



MARCH 2020



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GENRES

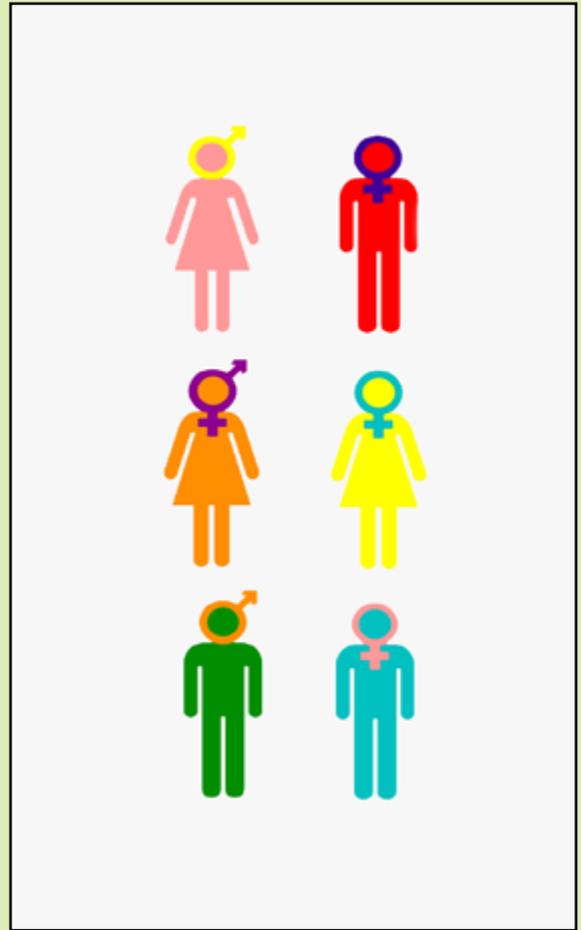
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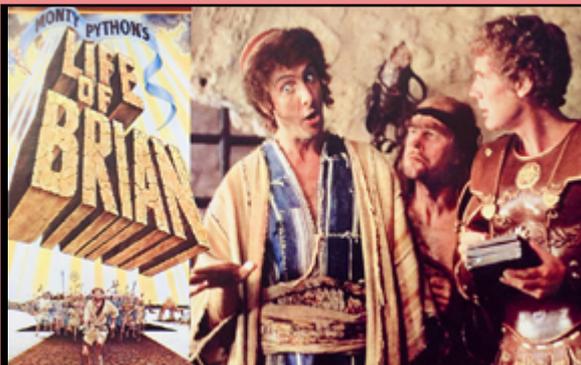
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EDITORIAL

The untimely pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the middle of this semester is a one-of-a-kind event in an Institution such as ours, but one that shall likely be forgotten with the graduation of the next few batches. As seniors – which is to mean anyone who has been on campus for a year – we tend to not pass on ‘non-useful’ nuggets of information to the batches that come after us - knowledge of unusual rules, of motivations for student bodies, of a marquee event, memory of which would otherwise be expected to last through the years. It is an environment in which in the students’ minds there can be no legacy, there can be no “urban legend” of alumni heroics, of unfortunate tragedy. Whatever may happen is destined to be restricted to only the present students at any time, bound not only spatially but temporally as well.

But not all is lost to time. People write, they draw, they blog, in expression of some abstract concept: and in this expression one can glean information of their surroundings. One may directly write of a lax attendance policy, but one may also speak casually of “skipping classes to give some contest”. A blog may criticise newly instated network admins, revealing the level of trust placed in students at any point in time. A frustrated writer might complain of difficulties they face in raising a legitimate issue, thus offering insight into a heavily bureaucratic administration.

And this issue’s cover article deals with exactly that: salvaging some history from the written records of past times. For ten years now, Ping! has been connecting IITians to what’s important in their lives. What started 10 years ago as the realization of a few students’ efforts to showcase the literary talents of the community has now become the embodiment of student dissent and creative expression. Hence, it was inevitable that at this point we look back at our roots so that it gives us a better understanding of our vision for the future – and at some point, it became a project to find out more about the Institute and its quirks, explored through these texts. To that effect, Zubair Abid, our current Editor-in-Chief teamed up with Neelesh Agrawal, our ex Editor-in-Chief to see: how it was, how it is, and how it should be.

It is not, of course, just the cover that counts. Scattered over this publication are accounts of regular campus life that may serve a similar purpose in the future. We talk of problems with Aarogya, while other pieces articulate on issues surrounding general Gender Awareness on campus. Yet others take a more light-hearted tone, taking a deep pictographic dive into the world of creepy-crawlies on campus.

At the end of it all Ping! remains both a representation of campus sentiments and a creative outlet.

Matters may yet not find coverage in the general proceedings of the magazine, be it due constraints of time, space, or manpower (hint: it’s not the second one). And so, we present a summary

of sorts, of prominent events that we were regrettably unable to cover in finer detail.

MENTAL HEALTH FORUM

The issue of mental health has been discussed in breadth and in depth and never was there a debate on the need of some form of mental support for students in this college. It was not the first time the college had made efforts in this general direction but the resources available were simply not being used. Unsurprisingly, a majority of the campus is oblivious of the existence of three counsellors on campus. Even those that have shared concerns about their effectiveness, furthering the idea that IIIT is ill equipped to handle mental health issues. One generally agreed upon reason for the same was that students shied away from approaching the counsellors because of the social stigma associated with mental illness. To address these issues, a mental health forum Facebook group was created by the students which works like a confessions page where one can go anonymous. The offline meetings were supposed to be moderated by Dr. Chytanya Deepak, a trained psychiatrist. The first meeting reportedly was a success, but the second meeting was not organized well and people were unable to attend due to assignment deadlines.

Skimming through the page reveals a rather disturbing state of mind for many. A large theme on the forum seems to be a feeling of indifference for life in general – a belief that one’s actions are inconsequential. From the fresher who’s just spent a semester here, to the senior in the final stretch, a lack of enthusiasm for their field in general seems common. Perhaps it’s Indian society in general which forced them to ignore their passion, or the quick pace of the institute that’s left them behind.

It’s undeniable that the best solution for anyone who’s having trouble would be professional help and counselling but in the absence of accessible, affordable quality therapy, the best the community can do is be there for each other. At the very least, responses to confessions on the forum give reason to have faith in this.

CROSS ENTRY

Just as the cover article speaks of ‘Memento Syndrome’, the resurgence of ‘cross entry’ in discussions is something that has consistently continued across the years. Each of these discussions begin with criticism about previous inaction, and unsurprisingly, such was the case this year too. In October 2019, an open session was conducted following a demonstration outside Parijat for students to air their concerns and proposals for cross entry. While professors did not attend despite initially indicating the opposite, student parliament promised to raise the issue with the concerned authority and act as a neutral party.

There has been moderate success in raising this issue at the highest levels to the parliaments credit but the delay on the institute's part cannot be ignored. Following several meetings and miscommunication about the proposals, the parliament was able to discuss cross-entry with SAC on 4th March. A conversation with the General Secretary revealed that the discussion included earmarking certain spaces as gender neutral. The meeting ended with the SAC promising to raise the points brought up as recommendations to the IAC (Institute Affairs Committee, a higher-level decision-making body). Perhaps this will result in a decision that addresses the problems brought up but given the general pace of decision making at IIT, one shouldn't be surprised with inaction for some time.

The above information was received in a mail from the General Secretary; the entire mail may be read at the end of the article.

FELICITY REVIVAL

Not that they had some great expectations to live up to given the sorry state of affairs last year, this year the team seemed more organized, none of the FCs were sacked, the organizing batch did not go to Goa, people actually participated in the events, there were sponsors, there were great performers and most importantly, there was footfall from neighbouring colleges for some of the events. In my personal experience, it was the best Felicity since I joined college and might have been the best the college had ever hosted. It sets a good precedent for the next batch, and hopefully someday "Felicity ko Mood I banayenge".

GENERAL SECRETARY'S COMMENTS ON CROSS ENTRY

"The Students' Parliament had shared the points collected with Chair SAC (Student Affairs Committee) right after the open session (14 October 2019) was completed. A representative each from both sides of the argument was witness to that. Following the open session, on 15 October 2019, the points compiled during the open session were also shared with the student community through email. Since not all people could attend the open session or express their opinion due to the limited time, a survey form was also released the same day (15 October 2019) through email. The form was released on Life@IITTH Facebook group as well.

The responses to the Survey Form (containing 191 responses) were then submitted on 19 November 2019. The reason for a delay of approximately a month was because initially there were very few responses to the survey form. However, in the meantime the representatives were in oral communication with the authorities. The Students' Parliament was then told that the documents that have been submitted would be looked at and discussed in the coming SAC meetings.

There was a SAC meeting held sometime early this semester (or near/during end-semester exams) in which cross-entry was discussed. The Student Parliament is still waiting for the minutes of the meeting (pertaining to cross entry) but it has still not been shared despite a couple of reminders.

I personally have visited the authorities several times as to take

up the issue in the SAC meeting and invite the Student Parliament since the beginning of this semester so that the issue may be closed. On most occasions I was told that the SAC will take up the issue of cross entry soon. On the last occasion of a request for this issue to be taken up and student representatives to be invited, I was told that the authorities were waiting on ideas by the students in favour and they have not been turned in to which I responded that the Students' Parliament has already submitted the documents as well as was told that the authorities would deliberate on them (the points submitted) and then invite the representatives for a meeting. As a result, in the next SAC meeting, that was held on 4 March 2020 the Student Parliament was invited to discuss on the same. Some students in favour of cross entry were also given approval to attend.

I communicated with some students that were strongly in favour of cross entry and invited them to the meeting, which they attended on the 4th of March. Cross Entry was discussed and some spaces have been identified which might be open to all genders. The students who attended the meeting were also asked to identify some other places which may be made gender neutral as well. We were told that the points that were discussed during the meeting would be put as SAC recommendations to the IAC (Institute Affairs Committee, a higher-level decision-making body).

No formal announcements have been made in this regard by the Students' Parliament as the final decision rests with the IAC and until they make a decision, any thing that we say may or may not hold." ■

CREEPY CRAWLIES ON CAMPUS

- Jyoti Sunkara



I think, like me, most people regard bugs, as well, bugs—annoying little critters that sting us or just create nuisance. Why would anyone be enchanted by them?

Individually, insects are not incredibly interesting, unless you get down on the ground or view them under a microscope to look at their complexity. But they are the invisible force working throughout the world to keep it running. They do everything from returning nutrients to the Earth to keeping wildlife going along by playing their role as the base of the food chain for fish, birds or mammals.

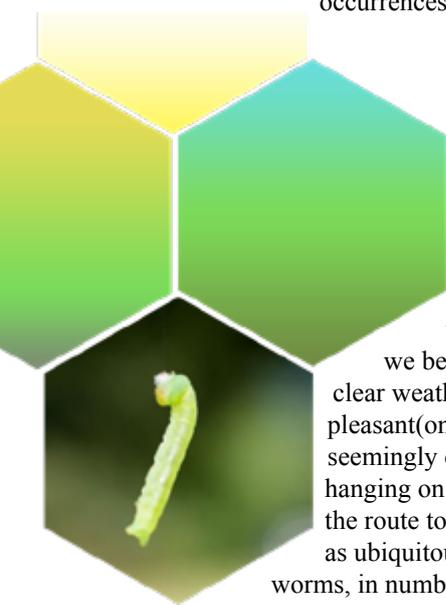
People tend to think a higher, godlike being runs the show. They're wrong. The real answer is under your shoe. Or flyswatter. Or—parasitically—skin. You know them as the common house pest. But collectively insects are the microscopic lever pullers calling the shots, shaping our ecological world and plant life for over 400 million years.



