Campastimes 2.0

Vol. 1, No. 1 IIT Madras, Winter 2026

Heritage Centre
IIT Madras

Cover Story: The Global Recession is Over





Hola, gentle beings of IIT Madras, its far-flung alumni, and anyone else inclined to enjoy a breath of sardonic wit mixed with occasional flashes of questionable wisdom - we're back!

Campastimes 2.0



What's On The Menu?

04 **First Beat** Never Say Never Again!

We dedicate this reimagined project of Campastimes 2.0 *to the memory of everyone involved in creating the original* Campastimes, *including its founding editor, the late Anand Singh Bawa, and its first publisher, Prof. Nikolaus Klein.*



06 **Singapore Sling** The Global Recession is Over

There was a rumour circulating last year that Fiji had found religion and become a Swamiji. Although I knew Dev Anand's role in The Guide *had a profound effect on him during his formative years, I remained sceptical.*



09 **Over a Cup of Aye Aye Tea** The Cup Flows On

In my younger days the inhabitants of our dear deer campus used to sip a special chai called Aye, Aye, Tea and go around dropping pearls of wisdom ranging from anecdotes to algorithms.



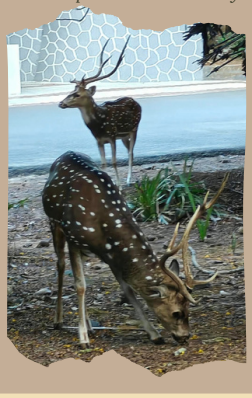
11 **Yankee Doodles** Back in the Seventies



Afternoon classes felt like a punishment for crimes we didn't commit, and workshop weeks were the only time we willingly touched tools that could create a diamond cube.

Double Take Our Deer Friends **13**

You know, most of the original five IITs were dumped right in the middle of thick woods, surrounded by all kinds of birds and beasts. We really owe a massive thank-you to the visionaries who planned it that way.





Enter the Econoматrix There's No Free Lunch **16**

The investment world is a massive canvas. It stretches from basic bank accounts and shiny gold to sprawling properties, stock market shares, and even digital coins.

Just Saying Kitney Aurat They? **19**



It's all relative. Six girls joined the BTech Class of 1971, and immediately felt grateful there were 'so many' of us. You see, the 1968 class had only one girl, and so did the class of 1969. In 1970 two girls had joined for BTech across all branches.

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Kumaran Sathasivam
K Kalyanaraman (Kāké)

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Just Saying - Viji Nathan
Bird in the Bush - Kumaran Sathasivam
Mind, Muscles & Memories - K N Srikanth
Traveller's Tails – S Srinivasan
Square Dance – Shiromani Vijay
Sportfolio - Indrajit Banerji
From Here and There - T A Balasubramanian (Tabby)

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1965-66 **Gautam Mahajan**
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1967-68 **M G Venkatesh Mannar (Venky)**
K Kalyanaraman (Kāké) 1968-69
1970-71 **Kalyan Raman** **Ranjan Somaiah**
P N Vijay **Shiromani Vijay** 1971-72

21 Bird in the Bush
Changed Characters

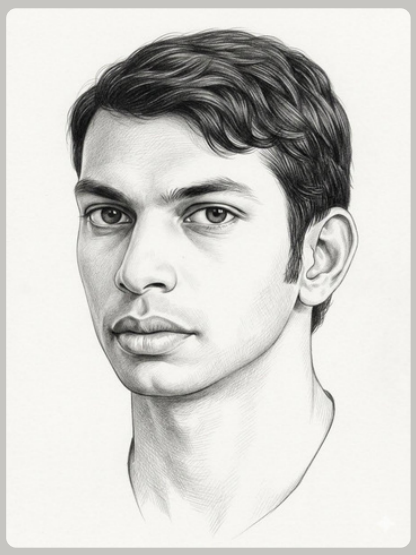
Even in my first year, I had seen a lovely little bird with a lot of yellow on it perched on an overhead line in the area. The name 'canary' had occurred to me then, but now I know that the bird must have been an iora.



25 Mind, Muscles and Memories
A Tale of Two IITs

Like the rest of us, when I joined IIT Madras in 1970, I fully expected to emerge five years later with an undergraduate degree in engineering. What I did not anticipate was picking up a fiancée along the way.

When I began at IITM, I was full of brash self-confidence. I had done very well academically during high school. That self-confidence (along with my self-esteem) got shattered within a few weeks. It happened when I got the results of my first math exam. I had scored just a B grade.



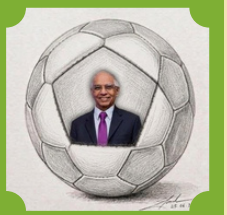
28 The Square Dance Crossing the Bridge

This crossword may be too simple for experienced Contract Bridge players. It would be interesting for those who are starting out with the game, and perhaps be a refresher for others. While the clues are general, the answers refer to specific terms used in Contract Bridge.



29 Sportfolio
My Soccer Buddy – Shorty

I met Chandrasekhar Nair one evening in the first week of July 1965 on the Madras Mail at Howrah station. We, along with a few others, were on our way from Calcutta to join IIT Madras. Surprisingly, he was fluent in spoken Bangla!



Traveller's Tails 31
A Double Loop Road Yatra

This is an account of two back-to-back looping road trip adventures in June 2023. The first was a run from Delhi to Pune and its neighbouring terrain and return to Delhi. Immediately following this was another round trip loop of Leh and Ladakh, starting from (and wheeling back to) Delhi.



Thommy's Thomato Thos 34
What the Stars Foretell



During his student days at IITM, Thommy's cartoons appeared regularly in Campastimes *and* Spectator. *He won the Mardi Gras Prize twice as well as the Kalakrithi Award of Anna University for cartooning.*

Last Blast 35
On to the Next Innings

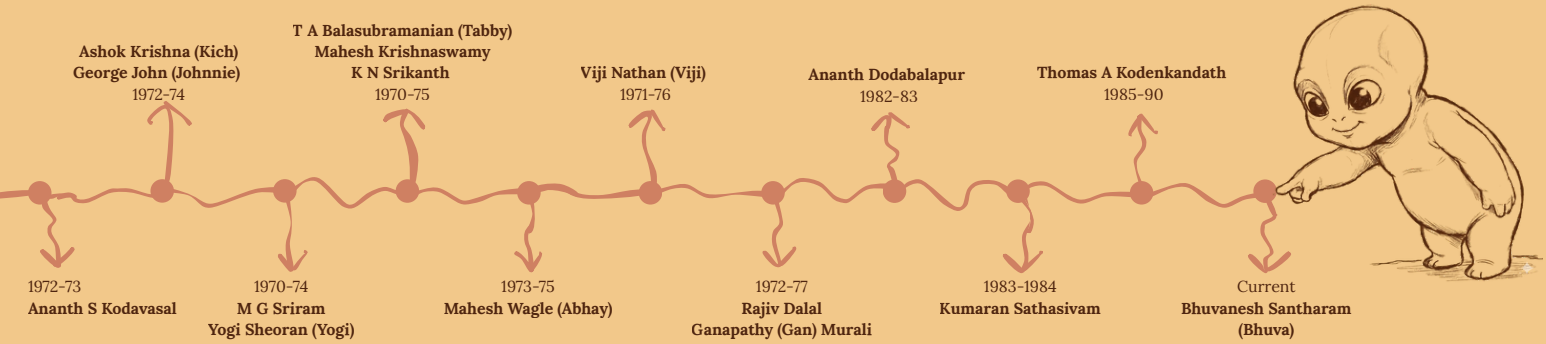


In this maiden over, our ambition was to bottle, however imperfectly, the restless vapours of a time that refused to fade away.

From Here and There Zen and the Art of Aircraft Maintenance 36



Most hard-working aircraft ground technicians have a refined sense of humour. Here are some actual maintenance complaints logged by airline pilots and the corrective action recorded by mechanics.





Never Say Never Again!

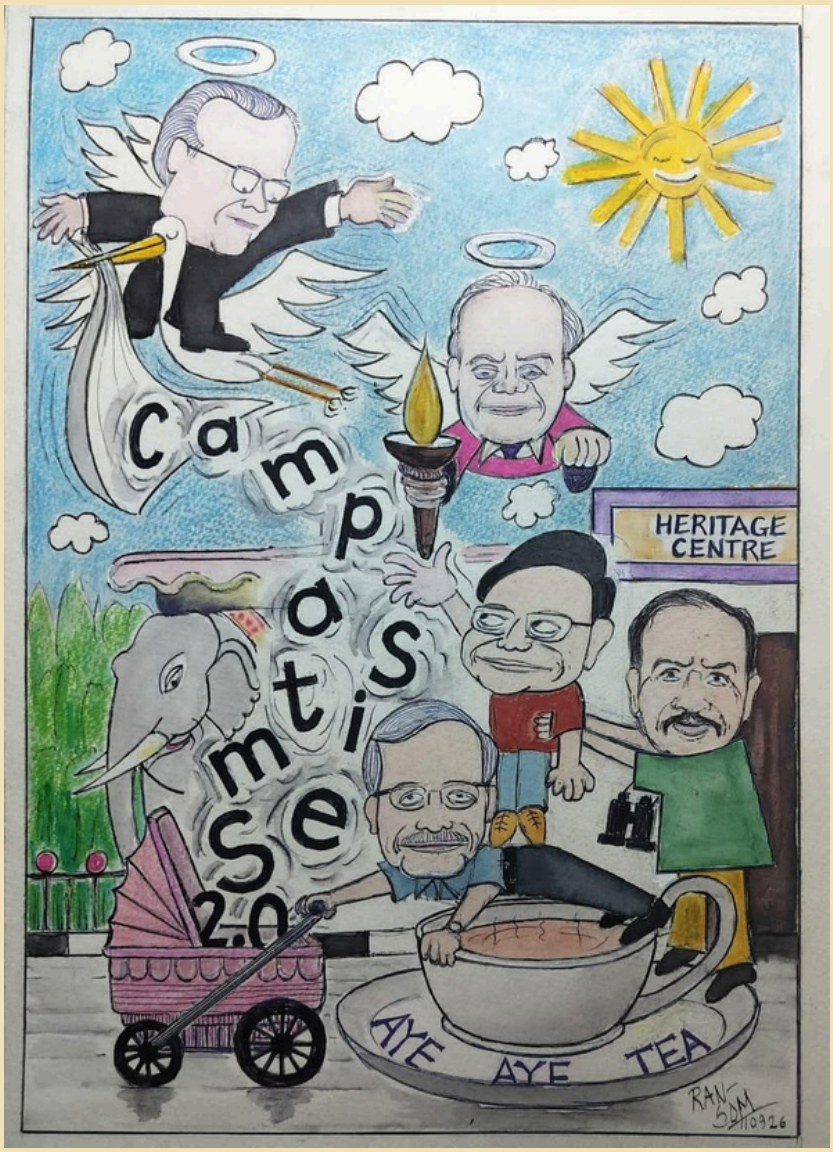
This is Campastimes 2.0 *– popping up after more than half a century! The revived spirit of an unconventional, tabloid-style campus magazine once assembled, and now re-assembled, through the combined efforts, grunts, squeaks, head-thumps and groans of cranky editorial coordinators, lazy memory-jogged writers, and never-say-never-again cartoonists.*

Words **T A Balasubramanian**

Half a century, eh? Just fifty-plus spins around the sun.

As we leapfrog — like a troop of spider monkeys (mixed metaphors and all) — across fifty-plus years, the spirit of *Campastimes* reinvents itself through the 1960s and 1970s, rises again through the mid-1980s, and then almost disappears into cyclostyled oblivion…until now. To borrow a famous spoken intro by Glenn Frey (a founder of The Eagles) during the band's 1994 live reunion concert: "Campastimers never broke up; they just took a fifty year vacation!"

What you see here is a concoction of playful headlines and gently teased-out tales by our global alumni that meander toward relaxed deadlines, accompanied by twentieth-century cartoons and crusty imagery that revives the old spirit of the rag as it reappears from the mists of its origin.



Cartoon by Ranjan Somaiah – aka Ranjoo Somoo

We Didn't Start the Fire!

We dedicate this reimagined project of *Campastimes 2.0* to the memory of everyone involved in creating the original *Campastimes*, including its founding editor, the late Anand Singh Bawa, and its first publisher, Prof. Nikolaus Klein.

Pooling their talents together, they were the igniters of the rambunctious tabloid that went on to become a living chronicle of self-expression, angst, creativity, satire, memorable events, artistry and tomfoolery for several generations of IITians from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Thanks to these pioneering spirits, all those who passed through the portals of the IITM campus and its sylvan green forest read the stories avidly, chuckled over the caricatures - and perhaps even pondered over the occasional thought-provoking essays - that flowed through *Campastimes* then.

We are happy to bring back the same engaging outbursts of creativity to the present-day reader!

Bawa, Klein and the early team lit the fire, and we are privileged to pick up and pass on the torch to another generation, to continue burning in the *Campastimes* tradition.

Those Were the Daze...

