

*Campanulines*



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## EDITORIAL

The way our semester progresses, we will soon have to be on the look out for a faster time scale. The IST is absolutely anachronous with respect to our time-axis. If you look at a semester as a whiff of relief between long stretches of exams, or a whiff of relief as a break between two interhostel matches, or a break as the time between evening tea and an OAT movie, you will know what our time scale is, or isn't.

What with Madras having had more than a fair share of the South West monsoon, quite a few of the days were soggy with rain. For those of us whose rooms have windows that don't open out to show the plain tar road or the opposite hostel's rooms, it is really a pleasant sight to see the rain falling in a haze of glory, almost reluctantly, on the plants and trees which stand bristling in attention on such an honourable occasion. And when the rain ceases and the sun regains control, the drops of rain that have clung on to the leaves for dear life just disappear.

The Campastimes Talent Search Competition for the uninitiated - the Sarayuites, PGs and First years was a moderate success. Naivete from Sarayuites is expected, but not to the extent of giving us copies straight from their wall magazine without even removing the cellophaned corners. A surprising

and pleasant aspect of the competition is that an unusually large number of the articles are by the flower-breathers, the star-gazers, the walkers on the long path down the woods and the like. What we need is the human approach to things, and if Campastimes can contribute in its small way to this, we, the editors, would be the happiest of all.

## CAMPASTIMES TALENT SEARCH COMPETITION :

1st Place - \*Rs.40\*- - SUKANYA RATNAM

2nd Place - \*Rs.30\*- - RAJAT MUKHERJEE

3rd Place - \*Rs.20\*- - C.J. LAE.



## CAUSERIE

Sober Reflections on Humour

Last year, there was a "controversy" in my hostel, about a cartoon that appeared in the wall-magazine. The cartoon referred to the alleged "thickness" and gullibility of members of a community. This is what I wrote when the initial furore died down.

"It (the cartoon) is being decried as an insult to a particular party; accusations are being made that it is perversion to laugh at it (certainly not a good sense of humour). It seems to me that application of this standard to any joke in general would stop our laughter in its tracks.

In anything we find funny, some one is the scapegoat, some one being laughed at: Bertie Wooster being chased by Spode is laughable, the Pink Panther shooting the inspector is hilarious and in general, a man slipping on a banana peel is riotously funny. Does this indicate a streak of sadism in us?

You bet it does! Probably, we inherit it from our cave-inhabiting ancestors in whom the trait of selfishness was the key to a successful existence - another man's discomfort made his position more comfortable (cave-logically speaking). As Stephen Leacock puts it, The headlines in a Stonage daily journal may one day have read: "HUMOROUS INCIDENT AT WATERHOLE: MAN SLIPS IN AND DIES".

Kumaran Sathasivam

However, there is no need for one to feel guilty if one enjoys a joke, for there is a line (albeit not always very clear) distinguishing sadism from humour. I think this is best brought out by John Keasler in his piece on the "Tightrope" nature of humour".

Imagine this scene. A formal stodgy affair is being held in an elegant ball room. The orchestra puts forth measured music, and people dance slowly, correctly. Suddenly a man is seen standing on a balcony above, glaring down; pompous, heavy-set figure, who gives off vibrations of disapprovals, disdain and a certain fearsome, if overdone, dignity. The music falters and fades out. The dancers stop.

Arrogantly, the man starts to descend the beautiful, curving staircase. At the first step he slips and falls. A snicker or two is heard, quickly controlled. He keeps falling, clumpety clump. More muffled laughter, for he is doing one of the world's greatest pratfalls. Now, somersaulting down, he careens off the wall at the second landing and keeps falling. People roar. He reaches the bottom of the staircase - The crowd is howling with mirth - and slides on the polished floor. He is dead.

When you figure out at exactly what step of the staircase it stopped being funny, you will know what humour is'."

## THE LIVING LIGHT

The matchstick caught fire and flared, stabbing the inky darkness around for a brief moment. I bent down, lit the oil lamp, and watched the tiny flame flutter in a capricious whiff of wind. The soft glow permeated a welcome sense of warmth on that inclement winter's morning. I tossed aside the match, and it lay glowering on the cement pavement, its sulky red tip trailing a faint wisp of smoke.