The most important bee in the hive is the queen bee.

My experiences with insects never awoke an entophile in me, they however did manage to make me curious about their ways of life.

Our approximately 70 acre campus has a large number of lush green spots that are home to a wide variety of creepy crawlies, heck they even reside in the barren, concrete locations as well! Of course having an encounter with a beast of small magnitude in your room is quite undesirable, but what better way to learn about 75 percent of our animal kingdom than by being curious about its occurrences around you.



Alsophila pometaria

In the first semester of the new academic year, after weeks of annoying downpour we begin to get accustomed to clear weather. Just when all seems pleasant (only weather wise though), seemingly overnight, green worms hanging on a silk thread from trees the route to the North mess become as ubiquitous as drugs in OBH. These worms, in numbers larger than comfortable, with wagging heads and an awful lot of legs falling from the trees and parachuting onto people's heads. The little creatures, identified as cankerworms, are basically harmless—a nuisance, but harmless.



Cankerworms feed on leaves and then do what most caterpillars do—form a cocoon and then turn into a moth. Their feeding is usually of little consequence to the trees—there are plenty of leaves for both the tree and the worm.

The problem is the wind! The wind dislodges them from their lofty dining rooms in the trees and they hang suspended in mid-air by a thin silk line. As you walk through the area the silk and worms cling to the clothes and skin.



The only available bug fix:

*This too shall pass! Allow the worms finish their life cycle, **turn over a new leaf**, if I may, and soon they will be gone!*

Chamaeleoneonidae

An Indian chameleon sits motionlessly at the Bakul entrance. Suddenly its sticky, two-foot-long tongue snaps out at 13 miles an hour, wrapping around a cricket and whipping the yummy snack back into its mouth. Now that's **fast food dining!** And the chameleon's swift eating style is just one of its many features that'll leave you **tongue-tied.**

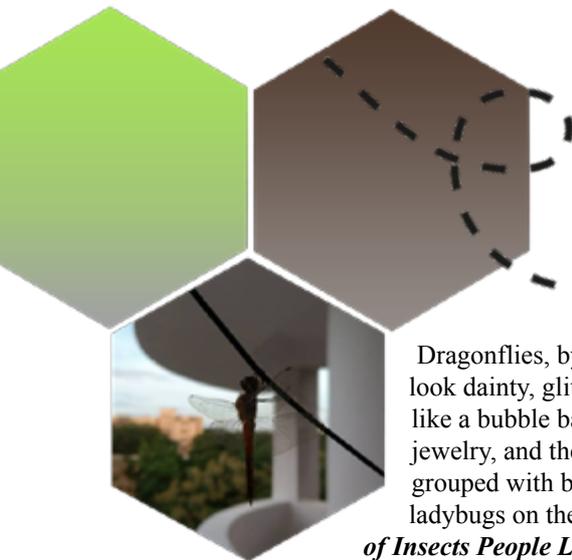
Their peepers can move in two different directions at once, giving the lizards a panoramic view of their surroundings. This **eye-popping reptile** really knows how to **scale up** the cool factor.

On campus you are sure to find many humans that are like chameleons: They can blend into any environment with ease. But are chameleons, themselves, like...chameleons?



Strangely, chameleons do not choose background colours and may not even be able to perceive colour differences. Sounds like *a reptile dysfunction?*

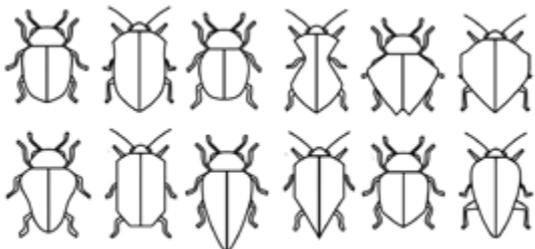
No, its true! they are usually in shades of green or brown or with bands and their primary purpose of colour change is for communication with other chameleons, so I guess you can still say they're trying to *blend in!* They also change colour to control body temperature by changing to dark colours to absorb heat since they are cold-blooded creatures—*much like many others on campus*, if you know what I mean.



Anisoptera

Dragonflies, by contrast, look dainty, glittery and fun, like a bubble bath or costume jewelry, and they're often grouped with butterflies and ladybugs on the *very short list of Insects People Like.*

Yet, they are also voracious aerial predators—when setting off to feed on other flying insects, often snatch their targets mid-air and wolfishly consume the fresh meat on the spur without bothering to alight. Talk about *being on the fly!*



Meanwhile, the phrase “they come in all shapes and sizes” could have been coined just for the Coleoptera—the beetles. From the minuscule to the mighty, tree-dwellers to pond-swimmers, millions of beetle species reveal a wealth of information about the world we live in. Taking a look at the beetles in campus should definitely be interesting!

Antilocbus conqueberti



These beetles are an Asian species of the Pyrrhocoridae family. They are known to be cannibalistic in nature, and in this picture they can clearly be seen *playing with their food.*

Cetonia aurata

Commonly known as the rose chafer, this bug is a picky eater. So the next time you decide to be a conventional lover and pick out roses, finding a metallic green bug in them *might not be a bad thing.* Infact, these bugs are poisonous and could always serve as *a backup plan* incase things dont go as desired.



Ping! is not responsible for any damage caused whatsoever.

Tettigoniidae



Katydids or the leaf bugs are all about leaves, they look like a leaves, eat leaves and heck even move like leaves—swaying to the wind. These pictures were taken in Vindhya but really katydids can be seen all over campus flaunting their leafy camouflage. However, katydids do have a strong bite and its probably best to *leaf them alone*.

Lepidoptera
Rhopalocera

A caterpillar spends its entire day alternating between eat and sleep, aiming to grow bigger. Butterflies and moths on the other hand are curious creatures that hop from flower to flower searching for nectar and a mate.

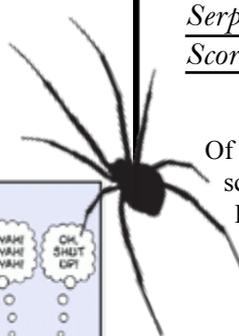


“Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee...”

Easy parallels can be drawn to college where you can find people who laze around all day as well as many who wake up seeking to seize the day.



Araneae



Most people would rather watch an *entire season of Keeping Up with The Kardashians* than deal with a spider presence in their rooms. Very understandable, as spiders with their eight arched legs – sometimes fat and furry, or thin like dark needles – crawling close, provoke outright revulsion and fear.



Spider webs are the cause of many stressful moments as well. It's truly amusing how when I walk into a spider web, I've essentially demolished the spiders home and displaced its dinner, yet somehow I always feel like the victim.



Anura

Almost as widespread and prevalent as dogs on campus are frogs and toads. Its hard to *froget* their presence during the rainy season, when almost every trip to the mess at dinner time involves spotting a couple of these slimy creatures. While they are harmless in general, or so I've been *toad*, their large size, slimy skin and confident jumps can be quite *ribbiting*.



CROAK CROAK CROAK!

Serpentes
Scorpiones



Of course, like as in every area with greenery present, scorpions and snakes are found on campus as well,. Every sighting is usually accompanied by a post on the Life facebook page where within seconds comments with people tagging batchmates who've *'snake'd* them begin to *slither* in.

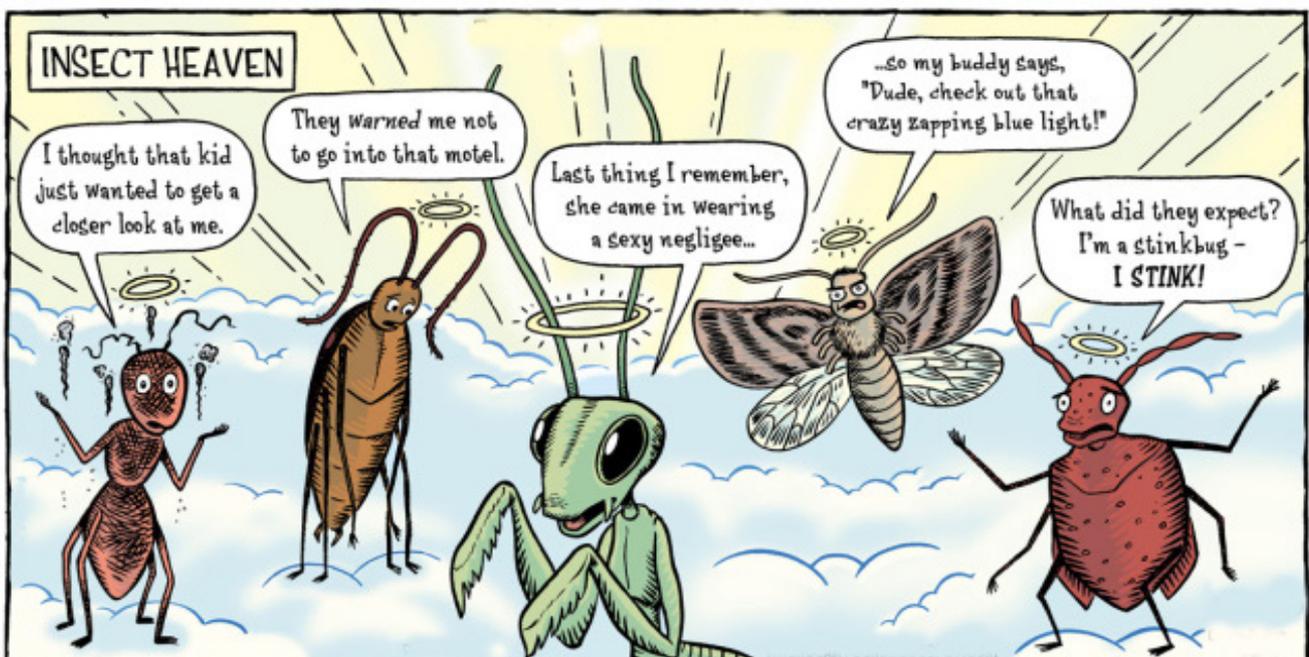
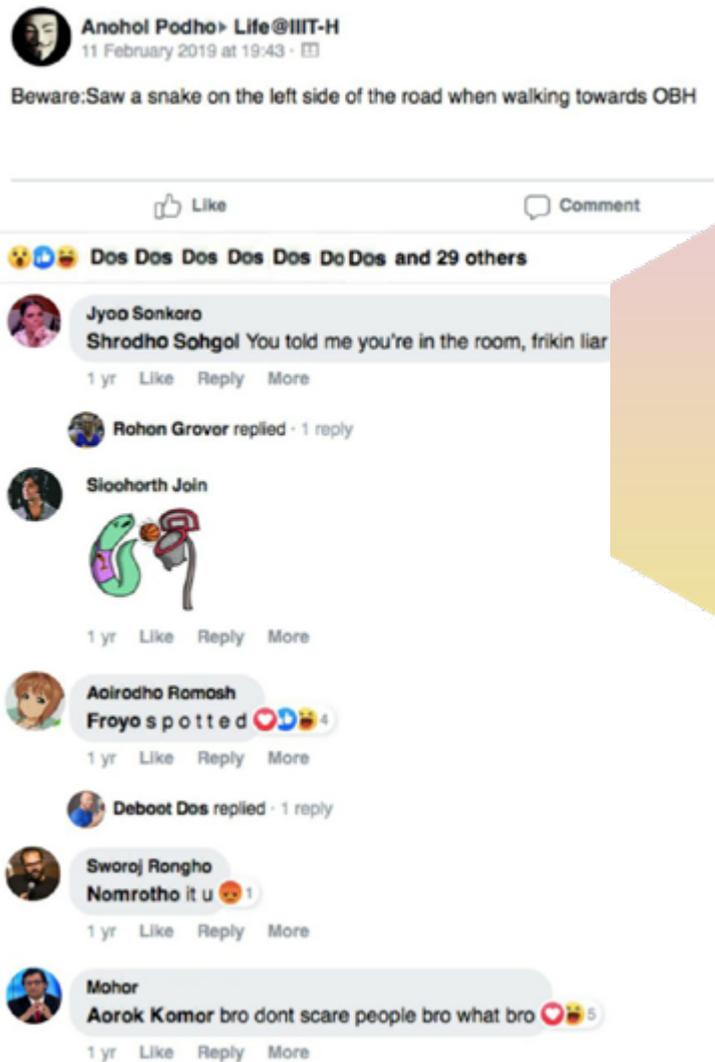


Mantodea

! *Pro Tip:*

If you could choose to be an insect, always, always choose to be a mantis. Say you hadn't read this article and had chosen to be a green grasshopper instead. You're jumping around, not looking for enemies because you know you blend in and are hard to see. Suddenly, another insect grabs you with long legs, jabbing its pointy leg spikes into your body so it can hold you and chow down. You just became a snack for a praying mantis.

