Heritage Centre, IIT Madras presents

Volume 4 - Issue 5

GLASS PANELS

Sep 2026

Heritage Centre
IIT Madras

Africa Special

THE COMMON MAN AT IIT MADRAS

THE STORY OF A MACHINE
THE RIGAKU XRD MACHINE AT THE HERITAGE CENTRE

STUDENT LIFE
WHO WERE THE BEAT-X?

INTERN INSIGHTS
A JOURNEY OF KNOWLEDGE, HISTORY AND GRATITUDE AT IIT MADRAS

THE ZANZIBAR CHAPTER
THE FIRST OFFSHORE IIT CAMPUS



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At the Heritage Centre, 3 March 2006: Prof. S. Narayanan (Dean of Academic Research), Prof. Ajit Kumar Kolar (Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre), Prof. M. S. Ananth (Director of IIT Madras), Dr. A. E. Muthunayagam (Chairman, Board of Governors), and Dr. Arcot Ramachandran (Former Director of IIT Madras) are seen in discussion.

The photograph was captured on the day the Heritage Centre was first opened. Following an inauguration ceremony outside the Administration Building, Dr. Ramachandran cut the ceremonial ribbon to officially open the Centre. The establishment of the Heritage Centre was the result of over eight years of planning, stemming from an original idea proposed by the former Director, Prof. R. Natarajan.

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.



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The IITM Time Capsule



Visiting the Heritage Centre, 19 June 2026

As the Student Secretary for International and Alumni Relations in 2017–18, I had the opportunity to work closely with the Heritage Centre on novel initiatives and institute branding. One of our proudest achievements was the creation of the Time Capsule.

The idea gradually took shape over several discussions with professors and our team. During a brief visit to the United States in the summer of 2017, I came across a university time capsule that was to be opened after 25 years. Preserving a little piece of the present for the future, I was fascinated! I returned with an even stronger desire to bring the idea to life at our Insti.

With my team, we put up posters across campus, floated emails, and invited students to contribute items. The response was wonderful, and the collection ranged from mess cards, swimming cards, cricket balls, T-shirts, cycle tokens, and even an answer script! I contributed my own institute ID card and a letter.

There were lengthy discussions around the nitty-gritty of designing and preserving the time capsule. Our team explored SS containers, gasket lids, and vacuum sealing to finally settle on beautifully crafted, transparent sealed boxes that offered a tempting glimpse of the memories held within. What began as an idea soon grew into an annual tradition, with each passing year adding another box to the institute's collective memory. Visiting the Heritage Centre again in June 2026, nearly a decade after the idea first took shape, was a truly special, full-circle moment. I was filled with immense joy and pride.

I look forward to the day the capsule containing contributions from my 2018 batch is opened! ■

- Vineesha Badabhagni, IITM'18

Letter from the EDITOR



Hello readers! July and August flew past, and we were all caught up with various events. The Heritage Centre's Madras Week 2026 celebration was pulled off in great style, with talks, campus tours, and a photo contest.

In this issue, M. Krishna Priya talks about a Rigaku X-ray Diffraction (XRD) machine, one of the larger exhibits in our collection. The story of how she ended up having a conversation with a stranger — whose company coincidentally worked on installing XRD machines at IIT Madras — is sure to leave the reader with a smile.

Sushmitha Sathasivam shares her experience working on the IIT Madras Zanzibar exhibition and a coffee-table book that was released by H.E. Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi, the President of Zanzibar himself! The article offers a unique look into the workings of a graphic designer.



Madras Week 2026: A Special Visitor!

Sonal Shekhar, a Ph.D. scholar at Christ University, writes about the intersection between engineering and international relations, drawing from her research work at the Heritage Centre. It gives me great pleasure to share that Sonal found our reading room to be an invaluable source of information for her dissertation work.

I have written about a subject very close to my heart: cartooning. Not many people know that IIT Madras has produced some fine cartoonists. We are fortunate to have documented cartoons at the Heritage Centre right from the 1960s. My story surrounds the visit of R. K. Laxman to IIT Madras in 1981 to deliver an Extramural Lecture. I drew inspiration from the original poster from that talk, which is displayed at the Heritage Centre. Right next to the poster stands Laxman's autograph! ■

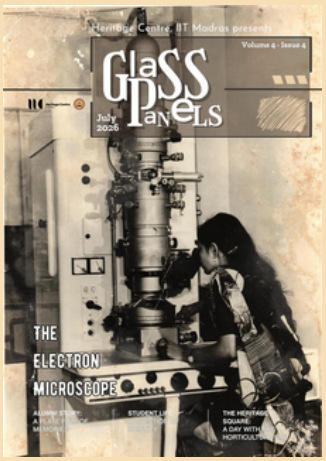


- Bhuvanesh Santharam

Send me your feedback at ic35226@imail.iitm.ac.in

Our readers write...

Responses to the JULY 2026 issue

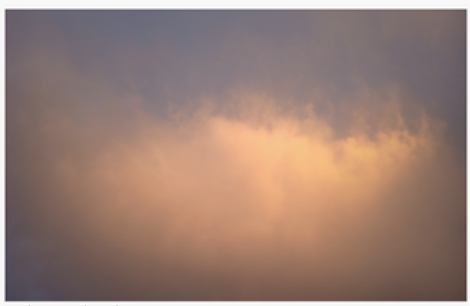


Thinking of other things which are heritage on our campus, I think the Vana Vani School is one such. I don't think it has figured in our *Glass Panels* so far. It will be nice if somebody can write on article on it. I know there are many who studied in this school, later joined IITM as well.



- K. Sashi Rao
Alumnus - 1969 B.Tech., 1971 M.Tech.

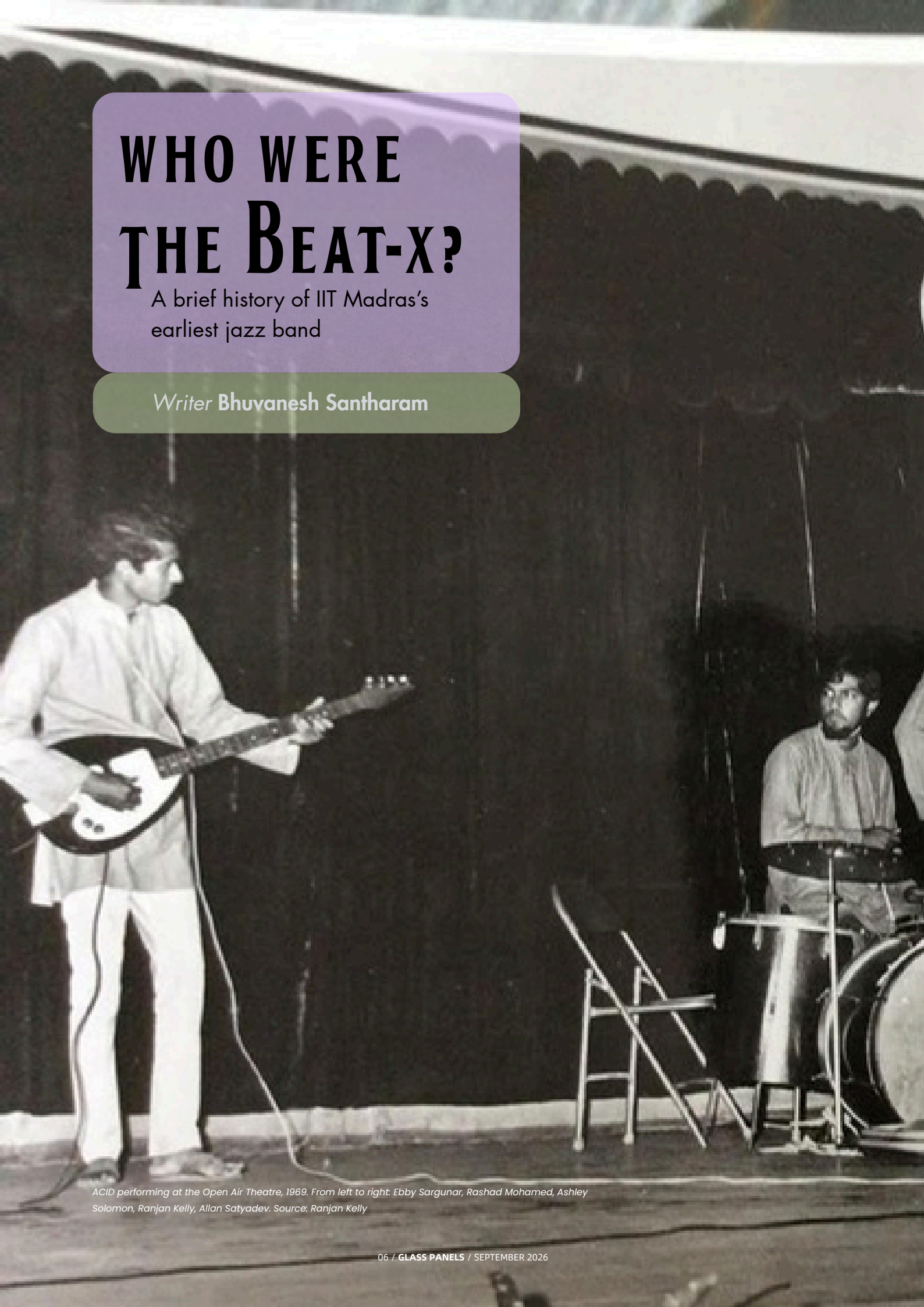

A Curious Deer


A Skyscape in July

WHO WERE THE BEAT-X?

A brief history of IIT Madras's earliest jazz band

Writer **Bhuvanesh Santharam**



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

alfie allan ashley Ebby edwin JJ MOHIT kash ranjan rashad murli vaidy



Introduction

The Beat-X were an instrumental jazz group which formed in 1963 at IIT Madras. They initially started out playing covers of The Beatles, The Shadows, The Animals and other British Invasion bands before moving into jazz. The band had a short stint, winning several competitions in the city and Institute. The Beat-X eventually evolved into a band called ACID, a vocal band focusing on folk rock. They sang songs by Bob Dylan and Simon and Garfunkel, apart from jazz numbers such as 'Take Five' by Dave Brubeck. 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.

The Beat-X were exposed to bands such as The Beatles through radio channels including Australia One. Voice of America, another channel, was a source for jazz music on a nightly basis. In an interview[1], Ranjan Kelly, one of The Beat-X members, narrates that every time their aunts and uncles went abroad, they would bring back albums which were passed on from room to room. Back in the day, when guitar tabs and drum lessons weren't readily available, the band members had to "Start, Stop and Rewind" to learn the lessons. Before getting into the history of the Beat-X, it is essential to know the context behind the jazz and rock scene in India.



Dave Brubeck in Bombay, 1958. Source: Quartz India

Jazz

In the 1920s, Jazz had become a popular genre among Bombay's elite: "Jazz had made its way from New Orleans in the waxy grooves of phonograph records and travelled over the oceans with touring American bands that played for the administrators of the Raj."[2]

Bands began performing at the Taj, in what was then Bombay in the 1930s. Artists such as Roy Butler and Teddy Weatherford, who had played with the great Louis Armstrong, graced the stage at Bombay. Goan musicians were also trained to perform jazz during this period. Although it was a new genre for them, they soon mastered it over the years. By the 1940s, swing bands of Bombay rose to popularity. Goan artists such as Chic Chocolate (Antonio Xavier Vaz), Chris Perry and Lorna Cordeiro were some of the big names in the swing and jazz movement in Bombay during the mid-1900s. India's interest in jazz grew significantly following visits to Bombay by legendary musicians Dave Brubeck in 1958 and Duke Ellington in 1963. By the 1960s, the focus had shifted from jazz to rock and roll, and the nightclub scene in Bombay fell apart due to the implementation of the Prohibition Act in addition to taxes. Bollywood had begun making the most of the talented Goan musicians who were apparently dissatisfied with their new roles in the film industry.

