

MADRAS
DAY
SPECIAL!

Heritage Centre, IIT Madras presents

Volume Issue 5

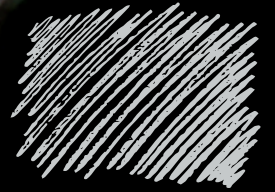
Glass Panels



Heritage Centre
IIT Madras



20



EVERGREEN DESTINATIONS

HEMA RAVI

INSIDE

*A Moment from the
March Past*
THIRUPURASUNDARI

Lessons of Language
H. K. PANIGRAHI

Symphony in the Open Gym
JYOTI SAHU

IIT Madras Heritage Tours
PRABHAKARAN S.
RAVI N.
SRIKANTH V.
SUSHMITHA S.
DIYA M. S.

Remembering Ebby Sargunar
BHUVANESH

GLASS PANELS



Scan the QR code to read all the issues of *Glass Panels* on your device!



ABOUT US

Glass Panels is the Heritage Centre's bi-monthly magazine. Over the last few years, it has gained immense popularity among alumni, campus residents and students. The magazine contains articles, poems, cartoons and much, much more. If you haven't got the opportunity to read this publication, it is never too late! Scan the QR code shared on this page and flip away!

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Acknowledgements

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Admission photograph of Ebby
Sargunar - Courtesy: **Archive of
IIT Madras** (Mr. R. Gopinath,
Mr. S. Singaravel)



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

September 2025 - Volume 3 Issue 5

01

Letter from the Editor

Bhuvanesh Santharam

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

02

Remembering Ebby Sargunar

Bhuvanesh Santharam

"The Heritage Centre mourns the loss of Ebby Sargunar, a gentleman whose presence will always be etched in the history of IIT Madras."

05

Evergreen Destinations

Hema Ravi

"As an individual whose childhood was spent on the IIT campus, the mention of 'Gajendra Circle' and the 'Open Air Theatre' fills me with nostalgia."

09

Madras Week 2025

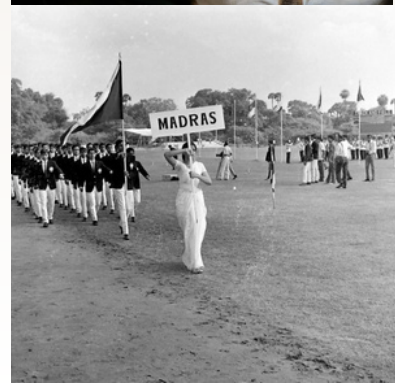
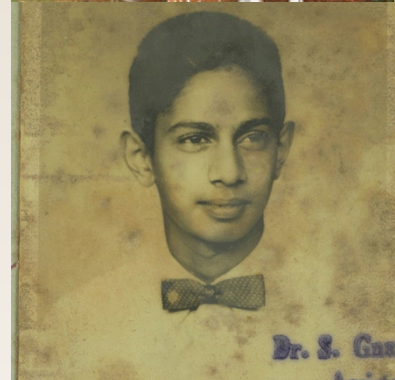
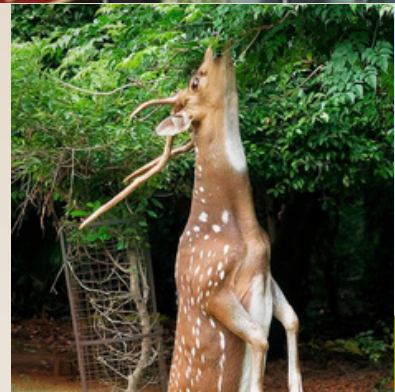
Ravi Neelakantan, Srikanth V., Prabhakaran Sambandam, Sushmitha Sathasivam, Diya Mariam Satheesh
IIT Madras Heritage Tours in pictures.

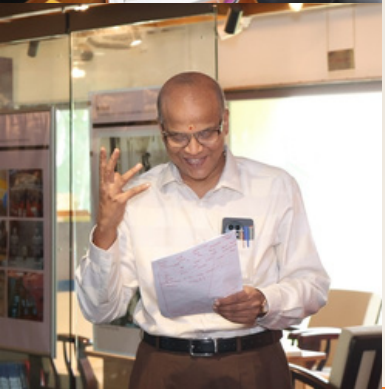
19

A Moment from the March Past

Thirupurasundari Sevel

"While someone wished me for Madras Day recently, this image suddenly came to mind - vivid, striking, and quietly powerful. I had first seen it at the IIT Madras Heritage Centre, tucked among artefacts and archives that narrate the institution's journey. But it wasn't just an institutional moment - it was a Madras moment."





Lessons of Language

H. K. Panigrahi

"Sometime in 1968, I was invited to participate in a Tamil skit for a cultural program at the Open Air Theatre. By then, I had won several bodybuilding and weightlifting competitions, and some friends had started calling me "Mr. IIT."

21

The Heritage Square

Jyoti Banishree Sahu

Symphony in the Open Gym, Classified Divertissements

23

Visitors to the Centre

Left Hook Lokesh

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

25

News Bites

Snappy the Snail

Find out what has been going on at the Heritage Centre in the last couple of months!

28

Creative Writing

Chakravarthy Balaji

"Ideas rule the world and these need to be expressed. The expression need not be restricted only to creative writing. Rather the expression extends to objects, devices, laws, rules, regulations and policies."

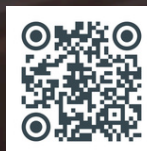
31

EXPLORE THE HERITAGE CENTRE VIRTUALLY!



TAKE A
VIRTUAL
TOUR

Scan this QR
code to check
out our
website!



Our readers write...

in response to *Glass Panels* July 2025

Seven Years to Glory and Beyond



"Great write up, Sashi! Your passion for the topic shines through. Happens to mention Vece Paes too — recently passed away as noted. The publication (*Glass Panels*) is a revelation to me. Good one."

- K. Narayanaswamy, B.Tech., 1978 batch

"What a great read! Thanks, Sashi."

- Kalyan Raman, B.Tech., 1982 batch

"Thanks for sharing, Sashi. Wonderful to read your hockey writeup. And also introducing *Glass Panels*."

- Sandesh Savant, B.Tech., 1976 batch

"Wow! That's a stunning magazine to be published (monthly?). With the quality, effort and hard work, I didn't expect it to be monthly."

- Bhav Virdi, MBA, 2004 batch

"Very nice, Sashi, and the story of the first Inter IIT gold is definitely worth recording and remembering.. The first time is the most important, as it increases the self belief exponentially."

- Ramesh Natrajan, B.Tech., 1978 batch

"Very well written..... a truly nostalgic ride down memory lane."

- B. Chandrasekhar, B.Tech., 1974 batch

"Sashi, thanks for the journey to the past."

- D. A. Muthana, B.Tech., 1971 batch

"Great article, Sashi!"

- Rahul Mishra, B.Tech., 1979 batch

"I found time to read your article today. What a great read! You helped me remember many names of that era."

- Indrajit Banerjee, B.Tech., 1970 batch

"Sashi, thanks for the journey to the past, and taking us down memory lane. Beautiful article about your hockey experiences."

- Prashant Kathait, current IITM Hockey Captain

Insti Through a Macro Lens



"Macro lens is amazing! Unbelievable photography."

- Srividhya Sridharakumar, Carnatic vocalist, and teacher, alumna of 2005 batch

Send us your
feedback!



Letter from the EDITOR

The July issue of *Glass Panels* was a huge hit. From Kavin's stunning macro photographs to Sashi Rao's nostalgic story about hockey glory, the magazine drew the attention of the IIT Madras community. Many lauded the writers' efforts and gave us some encouraging feedback. I had to shift the 'Our readers write...' column to a separate page in order to accommodate all feedback!

The last few months have been eventful to say the least. In August, we had the IIT Madras Heritage Tours as a part of Madras Week. We hosted more than 300 participants over two weekends. When we announced the tours this time around, the registrations were overwhelming. More than 500 registrants in the span of just a few hours! We received hundreds of images from the heritage tours. Unfortunately, due to dearth of space, we could not publish all of them. A few have been selected for publication.

Five of us from the Heritage Centre team visited five museums in Bengaluru between 29 and 31 July 2025. A brief account of this has been included in this issue. On 19 August, the Wodehouse-Asimov-Christie Awards were distributed at the Heritage Centre. Details are provided in the 'News Bites' section of this issue.