The Insti's early decades — the 1960s, 70s and 80s — now feel almost mythical. The chaos of carving a campus out of a deer park — mud, mess, water shortages and all — is behind us. The deer continue to multiply on a campus that now glitters as a thriving eco-system — home to an incredible variety of flora and fauna. We have since streaked past the end of the millennium into year counts with more zeros than anyone expected. When we left the cozy confines of the IITM jungle sanctuary to earn our stripes in the larger worlds of business, academia and professional mayhem, we carried with us a trove of memories — many preserved vividly in the words and cartoons printed in the original *Campastimes*.

In the mad old days, we were content to capture the texture of everyday campus life from the 1960s to the 1980s: how it felt inside hostels, classrooms, corridors and sports fields, as observed by people quirky enough to notice and reckless enough to pin those moments down in words, poetry, chatter, splatter — and cartoons that still throb with the emotions of another era. We wrote passionately about burning issues that mattered to us at the time — the dubious quality of the mess food; the insipid choice of OAT movies; the miniscule population of women on the campus; the absence of water in the swimming pool; and so on. These were subjects that stirred laughter, angst, petulance, irritation, curiosity, or debate.



Prof. N Klein at the Fourth Institute Day, 1963 (AI-enhanced image of B&W original)

When you flip through the old issues of *Campastimes* at the Heritage Centre, you'll find something far more electric than a bland record of official complaints. In the laid-back jokes, the teasing barbs, the mock outrage, and the sudden bursts of seriousness, you can sense the pulse of those times. The grand ceremonies and institutional milestones are absent — they are documented elsewhere.

Back to the Future Now!

Compare that past with today's tidy avenues and electric golf carts. Progress makes its own legends for each new generation of students and faculty. Now, in a new century, our effort to rocket the spirit of *Campastimes* into the 21st century is not merely an exercise in nostalgia or an attempt to assemble past editors, writers, and artists to recreate an old tabloid in a new avatar.

We are no longer single (unless it was a choice) or confined to hostel rooms. We are now much mellowed, much wrinkled, much heavier in size, and much dispersed around India and the world. We are endowed with families of our own—and some of us have even post-graduated into grandparenthood!

Campastimes of the olde sepia-tinted days was proud to never take itself too seriously. Indeed, editors as a cluster, have preferred to layer acerbic wit over unintended pomposity. And we continue, with pride, to offer no formal retrospective history. But heck, we may occasionally indulge in some misty-eyed retro gazing. We septa-hexa-goons cherish the good old days, dammit!

God forbid, does this burnished and slick new version of an old geezer qualify as high thinking? Now that's a teaser we happily leave for you to unravel!

To borrow a famous spoken intro by Glenn Frey (a founder of The Eagles) during the band's 1994 live reunion concert: "Campastimers never broke up; they just took a fifty year vacation!"



Late Anand Singh Bawa in Delhi - Photo by Kumaran Sathasivam

The Global Recession is Over



Mahesh Krishnaswamy opens this innings on Campastimes 2.0 *under his exclusive banner,* Singapore Sling*, as he escorts the subject of this profile, an old classmate (also from a nearby island), on a whirlwind shopping trip in 2001.*

Words **Mahesh Krishnaswamy**

I write this to reassure you that the global recession is now officially at an end. No, I have not been reading tea leaves or deciphering Alan Greenspan's impenetrable prose. It is simply that Hasmukh Patel, our old friend, classmate, and barefoot Maradona – known to all from our generation as Fiji – suddenly surfaced in Singapore after being lost to sight for 26 years.

Fiji 2.0

All this time, he has been beavering away at the Fiji Electricity Authority, starting as a lowly serf and progressing in the fullness of time to General Manager. He claims to have electrified much of Fiji, and I only hope that does not mean what I fear it means.

There was a rumour circulating last year that Fiji had found religion and become a Swamiji. Although I knew Dev Anand's role in *The Guide* had a profound effect on him during his formative years, I remained sceptical. I can now state quite categorically that while he has mellowed somewhat, Fiji is no nearer to enlightenment than our hi-fi Guru Ashok or myself.

Of course, he has changed. The sideburns are gone, and his hair is cut shorter, thinning a little on top. However, the chiselled profile remains intact, as does his habit of examining his reflection in any shiny surface he passes. His heavy gold bracelet and chain are still prominent fixtures.



Cartoon by Ranjan Somaiah – aka Ranjoo Somoo

Rather awkwardly for his hosts, he has stopped drinking altogether and now eats only *shuddh* vegetarian food. He even examined the ice cream I was buying for dessert, claiming he couldn't eat it because it contained traces of egg yolk. Coming from a man who was willing to eat anything he could overtake in the bad old days, this is surely a bit thick.

The Last of The Big Spenders

By now, anyone who knew Fiji in the old days must be muttering under their breath, saying, "Come on, get to the point – what was the bugger wearing?"

Let me just say that Fiji continues to be the very embodiment of what a well-dressed man might wear if he had no idea we were in the middle of an economic downturn. I still remember when he used to visit his uncle's house in Bombay for the holidays and return with a wardrobe updated with the very latest Bollywood fashions.

That was then. In the intervening quarter-century, Fiji's sartorial horizons have expanded considerably. Look at it this way: if Rudy Giuliani wants confidence to return to New York, he should simply invite Fiji over, hand him a million dollars, and get out of the way.

Most of us, when presented with that kind of windfall, would freeze in our tracks, worry about looming rainy days, and check the interest rates on three-year fixed deposits. Fiji, in sharp contrast, would hail a cab to Fifth Avenue and bring grateful tears to the cheeks of the high-priced retailers there.

Mustafa Madness

Why do I say this? This morning, he went to Mohamed Mustafa – Singapore's best-known tourist shrine – to buy sarees for his wife, relatives, and friends. The staff in the saree department recognised him instantly, and he promptly set about buying ten sarees.

At this point, I must reveal a dark secret that explains the psychedelic clothes he used to wear years ago: the man is colour-blind. He kept a list of desired colours written on a cheat sheet while I picked out the actual sarees. Now and again, he would hold up some ghastly specimen featuring fourteen different shades and prints as large as my palm, asking, *"Yeh kaisi hai?"* Feeling like a member of the UN Security Council, I would promptly veto it.

On our way out, he succumbed to the charms of a Calvin Klein watch. I dragged him away from the jewellery and sunglasses departments just in the nick of time, assuring him that the gold bracelet he fancied looked awful and that he did not need an eighth pair of sunglasses.

Next, we visited an exclusive shoe shop in Peninsula Plaza, an establishment of whose existence I had been entirely unaware. The owner greeted Fiji like a long-lost brother and shook his hand effusively. I am certain that had I not been there, he would have bent forward to kiss Fiji's ring. Fiji bought two pairs of shoes – one Clarks of England, another called Lloyd – along with a few extra insoles.

The Barefoot Maradona and Designer Shoes

As engineers-in-the-making many years ago, our knowledge of geography was dubious at best. We only had Fiji's word for it that fiji (to avoid confusion, let us use lowercase for the country and capitals for the man) actually existed somewhere near Australia. As for their national costume, we assumed it consisted of a few strategically placed coconut half-shells and a palm frond or two (one in frond and another at the back – sorry, I couldn't resist).

Now, of course, I know better. Formal dress for men in fiji consists of a shirt, tie, jacket, and skirt. Yes, you heard me: a skirt. Who knows, maybe they just prefer the ventilation. I once came across a photograph of a newly formed Fijian cabinet looking like a hairy-legged chorus line, and nearly died laughing.

At this point, I must reveal a dark secret that explains the psychedelic clothes he used to wear years ago: the man is colour-blind. He kept a list of desired colours written on a cheat sheet while I picked out the actual sarees.

However, it strikes me now that Fiji may have cannily decided to popularise the skirt in fiji just to better show off his designer shoes. It was probably for the same reason that he used to play football barefoot: anyone from Godavari who lashed out mega-bucks on designer boots was simply asking for trouble. The hooligans from Saras would have jumped all over them as surely as the sun rises.

My Brush with High Fashion

But I digress. To return to the story, Fiji then expressed a desire to visit the Salvatore Ferragamo boutique in Raffles City.

"Only to look, yaar," he insisted.

When we arrived, we discovered it had closed and were advised to try the Raffles Hotel shopping arcade across the road. Fiji walked in as if he ate pizza every day with his pal Sal. I sidled in behind him, keeping a wary eye out for intruder alarms and CCTV cameras.

It has always been my strict principle never to patronise designers and couturiers whose names I can neither spell nor pronounce. Apart from Salvatore Ferragamo, brands like Bvlgari and Ermenegildo Zegna spring to mind. I find Bvlgari particularly intriguing. Did the founder have a speech impediment? Was he dyslexic?

Be that as it may, whenever I pass their boutiques, I notice there are never any customers – only one or two pouting shop assistants engaged in e-commerce (which roughly means 'shooing the flies away' – the word 'e' means flies in Tamil). Little wonder, then, that when the Last of the Big Spenders breezes into town, the Singapore Retailers Association Choir falls to its knees to sing a grateful hymn to heaven.

Belts and Braces

When we walked in, the pouting assistant put away her fly whisk and asked Fiji if she could help him. He inspected a few pairs of shoes costing upwards of 900 dollars but didn't find anything to his liking. He asked what had happened to the Raffles City branch, and she reluctantly confessed it had moved to nearby Suntec City. Fiji nodded sagely, as if to imply he would have personally guaranteed the shop's profitability had he been in

Singapore instead of Suva. We began walking toward Suntec City in the warm afternoon sun. On an impulse, Fiji changed his mind and asked me to wait while he went back to the Raffles Hotel shop to buy a belt.

He emerged 20 minutes later. I asked him how much it cost.

"Guess," he said.

I tried to think of an obscenely large number for a piece of leather whose sole function is to ensure your privates are not held up to public scrutiny.

"120 dollars," I guessed.

Fiji smiled. "300 dollars."

Fortunately, I was seated on a bench. Otherwise, my sharp intake of breath would have caused my own trousers to drop instantly to my ankles.

Forgiveness and Whales' Teeth

A certain reticence prevents me from revealing exactly how much money Fiji blew in just four hours. I can only tell you that my family of four could easily live on it for a month.

I learned today that Salvatore Ferragamo started out as a humble cobbler (*"Woh ek chota-sa mochi tha"*), presumably before he was discovered by Fiji. I also discovered that the finest wool has a grade of 150 and costs Rs. 13,000 per metre – which even Fiji regards as excessive. He happily makes do with a grade of 140 at Rs. 7,000 per metre.

It is comforting to know that both varieties are readily available in India. *En passant*, Fiji informed me that whales' teeth are highly prized in Fiji. If your enemy offers you a whale's tooth, he does you great honour, and you have no choice but to forgive him.

What the whales themselves think of this practice has not been recorded, but one assumes they fight tooth and nail to keep their molars intact.

I can't recall exactly when this came up, but I think I was lecturing Fiji about his failure to show up at our reunion and his total ignorance of Yahoo Groups.

We shouldn't be too hard on him, though. After all, once he is done shopping, there is very little time left for anything else.

I nearly forgot to add that after we returned home, he slipped out to the nearby mall and bought that gold bracelet anyway.

Welcome back, Fiji! We accept your whale's tooth, and all is forgiven.



Mahesh Krishnaswamy (*the writer*) holds a BTech (IITM, Electrical, 1971-75), and an MBA (IIM Calcutta, 1977) degree. He has penned many regular columns, lampoons and tongue-in-cheek essays in *Campastimes* in the 1970-75 stint when he was at IITM. He is known for his trenchant wit as a debater and *de facto* Master of Ceremonies on most alumni jamborees. He has an abiding passion for cricket, both on the field (where he has led the IITM team as Captain, 1974-75) and in his later commentaries on the sport.

Mahesh has been a resident of Singapore since 1991, when he decided to drop anchor at the Lion City and make it his home away from home. As an entrepreneur, he has partnered in a software start-up, Sigmasoft, until 1999. Thereafter, Mahesh and Radha (his spouse) launched Earthsoft, a business applications venture. Their daughters Smita and Nandita had their university education in the US and now live and work there.

He can be contacted at <mahesh.krishnaswamy@gmail.com>

Hasmukh (*the subject of this article*) was born in Fiji in 1953, and that's how he got tagged as Fiji on arrival at IITM. His parents migrated from Gujarat, India, to Fiji in 1950.

He did his schooling in Suva, Fiji. Thereafter, he got a Commonwealth Scholarship to study engineering in Sydney, Australia. However, he ditched the scholarship the moment he got a telegram from IIT Madras in July 1970, offering him a chance to do the BTech degree course in Electrical Engineering.

After graduation, Hasmukh returned home in late 1975, after a few months as an intern at his uncle's edible oil mill in Mumbai. He joined Fiji Electricity Authority, a vertically integrated electricity services company in January 1976. He is now the CEO, and a Director on the Board of the company.

Hasmukh and his spouse are dedicated members of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) in Fiji since 1979.