Mantis' are one of the world fastest, most perfect predators. A silent *prayer* for the tenant of the room in which the above picture was taken.



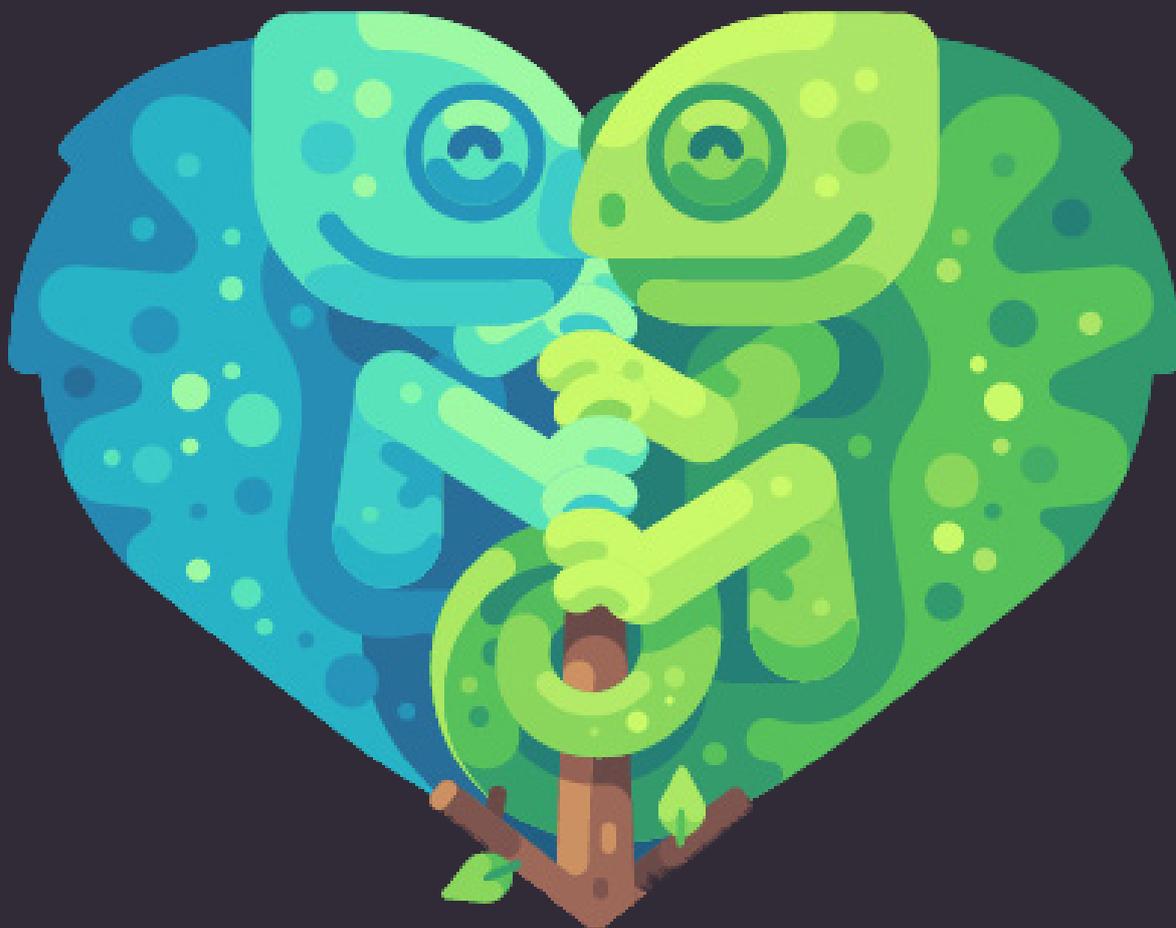


Chilopoda
Diplopoda

Millipedes and centipedes are the many-segmented and multilegged animals that live in rotting logs, but there is a huge difference in their strategies for survival. Centipedes are fast-moving carnivores with venom-filled jaws for killing insects while the slower millipedes feed on decaying plant matter.

Most millipedes, when alarmed, curl up like watch springs with their soft undersides hidden and their heads at the center of the spiral. If attacked, they emit toxic compounds like cyanide from glands on each body segment.

Looks like it's hard for them to put their *best foot forward*, when they've got so many. ■





The State Of Healthcare at IIIT

DEEPTI MAHESH & ROHAN LAHANE

Provision for health care in our college has always seemed to be sporadic, influenced by a seemingly vested interest but at the same time immune to any beneficiary change over the years. The holistic well being of the student community, encompassing both physical and mental health, is one of the highest priorities for any educational institute. Yet, health promotion and prevention are the most neglected part of both policy and practice.

College health-service programs tend to have three primary areas of responsibility: physical, mental, and educational. Medical services range from primary care in the form of treatment for colds, viruses, and minor injuries at less comprehensive centres to thorough lab tests, X rays, specialists, and pharmacies at the most comprehensive centres. Many college health programs also provide counselling services.

Provision for Physical Health Care

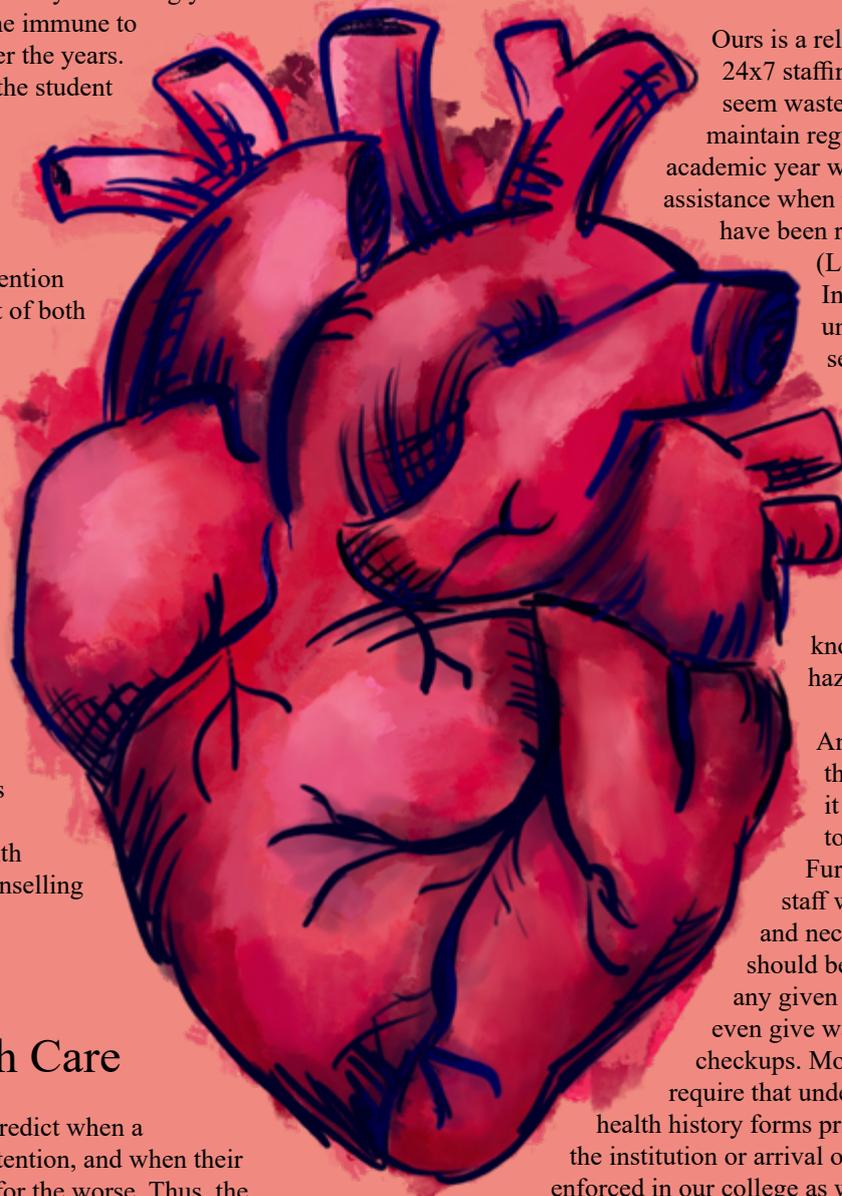
It is nearly impossible to predict when a person requires medical attention, and when their symptoms can take a turn for the worse. Thus, the recent increase amongst reports of incompetence and frequent absences of the staff employed at Aarogya cannot be ignored. Limited stock on essential first-aid supplies in a college which encourages (compulsory) participation in physical sports and other activities comes off as completely

nonsensical. Hostels are found to have next to zero first-aid necessities. All this has led to a widespread distrust towards the Institute's only medical service centre which must be dealt with and fixed immediately lest it leads to dangerous, unforeseen circumstances.

Ours is a relatively smaller college, and 24x7 staffing of the medical centre may seem wasteful to some. Similar colleges maintain regular weekly hours during the academic year with a system for emergency assistance when needed. However, incidents have been reported on public forums (Life@IIIT-H) where the Institute ambulance remained unavailable while a student had severe medical emergencies and in certain cases, even outright refused to do their job have been reported on the forums. Are most students even aware that these facilities exist within the campus? And won't this absence of knowledge lead to unnecessary hazards?

An optimal emergency system is the need of the hour. Moreover, it must be known and accessible to each and every student.

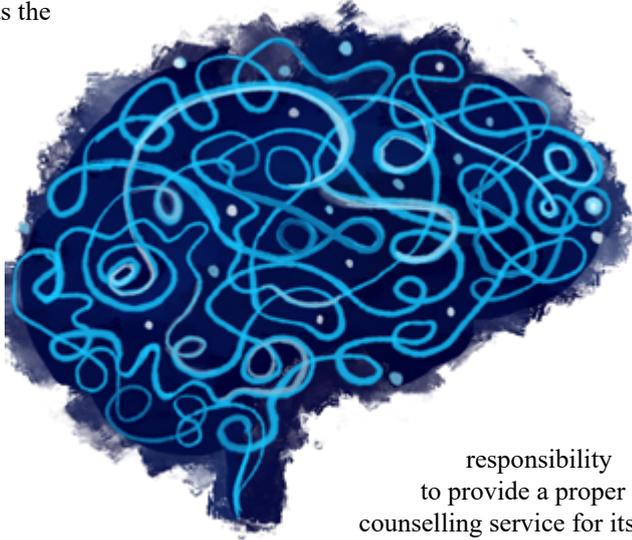
Furthermore, competent nursing staff who have access to reasonable and necessary primary care facilities should be employed and available at any given time. In the future, this can even give way to semester-wise medical checkups. Most colleges and universities require that undergraduate students fill in health history forms prior to their admission into the institution or arrival on campus. This needs to be enforced in our college as well. It aids the health centre staff to prepare for any special needs identified on the form and to have a recorded history in case certain information is needed to properly treat a particular student.