On 12 July 2025, our teammate Jabaraj captured a memorable moment of Prof. M. S. Ananth, former Director of IIT Madras and one of the visionaries behind the Heritage Centre, reading an issue of *Glass Panels*. It is truly rewarding to see our leaders and innovators finding time to engage with the magazine in the Heritage Centre's reading room.

- **Bhuvanesh Santharam** (September 2025)



Prof. M. S. Ananth at the Heritage Centre. Photo: Jabaraj J.

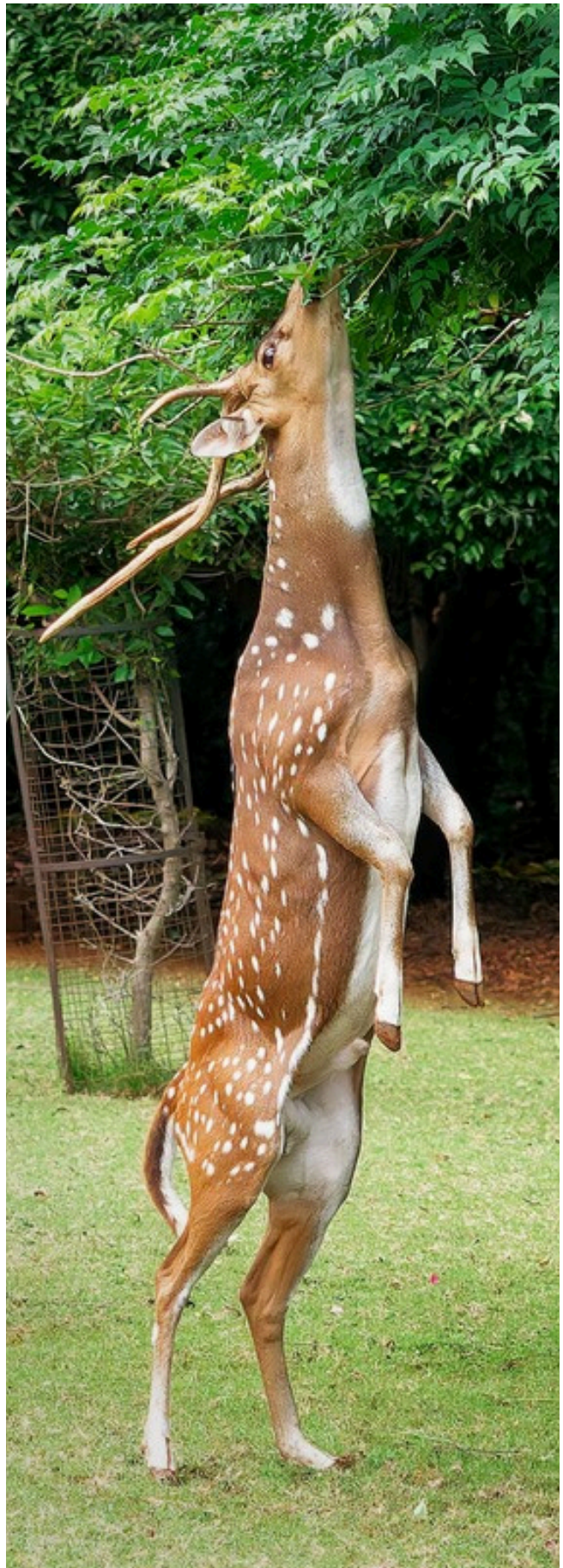


Photo: Ravi Neelakantan

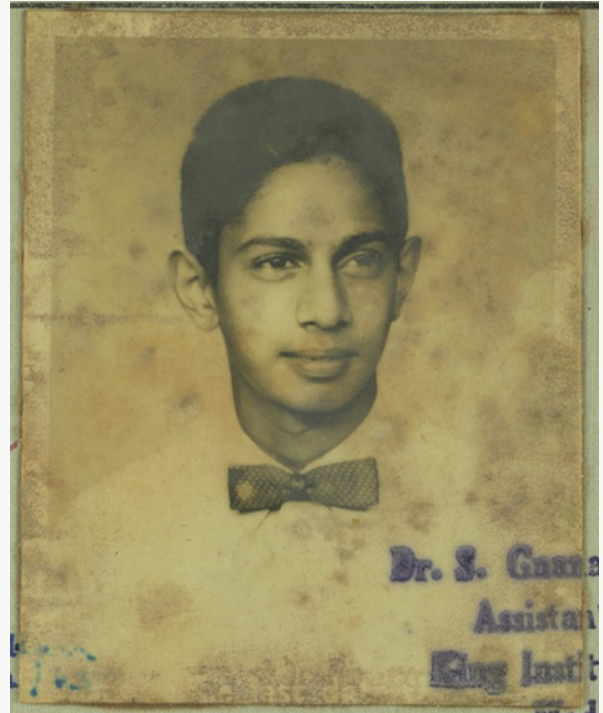
Remembering Ebby Sargunar

24 JUNE 1946 - 18 JULY 2025

John Ebenezer Thiagarajan Sargunar, better known as Ebby Sargunar, passed away on 18 July 2025. The Heritage Centre mourns the loss of Ebby Sargunar, a gentleman whose presence will always be etched in the history of IIT Madras.

Before joining IIT Madras, Ebby attended Madras Christian College High School (MCC HS) and Loyola College for his pre-university studies. During his time at MCC HS, he was an active member of the NCC, attending regular sessions. He also played on the softball team and enjoyed cricket, tennis, and table tennis. Additionally, Ebby distinguished himself as an exceptional swimmer, earning multiple medals for his achievements in the sport.

Ebby Sargunar was an active member of the School Social Service League and won a certificate for the best transistor radio exhibit at the Science Fair (1961–62), organized by the Extension Services Department of St. Christopher's Training College, Vepery, Madras.



Admission photo of Ebby. Courtesy: Archive of IIT Madras.



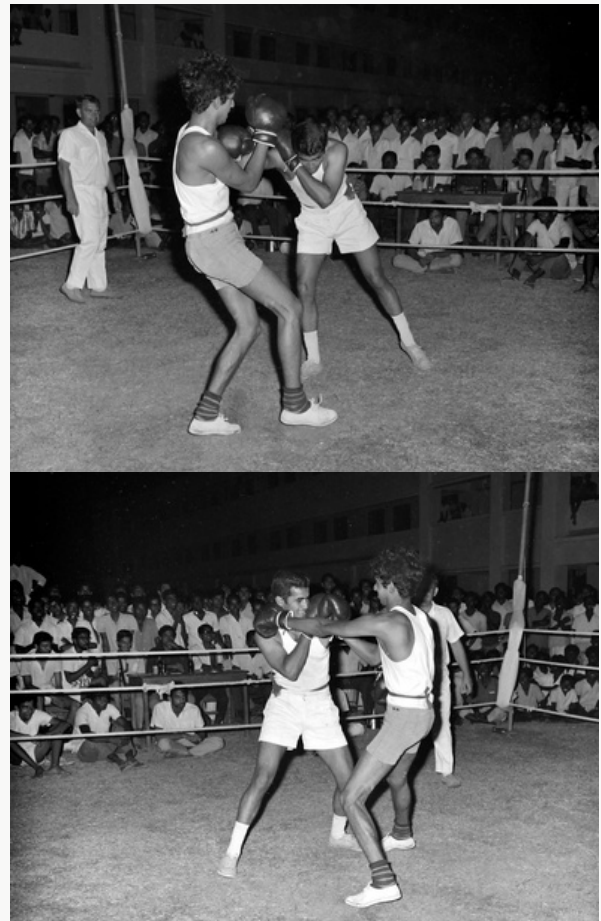
ACID performing at the Open Air Theatre, 1969. From left to right: Ebby Sargunar, Rashad Mohamed, Ashley Solomon, Ranjan Kelly, Allan Satyadev. Source: Ranjan Kelly

Ebby's father, Mr. A. H. Sargunar, a chemical engineer, worked as a General Manager for glue and sulphuric acid factories at Shaw Wallace & Company Ltd. in Parry's Corner, George Town. Not many details are available about Ebby's father. A quick Google search revealed a report published by the Bureau of Indian Standards (previously Indian Standards Institution). The report, titled *Specification for Permanent Rubber-Based Adhesives for Footwear Industry*, confirmed that Mr. A. H. Sargunar was a member of the Adhesives Sectional Committee. The committee, comprising of representatives from various companies, was responsible for developing the Indian Standard IS 4663:1968 for permanent rubber-based adhesives used in the footwear industry.