He can be contacted at <hasmukh@kasabias.com.fj>



The Cup Flows On



Words **K Kalyanaraman**

After a break of almost 50 years, Over A Cup of Aye Aye Tea *— the archetype column that has been intimately associated with the DNA of* Campastimes *since its birthday — is back, this time under the stewardship of an Air Force officer. The refreshed banner illustration dutifully conjures up an aviator fly visiting a café library in a sepia-tinted antique vision. Kake is all set to dive into the steaming cup seamlessly to resume the thread and connect the dots, so to speak, until the next issue rolls in.*
With no further ado – Tally Ho! *We are cleared for take-off!*

In my younger days the inhabitants of our dear deer campus used to sip a special *chai* called *Aye Aye Tea* and go around dropping pearls of wisdom ranging from anecdotes to algorithms. Those days we had sommeliers, baristas and masters of the brewing craft who poured out a cupful or two to stimulate anyone who browsed, devoured or ridiculed *Campastimes*.

Among the legends from the 1960s who poured out these overflowing cups of Aye, Aye, Tea were the likes of Surjit Randhava, Prof M V Rao (Faculty of Chemical Engineering), V Siddhartha, D J Nirmal, Cm (don't ask me who), Vijay Reddy, Gopakumar, and others of the ilk.

The Cup is indeed a survivor. It outlived the original parent rag that was born in the early 1960s, *Campastimes*, that gracefully receded into the horizon sometime in the '80s. Its naughty child, the brew that drew us together then, stimulating mischief and magic in its course, lived on. On through the years. On through variants of the parent paper mag that eventually shrank a bit in size though expanded in reach through a digital avatar. The Cup even spread its aromas into a prominent spot in the student publication *T5E*. And every time a fresh brew was offered, more nostrils flared up. More inviting than the aromas from the *chaiwallah*'s push cart on a railway platform on a cold wintery day! Now the Cup is riding on another carrier that is mothered by the Heritage Centre of the Insti, and simply called *Campastimes 2.0.*

The Cup is indeed a survivor. It outlived the original parent rag that was born in the early 1960s, *Campastimes*, that gracefully receded into the horizon sometime in the '80s.

The Cup, then, is glad to be back in a familiar grog bar, and hopes to be a vigorous variant. *Aye Aye Tea* with unique flavours, nutty notes and a huge splash of the great spirit. And mark my word. Tea masters will come and go, but the brew will go on forever.

Straddling Generations

Make no mistake. *Campastimes 2.0* is the brainchild of Tabby, a.k.a. T A Balasubramanian (Class of 1975). Just for that reason alone I think he's crazy. I understand that during the Golden Reunion of his class in 2025, at the Insti, he bumped into another equally crazy guy called Kumaran Sathasivam (Class of 1985) who heads the IITM Heritage Centre at this time.

When they met, Kumaran was buried under a heap of old issues, sorting and cataloguing them. Tabby struck up an effortless conversation with Kumaran, although each couldn't quite see the other till the latter emerged from the pile. They vibed. That is how *Campastimes* devotees recognize each other - they feel the pulse. These two talked about a revival of *Campastimes*! This meeting, then, was the most productive since the cow jumped over the moon. It was like when Rolls met Royce; or when Larsen met Toubro; or when Anand Singh Bawa (first editor) met Prof N Klein (first publisher). You get the drift. They agreed that the next avatar could be launched on 15 Aug 2026. Remarkably, the original *Campastimes* was launched on 15 Aug 1962. The dates have an eerie coincidence of alphanumerics! Being a dream project with relaxed scheduling, we ask readers to forgive some slip between the Cup and the lip.

During the next few weeks Tabby (picture a cowboy) swirled his lasso around and netted several of the ancient editors, authors, artists, creative writers and composers, from all over the planet, and herded them into a social media grouping. (WhatElse? I mean WhatsUp, Doc?).

The first bout of online discussion was centered around whether to call it revived, reborn, rejuvenated, reincarnated or resurrected. We finally agreed on reimagined, simply because it was different from all previously considered options. Not that it made any material difference. But that's understandable because oldies have an ardent desire to be adamantly difficult. Then came the real discussions.

I soon found myself in the crossfire of many ideas about a target audience and readership for *Campastimes 2.0*.

The generation gap between students and ancient alumni can be staggering. Our debates felt like we were trapped inside a large hadron collider. When we emerged from the intense initial debris there was some semblance of sanity. We agreed to merge the interests of sexagenarians and septuagenarians with those of the agile, dynamic brains and hearts on the present-day campus.

Campastimes 2.0 would bridge the generation gap! Almost *like a bridge over troubled waters*. Bridge the gap between the Baby Boomers (the guys who founded and toiled over the early cut-and-paste layouts of Ye Olde *Campastimes*), and the brilliant bunch of *Gen X-Millennials-Gen Z* who inhabit the campus now as staff and students.

When Kumaran informed us that Prof Ashwin Mahalingam (Dean of Alumni & Corporate Relations) and Prof Arun Menon (Staff-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre), had not just agreed but welcomed the idea, we all ordered another round of *Aye Aye Tea*.

(A disclaimer: Baby boomers are not the parents who created a surge in the birth rate after World War II; they are the children born during that surge. In fact, when baby boomers turned parents, there was a drop in the global birth rate).





Wg Cdr K Kalyanaraman (Kāké) [pronounced "Kah-Kay"] got his nickname from high school even before he wrote the JEE. During his five years on the campus starting 1965, he balanced his life between academics, workshop, sports, music, outdoors, the Gymkhana and *Campastimes* but mainly fooled around. After graduating in Aeronautical Engineering in 1970, he served in the Indian Air Force maintaining combat aircraft, flying as an aircrew of military transports, and conducting flight trials as a qualified flight test engineer.

Taking release in the rank of Wing Commander after more than two decades in the IAF, he served the next twenty years in the private sector, initially engaged in design and manufacture of flight simulators for aircrew training and, later, as a domain specialist mentoring a team that developed flight testing software applications for India's light combat aircraft (*Tejas*) program. He was the President of the India Chapter of the Society of Flight Test Engineers (www.sfte.org), till 2024, and received the SFTE Directors Award in 2025.

Kāké lives in Bengaluru with his wife, Jaya, who is an arts person now engaging in poetry, theatre and writing. They have a son living with his family in the US and a daughter living with her family in South Africa.

He can be contacted at <kake.iitmaa.1970@gmail.com>.

Back in the Seventies



What was campus life like in the 1970s at IITM? Here's a rollicking account by our happy-go-lucky man-on-the-spot Gujju Bhai, Rajiv, as he reminisces, misty-eyed, from his cartoon saddle in this first-ever column of Yankee Doodles.

Words **Rajiv Dalal**

Afternoon classes felt like a punishment for crimes we didn't commit, and workshop weeks were the only time we willingly touched tools that could create a diamond cube.

Long gone are the days of riding my *Speedking* bicycle to HSB/BSB and back to the hostel in 40-degree heat, pretending it was "good exercise" while actually questioning every life decision that led me there.

But soon enough, we settled into the sacred IIT routine: classes, studies, sports, carrom battles before dinner, and volleyball in the courtyard (where half the players argued about rules while the other half argued about who stole their slippers). Those were days of innocence, curiosity and bonding – mostly over shared suffering and the joy of welcoming new batches who didn't yet know what they were in for.

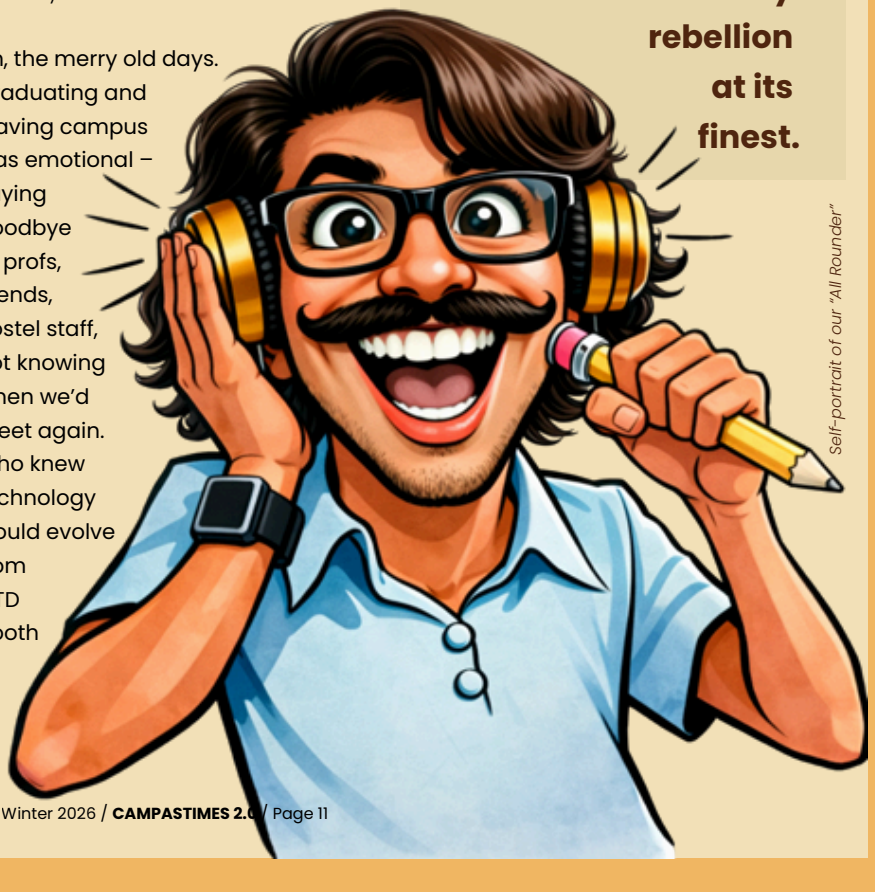
As studies got tougher and the dreaded perios kept ambushing us every week, we still found joy in the Inter-hostel Schroeter Cup and the Inter-IIT meets. Sethu and Ram Narayan dazzled us with cricket shots that defied physics, while the legendary senior, the lanky P K Eswaran made basketball look like a casual warm-up.

Roller skating at Sangam felt like a derby designed by people who took pride in knee-scrapes, and badminton in the hut was always rewarding – unless you lost, in which case the shuttlecock was defective.

Mardi Gras brought out our inner artists, playwrights, and comedians. Vernon strummed Gordon Lightfoot's 'If you could read my mind', while the rest of us tried miserably to hum along. The OAT skits made us laugh so hard we forgot our GPA for a moment. And of course, the sacred pilgrimage to Knick-Knack for cold coffee - or the even holier act of sneaking out to Adyar for Chinese at Waldie's – culinary rebellion at its finest.

Ah, the merry old days. Graduating and leaving campus was emotional – saying goodbye to profs, friends, hostel staff, not knowing when we'd meet again. Who knew technology would evolve from 'STD booth calls' to Facebook and WhatsApp groups where we now share opinions, jokes and reunion plans every so often.

The OAT skits made us laugh so hard we forgot our GPA for a moment. And of course, the sacred pilgrimage to Kit-Kat for cold coffee - or the even holier act of sneaking out to Adyar for Chinese at Waldie's – culinary rebellion at its finest.



Self-portrait of our "All Rounder"



A collage contest event at Mardi Gras, 1975: Extreme left (seated): K N Srikanth; Extreme right (seated): T A Balasubramanian, in conversation with Rachel Mathai, (seated with a drawing board). Photo credit: A Meyyappan

Our careers took us everywhere – some stuck to engineering, others bravely escaped it. Some stayed rooted in India, while others (like me) crossed oceans and now explain to confused foreigners what IIT actually is. But no matter where we went, the pride in our alma mater never left.

Speaking of pride – have you been to a movie theatre lately? Reclining seats, Dolby sound, IMAX and air-conditioning that actually works. Compare that with OAT: concrete steps, 70 mm film and opening an umbrella if it rained. Luxury then meant finding a spot without bird droppings.

Throughout my career, I've encouraged IIT Madras grads to apply to my company – their resumes go straight to the top. Other IITians also get in, of course—their commitment and positive attitude are always impressive. Once, during a phone interview, a candidate asked if I was a Gen X or a Gen Z. I told him that I was a Gen (I-Squared-T) vintage. He needed a moment and then cracked up.

Ironically, these same new grads are the ones who solve all my IT problems and introduce me to AI. I'm convinced the next generation of IIT engineers will take India - and the world - to new dimensions. We just need to cheer them on as they spread their wings and soar!



Rajiv Dalal (BTech Metallurgy, 1977, Mandakini, and Saraswati) was fondly called *Gujju Bhai* or simply Dalal.

A true campus all-rounder, Rajiv served as Fine Arts Secretary, designing Mardi Gras programs, schedules, and invitations that many alumni still remember. He also represented IITM in Inter-IIT weightlifting in 1976, bringing home a silver medal. Beyond academics and sports, he was active in both the Photography Club and the Outdoor Club, capturing memories and exploring the world beyond the classroom.