Provision for Mental Health Care

A healthy body is no good without a fit mind to control it. Mental health is just as crucial to the smooth functioning of a person as physical health. And just as regular physical checkups are a basic necessity for the body, counselling is a must for the mind.

Every college or institution has the



responsibility to provide a proper counselling service for its students or workers to seek support. Colleges like IITs have given huge importance

to this fact, and they offer a broad range of services including psychological assessment, individual therapy, group therapy, medication and management to promote mental health, life skills workshops, emotional resilience workshops and much more.

Every institute has one or more full-time psychologists and furthermore, they have regular visiting psychiatrists available for consultation. On top of that, the institutes have also taken efforts to reach out to the students who might need help, by forming committees among students to look out for signs of mental illness, and by doing so they can curb the stigma and create a more safe environment for students to open up about their struggles.

Meanwhile, at Aarogya, the facility isn't even open for the better part of the day, and the counsellors are irregular. They are only available for a short period of time, which is not nearly enough to attend to all the students on the campus. This makes it seem as if the facility is nonexistent.

While available, the facility is not even professional, they impose their own bias on the patients. There have been incidents where the students who tried to seek help, were instead shamed for being in relationships or other reasons. This kind of attitude discourages students from being open about their mental health.

College's Response

The college's response to the issue has been that we don't need better facilities inside the campus because our college is located in a city with good doctors available at close proximity. But that's simply not enough. Doctors outside the campus do not try to reach out and help the students open up, they charge a hefty fee and it's impractical to regularly spend hours going out to seek counselling services.

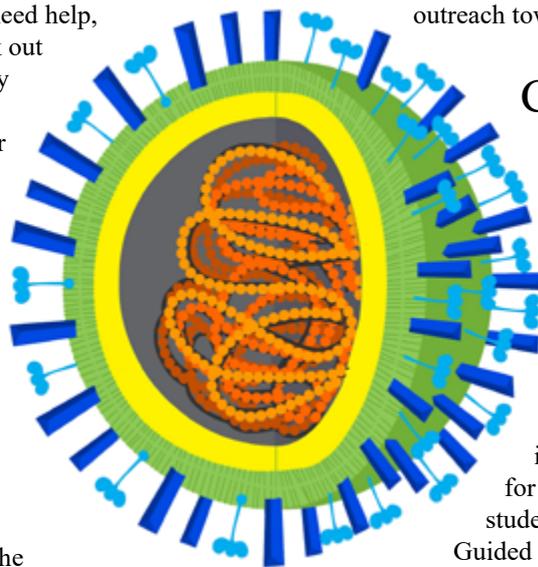
Other than that, the outside doctors are no good in the incident of a mental health emergency such as an emotional breakdown. Even the psychologists available in Aarogya are underqualified to handle such a situation properly.

However, this is not the case in most well-established institutions.

IIT Kanpur has recently taken the initiative to help students deal with familiar depressive symptoms such as stress, low mood, lethargy, etc. through different online exercises, questionnaires and games. The website is called TreadWill and is developed upon the extensive research conducted by Nitin Gupta, a professor at the Biological Sciences and Bioengineering department of the IIT.

Northwestern University (IL) developed an app for students, called "Breathe," to support healthy living and manage stress. It provides a variety of guided meditations and breathing practices to help deal with stress; reduce the negative impact on mind, body, and spirit; decrease perfectionism and self-criticism; and enhance confidence and well-being.

What can our institute do to help? It can start by making sure the counsellors are friendly and are increasingly more familiar towards the students. The timings for when they are available must be lengthened. It would be ideal if the psychologists hired were more experienced professionals. It is also crucial to sensitise the rest of the staff such as security guards and wardens of all hostels to further improve the outreach towards the students in need.



Conclusion

While the college and a few students have taken numerous efforts for this initiative, there is always scope for more. A student's overall success implies investing in a student's life broadly. Access to affordable healthcare should continue to be a priority for institutions of higher education for they remain a crucial factor in student development and growth.

Guided by a comprehensive framework and foundation for providing these services, universities can help a student burgeon emotionally as well as academically. ■

10

Years of
PING!

Zubair Abid

Ping! is over ten years old now. Covering almost half of IIIT's existence, these ten years have seen multiple articles, stories, and random snippets by students over the years. These pieces capture the zeitgeists over time for IIIT, and so we decided to play historian and went to the archives.

We found in the archives stories of another IIIT. Narratives of forgotten customs, mentions of still-familiar randirona, persistent concerns about "college life" over time. Hotly contested debates that are today foregone conclusions. The articles that were seemingly written as filler for pages have today gained significance, whereas popular topics of discussion at the time that are now dead; demonstrating how the Institute has, despite all apparent odds, moved on over time. Institutions (like Aarogya) that we take for granted (or not) have an origin story.

The archives talk of an "October Flakes" musical showcase, of an experimental half-semester C-Programming course, of

Snippets of Interest from a Different Time

The magazine began in the Monsoon semester of 2009, as a newsletter: "A monthly ping to all IIITians!!", as the front cover claimed. This early version was far from the Ping! that is today, and much closer to its neanderthal-ish ancestor of early-2000s Echoes. The content was standard school newsletter fare; some news, an interview, and "recommendations". The design is a relic of the times; a hodgepodge of seven different font types, including the abominable Comic Sans MS.
Caption: The front-page of Volume I, Issue 1 (October 2009)

This was a template that would largely be followed for the following three years. Focusing entirely on reportage, recommendations, interviews, and MS Publisher-esque design, each academic year saw the publication of four-five issues.

Fun fact — it was originally Ping and became Ping! only after someone realized that Ping already existed and wished to prevent any lawsuits (just in case...).

From "The story of Ping!" - Volume II, Issue 4 (April 2011)

varying Student Governance issues, elections and election formats over the years. They refer to a singular successful campus Protest with questionable impact. Interviews with the odd faculty or staff reveals a previously unknown tidbit. Conspicuous - more in what they do not talk about - we can gauge correctly concerns that did not exist then: or perhaps, merely approaches that were not taken.

"IIIT HAS A 'MEMENTO SYNDROME'"

But above all, when read between the lines, the records display an endless cycle: IIIT has a 'Memento Syndrome'. Editorials refer specifically to this: where one is lamenting the state of apathy and indifference amongst students, the next is on how things were "getting better": only for the cycle to start all over again. Be it the Student Parliament, the Music Club, E-Cell, even Ping! itself - no student body on campus appears to have successfully escaped this cycle of incredible activity and stilling dormancy.

And so, our goal has pivoted since. This article is about a story of Ping!, but also about snippets of what IIIT has been.

The articles, while mildly informative, feel vanilla, and there is a conspicuous lack of any conflict. This is despite the fact that Volume II, Issue 4 (April 2011) reports of a protest.

Ping! had a long way to go from being a passive reporter of events (and protests) to becoming an active reporter of student opinions (including dissent) and instigator of change.

The First Five Years

Even in its early formulaic format, Ping! was a faithful reporter of college events, and a plethora of information can be extrapolated from the rather dry articles. And not less than once did we exclaim déjà vu!

Zombie Events and Changing Names

Students who have been in the Institute for about three or more years might have noticed an interesting feature of IIIT Events and Organisations, wherein they run strong for a couple of years (if that), and then they either get delayed, resulting in logistical changes (like name changes), or they die out and are revived anew years later by another still-enthusiastic batch.

A concrete example - of either one, or both of these acting in conjunction - would be the Music Club's flagship November Jam March Meltdown Meltdown event. Ping! Volume I Issue I (October 2009) talks of a suspiciously similar event: here, named October Flakes. It's very basic coverage; merely a list of performers and their performances.

The same issue mentions the other instance of event - one that died but was revived anew, without memory of what happened in the days past. An article entitled "First basketball premier league" (Vol. I Issue 1, October 2009) says: "The inaugural IIIT basketball premier league was conducted from October 5 till October 9." On the other hand, "Let's DriBBle" (Vol. IV Issue 2, February 2013) talks of an "an initiative for a 'Basketball Premier League' that all started with a mail from the organizers

for interested players". It's the same event, less than four years apart - but each time, it's begun afresh.

As an aside, the latter article goes on to describe the procedure for team selection by auction, something that current residents of Bakul will be very familiar with in light of the recent Bakul Volleyball League (BVL).

The record shows that it's not just events which have been revamped but clubs as well. The E-Cell, that was only recently established in 2016, has grown to one of the more successful student-run organizations on campus today. Yet, there seemed to exist an E-Cell on campus back in 2011 as evidenced by the article: "E Cell Updates" (Vol III Issue 3, early 2012).

Editor's Remark

It is particularly interesting (as past/current Editors of the magazine, anyway) to note the changes in the approaches to writing, and covering events over the years. Where Volume I is an incredibly safe, straightforward, non-controversial publication, Volume II changes things up a bit - still very safe, but taking just slightly more risks, and raising points of dissent to the traditional narrative (like reporting on the Protest). Volume III on the other hand goes back to the style of Volume I when it comes to safety, but the reportage here is more advanced - giving context, covering more. IV and V are where the vision begins to take maturity, with fairly balanced content and context; but even here there's evident restraint with the rare outburst.

Interviewing an alum (who was an Editor of the Newsletter) revealed the background to the story. The team at the time would be by a large stay within a line - not asked to by the Institute, but more a form of self-censorship, as funds for printing came from the clubs budget (that was much smaller at the time). So articles like "On Hierarchies in IIIT" (Vol V Issue 1), which would not be much extra consideration in current day, were groundbreaking in their own right at the time.

It is also worth noting that Ping! remained funded by the Institute in 2016-2018, years in which such restraint was not exercised. Does that make this a case of over-cautiousness by the students, or a reflection of changing attitudes from the admin's side of things? We are unable to verify such a statement due to its subjectivity, but it is a factor worth keeping in mind.

10 YEARS
LATER

Drawing Parallels to Current Day

The current UG-1 and UG-2 are only too familiar with the pains that come with compressing the contents of ITWS-1 and 2 into a half-semester ISS course (as are the rest of the college, thanks to UG-1's control of the meme economy). Incidentally, it is not the college's first time shortening courses after a major syllabus change. "Change in Syllabus of Computer Programming" (Vol II Issue 2, September 2010) reports a similar change for the famed Introductory C-Pro course - "as a half-semester course which is to be started after the first mid-

semester

examinations". It appears the move was unpopular enough to call for (successful) regression; unfortunately that is the extent of the records available to us.

DLF first finds mention in a Ping! Poll from April 2011. It is from a time when Dominos got higher maximal footfall than DLF, polling at 30% and 23% respectively. The franchise fast food culture was hip and in during those days, while there is also the possibility that DLF food stalls offered much less variety back then.

Among the more popular narratives on campus is that of a "Dying Campus Culture". Editorials in recent times have mentioned it, articles have alluded to it, people on Life@IIIT

have complained about it. Every time, these are followed by a flurry of increased activity and hope, with incoming freshers' batches doing their level best to build said culture. And well, things evidently weren't too different a decade ago: with at least one editorial and one article directly referring to said indifference, over a three-year gap. In the middle, there is also an editorial piece on "new clubs" and "improving cultures", furthering our belief in this pattern. Other articles from the time also refer to this phenomenon through proxy; some call it a lack of senior-junior interactions, and yet others apathy - but it is clear that the habit of cribbing of the campus' distinct lack of identity is a consistent theme over time.

