENTS

WARNING: TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY MAY RESULT IN RAISED EYEBROWS AND MILD CONFUSION.

PLUMBERS NEEDED

The Heritage Centre is taking interns for a two-month period during the Northeast Monsoon season. They must be skilled in plumbing activities in order to cater to the leaky walls in the staff room. Wall diapers have been utilized but to no avail. The leakage is ferocious, especially during the rainy season. The interns shall receive a stipend of one postcard per month. For queries, contact the Heritage Centre.

- Anonymous

GAJENDRA MISSING

One of the Gajendras has been kidnapped and taken to a neighbouring state for a festival by unknown miscreants. Residents are requested to exercise patience until the beloved elephant is recovered by officials.

- Elephant Enthusiast

LOOKING FOR A LIFE PARTNER

I am looking for a life partner. For more details, I will be waiting on top of one of the elephants at GC on 17 July 2025 at 5:32 pm IST. Come and see me. Partners will be selected on a first-come-first-serve basis.

- Single Jingle Wingle

ALSO LOOKING FOR A LIFE PARTNER

I am also looking for a life partner. For more details, I will be waiting under the bridge outside Watsa on 17 July 2025 at 5:31 pm IST. Come and see me first. Partners will be selected on a first-come-first-serve basis.

- Jangle Sangle Bangle



SUBMIT

your entries for the July 2025 issue!

EARN

₹500 per entry if you get selected!

LOST & FOUND

Lost: Sense of wonder, last seen after realizing that planetary alignment doesn't mean planets will form a glowing line in the night sky.

If found, please return to the nearest Astro Club member gently explaining retrograde motion for the 9th time.

- Kavin Chakaravarthy

MISSING

Orion's Belt

Item Description: Three stars in a straight line (allegedly).

Last seen confidently pointed at by someone who later admitted they were actually pointing at an airplane.

Reward: A green laser pointer with fresh batteries (never point that to an airplane).

- Kavin Chakaravarthy

HELP!

Addicted to the egg puff in Usha Café. Need someone to help me get over this addiction and transition to chicken puff.

- Yegg Pups Lover

FILTER COFFEE - AN UNFILTERED OPINION

I was told that Madras is known for its filter coffee. I am highly disappointed that in my quest for a decent cup of filter coffee in Insti, I have encountered several counterfeit remakes of filter coffee, including hot brown froth, hot brown water, sugar water and brown water, but not a single cup of filter coffee!

- Uncaffeinated Critter

TO RAIN OR NOT TO RAIN

Of late, the weather has been having mood swings. Rain, sun, clouds, humidity have been alternating in no particular sequence. At least, the summer was not too harsh on us this time!

- Nooneasksformyopinionbutigiveit

CHEF WANTED

I'm tired of cooking everyday. I am looking for a chef who can make Italian, Japanese, South and North Indian, West Indian, Mexican, Continental, African, American, and all the other cuisines in the world. I will need 6 meals a day with a different cuisine for each meal. I pay 100 rupees per month. Am I asking too much for too less? I think not!!!

- Hungry 4Ever

Amusing Museum Musings

COMIC STRIPS FROM THE STAFF ROOM OF THE
HERITAGE CENTRE



Visitors to the Centre

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS TO THE
HERITAGE CENTRE IN MARCH AND APRIL 2025.



"Thank you for a fascinating tour of the rich history of IIT Madras. Regards from Germany."

Dr. Frank Ohme

Max Planck Institute for Gravitational
Physics, Germany
04 March 2025



"Thank you for the warm welcome of our delegation from the University of Würzburg. We are deeply impressed, feel extremely honoured and look forward to our continued and deepening collaboration."

Prof. Doris Fischer

Vice President, Internationalisation and
Alumni, University of Würzburg, Germany
06 March 2025



"This is my first visit to India. I feel very honored to be in Madras for my first Indian university experience."

Prof. Noriko Hasebe

Kanazawa University, Japan
10 March 2025

“Happy to have visited IIT Madras for a classical music concert. Got many insights into IIT Madras after visiting Heritage Centre. Would visit again.”

Pt. Sanjeev Abhyankar

Hindustani classical music vocalist

12 March 2025



“Very impressive to see and hear all about our long-standing connections between IIT Madras & German institutions. New avenues are being explored. Let’s carry this into the next generation”

Dr. Kathrin Misera-Lang

German Consul General

14 March 2025



“Knowledge will be the common property of the people. This quote by Mahatma Gandhi mentioned by President Lübke during laying of foundation stone is more true than ever. Let’s build on this strong relationship with Germany and make it even stronger. Excellent exhibit!”

Prof. Thomas Walther

Vice President, Technical University of Darmstadt

17 March 2025



“Touched by the humility and extraordinary display with care and concern. Keep it up.”

Prof. Asheesh Srivastava

Inter-University Centre for Teacher Education,

Banaras Hindu University

21 March 2025





Delegates

University of Paris-Saclay
21 March 2025



"Nice introduction to history of IIT Madras. Great"

Prof. Tsung-Yu Huang

Ming Chi University of Technology, Taiwan
02 April 2025



"Thank you very much for this nice visit."