I shivered a little in the pre-dawn cold. Beastly hour to be up, but there was no alternative. Ever since the crystallization of religious practice, generations of natives had chosen this one day in the year to worship the Goddess of Plenty. In a riotous festival of gaiety, the sun awoke to a fabulous reception of boundless joy.

It was still early yet, and the street was peculiarly silent. The house stood in an old part of the town, where humanity crowded thicker than a swarm of flies. One of many crumbling airless structures, the entire block constituted a horror to the

modern architect, and a permanent offence to the aesthetic sense of man. The unedifying monuments posed a constant reminder of the shackles of poverty and slavishness, that chain a nation once proud and free. Scared by the demolition a relentless future held, these hollow shells were obstinately clinging on to a post as empty as the boasts of men who dwelt within.

I glanced at the near-forgotten pile of fireworks by my side. Indifferent, but not reluctant, I picked up a sparkler and held it to the flame. It warmed, spluttered, and finally caught fire, splitting the velvet blackness with a shower of golden flowers. Suddenly, the world came alive in a kaleidoscopic play of light outlined on a background of sound. In the distance, the temple bells chimed. Strains of a flute and the more insistent twang of a veena floated along the breeze. The infernal bombs shattered the silence with an intermittent, staccato thunder.

The little children met with shouts and dances to celebrate their mirth. They clapped their hands in a pure enjoyment of an innocent pleasure, as they staged their play on twisting asphalt roads.



and cramped cement courtyards.

Time passed on, unnoticed and uncared for.  
Black lightened to indigo which paled to lilac  
flushed with pink. The red sun climbed the  
eastern horizon, crowning the sky and blessing  
the earth. Resplendent was the golden light,  
triumphantly calling out to a drowsy creation  
to soak up its glory.

A half-remembered verse flitted through  
the magic world:

'Light, my light, the world-filling light,  
the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the  
centre of life; the light strikes, my darling,  
the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind  
runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.'

The dhiya had burnt itself out. The sudden  
mass of day was caked with soot, which the  
women would preserve and prepare into kohl.

SUKANYA RATHNAM

#### THE MOOD

It had rained, it had showered!  
I had been sitting amidst the gusts of wind and  
the incessant rain,  
Water trickled along my skin in dewy drops of treasure,  
Past my sidelocks, into my clothes - my soddy wet  
clothes,  
Which clung to my skin like a second one.  
I had never felt such bliss, such a feeling of warmth  
in that cold shower of liquid,  
I felt my emotions warming me up as  
I saw drops falling off the broken edge of a twig  
In dewy drops - a monotonous cycle"

It stopped raining.  
The earth sucked up all the fluid like a thirsty dog,  
Who had never before tasted this nectar of summer.  
The sun slunk away, leaving behind  
Dark, dingy rooms, and poet's enfranchisement.  
The dew hung heavy in the air,  
The city lit up; the temple rang bells,  
Night entered its deeper phase,  
Tubelights threw their light at me -  
The lights pierced through the mist,  
The dew was lit up like candles,  
Light lit up my eyes, heart and my soul,  
-And the 'poet' in me.  
I looked at the shades of dewy green,  
The reflection of the lights in the water,  
I heard the crooning of a few late sleepers,  
I was still wet; my paper wasn't!  
- I sat down in the silence,  
Interrupted only by frogs' merriment, crickets' joy  
.....To write my POEM.

RAJAT MUKHERJEE

## THE TOUGH ONE

It was the evening peak hour and people were pouring out of their offices and factories and joining the long queues for the buses. Others were rushing for their trains. It was the kind of hour when every city dweller felt that it was simply not worth it,, struggling like this to go home, living in this hell of earth.

Standing in queues can be a terribly tiring and boring business; but then you can observe a lot, and pass your time. Some chaps, just as they step out of their offices, open some cheap magazine or other and start reading. Even if all that they had done during the day was to read on the sly and stare at the thing sitting up front; they continue to read in the queues. There are others who release their tension, abusing their bosses and cursing their subordinates.