Returning to Ebby Sargunar, his journey was no less remarkable. He was a pioneering musician, sportsperson and alumnus from the 1969 Electrical Engineering batch. He will always be remembered as one of the founding members of the Beat-X, IIT Madras's first jazz band formed in 1963. The name of the band Beat-X is not only a pun on the word B. Techs, but is also derived from the popular band The Beatles.

Ebby Sargunar, Alfred D'Souza and Mohit Goyal began casually jamming and strumming guitars in their hostel. When the warden overheard them playing, he asked them to perform at the upcoming annual hostel event. They obliged, roping in Jimmy Jayaraman, their classmate who played drums. This was the first line up of what was to become the Beat-X.

They initially played songs by The Beatles and The Shadows before shifting to jazz. Ebby went beyond performing music. A gifted guitarist and bassist, he also built instruments for his classmates. He hand-crafted a bass guitar modeled on his Höfner at a time when electric guitars were almost impossible to find in Chennai. His innovation and passion for music helped shape the sound of the Beat-X, which evolved from covering The Beatles and The Shadows, to performing distinctive renditions of jazz classics like Take Five and Desafinado. Ebby continued to contribute to the band as it transitioned into a band called ACID, focusing on folk rock, inspired by Bob Dylan and Simon and Garfunkel. During a time when students did not have access to formal music lessons, Ebby taught himself music by ear, listening to records over and over to master each note. In many ways, Ebby Sargunar's creative journey embodied the innovative spirit of IIT Madras.



Ebby the Boxer - Top Photo: Ebby Sargunar (left) vs Monishi Sanyal, 1969. Bottom Photo: Ebby Sargunar (right) vs Monishi Sanyal, 1969.



ACID performing at the Open Air Theatre, 1969. From left to right: Rashad Mohamed, Ranjan Kelly, Ashley Solomon, Ebby Sargunar. Source: Ranjan Kelly

Ebby Sargunar will be missed by all those who knew him. He was a passionate family man, enduring friend, elite Indian rower and a charismatic musician. He was also an internationally renowned engineer and innovator.



Rowing: Front to back or left to right are Indrajit Ray (Bow), Umesh Dutta, M. M. Sanyal, Ebby Sargunar (Stroke), Anag Chatterji (Cox). Source: Monishi Sanyal

Let me introduce to you the members of the crew. Stroke: John Ebenczer Thiagarajar Sargunar. Affectionately known by all as Ebbie. This lean and wiry six footer weighs 135 lbs. He took over as the club stroke where Pritam 'Pinda' Kapur left off. Though the job of the Stroke is the most difficult one, he is supposed to keep the rating and guide the other crew members; Ebbie pulls off this job with finesse. He was recently awarded the 1966 cup for the best oarsman in Madras. This was in recognition of his achievement in winning all the senior events in the Cold Weather Regatta, the Sculls, Pairs (with the Bow of the four, Nayyar) and of course the four. Ebbie is a fourth year student of L. C. and plays the guitar for the Beat-X. His talent for designing and assembling powerful electronic amplifiers that do not work is well known.

He is best known as the Don Juan of the Club. Every Regatta, a touch of color and glamour is added by a bevy of beautiful girls rooting for IIT with their high pitched voices. These young ladies are especially brought from the city colleges by Ebbie.



The Victorious Four (from L. to R) Dutta, Nayyar, Ebby, & Reddy.

An excerpt (Left) from a December 1966 Campastimes article describing Ebby Sargunar and an image (Above) featuring Ebby.



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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Evergreen Destinations

ECHOES OF NATURE IN AN URBAN LANDSCAPE



Gajendra Circle, IIT Madras

Photo: Rav Neelakantan

Heritage Walks attract people, both young and old, who are interested in understanding local history, traditions, culture, architecture, and life in general. This awareness helps foster empathy and tolerance toward people, places, and the environment.

Madras Day, which began in 2004 was the brainchild of two journalist-activists, Vincent D'Souza and Sashi Nair. They desired the past to come alive for the people, and invited S. Muthiah, a renowned historian, to reveal the city's history through heritage walks. The walks covered colonial landmarks such as Fort St. George, the Indo-Saracenic Senate House, and other architectural gems that are the pride of Madras – Chennai, as Madras is known today. What began as a small local event has grown into a month-long heritage festival throughout August, a month already rich with holidays and other religious festivities.

Undoubtedly, heritage walks serve as a valuable tool for education, community building, and cultural preservation. In recent years, the celebration has grown considerably, with more events and happenings. Several events are now organized, including photo exhibitions, cultural talks, poetry readings, food festivals, and music programs. These programs bring people from diverse backgrounds together and foster a sense of community. By educating people about these traditions and legacies, the festival helps build a better community that understands the importance of preserving them for future generations.

This year, my spouse and I had the opportunity to participate in two such heritage tours– one, conducted by the Heritage Centre of the illustrious Indian Institute of Technology (IITM), and the other, by the MS Swaminathan Institute of Scientific Research (MSSRF).

The MSSRF walk, led by architect-planner Ms. Thirupurasundari Sevvil, focused on the heritage buildings adjoining the MSSRF campus. These included the Dharmambal Polytechnic for Women, the Central Polytechnic for Men, and the Tamil Language University of Taramani.

She provided several examples from the city's growth to illustrate this concept. 'Poochi' Venkat, a well-known naturalist and insect photographer, joined the tour and shared some interesting points about the foundation's undisturbed ecosystem. He explained that this environment is particularly beneficial for a wide variety of insects and other tiny creatures.

A key point highlighted by the tour guide was that satellite towns often develop around academic institutions.

Interestingly, the IIT Madras campus is bordered by Taramani on one side and Velachery on the other. Established in 1959, with technical assistance from West Germany, it grew into one of the premier institutes in the country, known not only for its

academic excellence and cutting-edge research but also for its green environs in an urban landscape.

The sprawling campus, spanning over six hundred acres, was carved out of the Guindy National Park and is a protected forest area. It is home to a diverse array of wildlife, including blackbucks and spotted deer, providing a unique environment for students.

As an individual whose childhood was spent on the IIT campus, the mention of 'Gajendra Circle' and the 'Open Air Theatre' fills me with nostalgia. The leisurely ride in the battery-operated cars with guide Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam and his team members revealed several insights. The guide mentioned generous contributions from IITM alumni (most IITians have carved a niche for themselves on the international stage!) have helped fund various projects, including new indoor sports complexes, innovative buildings, and a significant facelift for the stadium.

At the Manohar Watsa stadium, the pair of leucistic black bucks was a fascinating sight; they, along with



Heritage Centre, IIT Madras

Photo: Ravi Neelakantan

other bucks and some spotted deer, were making the best use of the stadium as people were away. We enjoyed watching them, the spotted deer and the ubiquitous monkeys, all over the campus.

I must add that at the end of the tour, the participants were treated to delicious beverages and *vadas*. A tiny arboreal ancestor, attracted by the smell, was trying to enter the centre. It certainly amused us and prompted us to take pictures. The organizing team, however, had a tough time keeping it away.

Both heritage tours offered an enriching and immersive experience and left us asking for more. For me, IIT Madras was, is, and will always be 'heaven on earth.'



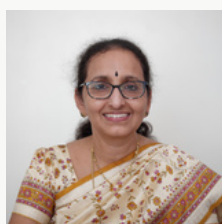
Tour of the Heritage Centre

Photo: Ravi Neelakantan



Gaining some key insights about IIT Madras from Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam during the Heritage Tour

Photo: Ravi Neelakantan



Hema Ravi

works part time as IELTS, Communicative English and soft skills trainer. She is a poet, author, reviewer, event organizer, editor (*Efflorescence*), and Secretary of the Chennai Poets' Circle. She has authored '*Joie De Vivre*,' '*The Cuckoo Sings Again*,' '*Everyday English*,' and '*Write Right Handwriting Series 1,2,3*.' She conducted Communicative English sessions (2023-2025), for rural girls of SheVil STEAM, an initiative of the students (IVILiitm). All the photographs in this article have been taken by N. Ravi. (retired IT professional, avid bird photographer & spiritual blogger).

HERITAGE

CULTURE

TRADITION

IDENTITY

386 YEARS



Photograph of the Central Railway Station at Madras (Chennai), Tamil Nadu, taken by Nicholas & Company in ca.1880.