Simla Beat and Rock

By the 1960s, people in Indian cities had already started listening to beat groups which mainly played rock. The counterculture movement, which had gained a strong footing in the United States also found a new audience among the Indian youth. Several bands emerged in the nation during this time. Mohiner Ghoraguli from Calcutta was one of the bands in this respect. Others included Great Bear, The Mustangs, The Confusions and The Fentones.

There were other bands which sprang up during this time, including The Trojans (Bangalore), whose singer-guitarist Biddu went to the U.K. and achieved musical success. Other notable bands of the time included The Jets (Bombay) and The Beat-4 (Delhi).

1. https://www.t5eiitm.org/b-techs-you-mean-beat-x/k
2. https://qz.com/india/407489/a-story-of-love-longing-and-jazz-in-1960s-bombay/



The Fentones from Shillong at Pinewood Hotel, Shillong, 1970. From left to right: (second from left) Sherlock Giri, Bing, Radbah and Bright. Source: Facebook and Raiot.

There were several important events which contributed to the rise of interest in rock in India. In 1968, The Beatles visited India. The previous year, Jimmy Page had visited the country. Page was the guitarist of The Yardbirds at the time. He visited again in 1972 with Robert Plant, the singer of Led Zeppelin. The duo performed a small gig at Bombay.[3] The rock movement in India emerged as an underground movement due to the strict non-import policy which made it difficult to purchase the equipment necessary to play music, such as amplifiers and guitars.[4] It appears that there was also hardly any foreign music on All India Radio and hardly any magazines talking about music abroad.

One of the other reasons for the rising popularity of psychedelic and garage rock in India was the Imperial Tobacco Company (now ITC Ltd.). The company's cigarette brand Simla thought of an exciting new way to market and promote their menthol cigarettes. They organised a nation-wide concert called *Battle of the Bands*, allowing young talent from the country to perform and win prizes at the competition. The event took place at Shanmukhananda Auditorium in Bombay, and the bands which were triumphant would go to Calcutta to record their songs for Simla Beat. Simla Beat was a compilation vinyl record released both in 1970 and 1971. The competitions were held between 1968 and 1972. *Junior Statesman*, the country's first youth magazine publicized this psychedelic rising.

In the 1950s and 1960s, rock music from the United Kingdom and United States brought with it a sense of freedom and exploration, which appealed to the youngsters of the era. It was a break from jazz for them, and an opening into a new kind of music. In India, most of this music was inspired from the United States of America, where the counterculture and hippie culture had sown its roots. The Beat-X of IIT Madras were different from the other bands in the city in the sense that they played jazz in addition to other genres. "Beat-X was essentially an instrumental band and played jazz classics — Take Five, Desafinado — unlike the other bands in the city, which were more into rock"[5] says Ranjan Kelly. This brings us to the history of The Beat-X.



LED ZEPPELIN
LAND BRIEFLY IN BOMBAY

The fab Led Zeppelin during their short stay in Bombay were snapped in a quick interview by Poky. "Music means communication to me. I say 'listen you people out there, listen to my music and let's be one'," says Robert Plant. "Man, it's great to be in India for a second visit."

The suite at the Taj was disorderly —pants, shirts and boots were strewn over chairs and sofas, and there were bottles and bottles of beer. Richard Cole their manager, Jimmy Page and Robert Plant were all reclining with bottles glued to their mouths. "Make yourself comfortable," Page said. "Listen, not more than five minutes," Cole said.

Plant said, "Come on, Richard, give him ten and pass him a bottle and a stick."

* * *

ROBERT PLANT : Man, it's great to be in India for a second visit. Listen, you know why we came ?—to see if we can set up a recording studio. But the Customs regulations are tough, man, like it will take us about six months to get out our equipment from Bombay Airport. This country is great and we'll be back.

JIMMY PAGE : Sure, man, God exists. He is the only tangible thing I believe in. He is my "superstar".

* * *

PLANT ON MUSIC : Music means communication to me. I say 'listen you people out there, listen to my music, let's be one.' Music is a friend to me when I am lonely, when I am blue. You can't define music 'cause music is cosmos and it knows no barrier or definition. You have to feel music to dig it.

* * *

PAGE ON THE BEATLES : They are great. In fact, they are the greatest. We felt sorry when they broke up, because together they produced the most fantastic music.

(Continued on page 10)



Led Zeppelin in Bombay, Source: Homegrown



Simla Beat '71 album cover and CD. Source: Discogs

3. *http://nandu_bhende.tripod.com/articles/particle5.htm*
4. *https://homegrown.co.in/article/37748/how-indias-1960s-psychedelic-rock-revolution-owes-simla-menthol-cigarettes-other-short-stories*
5. *https://www.t5eiitm.org/b-techs-you-mean-beat-x/k*



The Original Beat-X, 1967: From left to right: Ashley Solomon (saxophone), Ebby Sargunar, Mohit Goyal, J. Jayaraman, Alfred D'Souza. Source: Ranjan Kelly (Image created using Photoshop)

The Beat-X: A History

The Beat-X formed in 1963[6] with three guitar players who were casually jamming in their hostel. The guitarists were none other than Alfred D'Souza, Ebby Sargunar, and Mohit Goyal. When the warden overheard them playing the guitars, he asked them to perform at the upcoming annual hostel event. They obliged, roping in Jimmy Jayaraman, their classmate who played the drums. This was the first lineup of what was to become The Beat-X. They initially covered songs by The Beatles and The Shadows.

The following year, Ashley Solomon joined the band. Ashley played the tenor sax, and the band shifted their music to jazz. The band participated in competitions such as the *Musical Knock-Out* organised by Student Times at the Music Academy on Republic Day, 1966. This has been recorded in *Campastimes*.[7] The Beat-X won the competition after a tough match-up against surf rockers The Mustangs from Madras Christian College. Some of the songs played by The Beat-X were 'Summer Time' and 'Blue Moon'.

It is also noted that the music performed by bands from Stanley Medical College, Madras Christian College and (possibly) Loyola College was fast paced compared to the slow and soul stirring music of The Beat-X. In the *Campastimes* article, there is a mention of a band called The Flamingoes, which is likely to have come from Loyola College. There is also a reference to The Flamingoes in an article in *The Hindu*. [8]

IIT Madras was not the only venue in which The Beat-X, ACID and others performed. Allan Sathyadev, member of ACID, says in an interview[9] that his subsequent band regularly performed at Max Mueller Bhavan. Back then, IIT Madras had plenty of German professors who organised parties, and The Beat-X/ACID performed for these gatherings and at other colleges. One of the most interesting facets of these years was the fact that Allan Sathyadev, the guitarist made his first electric guitar at the Central Workshop with the encouragement of the Workshop Superintendent and the help of the workshop staff. He mentions that electric guitars were not available in Chennai back in the day, while acoustic guitars were being sold at Violin Krafts, a shop in Purasawalkam. It was also the shop where he got his fretboard. Allan says that he got the guitar painted at a furniture shop, while the electric pickups were brought from Germany his friends. The strings were fitted by Allan, and the wiring was done by the drummer of ACID, Rashad Mohamed. Previously, Ebby Sargunar, The Beat-X bass guitarist, had made several guitars for his classmates, including a bass guitar based on his Hofner. Most musicians during the time, especially from these bands were self-taught, since going for formal classes was an expensive affair.

ACID: A New Chapter

In 1967, Alfred D'Souza, one of the founding members of the band, left IIT Madras for Chicago. Two of the band members were in their final year, which meant that they had to focus on their studies. During this time, The Beat-X were inactive. The music was on hold until Ranjan Kelly and Muralidharan (Murali) sang as a duet and "Kash" Kasturirangan, Murali's younger brother joined IIT and formed a duet with Murali. Ranjan, who was close to Alfred, had been told by the latter to keep the band running. Ranjan notes that it took almost an entire year to get the band back together.

6. *Email from Mr. Ranjan Kelly*
7. Campastimes*, February 15, 1966 - https://heritage.iitm.ac.in/publications/issues/campastimes/campastimes-february-15-1966*
8. *https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/The-magic-of-The-Mustangs/article11642932.ece*
9. *https://www.t5eiitm.org/b-techs-you-mean-beat-x/k*

He had to bring the members of the band back in order to keep it alive. He initially got together with Rashad Mohamed, a fresher who played the drums (Rashad, interestingly, was the younger brother of Haroon Mohamed, leader of the Madras Christian College rival band, The Mustangs. Soon, Ashley and Ebby, members of the original Beat-X joined and the band was called ACID.

The name for the band ACID was conceived by Rashad and Ranjan, who were both inspired by the hippie culture happening in California. Allan joined them as well. ACID played the older songs which were played by The Beat-X, but they primarily focused on Folk Rock. They covered songs by artists such as Simon and Garfunkel and Bob Dylan.

After Ranjan, Ebby and Ashley graduated, Allan joined up with Murali and Kash to form a vocal trio. When Edwin Srinivasan and Vaidy (bassist) joined, they carried forward the Beat-X and ACID legacy. Decades later they would become the IIT Madras Reunion Band. In 2014, the three bands performed at the Saarang evening held at the Open Air Theatre in IIT Madras. A few years before the Saarang gig, the IIT Madras Reunion Band had performed at the Museum Theatre, Chennai, invited by the Madras Music Association. The concert focused on music from the 1960s and 1970s.



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

In IIT Madras Literature

Although there are no recordings available of The Beat-X or ACID, the alumni from the era will remember the band as one of the most popular and innovative bands of its time at IIT Madras. The Eighth Annual Number of IIT Madras (1966-67) contains an article written by Duke titled 'The Trophy Baggers or Who made all the noise?' Duke does not fail to make note of the success of The Beat-X in the city:

"The Beat-X have made quite a name for themselves in the city, as they have fared well in many local talent competitions."

Duke goes on to name some of the local competitions in which The Beat-X had gathered accolades, such as the 'Musical knockout' in which they won the Judge's Trophy, and stood second in the popular poll. They also won the All-India Beat Meet held at the Music Academy. The article also notes that no other band in the city had tried jazz except for The Beat-X, which made them stand out and gave them the edge in popular votes during competitions. Duke notes that the band played pop music during shows in spite of their jazz disposition.

There is also a mention of The Beat-X in the campus publication *Pradeep*, issues 7 and 2. In the seventh issue of *Pradeep* (1971), C. V. Krishnan's article 'Some

Memoirs' makes note of the "bang of the 'B-Tex' [sic] and the melody of Murali and Cash will be ringing in our ears for years to come." The second issue of *Pradeep* (1966) briefly mentions The Beat-X in the Gymkhana report:

"the Beat-X (naturally), beat all corners[10] in a music competition in the city. This has led to the sprouting of another strong music group which is slowly gaining popularity." However, it is not clear which music group is being referred to here.



BEAT-X TRIUMPH ...

It was no ordinary Republic Day. The Beat-x took part in a general Musical Knock-Out that was organised by Student Times at the Music Academy.

Stanley Medicos opened the programme which was 40 minutes behind schedule and one saw a formidable number on the stage. Their music did not live up to their size though they tried to satisfy every linguistic taste by playing tunes in Hindi, English and Tamil. The Stanleys were followed by the Flamingoes, armed with three electric guitars, a pianist and a drummer. Their concept of music was only fast moving numbers and to prove their point they played 'Besamemoucho' at twice the normal speed. Their flame soon withered away and the audience's opinion was conveyed by paper planes. The Mustangs mustered themselves and stunned the audience with their stage showmanship and the skilful control of their instruments; flashing guitars and a saxophonist produced excellent music and their numbers could be recognised. The audience remained silent, while the Mustangs rocked away and beat at their instruments with dexterity and fine co-ordination. Having laid a high standard, the Mustangs gave way to the unassuming Beat-x. Their slow moving numbers were a welcome change to the fast tunes so far heard. Their music showed a touch of superior taste and up-to-date rhythm. 'I could have danced all night' and 'Baby Beetle Walk' were striking. This programme was for the selection of the Most Popular group by the audience. As there was a far larger MCC crowd, the Mustangs were chosen 1st while the Beat-x—2nd.