"...THE HABIT OF CRIBBING OF CAMPUS' DISTINCT LACK OF IDENTITY IS A CONSISTENT THEME OVER TIME

AAROGYA

AN UNLIKELY ORIGIN STORY

While a vast populace on campus does not seem to have any faith in Aarogya, it has an origin story worth revisiting. No paraphrasing can do it justice, so here's the entire article:

TL;DR: Aarogya was a naturopathy center offering massages and mud baths, run by Yogachaarya Vinayak.

If you or anyone among your neighbors recently felt a need to seek a doctor's advice, you must be aware of the health center facility viz. Aarogya which has been functional for more than two months now. The word

aarogya literally means being 'disease-free'.

Providing a doctor for consultation when a person is sick is necessary but insufficient for being aarogya. Keeping this in mind, the health center has come to offer many Naturopathy services on a no-profit basis. Our yogachaarya Vinayak ji was visibly excited when we inquired about the health center. He told that the idea of dirt being the root cause of disease is the basis of naturopathy. Disease is caused by the dirt in our body, activities and mind.

"BODY MASSAGE, HAIR MASSAGE, SAUNA BATH, MUD BATH, STEAM BATH

Naturopathy cures through cleansing us off this dirt. Rejuvenation and treatment services that are currently offered include body massage, hair massage, sauna bath, mud bath, steam bath, etc. With the aim of gauging the quality of services being currently offered, I decided to try out a full body massage session. All you need to do is to tell your hostel guard and you can then fix an appointment for yourself at a time that suits you. One thing that I could tell after the massage is that it certainly feels good. Yuktahaar staff has undergone proper training for offering these therapies. Separate women employees are available for catering to the ladies. In addition to a full body massage, I was offered a partial mud-bath session as a complimentary service which was rejuvenating but messy for obvious reasons. A decent kitchen-garden is also being maintained at the back side of the health center. Homegrown and self prepared medicines from turmeric, jaggery, amla etc are prepared at the center. When asked about the infrastructure costs that were incurred in setting up this facility, Vinayak ji proudly said that he believed in the concept of Kabaad se Jugaad. I would encourage the readers to visit the health center and see for themselves what he actually meant by this.

MAGAZINES THROUGH THE YEARS



Volume 1
Issue 1
2009

Volume 2
Issue 1
2010

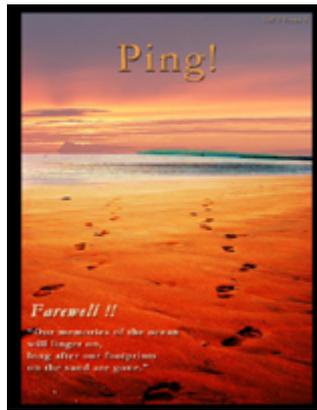
Volume 2
Issue 3
2011

Volume 3
Issue 2
2011

Volume 1
Issue 2
2009

Volume 2
Issue 2
2010

Volume 2
Issue 4
2011



*Volume 3
Issue 3
2011*

*Volume 3
Issue 5
2012*

*Volume 4
Issue 2
2012*

*Volume 3
Issue 4
2012*

*Volume 4
Issue 1
2012*

*Volume 4
Issue 3
2012*

The Interviews

The interviews. So many Interviews. One cannot write a retrospective on Ping! without noting how many interviews were done. Some were interesting, mostly for being slightly offbeat, such as those with the ‘JC waale bhaiyya’ (Volume III Issue 5, April 2012), or ‘OBH-shop wali Aunty’ (Volume IV Issue 3, 2013). Most were not.

The abundance of interviews was explained by a past Chief-Editor from 2014-15, in an interview we did with her to write this article. The most popular articles, apparently, were the interviews done with people around campus, like Appaji (Volume III Issue 4, 2012) - thereby explaining the excess.

Which is not to say all of them were useless, in fact, the interview with “OBH-shop waali Aunty” remains till date our most viewed article on the website. At their best, they told the populace more about those that were essential parts of our daily lives, but whom most of us are not very well acquainted with - professors, Appaji, those providing for us at the canteens every day. By and large, however, they were fillers that were not of any particular interest to anyone.

Recommended Interviews:

-- *Bhaiyya, Ek Watermelon!* (Volume III Issue 5, April 2012)

-- *OBH-shop wali Aunty* (Volume IV Issue 3, 2013)

-- *Ask Appaji* (Volume III Issue 4, 2012)

-- *Faculty Interview - Prof. Kannan Srinathan* (Volume III Issue 2, September 2011)

Representing Concerns in the First Five years

Reading through the first five years of archives does not tell one much about IIT. Sure, there’s detail upon detail of the nth college event that happened for however many years running, but - that’s it. Seen through this lens, IIT is just another college where regular college things™ sometimes happen on a somewhat irregular basis. It has no character. Beyond house events, there’s little indication of any community - one that engages, discusses, argues, and furthers itself.

However, there are some early glimpses of the type of content Ping! would eventually grow to cover: reportage of ‘non-trivial’ campus events. There’s some coverage of “these are debates happening on campus” that show the atmosphere around the place - essentially, the ‘controversial’ pieces of the time.

Student Parliament

Ribbing on whatever form of Student Governance existed at the time is not particularly uncommon in the archives, but it fits the definition, and is worth looking at. Whether we examine the articles on such in *Ping!*, or in its ancestor *Echoes*, one thing is abundantly clear: the students, who may or may not be actively participating in the system, tend not to have much faith in its internal workings and Institutions.

For some context, we shall temporarily go back to the short-lived *Interface*, from December 2002. Out of the Box - Student Parliament describes a sequence of events - the motivation behind the Parliament, initial interests, and an ‘abrupt “break-up”’, followed by a reconstitution. Likewise, in an interview in the original *Echoes*, back in September 2003, a member of the SLC of the time is quoted saying “The idea of the Student Parliament was from the SLC. But, of late, the parliament is not working as we hoped it would”. Finally, a snippet from *Echoes*, August 2006 informs us:

“The new academic year heralded an era of ‘selection’ parliament over ‘election’. For the first time, each house nominated its candidates for each council – Cultural, Campus Life and Sports – one each from the 2nd and 4th years, and 2 from 3rd year, a house captain and a council representative.”

With this context in mind, we move on to the Ping! archives. The issue first finds mention in February 2011 (Volume II, Issue 3), in the aptly named “Parliament Blues”. The article, that takes the form of a conversation between a (still nominated) Parliamentarian and a non-Parliamentarian, summarizes the issue as

“All of this signifies that there is an on going blame game being played out here. Parliamentarians blame the Majority IIT for being non-responsive and in the other case, Majority IIT doesn’t feel the need of a Parliament.”

The Editorial of the issue just after (April 2011) gives an update: a new system of governance, with elections to choose its members, with an “intra-batch, intra-house” election model. It also announces a new “Parliament Updates” section, a section that was hence seldom updated - be it due to incompetence on behalf of Ping! or Parliament, we cannot tell.

A second “Parliament Blues” about two years later (Volume IV, Issue 3, circa 2013) implies that it may have been the latter. In an article that comprises almost entirely quotes, what is interesting is how many of these sound

listed straight off of complaints from the last three years:

“In recent months it seems that the parliament’s say on important topics has reduced dramatically. It’s only purpose seems to be to convey student views to the faculty rather than express demands and fight for them (which was its original purpose)”

(paraphrased) ‘Parliament did not have a “visible” stand in any of the recent disciplinary actions. No proper justification was provided to the students on these sensitive issues. Also, the efforts of the Parliament are known only to them and not the rest of the student body, which should not be the case.’

Along with responses that, again, may as well be responses we’re all familiar with:

“A good student community directly translates into a good student parliament. If people are raising their voices responsibly, ... the student parliament will also get a boost ... Students have to come forward proactively to take up the responsibility and put efforts to sustain those interests. It is not just about raising issues, not just taking the students’ side always, it is about setting a good atmosphere in the student community...”

And the same observations, too:

“Regarding Parliament activities, the student community often tends to rush to conclusions and believe rumours. It is possible that the Parliament has actively been doing work, but it has not publicized the same. One must know all the facts before commenting on the issue”.

Some things, evidently, don’t change.



Felicity 2011

PROTEST

A Protest in IIIT

There has been a singular large-scale protest at IIIT, with questionable success. The protest was about a holiday the day after Felicity.

Volume II Issue 4’s “Campus Voice” (April 2011) is precisely about this protest. As it reports, “... on the gloomy morning of February 21, 2011, the day after Felicity ‘11 concluded, the students of IIIT-H too sat down (not cross-legged though!) along the road from the library to the NBH with the following thoughts in mind:

‘We are here, not because we are lawbreakers; we are here in our efforts to become law-makers.’ — Emmeline Pankhurst.

The students had unanimously decided to ask for a ‘well-deserved holiday’ by carrying out a ‘Gandhian’ protest, a ‘dharna’, for the first time in the history of the college.”

Like any other, this event had its share of supporters and naysayers, who invoke basically every argument any protest ever invokes in Indian circles and households. We shall save you the pain of going over those again and move to the question of - 9 years on, was this successful?

Well, long-term, no.

The Gender Issue

What we learnt from the article

The discussion was spurred, in part, by the 2012 Delhi gang rape. The central point of discussion was women's safety on campus, catalysed by the Delhi incident, but driven by cases of harassment girls on campus were facing. Specifically, about the "Need to act against harassment, discrimination, chauvanism".

Multiple FSISs were conducted, each seemingly as fruitless and rife with pointless sidetalk as the last. Some people on campus felt it was an "us vs them" debate, while the petitioners insisted it wasn't. As such, despite the seriousness of the matter, people appear to have taken it rather lightly, with some people believing some of the discussions did not have their place in a college.

A sentiment that was expressed by people interviewed in the article at the time was that there was no point of all the discussion - nothing would come of it, as nothing ever did on campus.

What we learnt from the interview

The debate and circumstances surrounding it were rather dramatic. Responses to it were of two types - first, those who believed it was being blown out of proportion; and second those that were glad that something was finally happening on campus.

What struck her most at the time was that it took time for people to understand the scope of harassment - that it's not just "Bollywood style whistling", but inclusive of behaviour like stalking, or online harassment. Both faculty and students took time to get this. She felt, however, that the discussions were helpful in the long run.

Overall, the discussion on campus seems to have been in line with debates outside of, albeit a bit advanced. Regardless, judging by some of the questions as popular sentiment on campus, it is particularly disturbing that some of them are particularly victim-blamey - questions like "why don't the victims speak up ... some responsibility is with them". One positive to be taken from such is that the Institute seems to have agreed on a consensus and moved on; despite all odds, it seems that the discussions did help progression.

(I'm honestly very surprised you're still reading, to be honest - Zubair)

This is not about reservations, or cross-entry, or any of the other issues that have been raised in recent times. Years before any of these topics were tackled (on record), a more fundamental problem existed concerning women's safety on campus. Again, records are scant - the only reason we know of it is due to "The Gender Issue", from Volume IV Issue 2, some time in early 2013. It's not entirely comprehensive, assuming some level of familiarity with the discussions on campus. So, we reached out to an alumni who was Editor-in-Chief of the newsletter around the time.