Originally from Mumbai, Rajiv married Joyce (also from Mumbai) in 1978. Soon after, he completed his MS in Industrial Engineering from UT Arlington, Texas in 1979.

Rajiv's professional journey took him across the country, with roles at Ball Corporation (Minneapolis), Pitney Bowes (Connecticut), GE Genicom (Texas), QMS (Mobile), and Eaton (Milwaukee and Raleigh) in various Engineering and Management roles.

He and Joyce have two children — Avni, who lives in Detroit, and Neeraj, based in Boston.

Today, Rajiv is happily retired, enjoying a full life of travel, photography, painting, arts and crafts, and bridge.

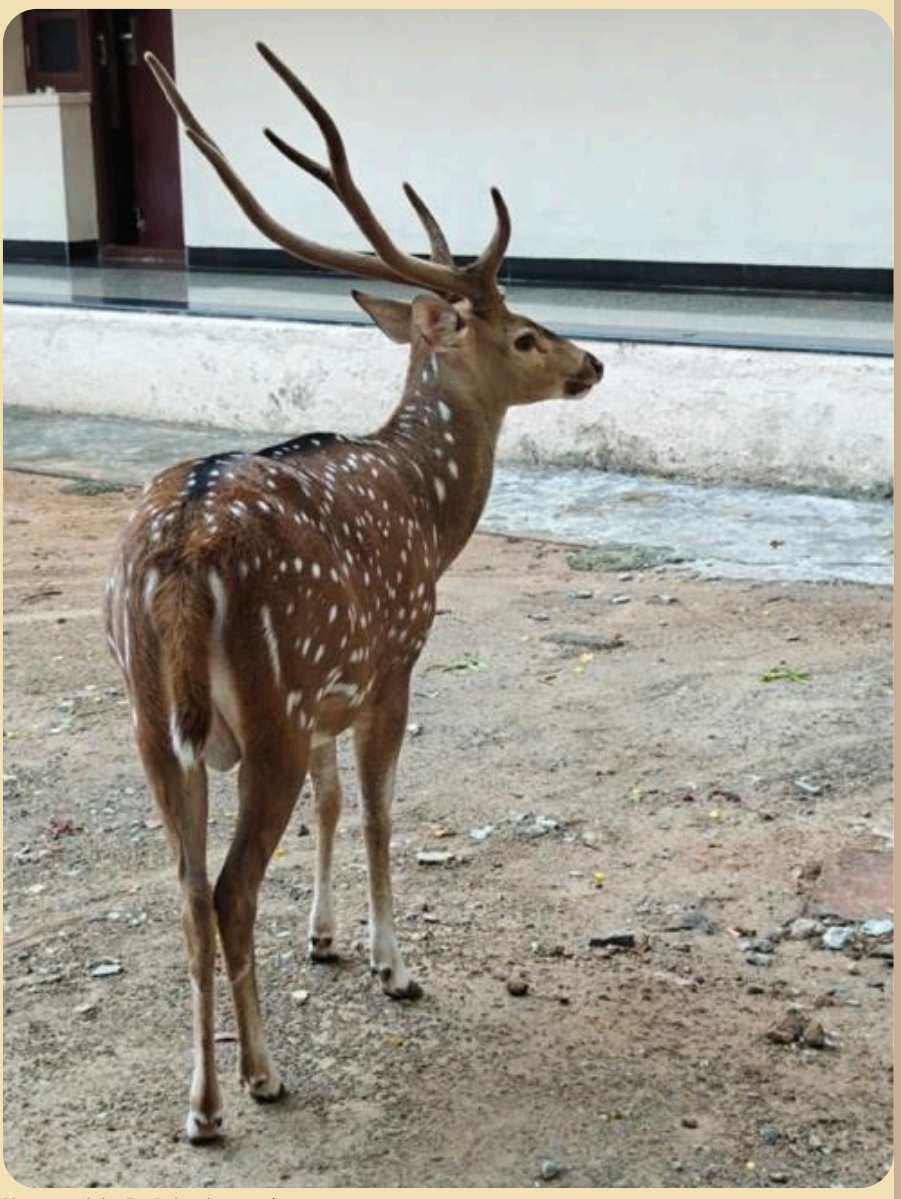
He can be reached at: <cooldalal@hotmail.com>

Our Deer Friends



Words **Ananth Dodabalapur**

D Ananth has devoted many happy hours walking around the IIT Madras campus tracking the presence of deer and documenting their movements over the years when he was a student in the 1980s. He has continued his observations and data collection into the present day. To round off his column of Double Take*, he wishes to thank the panel members Kumaran Sathasivam and Tabby (T A Balasubramanian) for their help in swapping notes and getting this article into the present shape.*



Photograph by T A Balasubramanian

You know, most of the original five IITs were dumped right in the middle of thick woods, surrounded by all kinds of birds and beasts. We really owe a massive thank-you to the visionaries who planned it that way.

Take IIT Kanpur—it's absolutely crawling with peacocks. IIT Kharagpur is basically a birdwatcher's paradise. Over at IIT Madras, you've got chital and blackbuck running around. And IIT Bombay? Well, they're famous for visiting leopards and the casual crocodiles lounging in Powai Lake right next door.

Then there's IIT Delhi. It's easily the most urban campus of the lot, but don't worry, it still gets its share of wildlife—mostly in the form of various subspecies of politicians who hang out nearby and pop in from time to time.

But let's talk about our deer over at IIT Madras. How much do we actually know about them? Back during my campus days—especially between '82 and '84—I was totally obsessed with the local wildlife. I've kept up a steady stream of visits since then, and I recently dug up some cool facts.

For starters, we have both chital (spotted deer) and blackbuck (which are actually antelopes) sharing our space. You can find the exact same crowd next door at the Guindy National Park.

Back in the day, there were holes in the fence separating the campus from the park, which led to a full-blown annual deer migration. It was honestly like a scaled-down, mini-me version of the great wildebeest migrations in the Serengeti! When the dry season hit, the IITM deer population would clear out and head over to Guindy. Why? Because the park authorities there would bring in lorries full of fresh

grass, and our deer never turned down a free buffet! But once the dry spell ended, they'd come marching right back to campus. Clearly, they just couldn't resist the campus vibe and the people! I used to know those secret migration pathways like the back of my hand. Sadly, that wonderfully porous fence has recently been replaced by a solid, boring wall.

Now, the numbers of both chital (and especially) blackbucks took a massive nosedive after the early '80s. To give you some context, back then we had well over 200 animals hanging out in IITM and more than 400 over in Guindy. Fortunately, over the last few years, the blackbucks seem to have read the script and reversed the decline and are all set to boom in numbers on the campus again. The big secret behind the comeback? Sealing off the campus with those new walls. It finally kept out the stray dogs, which—let's be honest—were wreaking absolute havoc on the population before 2019.

Now, the numbers of both chital and blackbucks took a massive nosedive...back then we had well over 200 animals hanging out in IITM and more than 400 over in Guindy.

If you talk to campus old-timers from the 1970s, they'll tell you that the chital and blackbucks used to be incredibly shy. They'd steer completely clear of humans and hide deep in the woods. Flash forward to more recent times, and the chital are basically roommates—hanging out in massive groups right by the hostels and staff quarters.

Mind you, even in the '80s, I remember chital loitering around the hostels to chew on discarded exam papers. It was a deeply satisfying sight, seeing them chew up those papers right after those exact same exams had spent the week chewing us up!



No Lunch Here!

A dog and a fox were engaged in a fight,
Determined to trap a few deer in the night.
"The deer we can see in the light of the moon,
So we'll catch all of them very soon!"

But the deer were too many, a thundering crowd,
And their munching of grass was unusually loud.
The shaken predators ran off from the crunch,
And decided that rabbits were better for lunch.

Cartoon Concept and Poem by T A Balasubramanian

These days, you can catch blackbucks casually strutting down Delhi Avenue like they own the place, while cars respectfully pull over and give them the right of way. Massive applause to the IIT administration for tackling the stray dog issue and giving our deer some proper security after 2019. Honestly, though, maybe it's time we start our own campus supplemental feeding program for the dry season, just like Guindy used to do.

After my IIT chapters wrapped up, I packed my bags and moved to Austin, Texas, where I've spent most of my life since. And get this—both blackbucks and chital are absolutely thriving out here in Central Texas on private ranches!

It's wild but incredibly comforting to have these old campus buddies living just down the road in a completely different corner of the world.



A blackbuck casually strutting down a road
Photo: T A Balasubramanian

As for the herd back home at IITM, it's fantastic that the dark days are over and the numbers are bouncing back. It means future generations of IITians will get to experience the pure, chaotic joy of sharing their college years with these beautiful, graceful creatures.

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D Ananth, known to close friends as Dan, BTech (Electrical, 1981-85) stayed at Mandakini and Narmada. He was a *Campastimes* editor, 1982-83. A native of Bangalore, Ananth attended Bishop Cotton Boys' School in Bangalore in his formative years.

While on the campus, apart from exploring the wilderness and the fauna, he has won trophies in several Inter-hostel and Institute Open Debates. After IIT, he joined University of Texas at Austin, where he obtained his PhD degree in Electrical Engineering in 1990.

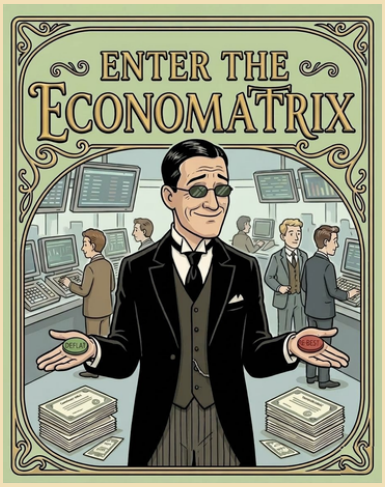
He has published more than 250 articles in refereed journals and has 27 US patents, which have been cited over 2,000 times by other patents. Since September 2001, he is with The University of Texas at Austin and holds the Motorola Regents Chair in Engineering. His present research includes organic and inorganic thin-film transistors and optoelectronic devices. A Fellow of IEEE and the National Academy of Inventors, he has received distinguished alumni awards from his alma maters Bishop Cotton Boys' School, Bangalore (in 2021), and IIT Madras (in 2026) as well.

A happily married man, Ananth is a father to two adult children. In his leisure time, he loves to read books (or watch programs) on history and philosophy. Canoeing on the lake near his home is a favorited outdoor sport.

Ananth can be contacted at: <dodabalapur@yahoo.com>



There's No Free Lunch!



P N Vijay (Editor, Campastimes*, 1971-72) is a career banker and investment analyst. He has been looking into the maze of the financial world for well over 50 years. In this handy primer, under the new banner* Enter the Economatrix*, he drills down into a few wise investment principles.*

Words **P N Vijay**

The Umbrella Bar at the Bangalore Club is a truly special place. It is a beautiful heritage bar that serves up fine spirits and even finer conversations. It is the kind of spot where folks gather to talk about everything from "cabbages to kings."

One lovely evening, a dear friend asked me to pull up a chair to discuss his shaky investments. But before we could even take our first sip, a young fellow rushed up to our table. "Uncle!" he burst out, "My broker swore gold was going to the moon! Based on his hot tip, I bought a Gold ETF back in January. But nothing has happened. My money is just sitting there!"

He had barely walked away, when an old buddy of mine strolled past. He leaned in and asked, "Hey P.N., property prices are absolutely zooming right now. Is it still a good time for me to jump into real estate?"

My investment-worried friend just shook his head, sighed deeply, and said, "With all the chaos and trouble in the Middle East, the world feels upside down. Honestly, I just feel like burying my cash or keeping it in good old bank deposits."

Watching them walk away made me think of an old piece of wisdom: "The easiest way to lose the money you have is to try and make money you don't need." It is clear to me that folks today desperately need to return to the basics of how money actually works.

The investment world is a massive canvas. It stretches from basic bank accounts and shiny gold to sprawling properties, stock market shares, and even digital coins.



No Free Lunch!

If you want to understand money, you have to start with the Risk-Return Hypothesis. Do not let the big business school name fool you. It is just a fancy way of stating a timeless truth: the profit you hope to make is always tied to the danger you take on.

Simply put, you cannot have a sweet tooth without expecting a couple of cavities. Risk and return move together like a horse and carriage. If you want a sky-high return, you must be ready for a stomach-churning drop.

The next time a fast-talking broker winks and says, "Buy this stock, friend! There is absolutely zero risk, and your money will double in two short years," just look him in the eye. Tell him you have heard that fairy tale before. Remind yourself of the old proverb: "If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is."

The Investment Ladder

Think of your investment choices as steps on a tall ladder. It is always wise to know exactly how high up you are standing before you look down:

Bank Deposits This is the very bottom step. It gives you a tiny, modest return, but it keeps your feet firmly on the ground. It is not exactly zero risk, but it is as close as you can get.

Company Fixed Deposits & Debentures These take you a step higher. They promise a bit more lunch money, but companies can and do go belly up. As the old folks say, "Don't lean your ladder against a shaky wall."