HAPPY

MADRAS DAY

22 AUGUST 2025

On 22 August 1639, Madras was born. A sliver of land — where Fort St. George now stands — was transacted by the East India Company, marking the city's founding day. The idea of a 'Madras Day' was first suggested by Chennai-based journalists Vincent D'Souza and Sashi Nair. They pitched this idea to historian S. Muthiah in 2004. Now, Madras Day is celebrated with much enthusiasm every year in August. Heritage walks, photo-walks, music, art and many activities adorn the streets of the city that we all love.

Madras Week 2025

IIT Madras Heritage Tours

in pictures



RAVI NEELAKANTAN

MADRAS WEEK – IIT MADRAS HERITAGE TOURS 2025



Top: A Blackbuck and a Spotted Deer grazing.

Below: A 100-year-old date palm preserved during the demolition of the old Mandakini and construction of the new 10-storey building.



10 GLASS PANELS

SRIKANTH V.

MADRAS WEEK – IIT MADRAS HERITAGE TOURS 2025

Below: Fruit bats near the Sitara Indoor Sports Complex.





Above: A Blackbuck walks along the road as a Bonnet Macaque crosses with her baby.
Facing page: Portrait of a Blackbuck.



PRABHAKARAN SAMBANDAM

MADRAS WEEK – IIT MADRAS HERITAGE TOURS 2025

Below: Scenes from the IIT Madras campus.





Above (left): A colourful rangoli for Independence Day outside the Manohar C. Watsa Stadium. Above (right): A bust of Mr. K. Kamaraj at the Heritage Centre.



Above: Inside the Sudha & Shankar Innovation Hub.

SUSHMITHA, DIYA MARIAM

MADRAS WEEK – IIT MADRAS HERITAGE TOURS 2025

Below: Scenes from the heritage tours organized by the Heritage Centre.



Above: Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam (left) and Prof. Arun Menon (right) in conversation.



Above: A participant filling out a feedback form with her suggestions and comments.



Above, Below. Participants with Prof. Nilesh Vasa, one of the tour guides.



Above. Participants with Prof. M. S. Sivakumar, one of the tour guides.



Above: A participant fills out a feedback form.



Above: Participants filling out feedback forms with their suggestions and comments.



Above: Ms. Chitra Jain, one of the tour guides, gathers participants for a heritage tour around the campus.



Above: A participant filling out a feedback form with his suggestions and comments.



Above: A participant explores the Heritage Centre.

Below: Ms. Mamata Dash in conversation with a participant.



Below: Participants gathered at the Heritage Centre as part of the Heritage Tours.

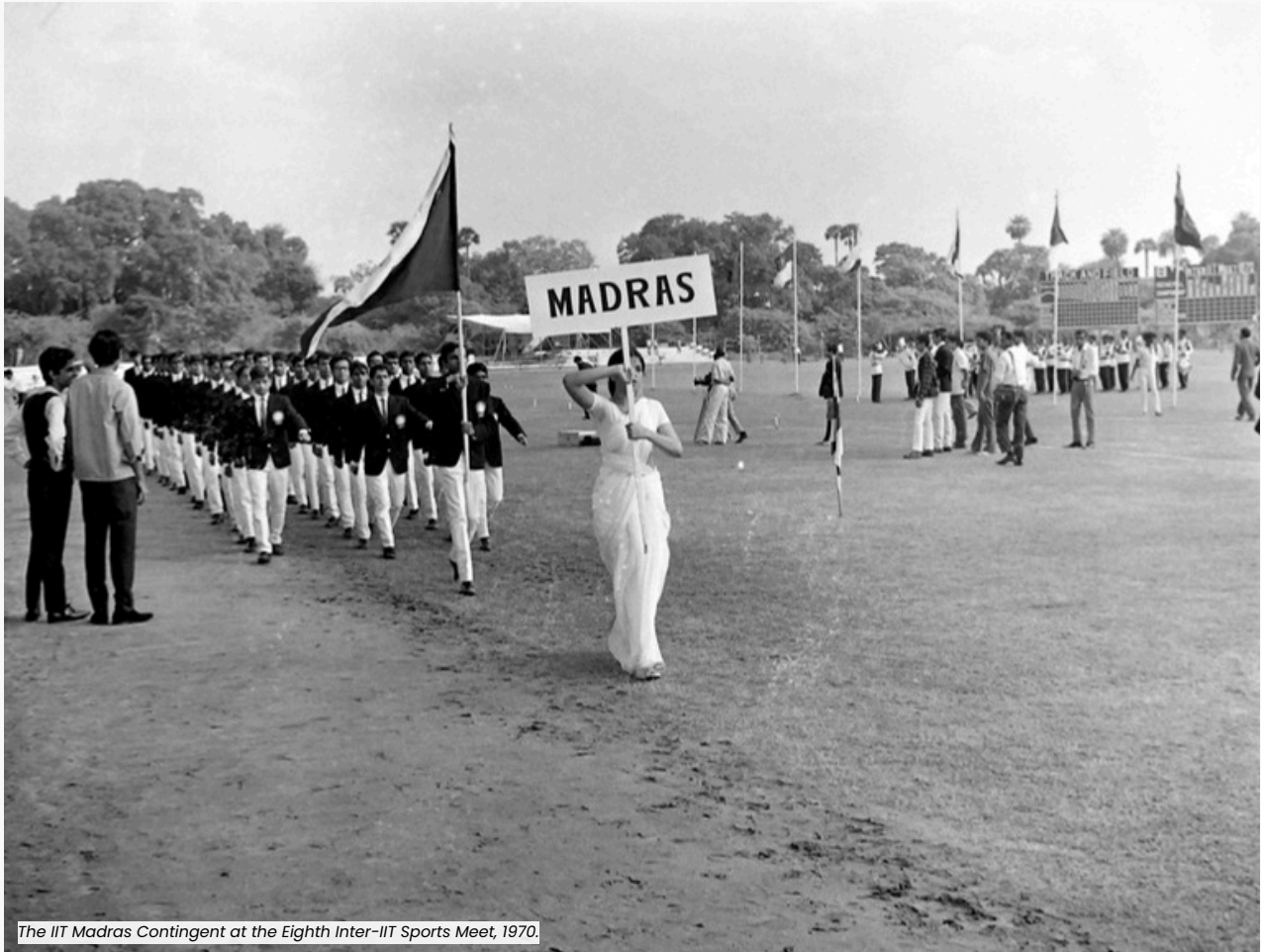


Below: Tour guides Ms. Ashita Yedida and Prof. Tarun K. Chandrayadula at the Heritage Centre.



A Moment from the March Past

MADRAS AT THE FOREFRONT



The IIT Madras Contingent at the Eighth Inter-IIT Sports Meet, 1970.

While someone wished me for Madras Day recently, this image suddenly came to mind – vivid, striking, and quietly powerful. I had first seen it at the IIT Madras Heritage Centre, tucked among artefacts and archives that narrate the institution’s journey. But it wasn’t just an institutional moment – it was a Madras moment.

In this black-and-white photograph, a young woman in a crisp white sari walks ahead, confidently carrying a board that simply reads “MADRAS.” Behind her, a line of sharply dressed men, all in blazers and white trousers, march in perfect sync. One carries the IIT Madras flag, held high and proud. The scene unfolds on a sports ground – during an Inter-IIT Sports Meet. In the background, other groups mill around, flags flutter, and a scoreboard looms silently.

There’s something deeply compelling in the simplicity of the composition. The woman leading the team, the marching students – they all radiate a calm sense of purpose, elegance, and dignity. You can almost feel the pride that came with representing IIT Madras – not just an institute or a city, but an idea. A place of learning, discipline, culture, and continuity.

At a time when India was shaping its identity in every sphere – from science and education to language and civic participation – this image reminds us of how IIT Madras quietly, yet steadily, led from the front.

Held on campus, the Inter-IIT Sports Meet was a proud event – IIT Madras won the General Championship that year. Interestingly, students were dressed in formals,

unlike today's sports uniforms. A full report of the event appears in the February 1971 edition of *Campastimes*, the student magazine.

That day in the Heritage Centre, the image caught my eye. But on Madras Day, it caught my memory. It reminded me that Madras is not just the city I live in or work for – it is something I carry within me. Always marching forward, with grace and grit.