Campus Voice: "The Gender Issue"

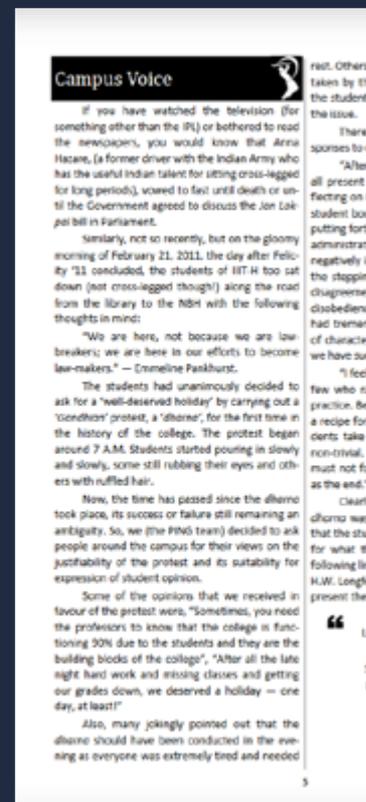
As a campus we are always in discussion- a lively, riveting cross between debate and gossip. In those breaks between assignments, or in large groups at the juice-awls, there's always an issue reigning through loud voices and strong opinions. This month we've heard, felt and seen them swirling around- what is being called 'the gender issue'.

It is the first time that this issue has been dealt with so seriously. Many found the exercise futile, and forced their way to SH2 due to attendance. Was it necessary? Did it make a difference?

As one student puts it, "The FSIS failed to get across to the people that we need to act against all sorts of harassment, discrimination and chauvanism. In its haste to galvanize people into action, it has ended up creating an even bigger gap between those who want something to be done, and those who feel this is only a phase during which everyone will blame the male half of the college. It didn't even come close to reaching towards and removing the inherent chauvinism rooted within many people. But while saying this, it must also be noted that the FSIS was timely, and it was a baby step for the movement against harassment."

Others were more outspoken in their displeasure regarding the FSIS: "I feel the FSIS didn't solve its purpose, rather; it left a bitter taste in the minds of few who think they were forced to attend and participate in stupid discussions on pornography and prostitution."

On the other hand, a good number of students also report a positive outcome of the FSIS: "We assume that our deeds will not hurt anybody. But in FSIS discussions my assumptions were challenged, and I finally understood how we are hurting and creating a bad environment in society which is making others insensitive ... We just need to know when and how it is going to hurt or make one uncomfortable."



Campus Voice

If you have watched the television (for something other than the IPL) or bothered to read the newspapers, you would know that Arnie Hazare, (a former driver with the Indian Army who has the useful Indian talent for sitting cross-legged for long periods), vowed to fast until death or until the Government agreed to discuss the Jan Lok-pal bill in Parliament.

Similarly, not so recently, but on the gloomy morning of February 21, 2011, the day after Felicity '11 concluded, the students of IIT-H too sat down (not cross-legged though!) along the road from the library to the NBH with the following thoughts in mind:

"We are here, not because we are law-breakers; we are here in our efforts to become law-makers." — Emeline Paskhurst.

The students had unanimously decided to ask for a "well-deserved holiday" by carrying out a 'Yondhok' protest, a 'dharma', for the first time in the history of the college. The protest began around 7 A.M. Students started pouring in slowly and slowly, some still rubbing their eyes and others with ruffled hair.

Now, the time has passed since the dharna took place, its success or failure still remaining an ambiguity. So, we (the PINS team) decided to ask people around the campus for their views on the justifiability of the protest and its suitability for expression of student opinion.

Some of the opinions that we received in favour of the protest were, "Sometimes, you need the professors to know that the college is functioning 50% due to the students and they are the building blocks of the college", "After all the late night hard work and missing classes and getting our grades down, we deserved a holiday — one day, at least!"

Also, many jokingly pointed out that the dharna should have been conducted in the evening as everyone was extremely tired and needed

Post 2014

In regard to the 'representing concerns of the college' bit of things, the next five years of the magazine (for it is now a magazine more than a newsletter) serve this role to a better capacity. Barring two years where an over-abundance of fiction and going online-only without fixed issues released seems to have transformed Ping! into a glorified blog. These years show IIIT as an elaborate ecosystem, with musings on Identity in college, debates and clarifications about the Institute committees, and impassioned almost-obituaries for beloved canteens. It shares concerns about the impact of students as future technocrats on an increasingly privacy-starved world. Editorials and articles alike question Institutions. And there are lighthearted articles too, but these, too, are largely campus related in some sense, indicating a running narrative.

2014 is also the year Ping! went online-only (sans Volume-Issues as well) for two years, effectively ditching the Volume-Issue numbering model - thus making it easier to choose this as the split date, alongside it lining up nicely with the first five - next five narrative.

As a lot of this is in recent memory, and the most noticeable change is in the increased themes represented by the non-reportive style of the magazine, we shall focus on those, skimming over the articles and stories themselves. While this is less a history of IIIT as the previous section was, and more history of Ping!, it tries to bring about a connection between sentiments on campus, and its corresponding expression in text.

Existential concerns; On Social and Personal Identity in College

Existential dread is rooted at the heart of IIITian culture, be it expressed through confessions, randirona, Life posts, or discussions at JC at 3 AM. What are we doing? What's the point of this degree? Will we even get a degree? What's the point of running whatever club, or focusing on extra-curriculars, when nobody cares about it? Getting rejected all over the spectrum is commonplace - research internships, placements, Master's Programs. Even when such barriers are surpassed, students are often left wondering if it was all worth it. Do we have any impact on anything substantive? Is the CV at the end of four years a definitive identity we have to bear?

Who are We? and Memento (October 2016) are two articles that tackle this problem, albeit from different perspectives. Where the former is concerned with an individual's identity in a resume-driven world, the latter explores a student's relationship with the college in terms of impact made, and is a broader exploration of the futility often experienced in a place that often feels like a rudderless ship going in circles.

Mental Health is a crucial part of this discussion. Imposter syndrome is a persistent problem in all major colleges across the world, and IIIT is no different. Keeping that in mind, Ping! has tried to raise awareness, with a coverage of three primary magazine articles:

-> *Depression Denied* (November 2017) talks of the importance of finding correct ways of dealing with depressed students, and not simply sweeping them under the misclassification rug of 'nihilistic outlook'

-> *Mental Health, or the Lack Thereof (January 2019)* gives a more comprehensive view of depression than is usually presented - tackling the “ugly side” of it as well. It also discusses the kind of changes that are needed, along with tips on functioning while depressed.

-> *The Healthiness of Depression (July 2019)* is atypical in that it reflects a personal story of “coming to terms” with one’s depression. It also provides some crucial bits of information on IIIT’s mechanisms to deal with mental health.



Ethical Concerns with Developments in technology - and why IIITians should care

As researchers and future developers in a top tech Institute in the country, debates and concerns on the ethics of technological advances are very much a consideration that should be made - or so say the articles that fall under this theme. And with the recent global concerns over privacy, mass-surveillance, and police states - it’s not hard to understand why. These are all articles that either directly or indirectly tell us to think about the social consequences of our creations.

Data and IIIT (April 2017) talks of privacy - its importance, the ethics of data-mining, and the importance of personal data. It then goes on to college-specific examples of such practices, elaborating with an a simple example (and history lesson for basically everyone post-2014) the issues surrounding such “accepted” practices:

“... instances just show how vulnerable we are in the current world, where the data that makes us us is no longer solely in our control. **Data in IIIT does not have a history of remaining secure either. Case in point: The 2014 incident when the ISAS grades portal was breached into and all information was uploaded online**”.

Understanding privacy (November 2017) and *A Twisted way to learn (April 2017)* are far more generalised “Eye to the Future” articles, but these, too, come with the self-same warning label. The former is in the context of Aadhar, raising arguments on biometrics that had been colouring mailing lists and inboxes at the time over a separate, but related, IIIT-Biometric issue. The latter is an equally generalised piece on limitations

of Machine Learning and biases, but raises the same call to action:

“As researchers, It is important to not get swayed by the cool ML prototypes and hypes ... What we really need today is not mindless application of of algorithms to problems, without any big picture insight into the change we are bringing on to our world. Instead, we need to actively address these issues, and hope that we are able maximize what we truly ought to: humanity.”

Research Ethics and Why IIIT Needs to Catch Up (April 2018) embodies in its entirety the spirit of this section. Covering this very topic, it takes a deep dive into the consequences of our research, and the mechanisms IIIT has - or doesn’t - in place to ensure ethical research.

I, Researcher

As researchers, It is important to not get swayed by the cool ML prototypes and hypes. To merely enlist a few big issues that plague ML based solutions,

1. Unknown “correct” objective.
2. Known-Hidden biases in data or lack of foresight about the data.
3. Lack of broad and real-world evaluation and testing methodologies.
4. Incomplete understanding of ethical, political and administrative implications and impact.

In a certain imagination of capitalism, it is said that consumers are said to express their preferences and values by how they choose to spend their money, what is termed as Dollar Voting. Similarly, perhaps, especially as programmers and computer scientists, we need to adopt *code voting*, ie. let our research and engineering work reflect our preferences and values, at least to the best of our abilities. Some of the first steps towards this are already been taken by some of the leaders and visionaries of AI, who all assembled in Asilomar Conference on Beneficial AI in January 2017, at the initiative of Future of Life Institute, and came up with the Asilomar AI Principles as a broad consensus on some 23 principles that we researchers and entrepreneurs must try imbibe in our efforts.

What we really need today is not mindless application of of algorithms to problems, without any big picture insight into the change we are bringing on to our world. Instead, we need to actively address these issues, and hope that we are able maximize what we truly ought to: humanity. ■

“*A Twisted way to Learn*”,
concluding paragraphs

Commentary on Institutions and Institutional Discussions

People like complaining. People like complaining about a lot of things, and in IIT it is, more often than not, directed at the Institute and related bodies - the attendance policy is terrible, DisCo doesn't make sense, the admin doesn't listen to Parliament, Parliament doesn't help students, and so on and so forth. These may be justified, or not - but some issues snowball into problems big enough worth either separate investigation, or dedicated ranting spaces (with citations).

And there's a multitude of such articles:

There is *On the Wrong Side of Disco, Parts I and II (April 2017)*, where the first attempts to explain what DisCo actually is and how it works, clearing the air on a controversial topic; and the second focuses on the student experience of actually going through the process. The related Commentary on Disciplinary Committee Decisions (November 2017) is a critical look at a list of DisCo decisions that had been released earlier that semester, questioning specific aspects and the general opacity of decision-making.

Cracked-mia: Visible Cracks in Academia (January 2019) talks of issues in academic research, including specific instances within college but also about research and academia in general.

PT: Physical "Training" to "Torture" (website-only, April 2018) raises long-expressed issues about the (then) PT system, it's ineffectuality, and the inflexibility it posed to students. It is worth noting that the revamped system was introduced in the semester following, incorporating some suggestions in the article.

Student constituted bodies and Institutions get their share of flak too. Skipping over all the Parliament stuff - there's been enough of that to get the trend - we find *Everything's Not*

Right with the SACB (website-only, March 2018) that raises concerns with the functioning of the erstwhile board. The body was dissolved soon after.

Just before the year's admissions season, *A Meeting With The Apex: Issues with the Body on Top (website-only, July 2018)* expresses often-felt concerns with the standing model of the Apex-Mentor system in college, followed by some suggestions that are reported to have been incorporated afterwards.

Bollywoodized Freshers (November 2017) summarises its message as:

"The Freshers is the guilty pleasure of students of our institute – our Bollywood, our yearly dose of public celebration of mediocrity, repetition and sexism"

Looking behind otherwise closed doors: Investigative Articles

These are the stories we love finally publishing (doing them is a different matter), the one-year-delayed "scoops" that sucked the soul out of those researching these for publication. They may be matters of concern to us all, but with an effort barrier few wish to surpass. On the other hand are matters of no evident concern that do have a lot of history and context worth revealing.