Gold and Silver These metals sit right in the middle. They are much safer than wild stocks but far jumpier than a bank account. They will bounce up and down like a rubber ball, but if you hold onto them for the long haul, they usually treat you well.

Property Real estate is a wild step. It can make you feel like a king with massive returns. But if luck turns its back on you, you will find yourself sitting on an empty piece of land for a decade, paying taxes and earning absolutely nothing.

Equity Shares This is the very top step of the ladder, right out there in the stock market wind. It is a risky place to stand. But, if you do your homework and learn to read the weather, you can catch some truly spectacular views and great returns.

Three Faces of Risk

Professor folks in business schools love to write thick textbooks about risk. But you don't need a degree to understand it. You just need to know that risk is a three-headed beast:

Security Risk (Is it safe?) This is all about the safety of your actual asset. Property is famous for this—one day you buy a plot, and the next day you find out the paperwork is fake or someone else has built a fence on it!

Liquidity Risk (Can I spend it?) This is about how fast you can turn your investment back into cold, hard cash. A bank account opens up instantly. A house? You might be waiting for years down the road just to find a buyer willing to pay your price.

Market Risk (Will the rules change?) This is how the big world outside changes your fortune. The government might suddenly rewrite the tax laws, or a sudden crisis might tank the market. Buying a stock in a calm, steady market is one thing; buying a stock in a troubled place like the Congo is a whole different ball game.



The next time a fast-talking broker winks and says, "Buy this stock, friend! There is absolutely zero risk, and your money will double in two short years," just look her in the eye. Tell her you have heard that fairy tale before. Remind yourself of the old proverb: "If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is."

The Asset Risks Grid

Investment Type	Security Risk	Liquidity Risk	Market Risk	The Bottom Line
Bank Deposits	Barely Any	Very Low	Very Low	Slow and steady wins the race.
Property	Medium (Watch for bad papers!)	High (Hard to sell fast)	Medium (Rules change)	Big bricks, but slow cash.
Stocks / Equities	High (Companies can fail)	Low (Sell with a click)	High (Wild price rides)	High thrill, high spill.



Smooth Talk, Beware!

Whenever a smooth salesman tries to pitch you a brand-new financial miracle, stop and look at it through our three risk lenses.

When a sharply dressed Bank Relationship Manager flashes a million-dollar smile and tells you, *"Trust me, buy this mutual fund. It is absolutely, perfectly safe,"* take a deep breath. Do not just take her word for it. There are hundreds of funds out there, and some of them are wolves in sheep's clothing.

The truth is, mutual funds can be some of the riskiest rides in town. Back in the crash of 2008, entire equity funds vanished into thin air. During the Covid scare of 2020, plenty of folks watched 60% of their life savings melt away in a matter of weeks. If you buy into the stock market at the very top of a bubble, you might find your money stuck deep underwater for a long, long time.

Before you hand over your hard-earned cash, always remember the wisest rule of the market: **"Invest for a rainy day - the sun doesn't shine forever; but be careful about chasing what shines too much - because all that shines is not silver!"**



P N Vijay received his MSc, Physics degree from IIT Madras in 1972. He was the General Secretary of Mandakini in 1971.

He has worked with various banks such as State Bank of India, ANZ Grindlays and Citibank (where he was Country Head of Merchant Banking). In 1990, he started his own boutique investment bank under his name.

Vijay was appointed Convenor, Central Economic Cell (BJP) from 1997 to 2005, and Official National Spokesperson up to 2016. He is a corporate member on the Boards of Nayara Energy and Jindal Drilling and a former member on the boards of Dabur, Eicher and Paytm.

He is invited often to talks on TV shows on business channels and writes columns on investments and economics for newspapers and periodicals. He has recently started offering specialised courses for investors in the stock markets.

Vijay is married to Shiromani, his classmate at IIT (also an MSc Physics graduate of 1972). They are residents of Bengaluru and avid bridge players.

He can be contacted at <pnv1007@gmail.com>

Kitney Aurat They?



Viji wrote witty profiles and articles for Campastimes *in the 1970s, often bringing fresh perspectives on women's issues. Here she reminisces, with her signature wry humour, about some of those early experiences and reactions of Sarayu's residents in a male-dominated campus and about the values she imbibed during her five years.*

Words **Viji Nathan**

It's all relative. Six girls joined the BTech Class of 1971, and we immediately felt grateful there were 'so many' of us. You see, the 1968 class had only one girl, and so did the class of 1969. In 1970 two girls had joined for BTech across all branches.

So when six of us came in, we outnumbered the total from the previous three years, which allowed us greater freedom. We'd go biking all over the campus, try badminton, go skating.

Fifty years later, at our 50th year reunion, there was a panel in which the question came up, how was social life (for the typical IITian, who was male of course) different in the 1970s vis-à-vis the 1990s? I was handed a mic and asked to add my bit/byte.

I sang four lines from a Tamil movie song:

Kaadhalikka naeramillai,
Kaadhalippaar yaarum illai,
Vaalibathhil kaadhalikka,
Jaadhakathhil vazhiyumillai..

(There is no time for love, no one to love, anyway. For any chance of youthful romance, there's no place in the horoscope..)

What did five years in that beautiful and unique campus give us girls? It taught us to walk into rooms — where we were in the minority — and take up space.



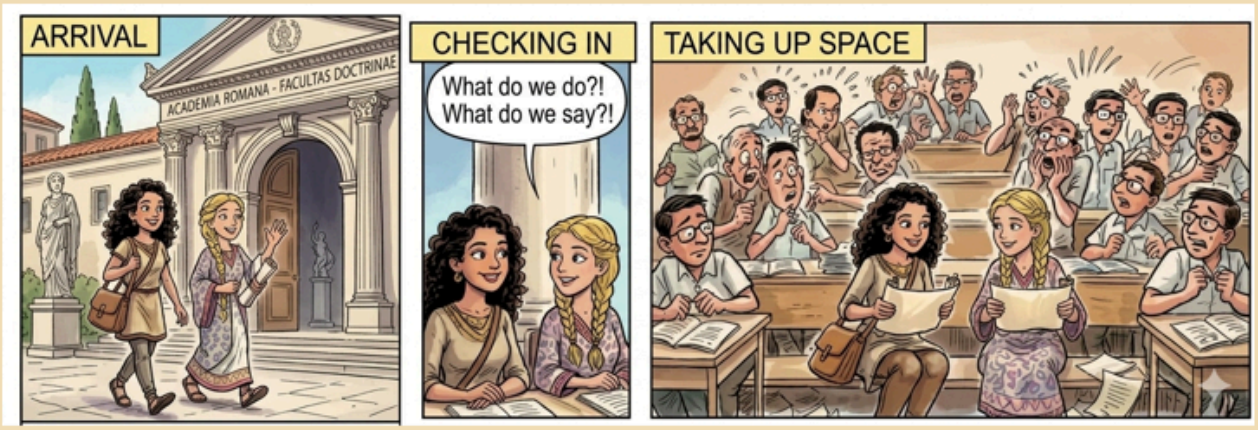
Seated *(L to R) Chandra, Sujatha, Iqbal, Devaki* ***Standing*** *Viji, Meena*

What did five years in that beautiful and unique campus give us girls? It taught us to walk into rooms — where we were in the minority — and take up space.

Performing at the OAT (Open Air Theatre) alone was unforgettable for a 17-year-old girl at whom 2,000+ guys were booing.

That was at our first hostel inaugural competition. By the end of the first year, I'd seen that a girl just had to hit her first note, and the booing would start. So the next time I made it to the stage, I set up one girl on the drums, two on guitars, and others holding random musical instruments, while I pretended to belt out a song, and my orchestra seemed to continue playing. One or two sounds of 'mic' could be heard while the audience sat in silence, puzzled.

After a few minutes of this mime, I stopped singing, and my friend Usha Natesan, the emcee, said "That, ladies and gentlemen, was the '*Sound of Silence*.'"



While the *laapataa ladies* (missing women) bothered me, in my own life I found that the five years of walking alone in that forest had given me a rare courage. In 1991, my husband was diagnosed with chondrosarcoma, a rare form of cancer.

After trying conventional treatments, the docs called us in to say "there is no hope. It's a matter of weeks at best." I had just graduated with an MBA degree from Berkeley, and I still had access to *Littsearch* to look up any subject at campus libraries.

The habitual IIT experience of looking up a new topic the night before quizzes/periodicals came in handy. I would collect excerpts, articles, theses, etc on all sorts of topics related to my husband's disease and read it — whether I understood a word or not.

One day I read that an experimental treatment was about to start, and a doc at UCSF could help. That treatment saved my husband's life at that time, and he lived to see our daughters grow up.

Today, we, the six women of the class of 1976, are thick as thieves and do feel very much a part of our class. It's wonderful, though, to enter an auditorium on campus and, thanks to the wives of classmates, see as many women as men at our reunions.

While the *laapataa ladies* (missing women) bothered me, in my own life I found that the five years of walking alone in that forest had given me a rare courage.

I used to joke about our time on campus, "Once you've been to IIT, whether you're a boy or girl, you're always searching for girls."

Only IITans of yore can understand that :)). But I'm still waiting for the day when the campus might look like a mini-India in gender ratios, only smarter ;). ●



Viji Nathan (1976, BTech, Sarayu) joined the Solar Energy Research Group in Kuwait in 1976. She hoped to help change the world through alternative energy and keep the planet cool, but the idea was apparently 40 years ahead of its time.

Moving on, Viji entered the finance world, eventually managing her own investment consulting firm in India. She wrote a monthly column for *Fortune India*. After earning her MBA from the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley, she worked on mergers and acquisitions (M&A) at several U.S. banks before moving to banking consultancy.

In the next phase, she followed a lifelong passion for acting full-time in Hollywood. Her roles include a spot on The O.C., playing Ali Fazal's mother in *For Here or To Go?*, appearing in *Pluribus* on Apple TV, and starring in a Heineken commercial ad - *Share the Good* (Check it out on YouTube).

Changed Characters



Kumaran returns to Campastimes *after a hiatus of four decades. During his years on the campus, he has explored the many wonders of the fauna and flora that IITM is immersed in.*
In this episode, our intrepid naturalist recalls a close vanishing act set up by an avian native on the campus, then drifts away to ponder on vanishing letters on sign boards and mischievous board notations he found in the hostels.

Words
Kumaran Sathasivam

The road from Godav to the swimming pool was straight and broad. One could walk or cycle on it with no let or hindrance.

But proceeding away from the road, to the sides, was a different matter: extensive *Prosopis* thickets bordered it, and the bushes, armed with formidable thorns, grew cheek by jowl.

Their branches were intertwined, so that they presented challenging walls of green. Any attempt to duck and weave through this prickly barrier was frustrated by the thorns underfoot, remnants of firewood-extracting activities of villagers from Tarams.

The point is that there were indications that the *Prosopis* was a paradise of birds. And so it was a source of fascination.

Even in my first year, I had seen a lovely little bird with a lot of yellow on it perched on an overhead line in the area.

The name 'canary' had occurred to me then, but now I know that the bird must have been an iora.

We requested the Bombay Natural History Society to provide us with photographs of eggs of the species we were interested in, taken from the correct angle, from directly above. It turned out that they had an ongoing digitisation programme, and so they had these pictures ready with them.

We took these images to our IIT Madras workshop, and they produced plastic clone eggs which you can see in the photo here.

▲

(Excerpt from Glass Panels, *May 2026 - Volume 4, Issue 3, page 7)*



In the Mandak days again, cycling back to my hostel one day after workshop, I had seen a partridge standing at the edge of the bush. There were night herons to be seen on the ground at places, deep inside the bush, if you bent and peered through the tangle.

And of course, open-billed storks were always descending into the thickets. If only one could enter them and get closer to the birds!

At the swimming pool, the road from Godav branched in two. The broader branch turned left, circling around the *Prosopis*, and eventually reached the stadium.

A narrower branch threaded through the scrub towards the lake, changed course, aiming for the boundary wall of the campus, and ended at the oxidation ponds. One could not really step off this road too.

The closest one could actually get to being immersed in the thorn habitat, with feet on earth and not on tarmac, was to walk around Ganga. At the back of the hostel, there was a small clearing, encircled by dense scrub.



And it was at the edge of that clearing that I found a stone curlew one day. A stone curlew is a bird around the size of a crow, and it has long legs.

'Nondescript' is the term that comes to the mind when you think of the appearance of a stone curlew.

It is chiefly brown, with dark streaks all over. If you study a stone curlew closely (and only then), you will note that it has white marks on its face and wings.

The stone curlew can fly, but it mostly prefers to walk. You typically see it standing quietly near a bush, looking anonymous and apparently inclined to not draw attention to itself. It is usually not seen indulging in any vigorous activity.

As I am going to disclose very soon, this does not mean that it is never active. When approached closer than an arm's length, quite a long arm's length actually, a stone curlew retreats into bushes and slinks out of sight. It really is of a retiring disposition.

Having said this, I need to state that there is also a different aspect to the stone curlew's personality.