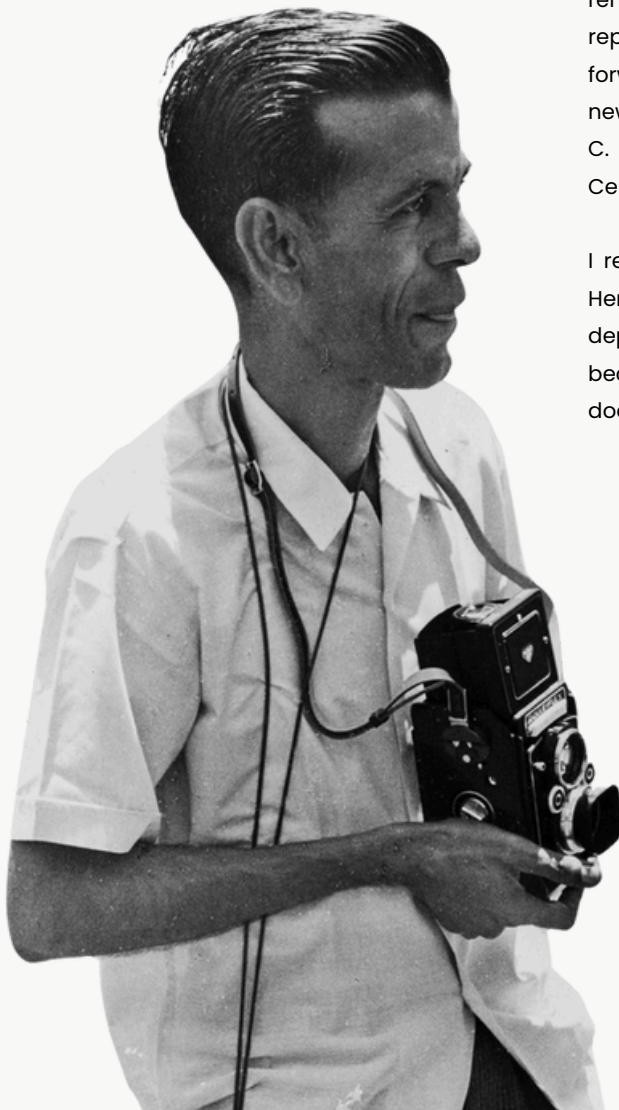
Thanks to editor Bhuvanesh Santharam for sharing more about the photograph, photographer and the occasion.

Note about the photographer :

C. Gourishankar (1936–2002), a geologist by training, transitioned into photography after years at the Geological Survey of India. Known for his pursuit of perfection, he brought meticulous planning and technical excellence into every frame. In the 1960s, he was the principal photographer documenting life at IIT Madras, capturing its milestones, moods, and everyday moments (from the website of the Heritage Centre).

Gourishankar's photographs are more than visual records; they are a vital archive of institutional memory, student life, and evolving culture. They remind us how photography can quietly become a repository of a city's or an institution's soul. I look forward to revisiting the Heritage Centre this time, with new eyes. *The Perfectionist*, a coffee-table book about C. Gourishankar, is now available at the Heritage Centre.

I recall seeing many images by Gourishankar at the Heritage Centre. Knowing his name and story adds depth to each frame, a reminder of how photography becomes more than an image; it becomes memory, documentation, and archive.



C. Gourishankar



The Perfectionist, a coffee table book about C. Gourishankar published by the Heritage Centre.

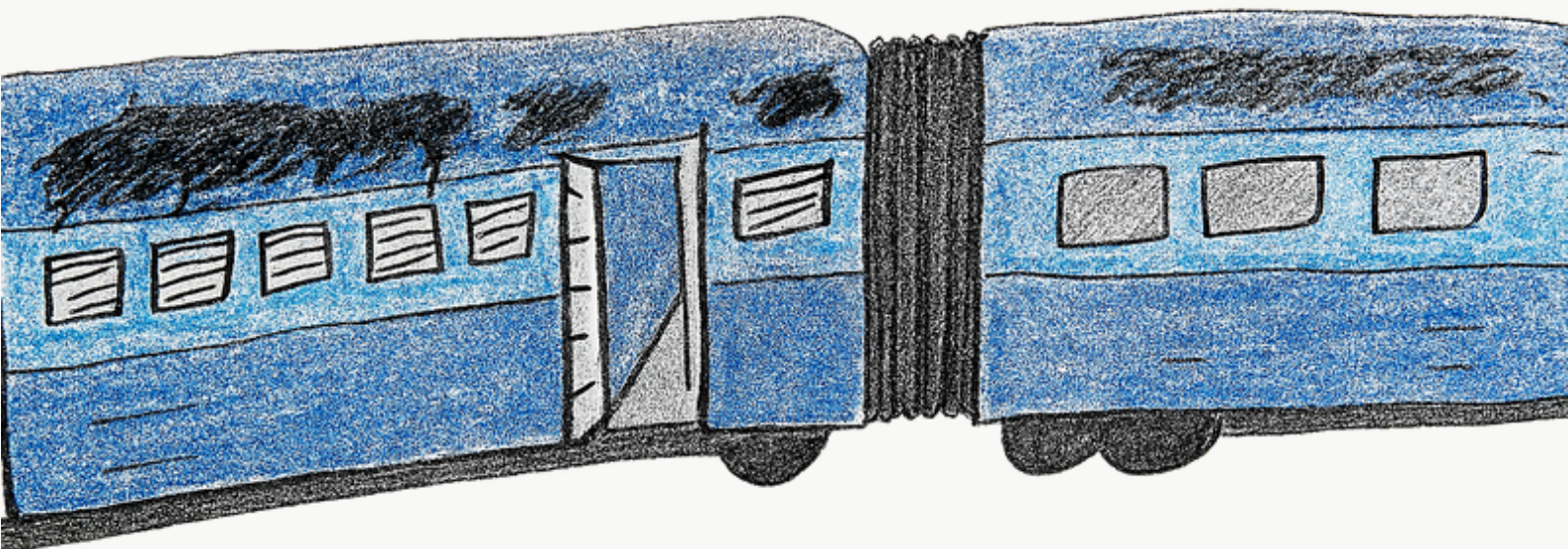


Thirupurasundari Sevel

is an architect-planner, author, storyteller, and historian. She is the founder of Nam Veedu Nam Oor Nam Kadhai, an initiative that explores heritage, history, and storytelling through exhibitions, workshops, and community projects. With a background in material restoration and conservation, her work focuses on documenting traditional design practices and creating inclusive, accessible urban spaces in collaboration with artisans, NGOs, and educational institutions.

Lessons of Language

MUSCLES, MEDIUMS, AND MULTILINGUAL MISHAPS



Language plays an important role in communication, cultural understanding, social connection, learning, and career opportunities. The need to learn a new language often arises from a specific purpose. The choice of the language in which a textbook is written is usually determined by its content and quality. During one's academic journey, students are often given several options to choose from, and selecting the right language can be crucial.

In my own education, several languages served as the medium of instruction at different stages. Most of my schooling up to class five in Odisha was in Odia, my mother tongue. There was also some exposure to English, Hindi, and Sanskrit. English was considered a global language, while Sanskrit helped connect with ancient Indian texts and traditions.

After class five, there was a significant shift in the medium of instruction to Hindi, following our relocation to Patna. English and Sanskrit remained part of the curriculum. Fortunately, learning Hindi took only a couple of months, as Hindi and Odia are both derived from Sanskrit and have similar scripts. I enjoyed learning Hindi—it opened up access to storybooks and magazines filled with colorful illustrations.

As a child, I found learning languages relatively easy. I picked up Bengali soon after, driven by a desire to read Bengali storybooks. I enjoyed Hindi literature as well. Bengali literature was rich, and Hindi literature was vast. However, I found South Indian languages quite



difficult to learn. My studies in Hindi-medium schools in Patna, Delhi, and Bhopal continued up to Class 12, the final year of the Higher Secondary course in Madhya Pradesh. For most subjects, the medium was sufficient, but in science—particularly Physics and Chemistry—I preferred English textbooks, which were more comprehensive. Many Hindi textbooks in science were merely translations of English ones, and often poorly done.

In 1961, my elder brother joined the B.Tech. program at IIT Bombay, where the entire course was in English. There was no Hindi in the curriculum. That sent a clear message: I needed to switch to English if I wanted to pursue higher studies. I applied for and received permission from the Board of Secondary Education, Madhya Pradesh, to write my Higher Secondary examination in English. This change came at the right time, as all my higher education—at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack and later at IIT Madras—was in English.