The Water Bill (July 2019) is the goliath. A prime example of the first type of article, this is characterised by the scale of the issue that involved people not paying fees in retaliation, constant pinging of all sources (the engineering department, parliament, the protesters, multiple meetings), and the year it took to verify and finally publish all the information. A team of first years with a then Chief Editor spent a whole year finally compiling the comprehensive issue with updates that nobody other than some members of parliament really knew till the end.

New Canteen, Newer Problems and *The Invisible People Behind OBH (January 2019)* are both examples of the latter. Where the first spoke of problems vendors were having adjusting to the renovation of JC, that second spoke of people that the vast majority of campus did not know existed.



MAGAZINES POST 2014



October 2015



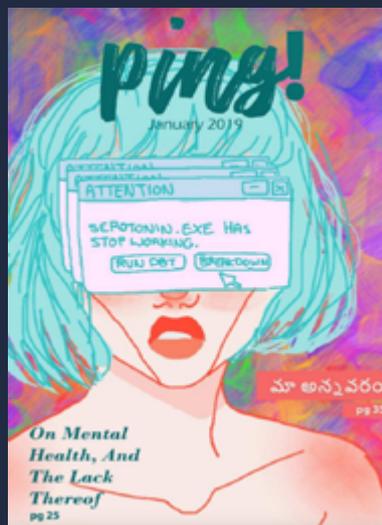
April 2017



November 2017



April 2018



January 2019



July 2019

Articles centered in and around Campus Life

All conflict does not a story make. A complete picture of IIIT as a living, breathing body of students requires more than coverage of ideological debate; it needs stories of the campus population (dogs), of the couples situation, the state of clubs, the food scene, the gaming scene, odd hostel rules. It calls for entirely unnecessary statistical analysis of the effectiveness of Dating Apps on campus. A reader from outside college should be able to appreciate just how bored UG2k17 got during a three-week activity period.

All of these can be found in abundance in the magazine. To list the articles specifically mentioned above:

- > *Isle of Dogs* (January 2019)
- > *Coupling-Decoupling* (November 2017)
- > *The Club Renaissance* (April 2018)
- > *#GGWP The Gaming Scene: Here and Now* (July 2019)
- > *The DLF Food Crawl* (July 2019)
- > *Hostel "Woahs!"* (July 2019)
- > *Mirror, Mirror on the wall, can I get a match at all?* (July 2019)
- > *The Induction Schedule in Review* (April 2018)

Looking beyond the themes

It's not all been about themes, and there's a lot skipped over in the incredibly short summary provided above. I would like to pause here, though - and consider, in equally short snippets, some things from the past 4 years that have had a ton of Impact, whether or not they fit into any of the "themes"

The ones with a visible impact

The section must necessarily begin with *And it was all Yellow – A Tribute to the Yellow Box* (November 2017). Seminal in that it is till date the only recorded instance of a Ping! article directly contributing to major change on campus. It was an obituary for Yellow Box. However, an official in IIIT Administration happened to read it, and consequently took steps to bring the beloved canteen back.

The second is also particularly notable: The Cross Entry articles. Arguments had been informally presented when the two-parter - *Co-ed Hostels: What Do They Imply?* and *A Case for Co-ed Hostels at IIIT* (April 2018) was released. The rest, has since been ongoing (or not. Check out the Editorial).

Echoes - The Revamped Newsletter

The other major change that has been introduced of late is the reintroduction of The Newsletter, Echoes. Modelled more after the Echoes of yore, it seeks to fill in the gaps - cover the news, give context to articles, and generally for pieces that cannot be covered in the regular magazine, due to constraints of space, time, or manpower. It serves as a historical record for the college, much like Ping! has tried in the past; but this time, hopefully, to a better extent.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, I would like to refer to "*The story of Ping!*", published in Volume II Issue 4, as the founders and co-founders of the magazine were leaving. In particular, this particular statement that stands out as crucial to its continuation as a Media Body by and for the students. ■

the torch, to write, to connect. Ping! though isn't the tool of a handful, it's the platform of everyone



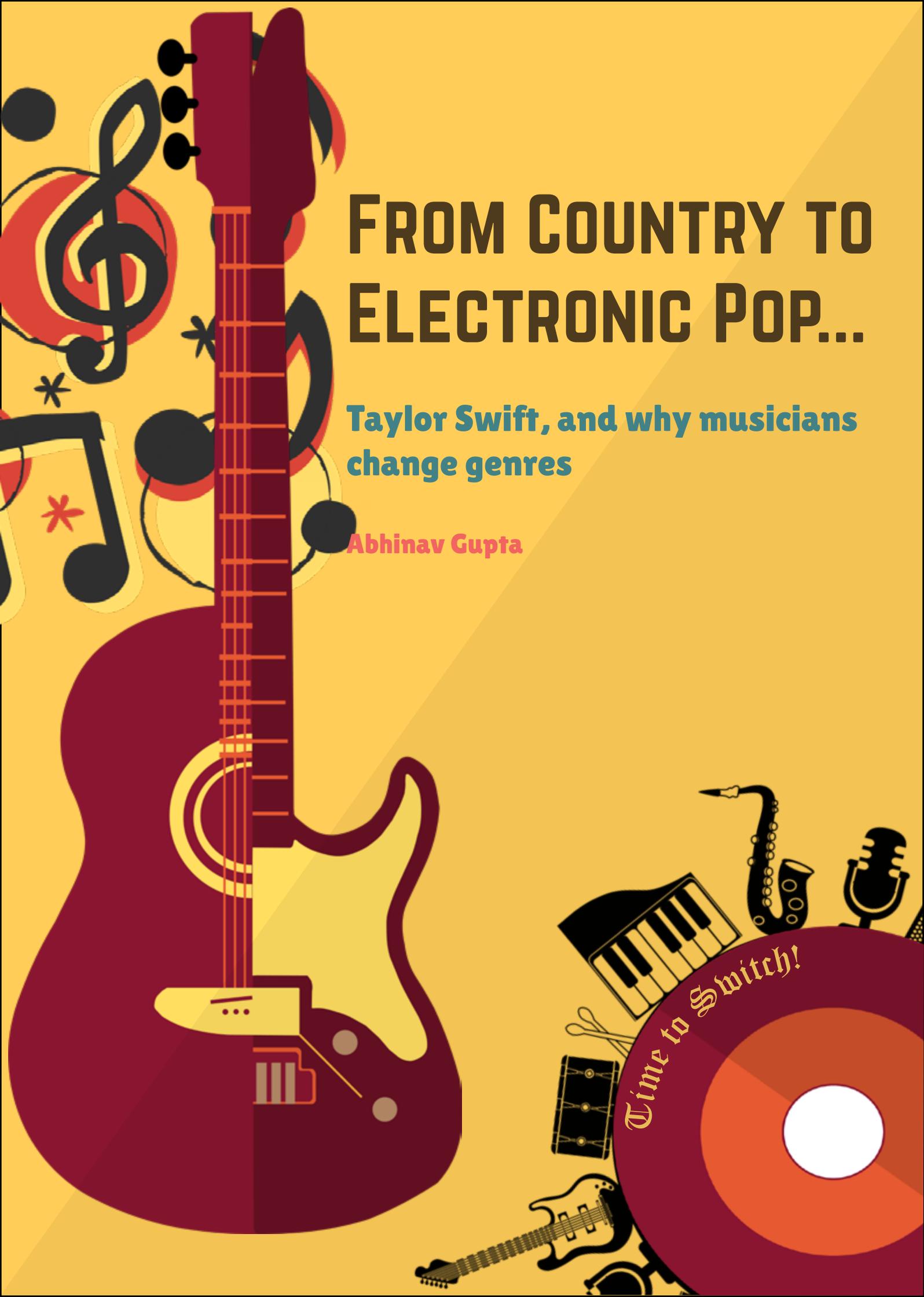
A visual representation of the author at 6:05 AM

SIGH! TAKE A MINUTE TO CATCH YOUR BREATH

Meanwhile, here's a cartoon:



by Shivansh Rakesh



FROM COUNTRY TO ELECTRONIC POP...

**Taylor Swift, and why musicians
change genres**

Abhinav Gupta

Time to Switch!

Haters gonna hate hate hate...

Taylor Swift shook the world when she released 'Shake It Off' from her massively popular '1989'. The 'dance-pop' hit debuted at number 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and became a radio staple all across the globe, staying on the chart for an impressive 50 weeks. The up-tempo beat, the saxophones and her rap make it hard for anyone to not dance to it. Surely, the southern country accent wasn't a thing of the past?

I remember listening to Shake it off (at least a million times) in high school, dancing to it at every party. I was a huge fan of her music and when she began teasing the announcement of her new single, I could hardly wait. The video premiered on YouTube, and it had hardly been fifteen minutes before the video amassed 20 thousand views. Surely, I wasn't the only one anxiously awaiting a Taylor Swift song; it had been two long years since the world had new Taylor Swift material. I remember coming back from school, throwing my bag away, turning on the computer and googling 'Taylor Swift Youtube'. With an overload of enthusiasm and curiosity, I instantly hit the play button and it was... weird.

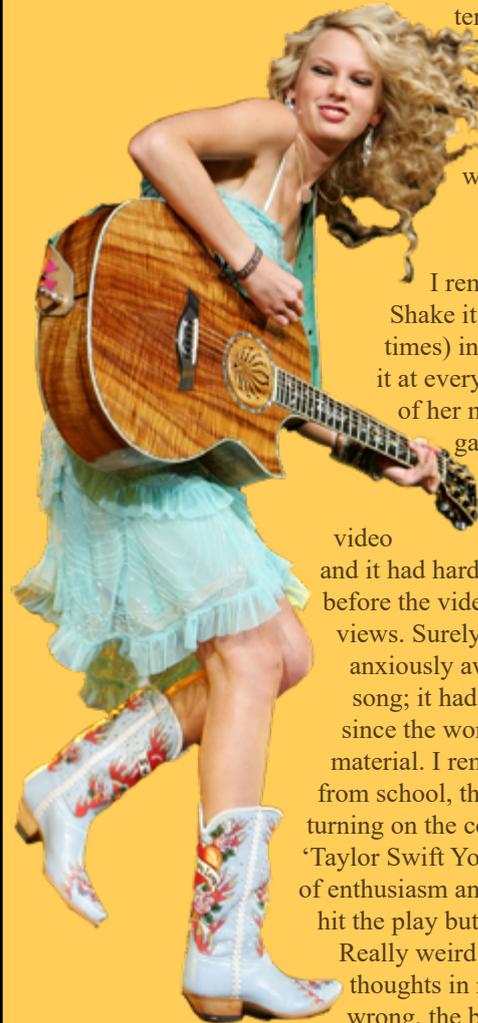
Really weird. Not the song, but the thoughts in my head. Don't get me wrong, the beat was extravagant and it instantly made me want to get off my feet and start dancing to the awesome tune. But it took me a while to comprehend that it was actually a Taylor Swift song. I had expected banjos and guitars, her classic country sound from her previous albums. But that was inconspicuous, Taylor Swift had just deleted her country style and traded it for the rising popularity of dance-pop.

It's undeniable that pop has garnered a reputation of being the genre which trades lyrics in favour of earworms. Naturally, the industry began speculations about Taylor's move, wondering if her best days were behind her. Would the 14-year-old girl who took the country world by storm turn out to be an ordinary crowd-pleaser?