There are times when it draws attention to its presence: when it is dark, usually, the bird produces loud calls.

It sounds then as though it is saying *pick-pick-pick-pick or pickwick-pickwick-pickwick* rapidly. It seems to call particularly when the moon is bright.

Sometimes you can hear a stone curlew calling overhead at night. Even if the bird is not visible, you know from its trademark voice that the bird is up there. When it gets dark, the stone curlew is abroad more than you would imagine. It undergoes a change in character once the sun sets.

The stone curlew at Ganga retreated in the characteristic manner, but it seemed to me that there was something more furtive about it than usual. As it turned out, there was a reason. I walked over to the point where the bird had been standing when I entered the clearing. And what should I find there but a pair of eggs on the ground!

The eggs were each about the size of a chicken's egg, give or take a little, and roughly the same shape. But they were of a colour pattern that no chicken egg had ever sported. The eggs looked as though they had been painted a vague light brownIsh colour all over, after which they had been heavily marked throughout with dark, irregular blotches.

The resulting scheme rendered the eggs quite invisible on the ground. In fact, if you took your eyes off for a while and turned back to them, the camouflage made it difficult to locate them. The stone curlew had been watching over or incubating a clutch of eggs!

The curious thing was that the 'nest'—well, to put it simply, there was no nest. No straw, no twigs. No building materials had been used at all. The eggs had been placed right on the ground, close to a bush.

This might appear to be a strange way for a bird to safeguard its eggs. Would they not be trodden on by a passing deer or blackbuck? Would they not be snacked on by the next mongoose or monitor lizard that came by?

The seemingly casually selected location at the foot a thorny bush was actually an ideal place. It provided a natural umbrella against the elements, and it ensured that no deer would actually come close to stepping on the eggs.

I was excited about the discovery of the eggs, but I did not wish to worry the stone curlew. So I withdrew from there quickly.

I was keen to see the chicks when they emerged from the eggs. But I had no idea when the hatching would take place. So, I decided to visit the clearing once every day until the event took place.

And this I did faithfully over the next week or so. On each visit, I would just reassure myself that the eggs were safe and then remove myself from the location quickly. On some days the bird was there; on others it was not.

And then, one day there was nothing there. There were no eggs and no parent bird. There were no chicks there either. The hatching must have taken place, and the chicks must have moved away. According to the bird book that I turned to frequently, stone curlews are precocial—their chicks are ready to move around soon after hatching. Unlike the chicks of many other birds, they are not helpless at birth, and they do not need lots of feeding and brooding.

I was disappointed that I had missed seeing the chicks. But I had shot a photograph of the eggs one day. I could show you the picture I got. Unfortunately, that picture, a transparency, is difficult to locate at the moment, lost in a large collection. And that transparency might have faded by now.

At any rate, the eggs were so well disguised that you would have found it hard to discern them in the picture. You might have thought the photo was of some soil. I suspect our editor would have moved it to the puzzles section—you know, it would have been like one of those drawings of a large crowd of owls or whatever and you have to find a single cat in their midst. So no matter that I am not presenting the picture.

If you were to visit the Heritage Centre at IIT Madras today, you will find replicas of stone curlew eggs there. These have been made with the greatest care to match real eggs perfectly, in their dimensions and shape as well as the external markings. The replicas have been exhibited against a plain background unencumbered with leaf litter, twigs, stones and suchlike natural elements. You can see them clearly and appreciate their details.

It is only when a stone curlew egg is on the ground in its habitat that it performs the disappearing act. It is as if it becomes invisible.

As if.

The expression ‘as if’ reminds me of something I mentioned when I gave a talk on an occasion. If you were not present then, this is your chance to hear me on the subject. If, on the other hand, you had been there, the following paragraphs are something you must not skip so that you can listen to me again.

It is like this: there had flowered in IITM a most unusual art form, one that I would like to refer to as creative editing. It is quite possible that you were aware of it once. I would like to remind you or tell you of this. This expressivism, to coin a term, was inspired by and practised on the diverse notices, signage and name boards of the IIT Madras environment. Unfortunately, I cannot name the practitioners, the maestros, of this art form. They have, sadly, remained unsung.

I can, however, tell you of some of the unidentified works that I recall.

It was not uncommon to see appeals like this on a hostel notice board:

> **Lost!**
>
> [Valuable item – thermodynamics notes, calculator, cycle key or other]. Last seen in the common room last Friday.
>
> Please contact: Hapless, 222, Mandak

Invariably, such notices ended with:

> **TREAT ASSURED!**

An artist who saw the entreaty would study it and find scope for improvement. A pen would be deployed briefly.

The inducement therein would, after the subtle ministration, read:

> **THREAT ASSURED!**

Sometimes the editing was more substantial. For instance, one student in my hostel had put up on the door of his room a sign that said:

CAR NUMBER 1

This was a souvenir from an international conference. The aforesaid student had used it when receiving delegates at the airport, taking to them to their hotels, bringing them to the conference venue and so forth.

After a few days, the stimulation that this placard provided proved to be irresistible to an unknown poet. An additional line appeared below it in shaky handwriting:

DRIVER NUMBER 2

It was much more common, of course, to find the names of the students on the respective doors. Frequently, the names were printed at the computer centre. One such computer-printed name was on a door in the ground floor in Saras:

ASIF

Signs such as this, on the mess-side of the hostel, enjoyed an intensive viewership on account of their location. Everyone residing in the hostel walked past it at mealtimes—three times a day, four including tea. It was much like a billboard at the Spencers signal on Mount Road.

It was not long before the sign read:

As if
my name is
ASIF

This list would not be complete without an example that was to be seen in HSB, in the second floor or possibly the third floor. One door there had borne the sign:

FACULTY ASSOCIATION

This had experienced the improving touch of artistic redaction at some point in time. So it proclaimed proudly:

FA ULTY ASSOCIATION

Oh dearie me, tut tut and all that. Whatever next?



Kumaran and Prof. R. Nagarajan (middle) with Nobel laureate Brian Schmidt at the Heritage Centre, 2 March 2023

Kumaran Sathasivam is the operational head of the Heritage Centre at IIT Madras.

He graduated (with a degree in naval architecture) in 1985, belonging to the first 4-year batch of IIT Madras. Four years later, he received his MS in Entrepreneurship from IITM.

As a student, he has traversed through Mandak, Saras and Brahmaputra hostels, and he was the editor of *Campastimes* during 1983-84. The title (*Campaschimes*) of the beautifully designed 245-page coffee table book he wrote, based on many years of dedicated research about IIT Madras, is inspired by the campus magazine.

Kumaran's professional career has spanned business, scientific editing and freelance writing. His articles on nature have been translated into Tamil by A. Valliappan and published as two anthologies, *Kaattin Kural Ketkiradhaa* and *Iyarkayai Thedum Kangal*. Among the books he has published are two on nature and wildlife: *A Forest in the City*, published by Children's Book Trust (winner of the first prize in a national competition organised by WWF) and *Marine Mammals of India*. In 2008, along with K.S. Natarajan (another IITM alumnus), Kumaran created the website of the Marine Mammal Research and Conservation Network of India (marinemammals.in).

Kumaran has been associated with the Madras Naturalists' Society (MNS) and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) since his student days. He is an editor of *Blackbuck*, the journal of the MNS, and he is a member of the Governing Council of the BNHS. His study 'Dragonflies in Madras' was brought out as a whole-issue monograph in *Blackbuck*.

A Tale of Two IITs



K N Srikanth starts off under his very own banner, Mind, Muscles and Memories*, on* Campastimes 2.0 *with a personal saga. Join his trip down memory lane as he recounts the serendipitous events that changed the course of his life on a visit to IIT Kharagpur during a sports meet.*

Words **K N Srikanth**

Like the rest of us, when I joined IIT Madras in 1970, I fully expected to emerge five years later with an undergraduate degree in engineering. What I did not anticipate was picking up a fiancée along the way.

When I began at IITM, I was full of brash self-confidence. I had done very well academically during high school. That self-confidence (along with my self-esteem) got shattered within a few weeks. It happened when I got the results of my first math exam. I had scored just a B grade.

After sulking for a few days, I painfully accepted the fact that plenty of my peers were smarter than me. I impulsively decided to try my hand at something perceived to need little intelligence. I chose weightlifting.

An Accidental Athlete

My father's side of the family came from the Tirunelveli District, of Tamil Nadu. This part of India apparently has a reputation for turning out wrestlers and weightlifters, but I did not know this at that time.

The improvement in my strength from weightlifting exercises led me to try field athletics as well. Soon, I was doing shot put and discus throw.

In 1973, I went to the inter-IIT sports meet at IIT Kharagpur. I was part of the IITM weightlifting and athletics teams. We arrived late on a Sunday evening. On Monday morning, I headed out to the athletic field with my discus in hand to get in some practice throws.

As I walked, I noticed a really pretty girl wearing a sari. She was riding a bike some distance away, with her long, braided hair floating behind her. I sighed wistfully. I would really have liked to meet her, but she was gone within a few seconds.



First photo sent by Leela to me, in 1973. Now you know why I tracked her down after just one glimpse of her on a bicycle!

Complaining at the Tea Shop

The meet concluded on a Friday afternoon. That evening, I wandered down to the on-campus tea shop. I got to chatting with the IIT-KGP students at my table. During a lull in the conversation, I complained about the inter-IIT meets.

I felt they were not doing one of the things they were supposed to do. They were meant to bring together people from different campuses and parts of the country to give them a chance to get to know each other. However, as athletes, we were so focused on training for our events.

Enter Professor Lamba

Sitting at a nearby table was a Sikh, a few years older than we students, who overheard my sad story. Suddenly, he banged his fist on the table and declared that this was something that needed to be fixed. He introduced himself as T. S. Lamba, a professor at IIT Kharagpur.

He then asked me if I was willing to sacrifice my Saturday sightseeing trip to Kolkata with the rest of my IITM team if we could find out who the girl was, and if he could get me an introduction to her. Slightly eccentric behaviour on his part, but I happily agreed.

An Aside Here: Remember That...

- This was India in 1973.
- I had *never* been on a date before.
- I had never even been in a one-on-one conversation with a girl.
- I was not quite as bad as Rajesh Koothrapalli in *The Big Bang Theory*, but it was close.
- Now we continue...

The Search for Leela

We first had to see if we could identify the girl in question. After a brief interrogation about what she looked like ("riding a bike, petite, really long hair..."), Lamba zeroed in on her name. He was pretty sure it was Leela Kar, a physics major who had taken one of his courses.

The extreme male-to-female gender bias on IIT campuses certainly helped in this identification.

Professor Lamba came by on Saturday morning to my hostel. I had been lying in a cold and nervous sweat all night. He hauled me out of my room and went with me to the girls' hostel.

An inquiry to the burly watchman standing guard there revealed that Leela-di had already left the hostel that morning. We spent the rest of the morning trying to track her down in places like the Physics Department labs, but with no success. Lamba kept asking passing students if any of them had seen Leela. Still, we had no luck, and I was starting to get discouraged.

Finally, someone remembered that she was a member of the Bengali theatrical club. They had been rehearsing all morning in the central theatre.

Sitting at a nearby table was a Sikh, a few years older than we students, who overheard my sad story. Suddenly, he banged his fist on the table and declared that this was something that needed to be fixed.

The Big Introduction

We hurried down there. Just as we arrived, the doors swung wide open. A group of students walked out, chattering away in Bengali.

I saw Leela, nudged Lamba, and said, "That's her!"

He told me to be quiet. He walked over to her and engaged her in a long discussion. She glanced at me a couple of times. She did not seem too impressed, and she went back to arguing with him.

Finally, he came back to me and said, "It wasn't easy, but I got her to agree to talk to you. Good luck, *bhayya*." Then, he patted me on the back and walked away.

I walked over to Leela and the conversation went like this:

Me: "Hi, my name is Srikanth."
Leela: "I know, Lamba told me."
Me: "Would you like to go to a movie?"
Leela: "No."
Me: "Would you like to have lunch?"
Leela: "No."

And that was it. I had spent all night tossing and turning, trying to think up what I would say to this girl I had seen just once from a distance.

Those were the only options I had thought up. So I came back with this:

Me: "Uh, you're not making this easy for me."

At this point she took pity on me.

Leela: "I will go on a walk with you, though."

The Long Walk and Beyond

We took that walk through the KGP campus. I took every chance I could to impress her. I mentioned ever so casually that I had just won the inter-IIT weightlifting competition and set a new record. I told her I had been in the top 100 in the IIT-JEE and that I had always been the class topper throughout high school. You know, all the dumb things a teenager can think of. I almost serenaded her with Mary Hopkin's *Those Were The Days*, but luckily, I came to my senses.

When we left, I asked if I could write to her, and she did not object. We corresponded for the next year. I sent her my self-sketched portrait, and she sent me her photograph.

After she graduated from IIT-KGP in 1974, she came to Madras to start her PhD at the University of Madras. We informed our respective parents of our intentions and got married in July 1975.