Now came the performance for the Judges' Prize and this time the Beateks preceded the Mustangs. It was a grim fight between them. The Beat-x started in their own modest way but soon started 'boasting' when they commenced with 'Summer time'. The music was slow and cool, swaying the audience. Solomon on the clarinet displayed his talent. Ebenezer on the guitar towered head and shoulders above his predecessor and Jayaraman drummed with gusto. 'Summer time' was followed by 'Blue Moon'—though we were not feeling blue and this was surmounted by 'On the street where you live.' The Beateks certainly knew where the hearts of the Judges and the audience were and with their soft music they knocked them open. Alfred enthralled them with the magic of his fingers on the piano and thus the Beat-x left everyone speechless and full of admiration.

The Mustangs came on and gave an impressive performance. They swayed with their guitars and saxophone but the Beat-x had a slight edge over them. It was a close fight in which the Beateks were supreme, the Mustangs—2nd.

BILL.

Editor's Note : Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, You did it. You did it. You did.....

Excerpt from Campastimes: *15 February 1966*

There is a *Campastimes* article about The Beat-X recording a victory at a competition at the Music Academy on Republic Day. It mentions a few other bands such as The Mustangs and The Flamingoes who had also participated in the contest. *Campastimes* was a student run magazine which contained articles, comic strips, poems and various other news events which happened in IIT Madras.

The Beat-X, it can be concluded, was a popular group on campus, featuring in several articles and reports from the Institute. Although much of the Indian rock and jazz music from the 1960s and 1970s remains undocumented, there are remote sources which provide information regarding the popular genre.

Other Bands From Madras

Some of the other bands in the city at the time were The Flamingoes, The Confusions, The Mustangs, The Thunderbirds, Frustrations Amalgamated, Mojos, Voodoos, Spartans and The Silencers. There were several more bands from the city. There is a mention of the Loyola College bands (some of which are mentioned above) in an article in the *Bangalore Mirror*.[11] Most of these bands performed across the country and gained popularity nationally. The 1960s and 1970s were the major decades during which the bands flourished in the shadow of the beat and counterculture movement of the United States of America.

The Mustangs from Madras Christian College were popular in their own right. The band was formed in 1965.[12] Their surf rock number 'Escape' was popular among the youth of the country. The band comprised Derek Norris, George Cherian, Christopher 'Kittu' Ratnam, Anand Padmanabhan and Haroon Mohamed (former member of The Thunderbirds). Former members were Daryl Cordeiro and Tim Tharasingh.[13] According to an article[14], "The Mustangs have the rare distinction of cutting two 45 RPM records with HMV..."

10. *It is unclear what this means*
11. https://bangaloremirror.indiatimes.com/opinion/sunday-read/a-short-walk-in-the-memory-lane-/articleshow/22071428.cms
12. https://indianbandshub.blogspot.com/2018/12/the-mustangs.html
13. https://indianbandshub.blogspot.com/2018/12/the-mustangs.html
14. https://www.redbull.com/in-en/band-in-focus-the-mustangs

According to the article, the band got together and played several shows, including one at Museum Theatre in Chennai in 2011, and again in 2016[15] at the same venue.

Little is known about the other bands from the city owing to lack of documentation and recordings. Today, India has seen various types of bands over the years, covering many genres, but the 1960s and 1970s marks an important phase in the history of music, not only in the country, but also in the West. It is interesting to note how the music of the age was used as a weapon to speak out against the Vietnam War by several musicians including John Lennon, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. The era ushered in a variety of musical genres including psychedelic rock, blues rock and laid the foundations for genres such as metal.

The Beat-X, ACID and The Reunion Band

In 2014, members of The Beat-X and ACID performed at Saarang 2014, while The Reunion Band also performed, backed by Blue Note and the MMA Choir in an event held at the Open Air Theatre (OAT). The event was organised by the IIT Madras Alumni Association along with The Times of India.



Beat-X/ACID Reunion Concert at the OAT 2014: (left to right) Alfred D'Souza, Mohit Goyal, Ranjan Kelly, Ashley Solomon, J. Jayaraman, Naveen Kumar. Source: Ranjan Kelly



Beat-X/ACID Reunion Concert at the OAT 2014: (left to right) Mohit Goyal, J. Jayaraman, Ranjan Kelly, Alfred D'Souza, Ashley Solomon. Source: Ranjan Kelly



DVD brought out by the IIT Madras Alumni Association

Conclusion

From its inception in the 1960s to its current state in the 21st century, Beat-X / ACID has evolved significantly. Not only have the band members kept in touch with one another, they have also performed at various events in the 2010s without skipping a beat. Although rock and jazz music may not be the preferred genre in today's Indian music scene, fans who are loyal to the genre will enjoy the band's numbers irrespective of the day and age. Being one of the first bands to come out of IIT Madras, it is important that musicians and historians alike are aware of this gem of a band which kept IITians and other city folk grooving to their music for years.

The 1960s and 1970s can be considered the golden age of rock. With bands such as The Doors, Deep Purple, Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, Black Sabbath and many others flourishing, there was no dearth of talent and music during the era, and youngsters across the globe

15. *https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus//article59813348.ece*



The Beatles with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi at Rishikesh, 1968. Source: Firstpost

had someone to look up to, be it a band or its members. The Doors drew inspiration from writers and literary works such as Allen Ginsberg, Friedrich Nietzsche and Jack Kerouac. The Beatles were inspired by their stay in India at Rishikesh in 1968. They stayed at Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ashram to take part in a Transcendental Meditation training course. There was a spiritual element in the music made by the artists during the time. The interest in the East was not only restricted to The Beatles, but also spread through the United States and Europe during the counterculture period. The quest for peace and non-violence encouraged artists to look up to the gurus of northern India. Poets such as Allen Ginsberg visited and stayed in India, while many others sought peace and meditation in the country.[16]

Unfortunately, the Indian bands would not be able to leave a mark or grab the attention of the Western artists, although the rock scene was at some point, booming in India. Indian classical artists were more sought after by the West.

Ravi Shankar toured Europe and the United States in the early 1950s, and people were mesmerized by the new sound. He collaborated with The Beatles and John Coltrane among others. Artists collaborated, bringing the sounds of the East and West. Bands such as Shakti consisted of both Indian musicians as well as musicians from the West.

The Raga Rock phase in the United Kingdom and United States in the 1960s, saw musicians from the West incorporating Indian instruments into their music.

The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and The Doors are prime examples of iconic rock bands that infused traditional Indian musical elements and instrumentation styles into their tracks.

Over the years, the groundwork laid by pioneering Indian bands of the 1960s and 1970s has proved invaluable for subsequent generations. Today, contemporary Indian acts like The Downtroddence, Agam, and SystemHouse33 are gaining unprecedented exposure and recognition in the West.

Additionally, early pioneers like The Beat-X deserve immense credit for their innovative efforts in introducing jazz and rock to Indian audiences when the genres were still in their infancy across the country.[17] ■

16. *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/eastward-bound-hippie-trail-of-the-60s/as66688586.cms*
17. *https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2017/12/the-wests-affair-with-indian-classical-music/*



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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The Insti Word Search

E Q R G U L J G G P J X U W J
I V N H M V E U T A L F U N W
H H T T O T A I Q F X U W V D
S N V J X R K N C M M W H X P
E Q G C A N P D V U A X V T O
R X I H V X Q Y X N Y G S F H
F M T C A N E C R U S H G W S
G S T I M I L D E E P S Y U K
I N U Q X V B J T H D W Q H R
E C I N Z F H I M A L A Y A O
J B A K O B L P H O E N I X W
T H G I N E I V O M A I H W S
X Y R C B U M R Q E I N I P H
O B Z P P I B U M S E I F X Y
G N I D A R G E V I T A L E R

Find the words in the puzzle.

Words can go in any direction.
Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

Bunking, Cane Crush, Enthu, Freshie, Guindy, Himalaya, Isthara, Lite, Maggu, Movie Night, Phoenix, Relative Grading, Speed Limit, Thulp, Workshop



Congratulations, Prabhanjana (hs22h065)!

You are the winner of the *Mystery at the Heritage Centre* puzzle from the July 2026 issue of *Glass Panels!*

Solutions to *Mystery at the Heritage Centre* puzzle from the July 2026 issue of *Glass Panels*

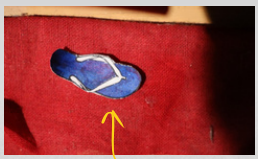


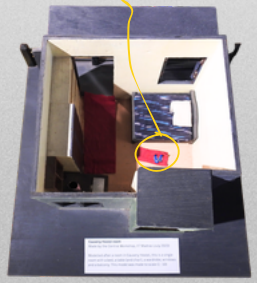
Clue



Solution: Replica of the Inter-IIT Sports Meet Trophy

Clue





Solution: Model of Cauvery Hostel room



Clue



Solution: Poster in the 'Sports' section

Clue





Solution: Autograph book



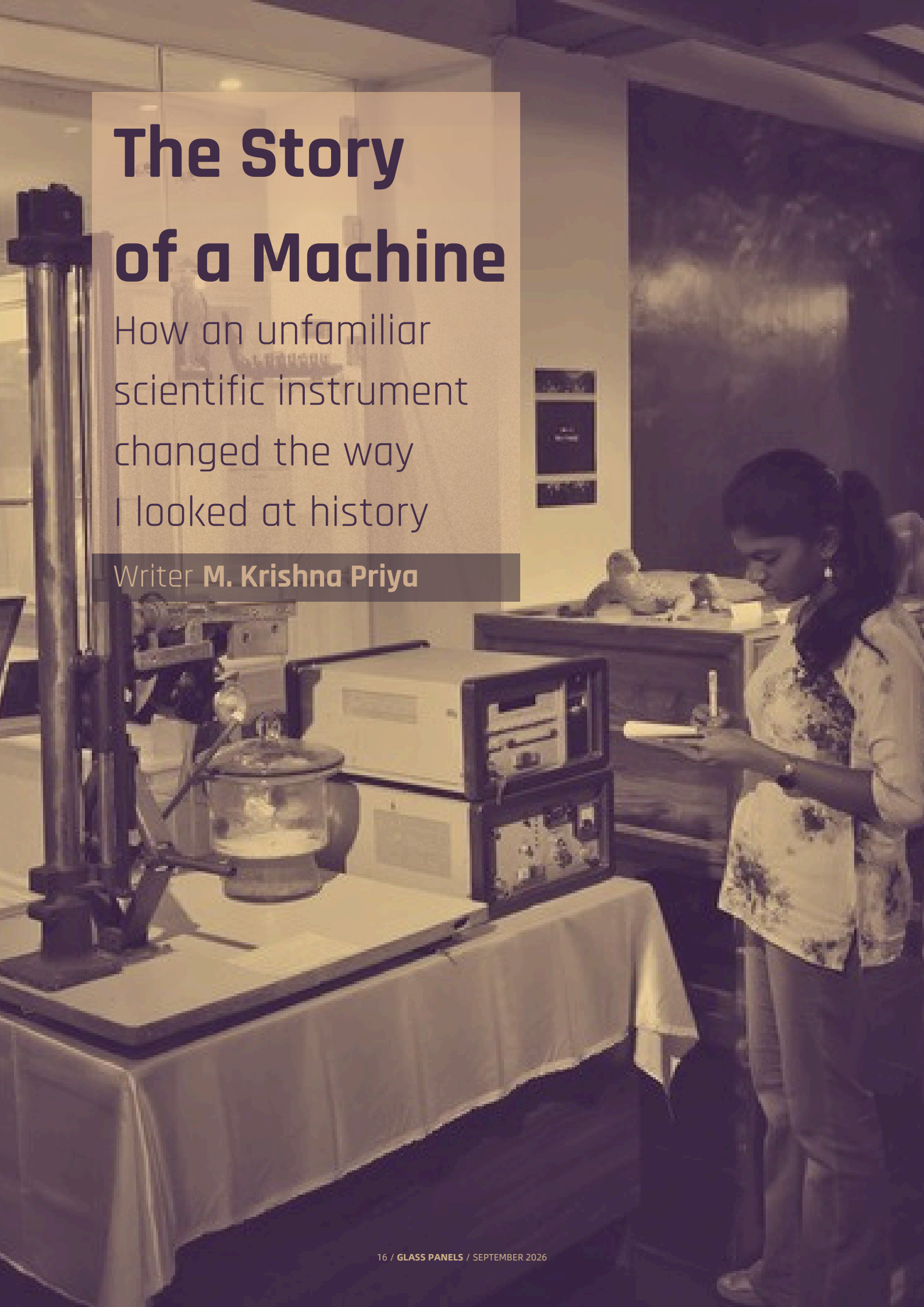




Photographs: Jabaraj J.