Prof. Jean-Baptiste Arnithier

Director, Centrale Nantes, France
07 April 2025



Admiral Radhakrishnan Hari Kumar

25th Chief of the Naval Staff
26 April 2025



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is a Project Associate at the Heritage Centre of IIT Madras. An artist and a nature enthusiast. Currently working on developing exhibits for the nature section of the Heritage Centre. Diya enjoys exploring different art mediums. Her strength lies in creating portraits.



News BITES

Latest news from the Heritage Centre

May 2025

C. V. Saha, *Campastimes* cartoonist, interviewed



Kumaran Sathasivam, C. V. Saha, Bhuvanesh Santharam, and Mamata Dash

On 3 March 2025, Kumaran Sathasivam, Senior Manager, Heritage Centre, and Bhuvanesh Santharam, Senior Content Writer, Heritage Centre, sat down for an oral history interview with C. V. Saha, an alumnus from the second (1965) batch of IIT Madras.

Saha, a cartoonist for the student-run magazine *Campastimes*, shared his journey as a student at IIT Madras. He spoke about his interest in cartoons, theatre and gave the interviewers an idea of what campus life was like in the initial years of the institute's formation.

At the end of the interview, Saha handed some of his caricatures to the Heritage Centre for preservation. The interview was recorded and uploaded to YouTube.



Kumaran Sathasivam, C. V. Saha and Bhuvanesh Santharam



Team Heritage Centre with C. V. Saha and his wife



Kumaran Sathasivam, Bhuvanesh Santharam and C. V. Saha



The interview can be viewed by scanning this QR code. It is available on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EESJJWlpuBc>

Exhibition about C. V. Saha to be held at Heritage Centre

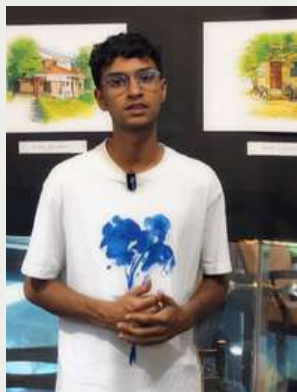
An exhibition featuring C. V. Saha's caricatures and photographs will be held at the Heritage Centre in June. Saha, a second batch alumnus from the Mechanical Engineering Department, graduated in 1965. Hailing from a humble family in Kerala, Saha made an indelible mark in IIT Madras's rich history. He contributed immensely to Campastimes, a popular student magazine, caricaturing prominent administrative, academic and celebrity figures. Some of the personalities he drew were the Director Prof. B. Sengupto, the Registrar Mr. R. Natarajan, Prof. V. Anantaraman, Prof. W. Scheer, the Nawab of Pataudi, and many more. Saha was also a theatre enthusiast, taking part in several play productions at IIT Madras during his student days. Photographs from his plays will also be displayed during the exhibition.

The exhibition will be on display at the central dome of the Heritage Centre.



A caricature of Prof. V. Anantaraman by C. V. Saha

Art workshop to be conducted as part of IIT Madras on Canvas exhibition



Aryan J. M. and B. S. Ganesh

IIT Madras on Canvas, an exhibition featuring paintings by campus residents B. S. Ganesh and Aryan J. M. has been running in the central dome for a couple of months now.

The Heritage Centre plans to organize an art workshop, wherein participants can interact with the artists and pick up some knowledge and skills from the experts.

More details about the workshop will be posted on the official Heritage Centre Instagram account @heritage_iitm.

Treasure Hunt and Classified Divertisements winners awarded prizes at Heritage Centre Day 2025



Prof. P. Sriram presents a prize to one of the Classified Divertisements winners Ashita Yedida (MS student)

The winners of the Heritage Treasure Hunt 2025 and the Classified Divertisements Contest were awarded prizes during the Heritage Centre Day event held on 19 March 2025 at IC&SR.

Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh delivered a talk titled Eight Decades and More with Wildlife during the event.



Treasure Hunt winners: Nivedha, Vaibhavi, Sudiksha and Astha.



Chemplast Cricket Ground (above) and Gurunath Stores (below) by Aryan J. M.



HERITAGE CENTRE



WANTS

YOU

**Send in your articles, art, poems and more to get featured
in the next issue of *Glass Panels*!**



YOU

**Cannot miss
these mugs!
Available at the
Heritage Centre!!**

"What is the use trying to describe the flowing of a river at any one moment, and then at the next moment, and then at the next, and the next, and the next? You wear out. You say 'There is a great river and it flows through this land, and we have named it History'."

- Ursula K. Le Guin



Well, well, well! Mr. Saha, you have finally been caricatured!
Thank you for the inspiration! ❤️

To know more about the work we do,
SCAN THE QR CODES:



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Instagram at
@heritage_iitm



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Stay up to date with the latest events, activities and exhibitions through our social media pages. Schedule visits by writing to the official email or by calling us!



Heritage Centre
IIT Madras