While I was studying in a Hindi-medium school in Bhopal, many believed that Hindi, being spoken by a large part of India's population, would eventually become the national language. Some even hoped higher education could be pursued in Hindi. Many of my friends bought into this belief and didn't prepare themselves to study in English. As a result, they struggled to gain access to professional courses. I took all my competitive entrance examinations for engineering colleges in English and eventually joined IIT Madras in 1964.

At IIT Madras, the medium of instruction was English, and English was also a compulsory subject in the first year. The B.Tech. curriculum offered options to learn foreign languages. I chose German in the second year, which was a great opportunity—especially since many engineering texts and research papers were originally written in German.

In early 1965, Madras city was rocked by a massive anti-Hindi agitation. Students from schools and colleges across southern states joined the movement. Many feared that if Hindi became the primary language of communication in government offices—as scheduled for 26 January 1965—it would hurt their chances of securing government jobs. Politically, this was seen as the imposition of Hindi, and there was a strong movement against it.

Students at IIT Madras did not participate in the agitation. Classes continued as usual. The campus

gates were closed to prevent city protesters from entering. News of the unrest worried some parents, and a few wanted their sons to return home. IIT authorities permitted students to travel home only by air, as train and road travel were deemed unsafe. Though IIT Madras students did not join the protests, they were not in favor of Hindi imposition. There were even jokes about how absurd it would be to teach engineering subjects in Hindi.

The effects of the agitation were evident during train travel. After the first year, we had summer vacations. When I went to Madras Central railway station to travel home to Cuttack, Odisha, I found it difficult to locate my compartment. Protesters had blackened all the Hindi signs on train coaches in the South, while pro-Hindi agitators in the North had blackened all English signs. I finally had to seek the help of a railway porter to find my reserved seat. When I returned to IIT Madras after the break, things had settled down. The agitation had passed.

Sometime in 1968, I was invited to participate in a Tamil skit for a cultural program at the Open Air Theatre. By then, I had won several bodybuilding and weightlifting competitions, and some friends had started calling me "Mr. IIT."

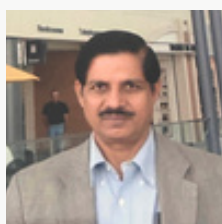
The skit imagined the creation of a Tamil empire where everyone spoke only Tamil. I had a brief but dramatic role. During a group discussion, when my character's name was called with the prefix "Mr.," I had to react angrily and deliver the line:

"Anbare, 'Mister' endru solathirkal, 'Thiru' endru solungal!"

("Dear friend, don't say 'Mister,' say 'Thiru' instead!")

I wore a tight T-shirt to suit the macho image of the role and to show off my muscles.

The skit was a hit, and even now—six decades later—that Tamil line remains one of my fondest memories.



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*.

The Heritage Square

POETRY

Symphony in the Open Gym

Beneath the gulmohar's crimson crown,
Where sunlight softly dapples down,
Our open gym, a vibrant space,
No rigid schedules, no hurried pace.

With diverse workouts side by side,
We enhance fitness with each rhythmic stride,
Our exercise journey, our personal quest,
In nature's lap, we find our best.

On dew-kissed grass, blackbucks freely prance,
Our fitness drive ignites, seeing their agile stance,
Fawns graze with steps so light and bright,
Inspiring our fitness run with full delight.

The scarlet petals of gulmohar sway and swirl,
Dancing slowly in Zephyr's gentle whirl,
A soft descent on the grassy floor,
Tranquil beauty meets strength once more.

Aloft in the sky, the palm trees stand tall,
Sharing mystic echoes of the emerald's call,
Of the verdant tapestry that surrounds the ground,
To the floating clouds and the birds joyfully flying around.

A symphony of sounds, birdsong sweet,
Keeps melody of leaves rustling at our feet,
Blends with the rhythm of hearts that beat,
And the clanging iron's metallic repeat.

The open sky with the Sun's golden glow,
Dispels the nights' residue and all aglow,
The promise of freshness in the morning air,
Brings untold might, a new hope beyond compare.

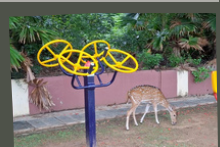
A natural haven where we all unite,
Friendship born each day in fitness delight,
The temple bell rings, a soulful sound,
Spreads inner peace all around.

The open gym captivates and uplifts our mind,
Prepares us for the day, our priorities aligned,
It keeps us going, leaving stress behind,
And fitness becomes our daily winning grind.



Jyoti Banishree Sahu

Campus resident



Note: The open gym is located inside the Manohar C. Watsa Stadium.

The Heritage Square

CLASSIFIED DIVERTISEMENTS

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

M.TECH. IN PURR SCIENCES

IITM presents: M.Tech. in Purr Sciences. Greetings, dear purr-emptory inquisitive minds! I, Prof. Furrbury Idiosyncrazy, invite you to join our esteemed institute (NIRF rank #1) for an M.Tech. in Purr Sciences.

Cutting edge Purr-fect Whisker Wisdom Courses offered:

- 1) Sunbeam Catnap Science - Learn to bask under the sun with precision
- 2) Super Food Bowl Dynamics - Research and understand the trajectory of Whiskas, Me-O and more.
- 3) Furr-Bulous Loitering - Develop hands-on expertise in lounging around.
- 4) Meow Data Science - Interpret cat vocalization and localization with deep (machine) learning.

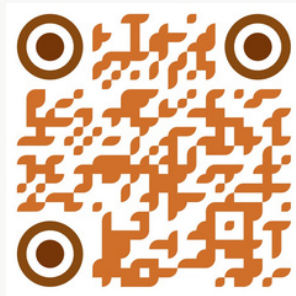
Eligibility: B.Tech. in Catnapping or equivalent; ability to purr-suade the interview committee.

Deadline: By Hug Your Cat Day (4/6/2026)

Contact: furrbury.idiosyncrazy@iitm.ac.in

Apply soon! Purr-omise you will get a job-of-purr right after graduation @ IITM Research Purr-Park with high Purr-ks.

- Furrbury Idiosyncrazy



SUBMIT

your entries for the next issue!

EARN

₹500 per entry if you get selected!

LOST

I lost my sense of humour a few days back. Last seen at the stadium. If found, please return to me. A big reward will be given.

- Always Angry

KUZZHI PANIYARAM

I have recently found a crazy combo at Campus Cafe. Kuzhi Paniyarams and Ginger Tea usually hits the spot for me every evening.

- Venkatesh K. P.

GYM BRO WANTED

I have recently signed up for a gym membership and I would appreciate the company of another person (a gym bro).

- Gym Halpert

SPRINTER AT LARGE

A tall, lanky sprinter with dangly legs was seen sprinting dangerously down Alumni Avenue, not heeding the speed limit of 20 km/h. He is wanted both by the security and the sports coach. If anyone happens to find him, please contact the gymkhana office. Our athletics team could use a few extra legs in the upcoming Inter-IIT Sports Meet.

- A Sports Fan

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION

Do you have a burning question but do not know whom to ask?

- What is the meaning of life?
- How can you wear your favourite T-shirt daily unwashed for two weeks and remain popular with your friends?
- Is it true that insti is going to introduce personal e-taxis from hostel to classroom?

All your questions answered. Free for a small fee.

- S.A.G.E. Guru, 307 Saras

MORE THAN A HUMAN CAN ENDURE

Dear Warden,

Yesterday a monkey peeped through my window and looked covetously at a bunch of apples I had spread all over my bed. I am so worried now. I cannot sleep. Even after removing the apples from the bed.

Who will help me? MiTR? DoST? The Chief Security Officer? Dean Admin?

Tell me Sir, Tell me.

- Distraught and Dramatic, 225
Brahmaputra

Visitors to the Centre

July and August 2025

It is always a pleasure and honour to host important personalities at the Heritage Centre. Ministers, entrepreneurs, authors, Nobel laureates...the Centre is never short of stories of dignitaries gracing it. The past, present and future of the Institute are documented and kept on display here, making it a significant part of any visitor's itinerary. Glimpses of some distinguished visitors.