29 July 2026: Introducing the Heritage Centre to first year students at CLT.

THE HERITAGE SQUARE



The Story of a Machine

How an unfamiliar scientific instrument changed the way I looked at history

Writer **M. Krishna Priya**



Photograph: Mani Kandan

An Unexpected Encounter

When I first stepped into the Heritage Centre, I began looking at all the exhibits. From the early history of IIT Madras to its iconic Central Dome, every exhibit seemed to have a story to tell, stories I had never thought about or even heard from others. As someone who loves stories and new facts, I found myself delving deep into the history of IITM and Madras State at the time.

And there was this one machine.

As a history student, I have always been fascinated by the history of civilisations, antique objects, and understanding society through past events. Give me an old aesthetic object with an interesting story, and I am usually happy to spend time learning about it. But this machine was different. It was a large unit, a little rusty, with buttons, tubes, and a rather confusing appearance. I was curious, but not curious enough to investigate it further at that time. Somehow, the task of researching it was assigned to me. And that was when my interest in scientific history began.

It was an X-ray Diffraction (XRD) machine with a residual stress analyser. I visited the Central XRD facility in the HSB Block and met Ms. Sugirdha, Junior Technical Superintendent in the Department of Metallurgical and Materials Engineering. She was kind enough to explain how it worked and provided me with multiple resources. They helped me understand the machine better. For the first time in my life, science actually made sense to me, and it was interesting! After that, I started reading about it on my own.

“But this machine was different. It was a large unit, a little rusty, with buttons, tubes, and a rather confusing appearance.”

On a random sunny day, I was waiting for the bus as usual after having missed it. That was when a person named Sugumar offered me a lift in his car. During our conversation, I mentioned that I worked as a Project Associate at the Heritage Centre. He introduced himself as a Manager at IR Technology Services, Noida. As we spoke further, I got to know that he was involved in providing services for and installing XRD and XRF machines at IIT Madras. It was quite a coincidence! I had been reading about these machines, and here I was, meeting someone whose work was connected to them.

I requested him to have a look at the machine which was kept at the Heritage Centre as an exhibit. Some days later, he called me to say that he would love to visit the Centre and see the machine.

He looked at the vintage machine and explained how some of its parts are no longer used in modern X-ray Diffraction machines. It was a surprise for him to learn that the machine was preserved at the Heritage Centre and held great value. That was when I realised that a machine is more than just its mechanism or purpose. It is also about the people who operate it, maintain it, and continue to find meaning in it even today. They are all part of its history.

Let's Get Technical (Just a Little)

The X-ray Diffraction machine uses X-rays to study the arrangement of atoms in crystalline materials and measure residual stress within them. Residual stress is the stress that remains inside a material even when no external force is acting on it. It can develop during processes such as welding, machining, and heat treatment, affecting the strength and life of an engineering component.

Now, this might sound like an ordinary concept to an engineering student. But for me, it was a whole new world. Until then, I had never given much thought to what might be happening inside a piece of metal. Turns out, there was a lot more going on beneath the surface than I had imagined!

Think about it: we cannot see the stress inside a metal, yet we have figured out a way to measure it! That is what fascinated me about the science behind this machine.

In 1913, William Henry Bragg and his son, William Lawrence Bragg, developed Bragg's Law to explain how X-rays interact with the layers of atoms arranged in a regular pattern within crystals, such as metals



Photograph: Bhuvanesh Santharam

A Rigaku X-ray Diffraction (XRD) machine with a residual stress analyser on display at the Heritage Centre

and salts. Their work helped scientists use X-rays to investigate the structure of crystals. It made me appreciate how far human curiosity can take us. Every instrument came into existence because someone dared to question and ideate.



Photograph: Bhuvanesh Santharam

Close-up of the manual control components on the machine

> **The XRD machine arrived at IIT Madras around 1975 from Rigaku, a manufacturing company based in Japan.**

When a Machine Becomes History

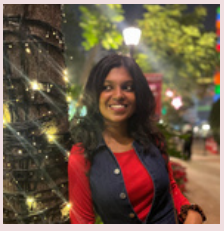
The XRD machine arrived at IIT Madras around 1975 from Rigaku, a manufacturing company based in Japan. Once it reached the campus, Prof. P. Kesavan Nair and his team assembled and commissioned it under the guidance of Prof. R. Vasudevan. Both professors were from the Department of Metallurgical and Materials Engineering.

The instrument subsequently supported research at the institute, helping researchers investigate the properties of materials. The XRD machine is no longer in active use, but it remains an important exhibit at the Heritage Centre because today, X-ray analysis has become highly automated and even AI-assisted. This vintage machine preserves an important chapter in IIT Madras's scientific history, reminding us how far technology has come and how much we can learn from the instruments that came before it.

My Takeaway From This Story

I walked into the Heritage Centre looking for stories in its exhibits. I did not expect to find one in a machine I could barely understand. Yet it showed me that history is not confined to monuments, manuscripts, or objects from ancient civilisations. It also exists in laboratories, scientific instruments, and the knowledge people have built over generations.

All it takes is a little curiosity and the willingness to learn. After all, not every interesting story comes with an elaborate display or an ancient inscription for us to decipher. Sometimes, it comes with a few buttons, some tubes, and a slightly rusty exterior as well.

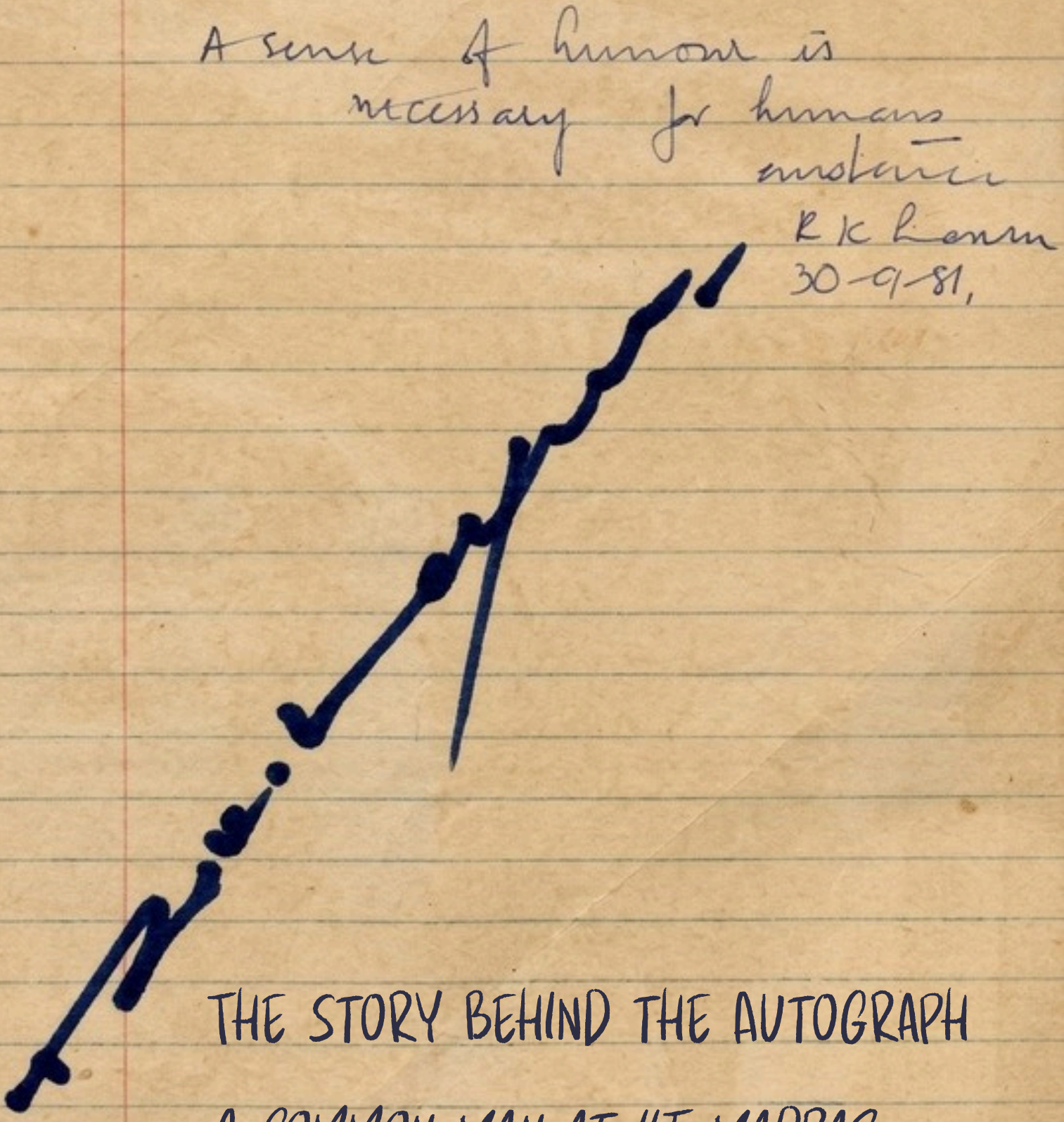


M. Krishna Priya

is a Project Associate at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras. A postgraduate in history and an aspiring singer, she finds joy in performing. She also inclines to pick up new facts, untold stories, and conversations that spark discovery. Apart from this, she loves dabbling in video editing and watching movies. She can often be found skipping around the Heritage Centre, looking for new subjects to make Instagram reels about.