I, like most of the other young chaps, just stand around watching the passing birds. This was easily the best way of whiling away your time waiting for the bus. Well, there I was, standing in the queue. All of a sudden, there was a piercing scream.

I turned around to look. There she was, a tall girl clutching a hand bag, screaming like a siren. I just managed to catch sight of a thuggish looking chap taking off from the scene. There was a ninety degree turn to the road just after the place where our queue was. The buses had to slow down to a crawl to take the bend. The thug had really put his brains to use, one had to give it to him.

The thug had been waiting at the bend, waiting for the right girl and a bus to come along. As soon as they did, he made a grab for her chain or bag and jumped into the slowed down bus.

Ah! Here was a damsel in distress and here was my chance! I broke off from the queue and made for the bus. By now, the bus had begun to pick up speed.

Undaunted, I gave chase. I think I must have chased the bus for a few hundred yards atleast. When the bus had put atleast fifty yards between us, I gave up.

When I returned back, I found a small group of people around the girl. People anxious for their evening entertainment!

'Lucky thing the strap was loose' the girl was saying. What the hell man!

\* For all I could see, she was wearing a tight sweater and an even tighter skirt. And she was talking about a loose strap! May be some strap inside....

'....Otherwise he might have made off with my bag. Now he could get only the strap' the girl finished.

Not a look in my direction. No body else said anything either. They had just assumed I was just another guy in a hurry, chasing a bus; and the ass that I was, chasing a thug running away with a loose strap!

Atleast they didn't take me for the thug and hammer me up!

God damn the damsel in distress!

I got back into my original position in the queue. I was lucky because the man behind me could have picked up a fight but he let me take my place ahead of him.

The queue began to inch forward with each passing bus. I would now definitely get a place to sit in the next bus. Getting a place to sit is important. Some people would go to any extent to get a seat and retain it.

Well, the next bus came along and people began to get in. The hangers on always wait for a weak link in the queue and take their chance. A young man and his girl slipped in along with a poor old woman. The bus had almost filled up and only a few seats were left when I got in.

The girl with the young man got a seat. The seat next to her was still empty and the old woman made a rush for the seat. But the young man was quicker. He roughly pushed the



woman aside, and was going to sit down.

With two strides I reached the seat. The old woman looked at me. She had the look that is peculiar to the poor old. The eyes, dulled by years of hunger, years of hard work. These kind of eyes make a man always feel wretched. You want to hide some where, do some thing to avoid those eyes. You see, they bring out a lot of guilt that is hidden inside you.

The young man was just sitting down. He had to be given a fair chance. I put my hand on his shoulder. 'Please, let the old woman sit down' I said. The look he gave me! If he thought he was tough, well, he should know there were others tougher. I caught hold of his shirt front and pulled him up. He had to come up. He did and making use of the momentum, he put his hand on my chest and shoved hard.

I fell over backward, arms clutching wildly at supports seen and unseen; my head coming to rest on a seat handle.

Painfully, I regained my balance; this was surely how the early man felt when he came down from the trees and tried to stand on two legs!

The young man came at me again. 'He took his hand sideways to slap me. But this had gone far enough. I hit him hard.

Right in the stomach! I could feel my fist sink in with the punch. The man gave a groan and simply collapsed. The girl who was with the man threw herself on him and started screaming. 'My God' she screamed, 'you have killed my husband; Oh my God!'

At the police station, they carried away the young man. His wife was by now sufficiently composed to talk to the inspector.

'Inspector Saab, my husband suffers from a weak heart. Last one week we were at the

Indirabai hospital. Only today he was discharged. The doctor told him not to strain himself at all; not even to travel in a bus. Since our house is quite a long way off, we couldn't afford a taxi and my husband insisted me go by bus ..... 'she was going on.

Oh, you criminal, what the hell have you done? You have killed a sick man! You, you who always thought you were helping the weak and the sick; you have done this!

You may hang for it or you may not! But will you ever recover from your wound?

Time alone can tell.