PROF. PRASANNA
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO
09 JULY 2025



MANISH PRABHAT
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA TO DENMARK
10 JULY 2025

"It is a great honour to visit the Heritage Centre of IIT Madras and to know about the glorious history of the institution. IIT Madras has contributed immensely to nation building and as Indians we are proud of it. Today India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership is thriving and IITM is contributing to that as well by partnering with Danish institutions. My best wishes to continued success of IITM, its faculty members and students!"



BHUJANG RAMRAO BOBADE
DIRECTOR, HERITAGE FOUNDATION (INDIA,
US, THAILAND AND SOUTH KOREA)
17 JULY 2025

"It's a golden opportunity to visit this Heritage place in IIT. Will be happy to connect in future too with this. It must become a milestone in educational world."

DURHAM UNIVERSITY DELEGATION 17 JULY 2025

“It is great to be back on campus to further develop our collaborations. I always learn and see something new when I visit.”

- Prof. Clive Roberts, Executive Dean-Science

“Wonderful to be back at this esteemed institution. Looking forward to strengthening our collaboration.”

- Prof. Robert Lynes, Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor Global

“Always inspiring to visit IIT Madras - an ecosystem of innovation, collaboration and cutting edge research.”

- Meena Saxena, Regional Director, Regional Director,
University Relations



DR. GIRIJA MAHALE

HEAD, SYMBIOSIS CENTRE FOR
EMOTIONAL WELLBEING
28 JULY 2025

“Wonderful Heritage Centre. And it was very well explained by the volunteers. Thank you.”



BHUVAN ANANDAKRISHNAN

VICE PRESIDENT OF ENGINEERING,
CATERPILLAR INC.
08 AUGUST 2025





VIVEK KHANDELWAL

MENTOR, SPEAKER, TRAINER

13 AUGUST 2025

“It was amazing to be here and spend time to watch the rich history and legacy that the Heritage Centre has created. Kudos to you!”



SHIBAURA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, JAPAN

18 AUGUST 2025



MALINI THADANI

DIRECTOR, WORLD MONUMENTS FUND INDIA

26 AUGUST 2025



News BITES

Latest news from the Heritage Centre

September 2025

WAC award function held at Heritage Centre

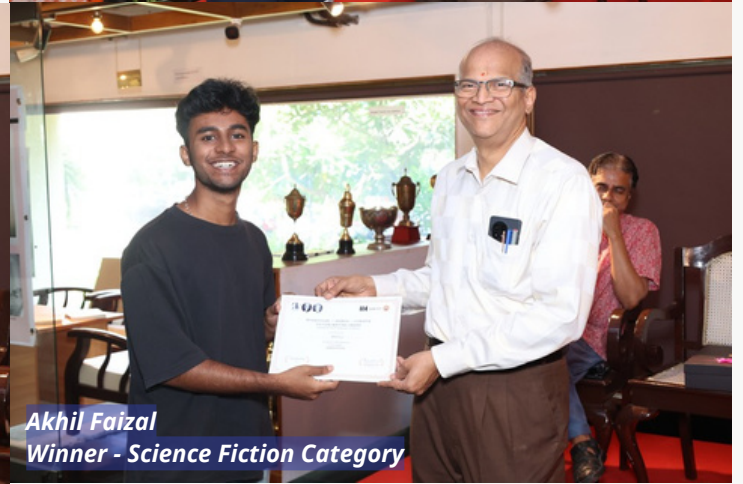
The Wodehouse-Asimov-Christie awards for fiction writing were presented on 18 August 2025 at the Heritage Centre. The chief guest at the event was Prof. Chakravarthy Balaji from the Mechanical Engineering Department. A total of five awards were given: three for humour, science fiction, and mystery, respectively, and two in the special mention category. Prof. Chakravarthy Balaji and Prof. R. Nagarajan presented the certificates and prizes to the winners.



Abhinandan Dhar
Winner - Humour Category



Venkata Sai Vishwesvar S. V.
Winner - Mystery Category



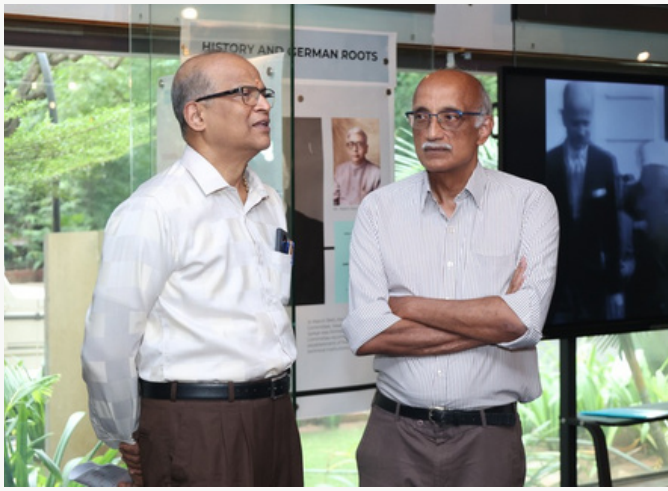
Akhil Faizal
Winner - Science Fiction Category



Anantharaam R.
Special Mention - Science Fiction Category



Sapan Kumar Tripathy
Special Mention - Humour Category



Prof. Chakravarthy Balaji and Prof. R. Nagarajan



Front row, left to right: Akhil Faizal, Abhinandan Dhar, Venkata Sai Vishwesvar S. V., Sapan Kumar Tripathy and Anantharaam R. Back row, left to right: Prof. Anindita Sahoo, Prof. R. Nagarajan and Prof. Umasankar Patra



Prof. Anindita Sahoo delivers a talk



Prof. Chakravarthy Balaji, chief guest, delivers a passionate speech



Ms. Mamata Dash, Senior Project Officer of Heritage Centre, Ms. Usha Nagarajan, National Centre for Combustion Research & Development (NCCRD) and Prof. P. Sriram, Faculty-in-Charge, Heritage Centre



A section of the audience at the WAC Award function

Heritage Centre team visit museums in Bengaluru

The Heritage Centre organized a 3-day trip to Bengaluru from 29 July to 31 July 2025. The objectives of this visit were to study five museums (Museum of Art & Photography, Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum, Science Gallery Bengaluru, Indian Music Experience Museum and the Archives at NCBS).



Outside the Museum of Art & Photography.
From the left: Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Ms. Diya Mariam, Mr. Bhuvanesh Santharam, Ms. Sushmitha Sathasivam and Ms. Mamata Dash.



At the Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum.
Ms. Mamata Dash and Mr. M. T. Raghunath, 1987 batch IITM alumnus.



At Science Gallery.
Ms. Mamata Dash and Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam.



Outside the Indian Music Experience Museum.



The trip turned out to be a rewarding experience, as the team gained meaningful insights into how different museums in the city function. Mr. M. T. Raghunath (1987 batch IITM alumnus) and Mr. Venkat Srinivasan (Archives at NCBS) helped facilitate the visits to some of the museums and the Archives at NCBS.

At the Archives at NCBS.
Front, from the left: Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Mr. Venkat Srinivasan and Mr. Ojas Kadu. Back, from the left: Ms. Sushmitha Sathasivam, Ms. Diya Mariam and Ms. Mamata Dash.

Creative Writing

THE CHIEF GUEST'S SPEECH AT THE
WODEHOUSE-ASIMOV-CHRISTIE AWARDS 2025



At the Wodehouse-Asimov-Christie Awards 2025

The ability to express oneself is one of the highest levels of freedom. This is acknowledged even in the Constitution of India, for example. Article 19(1)(a) grants citizens the right to freely express their thoughts, opinions and ideas. This includes the freedom to express ourselves through speech, writing, printing, visual representation or any other means.

Ideas rule the world and these need to be expressed. The expression need not be restricted only to creative writing. Rather the expression extends to objects, devices, laws, rules, regulations and policies. The built world itself is a creative outpouring of human beings. In fact, the state of affairs of a city, state or a nation or the world as a whole is a product of the dominant

ideas of that society at that point in time. Therefore, the quality of ideas of the individuals and the society, as well, is a bellwether of the standing of that particular society or nation as the case may be.

Ideation, though necessary, is not a sufficient condition. An efficient conversion of ideation to successful products, policies and laws requires institutional, societal and government support. Digression aside, let us get back to the topic of the day, namely creative writing.

The first benefit one gets when he/she writes is that creative writing more often than not is an emotional catharsis. In fact, one gets the same feeling after giving a charged-up lecture or a speech or a musical concert.