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THE STORY BEHIND THE AUTOGRAPH

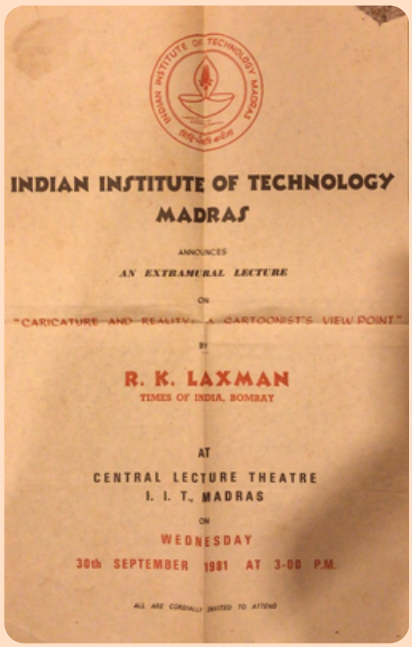
A COMMON MAN AT IIT MADRAS

WRITER - BHUVANESH SANTHARAM

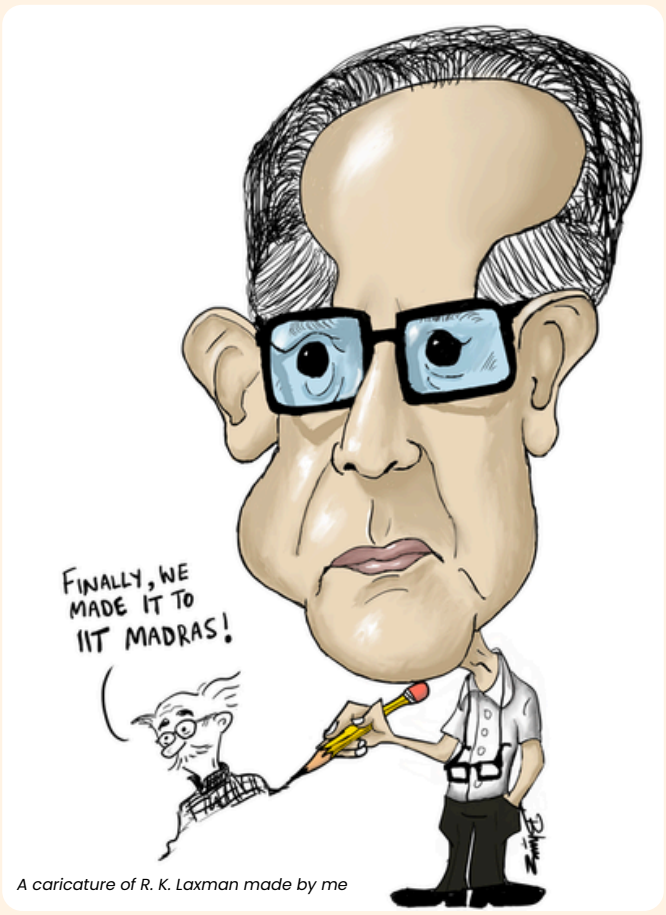
Introduction

IIT Madras has many cartoon links. Old student publications will give you an idea. The Heritage Centre is home to several of these publications, be it *Focus*, *Spectator*, or *Campastimes*. An untold tradition can be traced through these magazines: that of creating caricatures, comic strips, and cartoons of local events and people within the IIT Madras campus. To name a few, we have Ranjan Somiah (1972 batch), Dr. Thomas A. Kodenkandath (who goes by the name of Thommy, 1990 batch), and C. V. Sahasranamam (1965 batch) among numerous others.

While some alumni have stopped making art, some have continued and reached great heights. Thommy has bagged several awards for his excellent cartoons. For instance, Thommy is the first non-resident Indian recipient of the Kerala State Lalithakala Academy Award for Editorial Cartooning (2012), a winner of the international poster competition conducted by UNESCO to celebrate 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry, and the only scientist to win the Science Idol cartooning competition conducted by the Union of Concerned Scientists (USA, 2008). Apart from his contributions to publications such as *Mathrubhoomi* and *Gulf News*, his expertise earned him an Honorary Associateship of the American Association of Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC). Thommy was also awarded the Distinguished Alumnus Award from IIT Madras in 2016. Yet, I am barely scratching the surface. IIT Madras has scores of such impressive links with the cartoon world.



R. K. Laxman's Extramural Lecture poster from 1981



A caricature of R. K. Laxman made by me

A Faded EML Poster

Several weeks ago, I was scratching my head over something I thought needed coverage in our *Glass Panels*. As you may be aware, we have displayed the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) certificates and trophies bagged by IITM along with mementos and artifacts. One such artifact, a contribution from Chaitanya Jayaraman (1985 batch), had been lingering in the back of my mind, nudging me to write about it! In my eyes, this is one of the most important exhibits at the Heritage Centre, not that we have a ranking system to determine their level of importance.

You must be wondering what I am talking about. It is a poster from an Extramural Lecture (EML), *Caricature and Reality: A Cartoonist's Viewpoint.* The EML was delivered by none other than the creator of The Common Man, R. K. Laxman, on 30 September 1981. The poster, A4 in size, has taken on a classic, faded-page appearance over the years. Right next to this poster sits R. K. Laxman's iconic autograph, along with a message for the receiver: 'A sense of humour is necessary for human sustenance.'

The Silent Spectator

Recently, while my colleague Narmadha was cataloguing original *Spectator* issues, she found an undated one and brought it to my attention. The issue looked unassuming—tattered and worn. As I flipped through it expecting to find a clue to the date or year of publication, a report caught my eye. It was titled *Extramural Lecture: R. K. Laxman*, written by B. Guha. I was able to connect the dots almost instantly: the issue must have been published in late 1981 or early 1982. The story I was looking for was sitting right in our almirah!

The report notes that R. K. Laxman traced the history of cartooning in India, particularly emphasizing how political satire gained considerable momentum during British rule. The audience at the Central Lecture Theatre that day was treated to some funny stories from the cartoonist. According to the report, Laxman recounted a story about Rajiv Gandhi reacting to his overweight portrayal in the caricatures. In response, Laxman told him he would look into the matter. The event reportedly concluded with Laxman making sketches of popular political figures on overhead projector (OHP sheets), much to the joy of the audience. The final sketch featured The Common Man saying thank you.

While the report was brief, I was able to satisfy my curiosity about the event—although it would have been even better if we had some photographs to accompany it. I know, I mustn't get too greedy. For now, at least.

EXTRAMURAL LECTURE: R. K. LAKSHMAN

Yet another excellent extramural lecture. Kudos to K. V. A large crowd, including many non-IITians and a few foreigners had gathered to listen to this eminent cartoonist. Mr. Lakshman first talked about how cartooning had originated in India and said that political satire through cartooning gathered momentum during the British rule. He added that prominent political figures of the British empire started appearing frequently in the cartoons. He then talked about the various hardships he had had to undergo during his 42 year career. Mr. Lakshman proved that he was a witty speaker as well when he kept the audience amused.

Here are a few of his quotes:

Touching upon why there were so few cartoonists in India
"India being an economically backward country, people do not like to take up cartooning as a profession. Instead they prefer professions like Engineering, Medicine, Law or better still become a pilot and then enter politics."

Talking about why he chose to stay in India rather than go abroad, "Indian politics proved to be a cartoonist's paradise. My profession was safe in their hands."

The most amusing anecdote of the day was that after he had received the Magsaysay award, a Gujarathi cartoonist depicted him as arriving back home from abroad and his 'common man' asking for royalties.

At the end of the session, Mr. Lakshman sketched quite a few political figures including Nehru, Indira Gandhi, MGR, Karunanidhi, NTR, Rajiv Gandhi and V. P. Singh. Finally he drew the common man saying thank you for which he received thunderous applause.

Thanks to B. Guha.

A report about R. K. Laxman's Extramural Lecture published in Spectator (an old IIT Madras student publication)

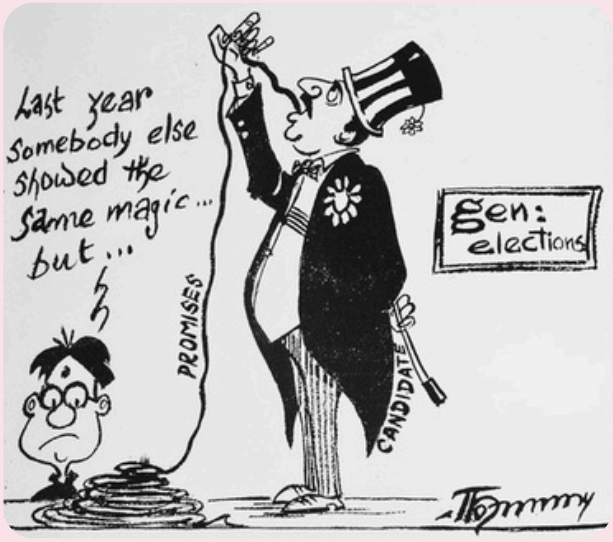
Conclusion

For those unaware, India has a rich history of cartooning, dating back to the mid-19th century. In 1841, the British magazine *Punch* was established, primarily publishing derisive cartoons and caricatures of colonised subjects, in this case, Indians. In response, local magazines in India started featuring political cartoons targeting the colonisers. The first of these political cartoons was published in the *Delhi Gazette* in 1850[1]. Sigmund Freud hit the nail on the head in his 1905 book *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, where he observed that cartooning and wit function as 'a rebellion against authority, a liberation from the oppression it imposes.'[2]

Today, cartoons are prevalent in publications across the entire country, which, in my opinion, is a great thing! Speaking of rebellion, one of the most fearless cartoonists this country has seen, Keshav Shankar Pillai, shared a unique friendship with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Shankar's merciless caricatures of Nehru did not deter the latter from praising him greatly, even acknowledging that Shankar has 'that rare gift, rarer in India than elsewhere.' Nehru even famously remarked, 'Don't spare me, Shankar.'

Since this article is primarily about R. K. Laxman, it should be noted that Shankar's Weekly, started by Shankar Pillai in 1948, was a launching pad for many Indian cartoonists, including Laxman himself! This brings us back to IIT Madras's cartoon link.

Most of the cartoons published in *Focus*, *Campastimes*, and *Spectator* are impressive and imitable. They display a rare skill and penchant for wit and drollery. Unfortunately, I do not find this cartoon culture permeating the student publications of today, although I know a few students who are keen cartoonists. I am certain they will perk up their antennae if publications encourage them to contribute their sketches.



Thomas A. Kodenkandath's cartoon on the cover of an issue of Focus*, a student publication, 10 March 1986*

Perhaps it is time to revive this dormant art and establish a way to reignite our sense of humour, which is a proven method of sustenance, as Laxman pointed out, for strange creatures like us in this fast-paced, serious world! ■

Notes

1. Srimati Ghosal, "A Historical Enquiry Into the Evolution of Caricaturing in Colonial Bengal (1872–1947)," Sahapedia, accessed October 15, 2026, https://www.sahapedia.org/historical-enquiry-evolution-caricaturing-colonial-bengal-1872-1947.

2. Sigmund Freud, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 105.

3. Rachel John, "Shankar, the Political Cartoonist to Whom Nehru Said 'Don't Spare Me!,'" ThePrint, December 26, 2022, https://theprint.in/theprint-profile/shankar-the-political-cartoonist-to-whom-nehru-said-dont-spare-me/340396/.



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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The Zanzibar Chapter



Chronicling the Birth of the First Offshore IIT Campus

Writer **Sushmitha Sathasivam**





At the heart of the Heritage Centre lies a circular, igloo-shaped enclosed area called The Dome. The Dome is solely dedicated to thematic exhibitions that we curate and populate it with twice or thrice a year.

It was late last year (2025), in the month of December, when I was assigned the curation and design of the exhibition on IITM Zanzibar (IITMZ). I had heard about the IITMZ campus sporadically prior to this, but this gave me the opportunity to follow the story more closely and weave the material into an exhibition-worthy narrative. At this point, the research was already well underway, and most of the required material had been put together by Mrs. Mamata Dash with the help of the Office of Global Engagement, along with the guidance of Prof. Preeti Aghalyam, the first Director of IITMZ. A stream of updated material kept coming in as I slowly immersed myself in the IITMZ story.

It all started back in 2020 when the Indian National Education Policy recommended that "high-performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries". The NEP aimed to discover means to facilitate "transformational reforms in school and higher education system to make India a 'Vishwa Guru.'" Following this, Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director of IITM, made a presentation during the NEP 2020 to the Minister of Education, Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan, who suggested having an international campus in Tanzania as a result of the Government of Tanzania's expressed interest. The Government of India took proactive steps, and within weeks, the contingent from Tanzania arrived at IITM.

When the delegation led by Prof. Raghunathan Rengaswamy arrived in Tanzania-Zanzibar—alongside Prof. Preeti Aghalayam, Prof. Ligy Philip, Prof. A. Mani, and Prof. K. N. Satyanarayana—the exact model of the institution remained uncertain. It was unclear whether it would be an International Institute of Technology hand-held by IIT Madras, or a full offshore campus.

However, Adolf Mkenda, Tanzania's Minister of Education, Science and Technology, quickly resolved this ambiguity, making it clear that they envisioned a dedicated IIT Madras Zanzibar institution rather than a hand-held campus.

The exhibition, *IITM Zanzibar 2023–2025*, was put together quickly, and it documented the institute's journey through its first three years, along with the key developments leading up to its commencement in 2023.