C.J. LAL

#### THOUGHT

A sunburst of  
 Silent rhapsody  
 Fleetinglly kissed  
 A pool of idleness.  
 In greedy quest,  
 Clutching fingers  
 Ravage my memory.  
 Ceaseless sifting  
 Yields nothing  
 I cannot remember....  
 It is lost.

CHITRA NAYAK



## THE SAXOPHONIST

In a room shut against the falling clouds,  
Swinging on achelers deeps of sound  
where the golden decibels tinkle against the  
wall

And dance the threadbare carpet in their glee,  
At being free from the confines of mere words,  
he sits ancient as Asia and as proud:  
(Full of a vision that's ever new-found)  
Constructs philosophies and lets them fall,  
Bound in an endless tapestry  
That links him to all that was ever yet heard.

In his wisdom he smiles deep in the gold reed,  
In his folly he disdains history's call,  
Builds castles and empires and storms in the  
heart,  
Lets everything flow from the note that he  
makes

Sits indestructibly changing as the ground;  
He draws on his art as he senses my need  
And tunes it to the flickering shapes on the  
wall

He's all this moment, he's all that's apart  
He's filled with a madness that only greed  
slakes

As he enshrines in thin webs the meanings  
of his sound.

VIJAY NAMBISAN

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## POINT OF NO RETURN

*"At the end of a horizontal tunnel, in a deep coal mine, flickers a tiny light. The miner, buried in his hopes and fears, chips away patiently at the black coal. He refuses to give up. He has to do it, to stop is to starve. He struggles through the years from when he was a young boy of eight, full of life, to a crushed old man of thirty. He gasps for breath in this hot hell, his lungs eaten away by the coal dust. Any time, a cave-in, flooding or an explosion could be the end of all his misery. His death would hardly matter, except to his wife and their starving children. It would not cause even a ripple in the national statistics. He would then be with his God, whom he believed in throughout his wretched life - the God who is more comfortable in rich mansions, than in poor hovels".*

*I close the diary and put it on the shelf. The only thing I ever wanted to do was to write. I had written that in the first week. Now I can't even write.*

I collapse to the ground - cannot take it any longer. My body shivers uncontrollably. The cold is killing, after the infernal heat in the mines. The weak tea tastes of coal dust. There is coal dust in my hair, in my eyes, in my clothes; everywhere. I look into the broken mirror. My face is coated black with streaks where sweat had run down. There is an overpowering stench, of rotten wastes, of rotten lives.

I had wanted to taste life, to experience poverty. "One can't be a good writer, until one experiences everything life has to give. A writer must know poverty firsthand to write about it", I used to lecture at the dining table. So I had come here, to this hell on earth.

A girl, who is eight years of age, but looks much older, comes running. "Bhaiya, Rahul is crying for food", she says. I tell her that I would come soon. They live in the neighbouring hovel. Their parents were killed in a cave-in last month. So I have to look after them.

What now? What can I do to save these souls? They will never know the joys of childhood. It is a struggle just to stay alive. I can't leave Rahul, a bag of bones, to die. I can't go back, sit in a warm house and eat rich food. Not after all this' it is too late to go back: a point of no return.

Only God is happy in his heaven. He is just testing his children, to know whether, our faith can survive all these trials and tribulations. It becomes clear to me. I had known it all along, but had been afraid to admit it. As I stumble out of the hovel into the dark, cruel world, it hits me. There is no God. There never was one. He is just an invention of savages who were frightened in the dark, dangerous nights. He is our creation and we live meaningless lives in an indifferent and purposeless universe. I turn my head to the starless sky.

LINUS

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#### ON GETTING DRUNK IN THE MORNING

A rain of colours corrodes my eyes  
 Flaming tongues lave my skull  
 Bowed beneath these scurfy skies  
 The touch of rouged and haggared suns  
 These moments spawn forgotten lines  
 Those traced by a broken, dangling bone  
 As I sip the clear arrack of madness  
 The night erupts in me  
 Like in a town, the pox  
 The bitter distillate of yesterday  
 Chirrup from the root of my tongue  
 This monstrous clockwork of the sun  
 And stars and moon and flowers  
 Infuriates me -  
 A gelded giraffe stretching his head  
 To plumb these cavernous lies.

VIPIN B.