Then, we came to the US to do our PhDs – a fresh one for me, a restart for Leela. I studied operations research, and she studied biophysics. She was at SUNY-Buffalo the first year while I was at the University of Rochester, but she transferred to the University of Rochester the following year.

Fifty-One Years Later

Fifty-one years later, we are still happily married. We have two smart daughters, Maya and Priya, with MD/PhD degrees from Northwestern and Harvard. We have two grandsons, Kiran and Suraj, as well.



Srikanth's self-portrait (1973).
Tweaked a little with AI!

It took an amazing sequence of coincidences to make things happen. But this is proof that mergers do happen.

I would emphatically not call this an example of an M&A (Mergers and Acquisitions). My wife can have a short temper, and I have a strong desire to stay alive!



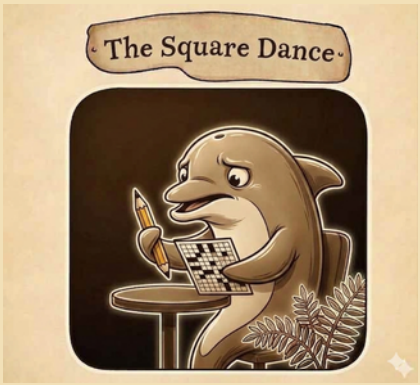
K N Srikanth, known to his friends at Alak and Saras hostels as KNS, bagged the prestigious 1975 Governor's Medal for best all-round graduate when he got his BTech degree (Electronics, 1970-1975). Dubbed Muscle Man by his sports colleagues, he has contested as a weightlifter at many events and has participated in field athlete events at IIT sports meets. When he dons his creative hat, he is also a witty and perceptive writer as well as a sketch artist.

On the career front, Srikanth earned his PhD in operations research from the University of Rochester. He has served as a faculty member at SUNY-Binghamton and at the University of Illinois, Chicago. He then shifted gears, moving to industry, working as an applied mathematics and logistics specialist with companies like Royal Dutch Shell, US Steel, IBM Australia & USA, i2 Technologies, and Decisionbrain. Eventually, he hung up his spurs in 2023 to settle in Nashua, NH, near Boston.

His current interests are in day trading, gardening and (avian) bird-watching.

He can be contacted at: <knsrikanth@gmail.com>

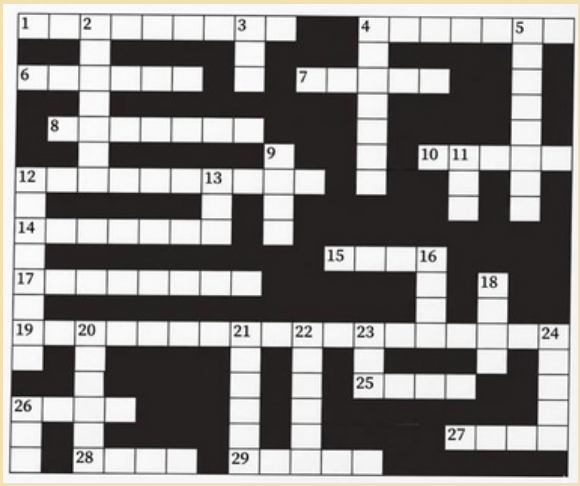
Crossing the Bridge



Shiromani Vijay returns to The Square Dance *after over half a century. This was a much-solved crossword – a familiar feature from* Campastimes *in the 1970s, when the rag was in tabloid from, and even in later years, when it was redesigned into a long format magazine with a cover, center-pinning and other features.*

Concept **Shiromani Vijay**

This crossword may be too simple for experienced contract bridge players. It would be interesting for those who are starting out with the game and perhaps be a refresher for others. While the clues are general, the answers refer to specific terms used in contract bridge.



Solution on inside back cover

CROSSWORD CLUES

ACROSS:

1 Dark Timber (9)
4 Punishment (6)
6 Coy Job; A Convention (6)
7 Watchful (5)
8 Savvy (7)
10 Annual incentive (5)
12 Meeting of like-minded persons (10)
14 Slogan in Iran (2,5)
15 American Bridge Body (4)
17 Strengthen (8)
19 Auction Process (11,7)
25 Dodge (4)
26 Across and 11 Down Discard (4,3)
27 Across and 3 Down Put an end to (4,3)
28 Bang the door (4)
29 Structure (5)

DOWN:

2 Sell Off (7)
3 ... See 27 Across
4 Stay ahead of (3-4)
5 Rescue (4,3)
9 Empty space (4)
11 ... See 26 Across
12 Written Agreement (8)
13 Excellent (3)
16 Start playing (4)
18 Formal Wear (4)
20 Army officers (6)
21 Gimmicks (6)
22 Home of Mozart (6)
23 Command (3)
24 Father of modern bidding; Goner! (5)
26 Tennis scoring (3)



Shiromani Vijay received her MSc (Physics) degree from IIT Madras in 1972. She was the Social Secretary of Sarayu in 1970.

After IIT, she took up a career as a software professional in DCM Data Products in the 1980s. Subsequently she was employed with Fidelity international.

Shiromani is deeply interested in spiritual studies. She has served as the editor of *Direct Path*, a quarterly magazine of Ramana Kendra, Delhi. Started in 1996, it carries articles and poems from devotees all over India.

She has helped two major NGOs - Society for Participatory Integrated Development (SPID) and Sai Kripa Seva Sansthan, in Delhi NCR - for a decade during their early years. She was also on the governing board of the Sustainable Development Society (Sundesh), a large NGO, for 15 years. She has been involved in mentoring Friends of Himalaya for the past 13 years. The current project of this team envisions the rejuvenation of a Himalayan river.

Shiromani is married to Vijay, her classmate at IIT (also an MSc [Physics] graduate of 1972). They are residents of Bengaluru. Her hobbies include crochet, painting and playing bridge.

My Soccer Buddy — Shorty



Indrajit Banerjee (Class of 1970), presents a memorial essay about a well-loved classmate and how the batch of 1970 chose to honor his memory.

Words **Indrajit Banerjee**

I met Chandrasekhar Nair one evening in the first week of July 1965 on the Madras Mail at Howrah station. We, along with a few others, were on our way from Calcutta to join IIT Madras. Surprisingly, he was fluent in spoken Bangla!

Most of us in that group decided to head straight to the soccer field in the evenings, after class, to avoid encountering - and getting ragged by - the seniors who were expected to arrive the following week.
It was on that very field where Chandrasekhar earned the nickname *Shorty* - and the name stuck forever.

The Soccer Star

He was the best soccer player of our time and a prolific goal scorer. Despite his shorter stature, he was the tallest scorer on the field. I can still vividly remember our inter-collegiate games, including a few during Inter-IIT meets. Shorty would pick up the ball from the half-line, dribble past five or six defenders, and score spectacular goals!

After I graduated from IIT Madras in 1970, I temporarily lost touch with Shorty. I later learned that he completed his MTech from IITM and went on to earn a PhD in Chemical Engineering from Glasgow University. I also learned that under the captaincy of Shorty, IITM won the Inter-IIT soccer championship for the first time in 1971. While living in England, he remained highly active in sports, picking up hockey and squash alongside soccer.

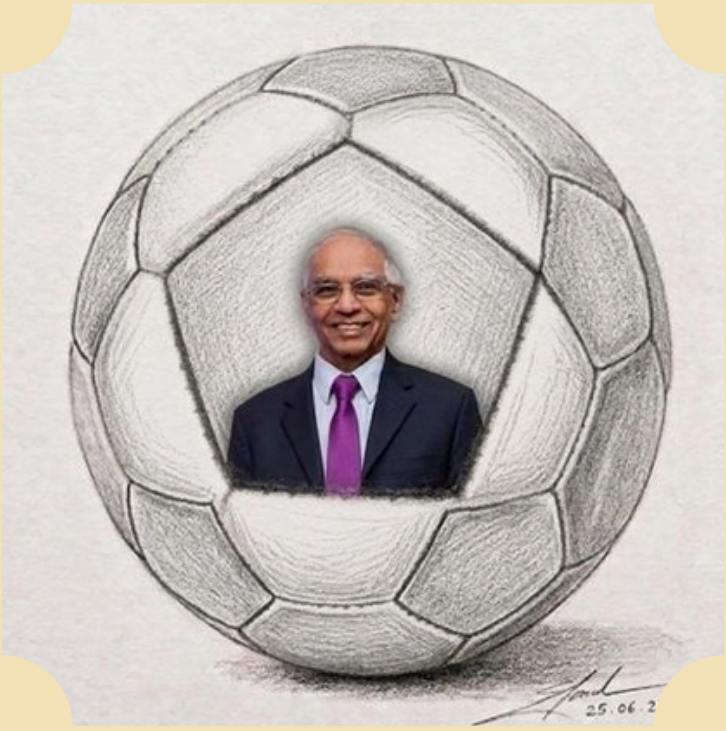
He was not only my teammate but truly my brother and conscience-keeper. His work later took him to various places across the globe until he finally retired and settled down in New Jersey, USA.

We eventually reconnected but sadly learned that he began experiencing health problems in 2019.

At that time, his family decided to relocate to Dallas, Texas, to be near their daughter, who is a doctor. On February 16, 2025, he left us for his permanent resting place.

Honoring a Legend

To honor his memory, some of us soccer buddies decided to start institutional socer trophies in his name. This marks perhaps the first time in the history of IITM that an award has been created in the name of a sportsman by his own batchmates.



Chandrasekhar Nair, aka Shorty

Monishi Sanyal originally mooted the idea, and several of us readily agreed. After lengthy follow-ups with the Institute, we finally made our wish happen. We received vital local help from our batchmates based in Chennai—including DC (D Chandrasekar) and Garu (SV Narasimha Rao)—and Sashi Rao of the 1969 batch. For the final design of this new trophy, we were assisted by a couple of batchmates, as well as my grandniece, who was adept at using AI tools.

Ajoy Sircar identified a reputed trophy manufacturer in Kolkata. He and Niyogi (Jawhar Kanta Niyogi) closely monitored the manufacturing phase. Ultimately, two trophies - one for boys and one for girls - were delivered to the Institute. The total cost is being shared among us, with Sanyal serving as the primary contributor.

Full Circle

Incidentally, the first-ever winner of the girls' trophy for the academic year 2025-26 is a German national from Berlin! It feels like we have come full circle: a German student coming to IIT Madras to study engineering and winning a sports award.

The ultimate intention of this initiative is to popularize sports on campus and promote athletic excellence.

The trophies will remain rolling from year to year, and a total of 40 gold-plated medals are to be given away for keeps for the next 20 years.



Girls' trophy



Boys' trophy



The gold-plated medals



Artist **Rajiv Dalal (a.k.a. Ardee)**

A Double Loop Road Yatra



S Srinivasan, a 1970 IIT alumnus, makes his debut on Campastimes 2.0 *under his adventure banner,* Traveller's Tails*, as he rewinds to 2023 to narrate two action-packed travel stories in a serial mode. Vasan brings out the unusual, comical and bizarre facets of travel that are not generally the focus of plain "touristy" narratives.*

Words **S Srinivasan**

This is an account of two back-to-back looping road trip adventures in June 2023. The first was a run from Delhi to Pune and its neighbouring terrain and return to Delhi. Immediately following this was another round trip loop of Leh and Ladakh, starting from (and wheeling back to) Delhi.

A Generational Tug-of-War

Usually, vacations are simple and straightforward. You choose between a visit to a temple town, a jungle safari, a stay at a resort, or experiencing beach life. That is, of course, if there is some homogeneous thinking and you are in total command of the itinerary. But have you ever planned a trip to accommodate everyone's radical interests and extreme tastes, only to be overruled at every turn?

We went through exactly that during the 5,000 km extravaganza starting from Delhi, stretching down to Pune in the south and shooting up to Leh in the north.

Eccentricity was evenly distributed across generations: my spouse and I represented the old school, our son and daughter stood for Gen X, and two tantrum-throwing teenage granddaughters represented Gen Z. Our pendulum-like mood swings would have befuddled Sigmund Freud or Jung!

Sizzling to the Vindhyas

We started our first loop from sizzling Delhi at 42 degrees Celsius in late May on our three-week drive. I handled about 30 percent of the driving in the plains but close to zilch in the mountains, and my son handled the rest. We raced toward the Vindhyas and beyond, watching the climate gyrate between scorching and scalding.

Paradoxically, my wife—who usually survives on Rubor Gel and carries a history of 19 different types of body pain—found total relief in that sweltering heat. Along the way, the awe-inspiring Narmada River was a sight for sore eyes.



Leh Palace. Leh, Ladakh.



Chousath Yogini temple, close to Gwalior

Our first major stop was Gwalior, which took us to the Chousath Yogini temple, one of only four in India dedicated to Goddess Bhavani. Notably, the old Indian Parliament House is an architectural replica of this structure, renowned for its structural stability.



Sula Vineyards, Nashik

Chants, Spirits, and Toy Trains

Our itinerary quickly morphed into a series of wild contrasts. Spiritualism at Shirdi was immediately followed by spirits at the Sula Vineyards in Nashik.