The exhibition traces the origins of IIT Madras Zanzibar, beginning with the signing of a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 6 July 2023, between the Ministry of Education (MoE), India; IIT Madras; and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), Zanzibar. It also highlights the institute's growth and achievements between 2023 and 2025, covering student activities, profiles of administrators, faculty and visiting faculty, workshops and seminars, the STEM programme, faculty initiatives, institutional partnerships and MoUs, and major milestones. The development of the old and transit campuses, culminating in the degree distribution events held during this period, is covered as well.

The exhibition was inaugurated on 13 January 2026 by Prof. Preeti Aghalayam, the former Director of IIT Madras Zanzibar. The invitees ranged from alumni and Professors to Deans and other staff members from all across the Institute. The exhibition is still displayed at the Centre today (27 October 2026) and will be replaced soon over the coming months. This exhibition has enjoyed the longest run of any thematic exhibition presented at the Heritage Centre.

As and when each exhibition has run its course and is nearing its take-down period, for documentation purposes as well as reference purposes, the Heritage Centre creates an exhibition booklet that is essentially the entire exhibition in a booklet format. I started working on the IITMZ exhibition booklet as soon as the exhibition was inaugurated, just to be able to work on it at a leisurely pace as and when I got the time. 6 March is celebrated as Heritage Centre Day, and it was decided that this booklet would be turned into a coffee table book of sorts, as it could serve as a valuable document for both IITMZ and IITM, as it documents the history of the Institute, and to release a preview of the book during the event. The book preview (around 30 pages) was released on the Heritage Centre Day, 2026. It was particularly special as it marked 20 years of the Centre.

It so happened that IIT Madras's 63rd convocation ceremony was coming up in the month of July, and the Honorable President of Zanzibar, Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi, was to be the chief guest at the event. Hence, it was decided that the completed version of the IITM Zanzibar book would be inaugurated at the convocation. This meant that the entire process had to be accelerated, and with a number of people involved, the number of corrections and adjustments increased. In the end, the IITM Zanzibar 2023-2025 book turned out to be a 210-page hardbound coffee table book with three main sections titled: *Creation*, *Full Swing*, and *Permanent Campus*.



Image source: Joshua Samuel M. / IIT Madras

The President of Zanzibar, Hussein Ali Mwinyi, releases the coffee table book IITM Zanzibar 2023 -2025 *during the 63rd convocation of IIT Madras, along with Dr. Pawan Gownka, Chairman of the Board of Governors; Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director of IIT Madras; Prof. Prabhu Rajagopal, Director-in-Charge of IITM Zanzibar; and Prof. Preeti Aghalayam, former Director-in-Charge of IITM Zanzibar*



The President of Zanzibar, Hussein Ali Mwinyi, at the IITM Zanzibar exhibition, Heritage Centre, along with Prof. Prabhu Rajagopal, Director-in-Charge of IITMZ; Ms. Mamata Dash, Senior Project Officer, Heritage Centre; myself; and Prof. V. Kamakoti, IITM Director

The book is speckled with a lovely collection of articles and photographs, contributed by administrators, faculty members, and students of IITM Zanzibar. This, in my opinion, is what makes the book so wholesome. The cover design is predominantly grey and white and has a bold striped pattern inspired by those on the Zebra. As for the page layouts, other than the title pages, headings, and subheadings, I allowed the layout to be flexible and defined by the content (text and images) on the respective pages. The colours that I used for various elements within the book were derived directly from the Zanzibar (Tanzania) flag: green (#1EB53A), yellow (#FCD116), and blue (#00A3DD).

It was a proud moment for the Heritage Centre when the Honourable President of Zanzibar released the book along with Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director of IIT Madras, at the convocation ceremony. Making the experience all the more memorable, the President of Zanzibar visited the Heritage Centre after the convocation ceremony.

We had the opportunity to present the *IITM Zanzibar 2023-2025* exhibition to him in person.

Book and exhibition design are two areas of design that I enjoy the most, and overall, I had a great time designing both the IITMZ book and the IITMZ 2023-2025 exhibition. I am thankful for this opportunity that allowed me to be a part of the IITMZ journey. ■



I got the rare oppurtunity to interact with the President at the Heritage Centre



Sushmitha Sathasivam

is a Senior Graphic Designer at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras. Other than book and exhibition design, she has a special interest in all things art, product design, and fashion. She enjoys experimenting with natural materials under her own creative endeavour, Warpworks, and most of what she creates draws inspiration from the natural world, travel, and literature.

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INTERN'S INSIGHTS

A Journey of Knowledge, History, and Gratitude at IIT Madras

All research journeys begin with questions. My journey to the Heritage Centre and the Archive of IIT Madras began with curiosity and a gut feeling that I could find the evidence needed to support my research objectives. I hoped this evidence would deepen my understanding of the diplomatic ties, technical knowledge transfer, and historical relationship between India and Germany.

As I began my academic exploration, I felt nervous, sceptical, and unsure of how to navigate the landscape. However, when I visited IIT Madras for data collection, my apprehensions quickly cleared. What started as a strict quest for archival evidence gradually transformed into an engaging, enriching encounter with the remarkable story of an institution that represents far more than scientific excellence. Beyond engineering and technology, IIT Madras showcases a narrative of international cooperation, institutional rigor, the vision of diplomats and civil servants, and the enduring value of human growth that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the early founding members envisioned.

My research examines the establishment of IIT Madras within the broader context of India's post-independence developmental aspirations and West Germany's position in the post-war international order. In this regard, the Heritage Centre and Archive of IIT Madras have been invaluable resources committed to preserving this shared history. When I first started out, I assumed an engineering institution would have little to do with conventional diplomatic history. Yet, as I dug deeper, it became clear that technology is never simply about machines, laboratories, or blueprints. It is about ideas, negotiations, and the people who shape the growth of these spaces. This is precisely where the history of IIT Madras becomes so significant.

Unfurling the Stories Behind the Creation of IIT Madras

My Ph.D. topic, *A Biographical Study on Konrad Adenauer: Diplomatic Strategies and Policies that Shaped Growth and Development between Post-Independence India and Post-World War II Germany*, directly intersects with the roots of the campus. The establishment of IIT Madras was the celebrated result of an Indo-German collaboration born from the historic dialogues between PM Jawaharlal Nehru and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in 1956. German academic expertise, technical assistance, equipment, and training formed the bedrock of this partnership.

While unravelling these historical facts, a fascinating realization struck me: the profound beauty of how a diplomatic conversation between political leaders eventually materialized into a living institution. It evolved into classrooms, active laboratories, an exchange of ideas, and generations of engineers. As a student of diplomacy, it is incredibly enriching to realize that the history of international relations is not confined to formal treaties and meetings. It finds tangible expression in scientific cooperation and the cross-border sharing of knowledge. IIT Madras stands

as a premier example of how decisions made in the geopolitical arena ultimately shape how students learn and how knowledge is developed globally.

Heritage Centre at IITM: Preserving More than Memories

The Heritage Centre at IIT Madras performs a vital role that goes far beyond hosting campus tours or preserving material artifacts. It creates a space for people to engage actively with history and fosters a deep sense of belonging. Though a hidden gem to many, it houses a cozy reading room with volumes that help researchers understand the socio-political climates, institutional ambitions, and challenges that shaped the organization we know today—even down to the unique flora and fauna of the campus. These materials provided crucial dimensions to my data collection.

Archive of IITM: Preserving Documented Facts

The Archive of IIT Madras houses thousands of physical historical documents gathered from across the campus, and I am incredibly privileged to be one of the first researchers to access this facility. For anyone approaching IIT Madras through the lens of History and International Relations, this material is a goldmine. The data and facts suggest that while these initiatives were meant to enhance engineering expertise at the time, they were a direct reflection of broader geopolitical cooperation. The archives quantified these aspects, offering lasting, preserved proof of the partnership between India and Germany.

I am profoundly grateful to IIT Madras for granting me the opportunity and permission to explore both wings of its history, transforming my research into a truly unforgettable journey.

Special Thanks to the Staff

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude and sincere thanks to the teams at the Heritage Centre and the Archive of IIT Madras. Throughout my stay, they provided invaluable support, constant encouragement, and an unwavering commitment to helping me navigate my research queries.

For a researcher, much of academic work is defined by uncertainty and scepticism. Because my research crosses disciplinary boundaries, it relies heavily on specific historical events and the precise facts supporting them. At the Heritage Centre, the team does an incredible job of cultivating an environment where curiosity is welcomed, and historical exploration becomes a truly meaningful experience. Their warmth helped transform my initial uncertainty into deep motivation. I am incredibly grateful to Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Ms. Mamata Dash, Ms. Sushmitha Sathasivam, Mr. Bhuvanesh Santharam, Ms. Krishna Priya, Ms. Narmada M., Mr. Mani, and Mr. Jabaraj for their exceptional support.

At the Archive, the openness and generosity of the Chief Archivist, Dr. Ponnarasu, alongside Ms. Raveena and Mr. Gopi, made my research process considerably more enriching. Their willingness to share information, point me toward hidden resources, and maintain a spirit of institutional openness was invaluable.
While these centres might appear quiet in the day-to-day bustle of a massive engineering institution, their impact is profound for a researcher trying to shape a raw idea into a coherent piece of history.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to the Office of Global Engagement. Dr. Priya Venkat and Ms. Kanya were the very first people to help me connect with the Heritage Centre and the Archive, setting this entire journey in motion. ■



Sonal Shekhar

is a Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Fellow and Ph.D. scholar at Christ University, Bengaluru, in the Department of International Studies, Political Science and History. Her primary research focuses on Indo-German relations, Konrad Adenauer, and his contributions to the growth and development of post-independence India. She believes in possibilities. She has faith that little courage and kindness can change the world. In her free time, she writes poetry, reads, or is in the swimming pool.

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Distinguished Visitors

It is always a privilege and delight to welcome eminent personalities to the Heritage Centre. From ministers and entrepreneurs to authors and Nobel laureates, the Centre has never been short of inspiring stories of distinguished visitors. Presented below are glimpses of some of our most notable guests in July and August.



Mr. Samuel Loh
Consulate-General of the Republic of Singapore in Chennai
09 July 2026

"Thank you for having me in your lovely campus. Wonderful to learn about rich and incredible history of IITM."



Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi
President of Zanzibar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council
17 July 2026

"I have been extremely impressed by the work (Academics & Research) being done in the Institute. Keep up the good work."



Dr. Manoj Kumar Singh
Director, Department of Higher Education, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh
20 July 2026

"अद्भुत सुंदर और अनुकरणीय संस्थान। अधोसंरचना एवं कार्य-व्यवहार पद्धतियाँ भी। संस्थान के सभी प्राध्यापकों व कर्मियों सहित प्रशासनिक अधिकारियों को अनंत शुभकामनाएँ।"

"An extraordinary, beautiful, and exemplary institution. Its Infrastructure and working practices are equally commendable. My best wishes to all the faculty members, staff, and administrative officers of the institution."



Dr. Hope Katherine McCoy
Faculty - School of Engg. & Science, IITM Zanzibar
23 July 2026

"Asante! How beautiful to see the history of our great Institution."



Dr. Prerna Kohli
Clinical psychologist and social worker
27 July 2026

"The Heritage Centre took me back in time. Fabulous display; every detail was passionately explained by Ms. Mamata."



Mr. Mahadevan Mani
Alumnus
01 August 2026

"I'm visiting Chennai with family, including 5 grandchildren, to show them the campus + hostels at IITM where I studied and lived for 5 years (1963–1968). The Heritage Centre is an outstanding institution, and I literally relived my student days here, walking through the beautiful exhibits. As Ms. Mamata noted, I'm part of the Heritage Centre, reflecting a wonderful, top-notch, renowned academic and research institution, now known the world over."



Prof. Brian Yuliarto
Education Minister, Indonesia
05 August 2026

"Very great to meet with the Director & Team of IIT Madras, we will work together in many sectors to bring high tech for both our nations."



Embassy of Switzerland, Swissnex Team
Director, National Institute of Siddha
14 August 2026

"We would all like to be students again after visiting the beautiful, inspiring, and peaceful campus. Thank you."