## AWE-FUL TALK

"Have you heard the latest?" asked the shampoo, bubbling with excitement, "A new comb is coming here soon".

All the other at the dressing table perked up with interest. "Oh! Another one of those feeble fools that won't last here too long!", snorted the hair brush, blaselybrushing the news off.

"No, no" poked in the pins, "we heard that he's a fine fellow, with excellent credentials!"

"So forced into compulsory retirement, eh?" enquired the eyebrow pencil, looking archly at the comb.

"I should have insured against unemployment", muttered the comb, gritting his teeth.

"-And I heard it's got a built-in brush too" sang the tweezers, trying to pull a fast one.

"You just wait till you've lost your grip", spat the astringent, caustically.

"Ah! But everything is transitory in this world!" signed the cleansing lotion deeply.

"Mirror, what's your plan, You've so remarkably bright in times like this", gushed the eyelashes, falsely.

The mirror, who had been reflecting for a while stated sententiously, "We will have to project a very good

image when he comes. Perhaps -"

"I heard that he's really smart". cut in the scissors.

"Yes, yes, powder blue in colour and carved too!"

added the normally taciturn talc.

"Now" choked the blush-on, despondently "thing don't seem rosy at all"

"As if they ever were!", snapped the rubber bands", and definitely, since we are not so classy, we'll all get replaced, just wait and see".

"Aw! that's stretching things a bit too far", yawned the pony-tail grips, "You don't have to get that pessimistic!"

"You are a fine lad". soathed the hand-and body lotion.

"Things should work out smoothly", she consoled.

"There's a great one for rendering lip service comment-ed the chapstick drily.

"Something's in the air, "Sniffed the perfume - "Voila, if it isn't the new chick! Boy! Is she beautiful!"

"Er. It is with greatest pleasure that I present to you - "began the oil unctuously" the most charming model from Paris - she comes from an aristocratic class that have the world's best coiffures to their credit!"

"Enchantee" whispered the shy new thing, coyly.

"Enchantes, nous aussi", chorused the clan in unison.

"You could rely on me for anything you need", stated



the comb, briskly, taking command. Er-"he informed the observers apologetically, "She's bound to have a few teething problems, at least".

"Let's toast!" yelled the creme puff merrily" to our exotic beauty! - And," continued he, with a flourish, "if I may add compactly - we'll live happily ever after!"

"How perfect if these two combs get engaged to get married-wedding bells so thrill me, "sighed the ring, sentimentally.

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#### THE "RED" HEN

Once upon a time, there was a little Hen who scratched about and uncovered some grains of wheat. She called her neighbours and said, "If we plant this wheat we will have bread to eat. Who will help me plant it?"

"Not I" said the Cow. "Not I" said the Duck. "Not I" said the Goose.

"Then I will", said the little red hen, and she did. The wheat grew tall and ripened into golden grain.

"Who will help me reap my wheat?" asked the hen.

"Not I", said the Duck.

"Out of my classification", said the Pig.

"I would lose my unemployment insurance" said the

Goose.

"Then I will", said the little red Hen, and she did.

At last it was time to bake the bread.

"That's overtime for me" said the Cow.

"I'm a dropout and never learned how", said the Duck.

"I'd lose my welfare benefits" said the Pig.

"If I am the only helper, that's discrimination", said the Goose.

"Then I will" said the little hen. She baked five loaves and held them up for her neighbours to see. They all wanted some and demanded a share. But the little hen said, "NO, I can eat the five loaves myself".

"Excess profits"! cried the Cow.

"Capitalist leech! screamed the Duck.

"Equal rights"! yelled the goose and they painted "un-fair" picket sign and marched around the little red hen, shouting obscenities. When the government agent came he said "You must not be greedy, little red hen".

"But I earned the bread", said the little red hen.

"Exactly", said the agent. "That is wonderful free enterprise system. Anybody in the farmyard can earn as much as he wants. But under our modern government regulations the productive workers must divide their products with the idle". And they all lived happily thereafter, including the little red hen, who clucked, "I am grateful, I am grateful". But her neighbours wondered why she never baked any more bread.

SUNDARARAJAN SRINIVASAN