An appreciation of the highly intricate, historic artwork at the Ajanta Caves was followed by kid-level train spotting at the Joshi's Museum of Miniature Railways in Pune—an impoverished cousin of the original Miniatur Wunderland in Hamburg.

Through it all, the SUV's audio system reverberated daily, swinging wildly from Vedic chants and classical music to raucous rock.

We fell reverently at the feet of Mahakaleshwar at Ujjain, only to revert right back to a wicked, epicurean lifestyle at Taj Hotels along our route. The road was a royal glide! Move over, Delhi-Mumbai Super Expressway, the Mumbai-Nagpur Samruddhi Mahamarg trumps it completely with its smooth concrete surface (as opposed to bumpy bitumen) and advanced sound mufflers that lessen traffic noise.

Dhabas and Tunnels

Upon reaching Delhi, we immediately took off for the hills. We performed our travel "Ganapathy Puja" by stopping at the inevitable Amrik Sukhdev Dhaba in Murthal—a happening place packed with hordes of holiday crowds—on our way to Kurukshetra. From there, we moved on, with short stays in Kasauli, Kullu, and Manali.

This was followed by a drive through the 9 km long Atal Tunnel (a stretch I proudly drove on the return leg) onto the Manali-Leh Highway. It was our second time on this route in a single year, yet we were thirsting for more.

Defying Gravity

If the Samruddhi Expressway, which features the absolute best in road engineering, offered a comfortable drive, the Manali-Leh Highway induced terrifying thrills.. It is narrow, unpaved, and highly dangerous, and we were defying gravity, with our wheels frequently spinning inches away from 1,000-foot drops.

Menacing truckers try to run you off the road, and the eternal threat of landslides looms large. We were left entirely breathless—both by the spectacular scenery and by the rarefied atmosphere

Not bringing along supplemental oxygen was a rash mistake. It reminded me of an earlier trip in which we stayed overnight at Pangong Lake at 14,000 feet, shivering in my tent.

I accidentally pushed my pillow onto the heater and started a minor fire, adding to the problems of the tour organisers, who were already dealing with a medical emergency from someone else suffering from altitude sickness.



Detail of a fresco at the Ajanta Caves

The Leh Highway mostly traverses a 16,000-foot range, which brought immense altitude difficulties for my better half and our son. If all the driving hadn't driven us nuts by then, the famous "Gata loops" did—a dizzying series of 21 hairpin bends compressed into a 10 km stretch that will truly drive you around the bend—or a series of bends, if you like to be literal!

Rivers of Fury

For nearly 300 km each way, we were faithfully accompanied by the Beas, Indus and Sutlej rivers, or their tributaries. It was a spectacular experience to watch these waters start as tiny, gentle streams and gradually merge into mighty rivers of uncontrolled fury.



A Gata loop. Part of the 1,600 foot climb in 21 hairpin bends.



Lachungla. On the Leh—Nubra Valley route

Curiously, three of the region's giants—the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, and the Indus—all originate from roughly the same geographic area.

Our four days in Leh went by like a breeze. It is a lively town with a throbbing, charming marketplace. Nearby, the thousand-year-old Alchi Monastery sports ancient paintings that remain in reasonably good shape despite the ravages of time.

We also visited the famous Magnetic Hill, a spot where the road defies the laws of gravity, causing vehicles left in neutral to roll slowly uphill.

A Providential Escape

A last-minute change to our route on the way back proved providential. We later learned that our original route suffered a massive landslide, leaving hundreds of travellers stranded on the tarmac for eight hours in pitch darkness—a common hazard to be expected in these parts.

The rest of the return to Delhi was blissfully uneventful. After resting for a day, we headed back to good old Bengaluru, where the city's famously salubrious climate welcomed us home.

S Srinivasan, fondly called Buddi by his friends, is an automotive industry veteran, author, and public governance commentator.

A graduate of IIT Madras (mechanical engineering, 1970) and IIM Calcutta (quantitative techniques, 1972), he spent 43 years in leading automotive organisations across India and Oman. A prolific writer, Srinivasan has published over 60 articles on business management, IT and public governance in leading Indian and international journals. He is also the author of *Anand's World*, a corporate drama novel exploring human dynamics in business.

Now retired in Bengaluru with his wife, Malathi (an artist), he is an avid global traveller, and has visited 34 countries so far. His extensive local road drives by SUV has touched Dhanushkodi, Dwaraka, Leh and more. He has two children: Purnima, a market sociologist, and Ananth, a Supreme Court advocate.

Srinivasan can be reached at <ssvasan101@gmail.com>

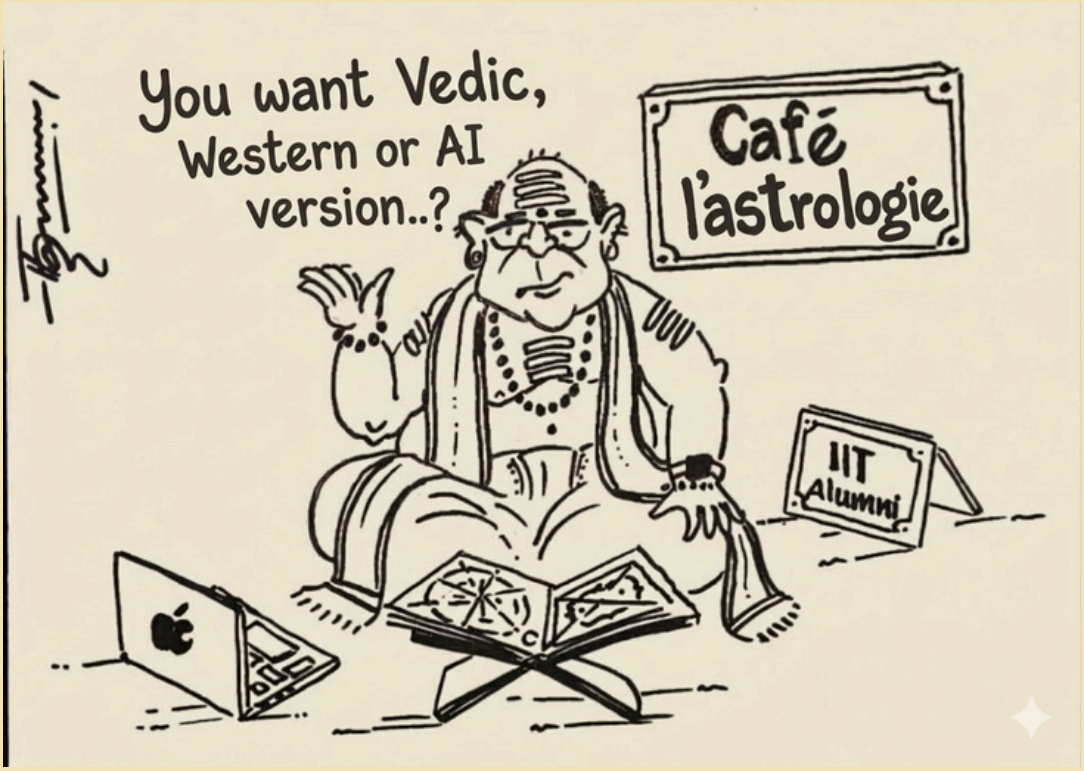


What the Stars Foretell



During his student days at IITM, Thommy's cartoons appeared regularly in Campastimes *and* Spectator. *He won the* Mardi Gras *Prize twice as well as the Kalakrithi Award of Anna University for cartooning.*

Art **Thomas A Kodenkandath**





Thomas A Kodenkandath (aka Thommy) 1985-1990, PhD (Chemistry) and Cauvery Hostel. Cartoonist for *Campastimes* and *Spectator* and represented IITM in field hockey in four Inter-IITs.

Thommy has received many awards: The International Year of Chemistry Poster (2011), Kerala State Lalithakala Academy Award for Editorial Cartooning (2012), and Distinguished Alumni Award (DAA-2016) for "Excellence in Science and Other Walks of Life".

In his work life, he has focused mostly on advanced materials for energy (generation, storage and efficiency) technologies. The proudest moment of his industrial R&D career was when *TIME* magazine selected the flexible solar cells that he helped develop at Ascent Solar as one of the best inventions of 2011.

He is currently serving as the Chief Science Officer of Versa Material Technology, a start-up developing next-generation materials for EV batteries.

Thommy is married to Rekha, and they are blessed with three daughters (Bridgit, Priya and Mary). His hobbies are cartooning, hiking and singing Indian light music with family and friends.

On to the Next Innings



Words **T A Balasubramanian**

So where do we go from here?

In this maiden over, our ambition was to bottle, however imperfectly, the restless vapours of a time that refused to fade away. If you catch even the faintest whiff of that in what you see here—sharp, unruly and unmistakably alive—then we can claim to have achieved more than we dreamed of when we launched this long-lost spaceship.

The dream is to continue the *Campastimes* heritage with a spicy dash of the original signature quirky humour, and a teeny pinch of gentle irreverence, but sometimes provoking serious reflection on a few stray issues, pesky trends or hidden stories you may never have heard before.

In forthcoming issues of *Campastimes 2.0*, as in this inaugural one, we plan to feature a fun-to-read medley of retro, novo and art or literary works.

Retro Themes Back-in-the-day stories and flashbacks to our earlier stint as students at IIT Madras from the 1960-70-80s era, when we were all hostel-bound freshers and denizens on the campus!

Novo Themes Contemporary stories relating to the hot button ideas, trends and debates prevailing in the current era: in education, work and career, travel, technology, art and culture, communication and so on.

Art & Literary Themes Creative sparks and experimental ideas, columns, stories, poetry, skits, satires, caricatures, book reviews, cartoons, puzzles, brain teasers and other works of imagination or an explorative nature.

Old Game, New Pitch

In the next phase, we are fanning out to the present Gen Z and Millennials in the Insti's rosters and creatively inclined circles as well as the vast cohort of senior alumni from the early 1960s to the 1990s and possibly a general audience of anyone interested in enjoying whimsical perspectives on our times and customs, past, present and future. To quote Cicero, "*O tempora, o mores!*"

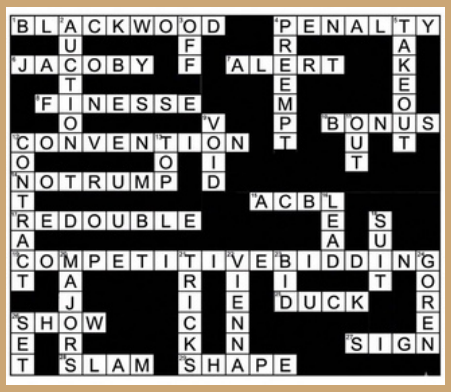
The old tabloid may not have pleased the purists, but it gave us enormous joy to produce, and maybe even to read. And the same spirit of Bawa and Klein will keep finding new channels in *Campastimes 2.0*, with a nod to the digital age and its tendency to pixelate and flicker through backlit screens, making the record of our stories seem ever more colorful and infused with new styles of typography and layout – as opposed to the musty, papyrus-bound gravitas of Times Roman text, painstakingly carved into print and stored in dusty heritage archives for the occasional curious reader.

So, while browsing these pages, if you see the specter of a cricket bat cracking a new ball into the distance and think, "Wow, these guys are on a roll," or even, "Where on earth have they been all these years?" we'll consider that as a sixer. Or at least a respectable boundary.

And the innings won't stop there. We intend to keep it going every four months, in an approximate rhythm with the seasons — keeping the runs flowing and the scoreboard ticking.



CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS





Zen and the Art of Aircraft Maintenance

Words **T A Balasubramanian**

In the Campastimes *tradition, From Here & There was a column that carried a mixed bag of funny ruminations, airy general opinions on world affairs or sometimes quirky matters of some concern to the student cohort or the Insti's administration and services – such as the scarcity of magazines in the common rooms. In keeping with the new magazine's broader global canvas, we reopen this whimsical banner to you. The idea is to draw upon odds and ends from your life around the world as seen through the eyes of techies and other bewildered or bemused folks who grapple with life's little turmoils with professional aplomb, a shrug and an indulgent smile.*

Most hard-working aircraft ground technicians have a refined sense of humour. Here are some actual maintenance complaints logged by airline pilots and the corrective action recorded by mechanics.

(P) stands for the problem the pilots entered in the log,
(S) stands for the corrective action taken by the mechanics.

The Classic Pilot vs. Maintenance Exchanges

P: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.
S: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

P: Test flight OK, except auto-land very rough.
S: Auto-land not installed on this aircraft.



P: Mouse in cockpit.
S: Cat installed.

P: Dead bugs on windshield.
S: Live bugs on back order.

P: Autopilot in altitude-hold mode produces a 200-fpm descent.
S: Cannot reproduce problem on ground.

P: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.
S: Evidence removed.

P: DME (Distance Measuring Equipment) volume unbelievably loud.
S: DME volume set to more believable level.

P: Number 3 engine "missing" (note: this was for a piston-engined airplane; the pilot meant the engine was not running smoothly).
S: Engine found on right wing after brief search.