Ms. Smita Prakash
Editor-in-Chief of Asian News International (ANI)
19 August 2026

"It was an illuminating experience. Thank you for the opportunity."



Mr. K. R. A. Narasiah
Indian marine engineer, historian, and author
28 August 2026

"It was a fascinating experience interacting with the IIT Madras Engineers."



Narmadha M.

is a Senior Executive at the Heritage Centre of IIT Madras. Outside of her professional role, she is an artist and an avid stationery collector; she has created numerous works of art using charcoal pencil, fine-line drawing pen, watercolour, and oil paint. She creates custom pieces and accepts commissioned work through her independent project, Nlines Studio. In her spare time, Narmadha enjoys catching the latest films in theatres in the city.

nlinesstudio

The Heritage Herald

September 2026 https://heritage.iitm.ac.in/

Heritage Centre celebrates Madras Week 2026 with tours, talks, and a contest

by **Mamata Dash**

Chennai, 30 August 2026: As part of Madras Week 2026, the Heritage Centre organised campus tours, talks, and a photography contest for the public spread across two weekends. The campus tours were held on 22, 23, 29, and 30 August 2026. A total of eight slots were arranged on these dates for participants who streamed in from across the city and other states. Registration was conducted via Google Forms, which were distributed through email and social media. Vincent D'Souza, one of the co-founders of Madras Day and Madras Week, shared an announcement on the Madras Week website for participants to register.

Reportedly, hundreds of people registered for the campus tours in the first few hours of opening the registration form. A total of 200 participants were shortlisted. Heritage and history enthusiasts from IIT Madras—including professors, Heritage Centre staff, and a campus doctor—guided the campus tours. Participants were taken to places on campus that held historical significance. Some of the places covered were the Gajendra Circle, Manohar C. Watsa Stadium, Tvasta — India's first 3D-printed house, and the Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre.

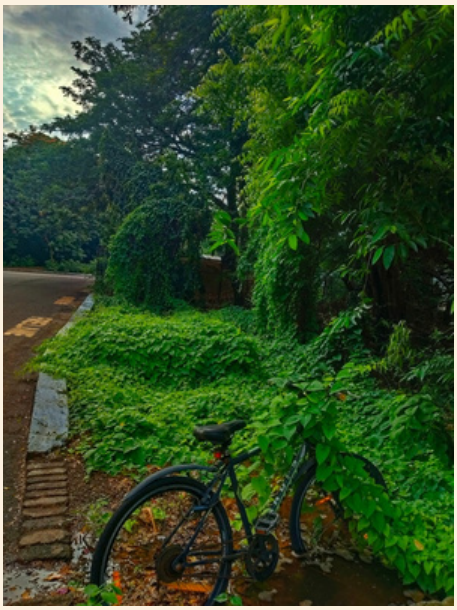
Prof. Arun Menon, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, was among the tour guides, whose expertise enriched the tour experience for participants. Campus veterans such as Prof. P. Sriram, former Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, and Prof. M. S. Sivakumar offered rare insights into campus history during the campus tours.

Participants were happy to see the lush green campus with wildlife around. Prof. Sriram shared insights on the ripe palm fruit and its uses. Dr. Gourishankar took the participants to the Adhipureeswarar Temple to show the old inscriptions on stones. When I took some students of SRM on the tour, I could take them to the Brain Centre, Mr. Saravanan kindly agreed to show us around. Prof. Nilesh Vasa took the participants to the Department of Engineering Design. The participants also had the opportunity to explore the Heritage Centre and watch the short film *IIT Madras: Journey to Eminence* at the mini-theatre.

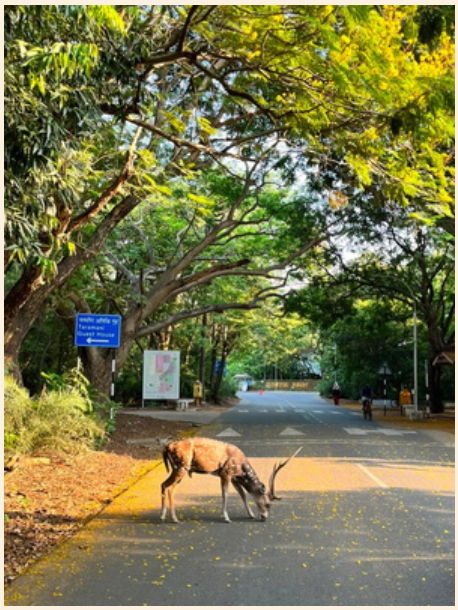
Campus tours were complemented by three talks: Mr. Poochi Venkat spoke on the Origin of Railways in India; Col. David Devasahayam presented *An Intersection of Heritage: IITM, St. George's Cathedral & Madras*; and Mr. K. R. A. Narasiah discussed *A Forest in the City*. The talks were held on 24, 25, and 28 August 2026, respectively.

The photography contest, *IIT Madras Shutterbug Shuffle 2026*, themed campus life, was open to the IIT Madras community. The winners were selected by Mr. Poochi Venkat. Mr. K. R. A. Narasiah distributed the prize to the contest winners after his talk on 28 August 2026.

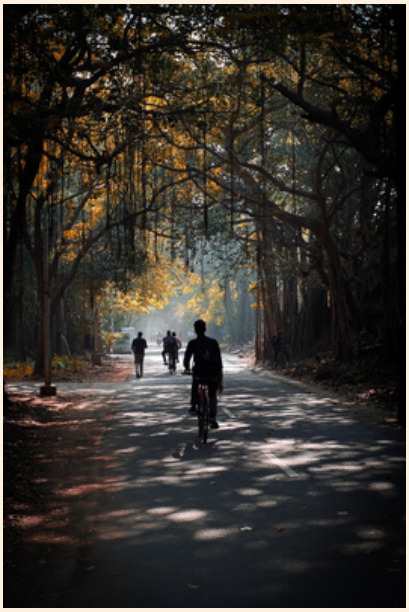
The winners were: first prize, Riya Verma (hs25h015); second prize, Shreya Som (ms25s009); and third prize, Joson Mathew (md23d003). ■



First prize: **Riya Verma** (hs25h015)



Second prize: **Shreya Som** (ms25s009)



Third prize: **Joson Mathew** (md23d003)

Musician Srividhya Sridharakumar shares her experiences at Zanzibar

by **Bhuvanesh Santharam**

Africa Special

Chennai, 14 July 2026: Ms. Srividhya Sridharakumar, Carnatic vocalist and teacher, delivered a talk at the Heritage Centre, sharing her experiences with the people, their culture, and the environment during her stay at IIT Madras Zanzibar from April to July 2026. The talk was titled *From Sunrise to Sunset: A Glimpse into the Different Facets of the Island of Zanzibar and Tanzania*.

In her talk, Ms. Sridharakumar introduced several places in the Zanzibar archipelago, including historic Stone Town, Fumba Town, and Kwale Island. She also discussed Zanzibar's historical links with India through trade and cultural exchange. Highlighting the ecological importance of mangrove forests in protecting shorelines from tidal erosion and sustaining coastal ecosystems, she noted that mangrove roots 'ensure that the ecosystem and the entire soil doesn't get washed up by the tides there because the tides are very dramatic there.'

Her visit to Kwale Island revealed beautiful views of the coral reefs and the marine biodiversity. She shared that there were concerns about coral bleaching caused by environmental changes and rising temperatures.

The presentation also featured talks about Tanzania's Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Mikumi National Park, and Uluguru Mountains.

Apart from exploring the rich natural landscapes of Zanzibar, Ms. Sridharakumar also interacted with the people, their culture, and the Swahili language.

Her observations about the people of Zanzibar and their traditional livelihoods were especially interesting and informative. She shared an anecdote about a tuktuk driver who refused extra money, saying, 'Don't give me, don't give me, I will not know what to do with the extra money.' The experience encouraged her to see how most locals from Zanzibar placed importance on living a slow, calm life, rather than one filled with materialistic pleasures.

Ms. Sridharakumar ended her presentation with a video of a Swahili song performed by IIT Madras Zanzibar faculty members and students, followed by an informal discussion with the audience. The talk offered insights into Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania, emphasizing their cultural diversity, ecological importance, and wildlife, while highlighting the region's historical ties with India. ■

Scan this QR code to watch the talk by Ms. Srividhya Sridharakumar

Prof. Arun Menon recounts conservation efforts in Mogadishu, Somalia

by **M. Krishna Priya**

Chennai, 24 July 2026: Prof. Arun Menon, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, shared his experience of protecting and restoring a historic lighthouse in Mogadishu, Somalia, in a talk titled *On the Shores of Mogadishu: Continuing the IIT Madras-Africa Connect* at the Heritage Centre.

Prof. Menon was part of a UNESCO-supported mission carried out in May 2025 to assess the condition of the lighthouse, believed to have been constructed in the early twentieth century, which had partially collapsed in May 2023.

The National Centre for Safety of Heritage Structures at IIT Madras and heritage professionals from Somalia were involved in the mission. Prof. Menon explained the difficulties in assessing the building's condition and the planning of its conservation. He also described its main features, notably the use of coral stone walls, reinforced concrete floors, and the beauty of the spiral staircase. Prof. Menon described how the collapse complicated the site's potential nomination for UNESCO World Heritage status.



Scan this QR code to watch the talk by Prof. Arun Menon

Prof. Arun Menon delivers a talk: On the Shores of Mogadishu: Continuing the IIT Madras-Africa Connect *at the Heritage Centre*

The talk also introduced important heritage sites in Mogadishu, including historic mosques, colonial-era buildings, a cathedral and monuments linked to Somalia's independence movement. These sites offered a glimpse into the city's rich history and the fusion of cultures in architecture and population. Prof. Menon also spoke about Mogadishu's maritime history and its links with the wider Indian Ocean region, including its historical connections with India.

The Mogadishu project showed that conservation requires skilled professionals, time, and resources. Unlike constructing a new building, restoration involves repairing damage while preserving the structure's original character and historical features.

The session highlighted the importance of documenting and protecting historic buildings, especially in regions facing political, environmental, and infrastructure challenges.

It also underscored IIT Madras's continued engagement with Africa through heritage research, international collaboration, and the preservation of historic structures. ■

Poochi Venkat delivers a talk on the Indian Railways

by **M. Krishna Priya**

Chennai, 24 August 2026: As part of the Madras Week celebration, Mr. Poochi Venkat presented a talk at the Heritage Centre titled *Origin of Railways in India*. Mr. Venkat used historical photographs, videos, and personal anecdotes to explain Madras's contribution to railway development and the evolution of railway technology.

Mr. Venkat highlighted Madras as an important centre for railway experiments, where new technologies were tested before being adopted elsewhere. He also discussed railway electrification and the shift from metre-gauge to broad-gauge lines.

The talk also featured the work of Prof. Ian Manning, an Australian professor who taught at Madras Christian College (MCC) and photographed trains during his stay in India. Mr. Venkat shared that he had received around 3,000 of Manning's photographic negatives and spent several years restoring and digitising them. The photographs capture historic railway stations, locomotives, railway staff and landscapes. They also provide valuable insights into the evolution of the railway system in Madras.

By comparing photographs with present-day views, he showed how Chennai's landscape and railway infrastructure have changed over the years. He also acknowledged the dedication of railway workers and their contribution to the railway system's development and maintenance over the years.

After the talk, Dr. R. Mahadevan, a Distinguished Alumnus Awardee from the first batch of IIT Madras and a Director of India Pistons, shared his experiences working with the Indian Railways. Notably, he led the development of the first indigenous piston assembly to power diesel engines, successfully ending India's dependence on foreign imports.

Mr. Venkat highlighted Madras as an important centre for railway experiments, where new technologies were tested before being adopted elsewhere.

Following this breakthrough, his company manufactured and supplied piston assemblies to the Indian Railways for over 15 years.