The above said, creative writing culminating in say a book often has a much longer shelf life. Books are often a wonderful way of living even after one's death. Trying to become immortal seems to be the long-term objective of an individual or even a society as a whole. Building palaces, erecting statues and monuments are all but reflections of the fundamental craving for immortality. In fact, the Indian scriptures frequently talk about "Amruthasya Putra" or the "children of immortality".

If one looks at a long-term objective of one's work becoming immortal, the idea of time naturally comes in. Hence a key goal of writing is to aspire for ideas and thoughts that can transcend time as well as space. This idea of infiniteness in both space and time is a key motivator for all "uber" grade endeavours of society and writing is very much part of this set of endeavours.

Behind every book, whether fiction or non-fiction, is a core idea and the author labours hard to effectively bring out this idea in a coherent, cogent and convincing fashion. The development of this idea is a labour of love at its quintessential best. The key to the success of such an initiative is not only powerful language but the ability to maintain the flow of thought, the tempo and the suspense so that we do not lose the readers along the way, much in the same way we do not want to lose students 20 minutes into a class. If a majority of the readers go up to the last page of a book, it may be deemed to be a great success.

A good dose of humour, non-linear storytelling, use of examples, sub-stories and so on may be employed to ensure that the narration is gripping and at the same time logical and clear. The role of humour can never be overstated.

Let us now look at the idea of a non-linear storytelling or non-linear narrative where a story is not presented linearly in time. This technique is also frequently applied in movie making where the creative director can employ several techniques like flash cuts, sub-plots and so on and weave them all together

seamlessly with the main plot of the film. This has been and continues to be used in creative writing and also ensures that the audience is fully immersed in the work. In fact, this has a strong parallel with teaching too. Instead of theory first and example later, one can employ an example first approach whenever and wherever it is deemed appropriate. In fact, this also has a lot of diagnostic value and one can get a feel of how far students can go with their a priori knowledge. In fact, it will be a good idea to illustrate the theory with the same example after the theory is taught. Likewise, one can look for concordance and correspondence between creative writing and creative teaching from other dimensions too.

To summarize, creativity powers innovation. Innovation drives technology and technology propels growth and civilization. Creativity often has not got its due attention in the curricula of the world. Creative writing is an important activity even for those who do not want to become professional writers. Ideation, abstraction, communication are all key attributes to creative writing as much as they are to the progress of any society. Scholarship too is a key ingredient to this process and one must know and appreciate how ideas have been proposed and communicated in the past in different parts of the world on similar subjects.

The reward for creative writing is the output itself. It is intrinsic, eternal and liberating.

Happy Writing!!



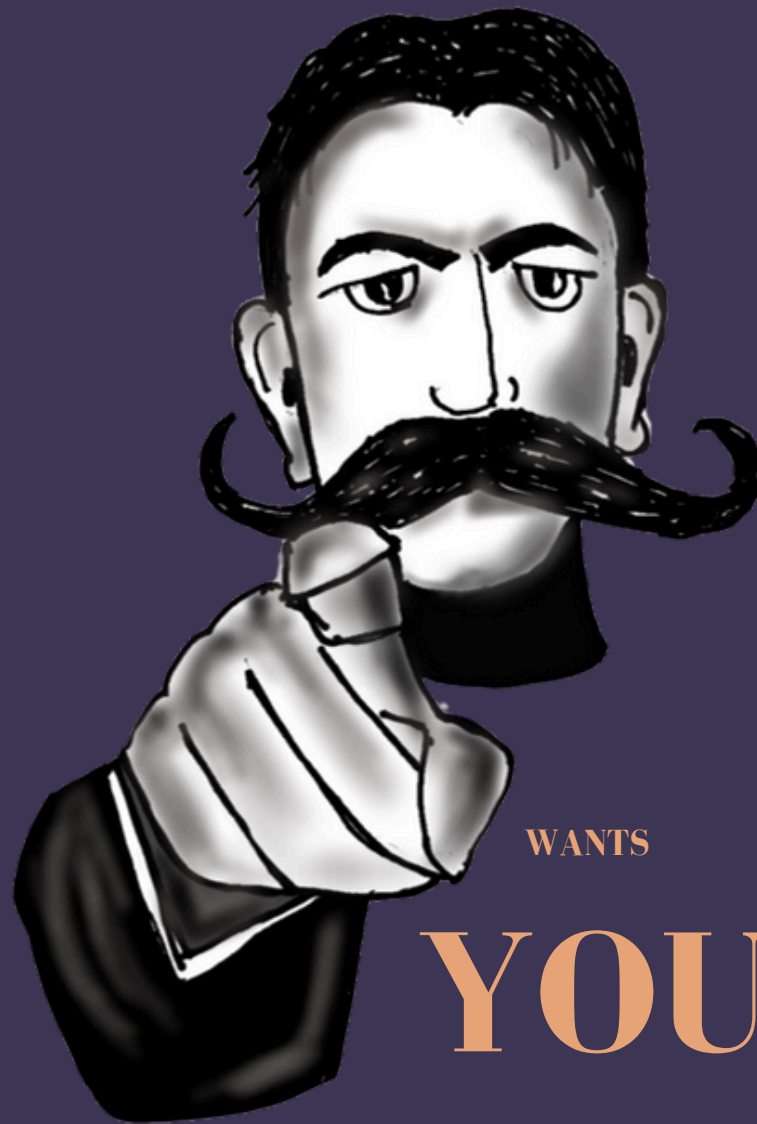
With Prof. R. Nagarajan at the Heritage Centre



Chakravarthy Balaji

is a T. T. Narendran Chair Professor in Mechanical Engineering at IIT Madras. A University Gold Medalist from Guindy Engineering College, he earned his M.Tech and Ph.D. at IIT Madras in Heat Transfer. With over 30 years in teaching and research, he is a celebrated educator and prolific author of 15 books. He has received numerous prestigious awards and is a fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering.

HERITAGE CENTRE



WANTS

YOU

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



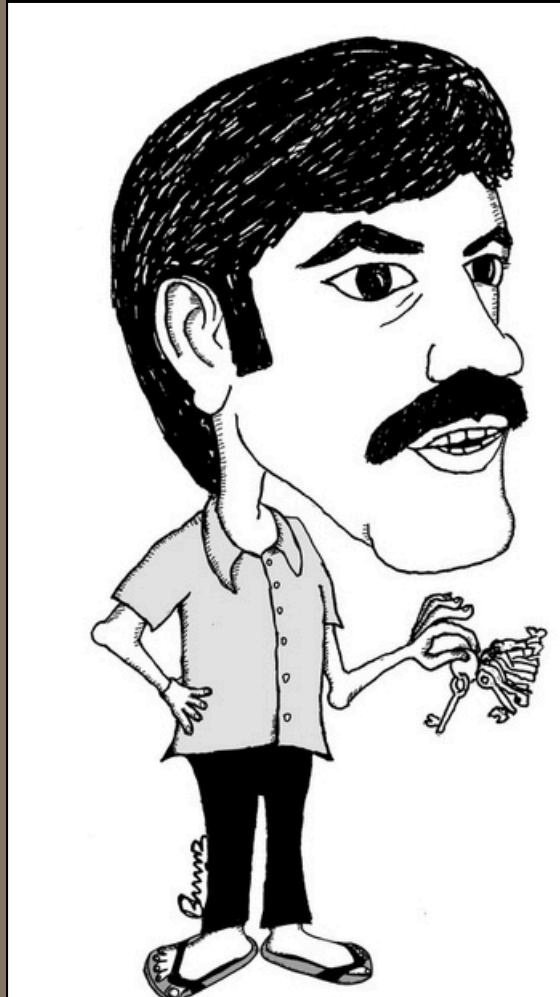
Glass Panels is now on sale at the Heritage Centre! Get yours now at ₹150/-

"Every day, think as you wake up, today I am fortunate to be alive, I have a precious human life, I am not going to waste it. I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to expand my heart out to others; to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. I am going to have kind thoughts towards others, I am not going to get angry or think badly about others. I am going to benefit others as much as I can."

- The Dalai Lama

Dr. Ponnārāsu 'Pons' from the Archive of IIT Madras is an extremely resourceful person. He is a natural leader and a reservoir of information and ideas. Under his leadership, the Archive has grown from from just an idea to a massive state-of-the-art facility located on the stilt floor of Krishna Chivukula Block (KCB).

the key-per of Secrets, Guardian of the ancient parchments.



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



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Heritage Centre
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