IIT Madras has worked closely with the Indian Railways for more than half a century. In 1971, the Structural Engineering Laboratory was established at IITM. At the time of its construction, the laboratory held the distinction of being the only laboratory in India equipped with a dynamic load testing facility. This facility proved vital when the Indian Railways decided to switch over from wooden sleepers to prestressed concrete railway sleepers.

The design and method of production developed by this laboratory were adopted by companies across the nation, and are produced in millions today.

Poochi Venkat's talk combined technical knowledge with humour and nostalgia, which helped the audience appreciate railways as more than just a means of transport because it touched upon their history, technological progress, the people behind them, and the changes in the landscape over time. It also brought the connection between IIT Madras and the Indian Railways into the limelight. ■



Mr. Poochi Venkat delivers a talk on the Indian Railways at the Heritage Centre

IIT Madras and the Restoration of St. George's Cathedral

by **Bhuvanesh Santharam**

Chennai, 25 August 2026: The second talk in the Madras Week 2026 talk series at the Heritage Centre was Col. David Devasahayam's presentation, *An Intersection of Heritage: IIT-M, St George's Cathedral & Madras*. Col. Devasahayam served as the convenor for the recent restoration effort of St. George's Cathedral. The talk explored the longstanding association between IIT Madras and the cathedral. The event brought together members of the restoration team and the IITM community.

More than 200 years old, St. George's Cathedral boasts a 139-foot spire, stained-glass windows, marble statues, and memorials. It became the cathedral of the Diocese of Madras in 1835. More than a century after that, in 1947, it became the venue for the inauguration of the Church of South India (CSI).



Col. David Devasahayam delivers a talk at the Heritage Centre

Col. David traced the close affiliation between the cathedral and IIT Madras — a link that dates back to the early 1990s, when Prof. P. C. Varghese, then Head of Civil Engineering at IIT Madras, was involved in the cathedral's structural assessment and subsequent structural retrofitting. In 2012, an IIT Madras team consisting of Professors M. S. Mathews, S. R. Gandhi and Arun Menon contributed to a comprehensive project report for structural conservation ahead of the cathedral's bicentenary.

This report provided useful documentation for further assessing the deterioration of the cathedral's structure and laid the foundation for the later restoration. In 2024-25, the IITM team returned to provide technical expertise and conduct a condition assessment for the restoration.

The restoration work, which commenced on 8 January 2025, took nine months to complete. The work included repairs to masonry, lime plaster, timber rafters, stained glass, roofing, waterproofing, drainage and electrical systems.

The project brought together IIT Madras engineers, conservation architects, contractors, artisans, stonemasons, volunteers and church members. One of the noteworthy aspects of this restoration project was the use of traditional materials and craftsmanship. The talk highlighted the importance of preserving traditional craftsmanship alongside the cathedral's structure.

Col. Devasahayam's talk highlighted the role of IIT Madras in applying scientific research and engineering expertise to the preservation of Chennai's heritage. The restoration demonstrated how historic buildings can retain their architectural identity and functionality through conservation. ■

Wodehouse-Asimov-Christie Fiction Writing Competition Awards 2026, held at Heritage Centre

by **Bhuvanesh Santharam**

Chennai, 6 August 2026: The Wodehouse-Asimov-Christie (WAC) Fiction Writing Competition Awards, instituted by former Faculty-in-Charge Prof. R. Nagarajan, were presented to the winners at the Heritage Centre on 6 August 2026. The WAC awards are an annual student short-story fiction competition that began in 2017. The competition honours writing across three popular literary genres, all named after legendary authors: humour (inspired by P. G. Wodehouse), science fiction (inspired by Isaac Asimov), and mystery (inspired by Agatha Christie). The chief guest was Prof. Devdas Menon, a prolific writer and retired professor in the Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Madras, where he held the prestigious P. C. Varghese Institute Chair Professorship.

The event began with a welcome address by Prof. Arun Menon, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, followed by a speech by Prof. Rajesh Kumar, Head of the Humanities and Social Sciences Department. He discussed the challenges of preserving creativity amidst the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) among writers. Prof. R. Nagarajan outlined the history of the WAC Fiction Writing Competition and shared his deep passion for literature. Driven by his admiration for Stephen King, he also expressed an intention to introduce a new category dedicated to horror fiction. Prof. Anindita Sahoo from the HSS Department then traced the journey of the competition from its humble origins and elaborated on the selection process. She spoke about compiling fiction entries into a second volume of *Wit, Warp, and Whodunits* in the upcoming years. The first volume was published in 2024. Prof. Umasankar Patra then introduced the Chief Guest for the evening, Prof. Devdas Menon. Following Prof. Patra's insightful introduction, Prof. Rajesh Kumar, Head of the HSS Department, presented a memento to Prof. Devdas Menon.

Prof. Devdas Menon's speech wove together elements of philosophy and mythology, particularly focusing on the concepts of life and death. He captivated the audience with his comparisons between the story of Nachiketa and our lives. Prof. Menon read an excerpt from his book, *The Awakening of Nachiketa*, offering the audience a glimpse into the mind of a seasoned writer and thinker. The inspiring speech was followed by a prize distribution function. A total of six prizes were awarded: three to the category winners and three as special mentions. Medhavi Dhyani received a certificate on behalf of Kritika Nautiyal for her story, *The Two Yappers*, in the humour category. Asim Vats received a prize in the science fiction category for his story, *The Vast Essence*. Thanusree R. P. received a prize in the mystery category for her story *The Scar*. The winners had already received a cash prize of Rs 6,000 from the Office of Alumni and Corporate Relations earlier.

The winners of the special mention were Hooriya Fathima (*The Famine of Serenity*), Shreemoy De (*The Entity*), and Venkata Sai Vishweshar S. V. (*The Stone Kicker*). They each won a gift voucher of Rs 1,000. The winners each read excerpts from their stories. The already engaging event was thus brought to a close on a cheerful note.

As a token of our appreciation, Prof. Arun Menon presented mementos to the distinguished guests: Prof. R. Nagarajan, Prof. Rajesh Kumar, Prof. Anindita Sahoo, and Prof. Umasankar Patra.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Operational Head of the Heritage Centre. ■

(Parts of this report were extracted from a Heritage Centre Instagram post)



Prof. Devdas Menon delivers a talk at the WAC Awards function

Historian K. R. A. Narasiah delivers a talk at the Heritage Centre

by **Sushmitha Sathasivam**

MADRAS week 2026

Chennai, 28 August 2026: Mr. K. R. A. Narasiah delivered a talk titled *A Forest in the City* at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras. It was the third and final talk of the Madras Week 2026 talk series. Mr. Narasiah is a celebrated Indian marine engineer, historian, and bilingual author writing in Tamil and English.

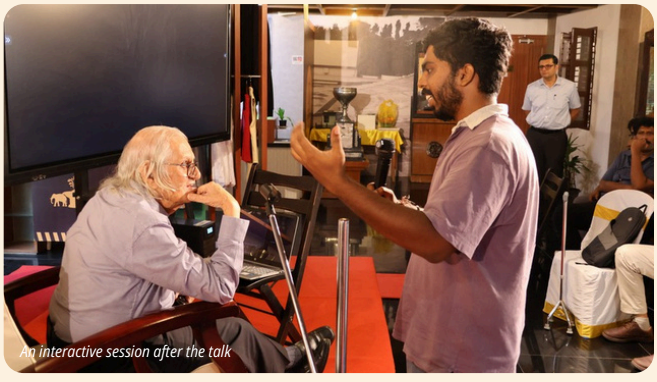
The talk explored the history of Guindy's forest landscape and its transformation over the centuries. Mr. Narasiah traced the origins of Guindy Lodge, built by Governor William Langhorne in the 1670s, and its eventual evolution into Raj Bhavan, the official residence of the Governor of Tamil Nadu. His presentation highlighted how portions of the original forest were later allocated for the establishment of IIT Madras, Guindy National Park, the Children's Park and other institutions.

The talk also drew attention to the region's rich biodiversity, including deer and blackbuck, the contributions of Romulus Whitaker to wildlife conservation, and the Irula community's expertise in snake catching and venom collection.

Mr. Narasiah concluded by highlighting the challenges posed by urban development and the importance of protecting Guindy's natural and historical heritage. ■



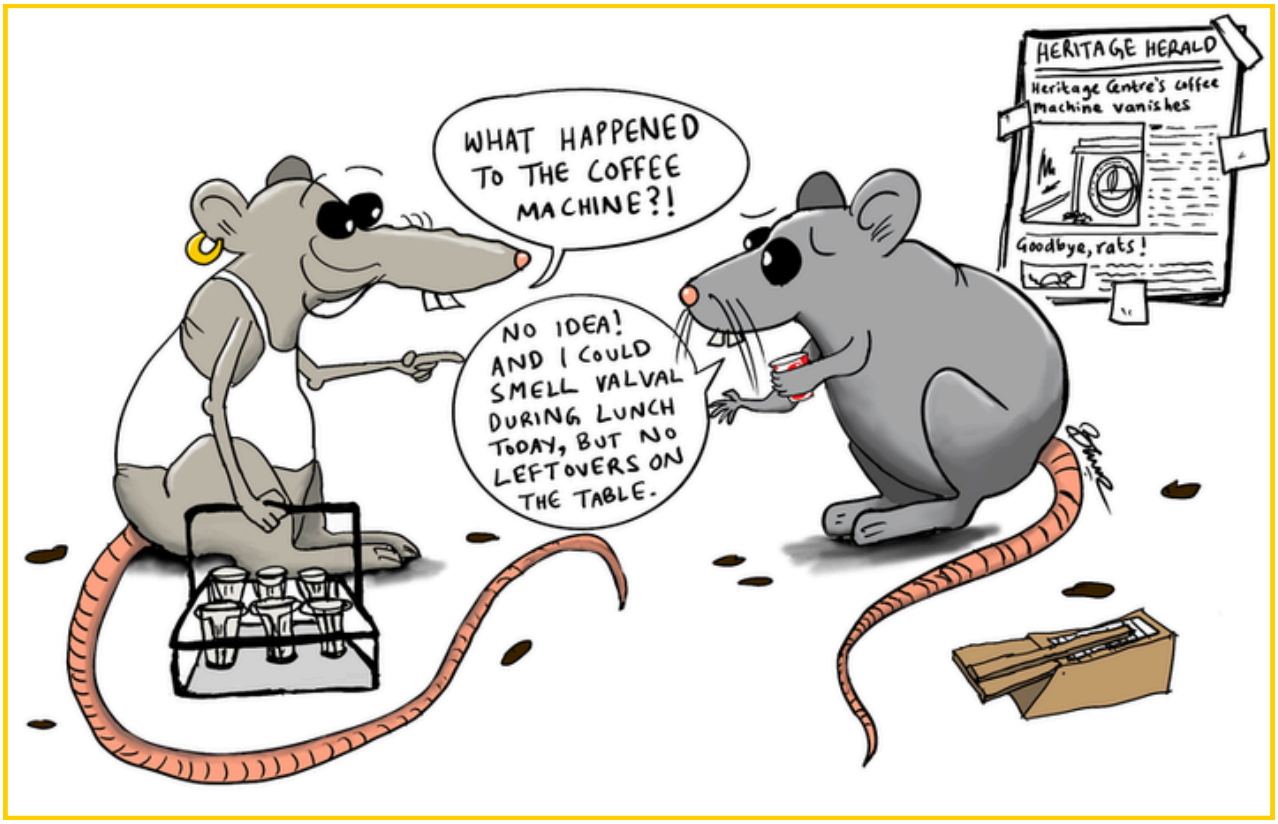
A talk by Mr. K. R. A. Narasiah



An interactive session after the talk

"IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY HOW TO BECOME A CARTOONIST; YOU HAVE TO BE BORN WITH THE GIFT, JUST AS YOU CANNOT TELL SOMEONE HOW TO SING."

- R. K. LAXMAN



Art: @soulkadhistudio / Bhuva

Rats have been successfully eliminated!

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