Soon enough, critics all over the world praised her departure from her earlier country pop albums. They said it was a refreshing change, making her a great pop star for

the ages. The song became one of the most-viewed videos on YouTube. 1989 became one of the most defining albums of the 2010s and marked her transition from her trademark country style to pure electro-pop. More singles from the album were released, including Blank Space, Bad Blood and New Romantics, which all became immensely popular and were radio hits across multiple countries. Even in the online-streaming world where people rarely go to music stores to buy albums, 1989 sold 10 million copies worldwide and cemented Taylor Swift's place as one of the greatest musicians in the world.

But it just wasn't Taylor Swift. Gone was that girl madly in love with Tim McGraw (after whom she even named a song!). Gone were the days when she had teardrops on her guitar. That little girl, who once went to Nashville record labels with her mother to submit her demo tapes, had now seemingly forgotten about her country music roots. After 1989, Taylor Swift released the massively successful 'Reputation' which was again completely electro-pop and synth-pop. But gone was the harmonica, the bass and the fiddle, replaced by drum pads, programmed instruments, processed and overlapped vocals. Guess old Taylor really wouldn't come to the phone this time. Artists generally have individual unique styles and we see elements of it across their albums, like the squeals and hiccups of Michael Jackson, or those distinctive guitar riffs from every Guns N' Roses song. But Taylor Swift, ever since '1989', has been a very different artist that she was in her country days.



Haters Gonna Hate
Hate Hate
Hate Hate
Hate Hate...

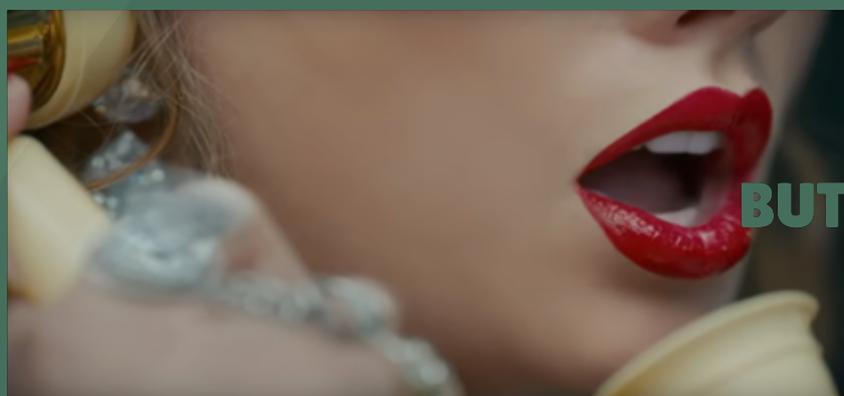


Why would Taylor Swift, one of the greatest country musicians in the world, move on to electro-pop? Was she bored of it? Did she want to try something new? Or was it because country music was dying and the only way to stay 'relevant' in the 2010s was to start making electronic pop music? Maybe she was just experimenting with her genre and style?

One major reason for her switch could be her Album of the Year loss at the Grammy's for her album RED. Lauded and criticized by critics for being a fresh take on the country while simultaneously straying too far from the typical country sound, RED was a polarizing album in terms of sound. In recent memory, Old Town Road faced such problems before Billy Ray Cyrus joined the remix. Swift claims that the loss pushed her towards pop - a statement against her critics who attempted to box her into one sound.

The music scene today is certainly very different from what it was in the '90s, and even more so than in the '80s. There was a phenomenal difference between the '80s and '90s itself! The '90s were really infamous for bringing about a great change, with grunge and hip-hop starting to dominate the airwaves, thereby sending many rock n' roll bands out of business. But some artists did manage to survive the changes.

taken over the rock scene. These songs still receive get airplay from radio stations all over the world. But then came the 90's and with the advent of grunge, Britpop and lots of boy-bands, and 'Bon Jovi had to either adapt or die'. But they survived, and they did so without letting go of their classic 'hard rock' sound. They had evolved, the lyrics were darker and more mature, no more cheesy choruses. They changed visually too, with the lead singer chopping his signature long hair and felt it was time to say goodbye to their spandex uniforms. But they did not let go of their classic rock sound, with classy guitar solos and thumping bass lines. Then came the 21st century, and Bon Jovi came up with arguably their most popular song to date - 'It's My Life' which took over rock stations, thereby introducing them to a younger fanbase. They managed to stay relevant, but then definitely died out in the 2010s. The band released three albums in the past decade, out of which not even a single song hit the Billboard charts.



BUT WHY?

Bon Jovi, one of the greatest selling rock bands in the world, was extremely popular in the 1980s. With numbers such as 'Livin' on a Prayer' and 'You give love a bad name', they had



'Staying Relevant'??

Even U2, another very popular 80's band, saw a decline in their popularity during the 90's and they just couldn't blend in to the music scene even though they tried experimenting a lot with their sound. U2's guitarist, The Edge, famously said that the band had "taken the destruction of the rock n' roll band format to its absolute nth degree". They wanted to 'reapply for the job of the best band in the world' did so very successfully in the early 2000s. They returned back to their rock roots with 'All that you can't leave behind', regarded as one of the greatest albums of all time and won 7 grammy awards (interestingly, over multiple years!). U2 somehow survived the 90s (it's a lot more complicated, a story for another day) but not every band did. The rock scene soon died out and was taken over by the newly emerging genres. U2 was an exception and so was Bon Jovi, but it was generally seen that the artists who failed to comply to the music scene of the time died out.

METAL
POPULAR
SOUL
CLASSIC
ROCK

But is Taylor Swift the only one who switched genres so drastically? Let's look at Katy Hudson (popularly known as Katy Perry, she changed her stage name to avoid confusion with Kate Hudson, the actress!), whose first album was actually a Christian rock album! This eponymous album was released way back in 2001 saw her exploring Christian rock music and the lyrics talking about her faith in God. It was quite unsuccessful, and she soon rebranded herself as Katy Perry

She rose to fame with 'One of the Boys', a pop-rock album and a significant departure from her gospel music. One can only imagine how her listeners felt when she followed up the Christian album with 'I Kissed a Girl' in 2008. However, she still stayed true to her rock roots and most of the songs on the album contained the classic bass-guitar-drum line-up.

It was when 'Teenage Dream' was released that she really ventured into disco, electronic and hip-hop. She became hugely popular and 'Teenage Dream' was only the second album (after Michael Jackson's 'Bad')

to spawn five number one singles! Katy Perry had established herself as one of the prominent artists of the 21st century. Her 2017 album 'Witness' was purely electro-pop and EDM, easily distinguishable from her gospel music. Would she still have been as successful as she is today, had she continued to compose christian rock music? Hard to say, but probably not.

The 2010s had ushered in a new era of EDM, electronic pop and club music. Gone were the days of rock n' roll, where you'd actually listen to a rock song on the radio. All the rock bands were old and white-haired and the Billboard Hot 100 would rarely have a rock song on its list. As the new decade begins, there are further shifts in the music industry, namely the surge of hip-hop and R&B. Interestingly, R&B has occupied such a large share of the industry that even Justin Beiber - former pop prince - promoted his new album as R&Bieber.

While I began my research hoping to find a single definitive answer to the question of genre-hopping, I've realized there is perhaps no single answer. It's easy to label genre-switchers as unfaithful money grabbers but as seen with U2, there is no guarantee of success. In the end, the music world is unpredictable - evident in the excitement leading up to the weekly billboard charts - and it's in this lack of certainty that beautiful music emerges. Artists may switch for personal reasons, a reflection of their journey through life, or purely to have broader appeal, but success is a parameter that cannot be predicted. At the end of the day, we shouldn't worry too much about our favourite artists switching boats once in a while, because more often than not, the music world changes for the better. But it will always break my heart a little because the world would probably never get to listen to a Taylor Swift country song again. ■

Do they do it for the Money's?



GENDER AWARENESS

-Anonymous

The campus seems and claims to be a welcoming environment for all kinds of students. However, many incidents have taken place in the recent past that show otherwise, especially with respect to the campus as a whole being sensitive about the issue of gender.

The institute has a Gender Sensitisation Committee and a Gender Grievance Committee, consisting of staff members who can be approached in case of any incident related to gender issues. The Gender Sensitisation Committee also holds a two-day workshop every year on gender and related subjects, which is open to all students, as well as conducting smaller discussion sessions during the UG1 Induction programme.

However, not many students feel comfortable approaching the members of these committees when they face any such problem, and some are unaware that these committees exist on campus. Many others also consider these problems to be normal, or not worth going through the hassle of reporting to any authority figures.

CAMPUS CULTURE

The gender workshops, especially the ones conducted during the UG1 induction do not seem to hold much interest among the students either, with only a few of those who attend interested in the topics that are discussed. Among those who did participate, some students agreed that they feel uncomfortable around people of the opposite gender. Comments such as male students saying that they would be “uncomfortable with lesbians” were made, which also shows a lack of sensitivity towards their peers.

A fair number of the female students also say that they felt uncomfortable when they were [hit on] by some of the male students; however, they brush it off, consider it to not be a big issue, or are scared of angering their seniors, since this often happens in the form of a senior [hitting on] a person of a junior batch. There have also been incidents where girls have been forced to write or say that a particular male senior is the best looking, to the point that they were extremely uncomfortable with it. Some girls have also been bullied for their appearance by the male seniors and told that they should

look up to other ‘prettier’ girls to improve their appearance in a certain way. Girls have also sometimes mentioned that some of the guards make them uncomfortable or leer at them, especially if they are passing by later in the night, or wearing shorter clothing. There always seem to be guards positioned in front of the NBH/ New Parijat entrance at night, and some of the girls find their staring making them uneasy. All of these incidents are very rarely reported to the GGC.

BOYS VS GIRLS

This ties into the issue of ragging, which is most likely not based on gender. However, usually, female students are ragged much less than male students. A very standard form of ragging, however, is asking or forcing the junior to reveal a list of their crushes, following which the students who are on the aforementioned list may be teased or harassed. Another common thing is for the student to be told to propose to someone of the opposite gender, including seniors, or people from their batch they may not even know. Since some of the students are from schools or institutions where they have not had as much contact with the people of the opposite gender, this makes them even more uncomfortable - instead of bridging the gap, as some claim it does.

Often the male students may be facing some issues related to their mental health because of ragging or the stress of academics. While the institute has a system in place including mental health leave and counsellors on campus, boys seem to get much less support overall from their peers than girls, since it is assumed that they are supposed to be emotionally stronger, and not break down as often. This is not usually regarded as an issue either, and this is not only the case in IIIT.

As most students know, there is an ironically formed group called Bajrang Dal on campus, which satirically intends to ‘preserve the purity of our culture’. This group consists of students from all batches, almost all of whom join for the sake of the laughs. However, recently, some of the members seem to have taken the purpose of the group literally. Couples on campus have been threatened that they will be hit with stones if found together during Valentine’s day, and meetings have been held in the rooms of the members of this group to

'plan and execute' the same. They also made somewhat derogatory or mocking posters to put in Bakul Nivas about the protesters during the cross-entry protest that took place recently. Even though most of the members are not part of these activities, the strength of the 'non-serious' members seems to bolster the courage of the 'serious' members to inflict this kind of moral policing on other students.

THE CONFESSIONS

Another forum that breeds a broader gap between people of both genders is the IIITH confessions Facebook page. The page is also meant to be ironic. However, the anonymity offered makes it the ideal place for people to express their sometimes-harmful opinions about others. Often, a significant feature of the confessions is the confessor saying they are not comfortable with talking to people of the other gender.

A lot of the confessions lead to the (suspected) person for whom the confession is written (and generally, it is written by this person's friends to embarrass them), to be teased or called out for 'scoring' a partner. Often, certain people's characteristics/choices are also made fun of in fake confessions. It becomes an excuse for the students submitting the confessions to hide behind a mask and mock some people of the other gender, by either outright mocking them, fake 'confessing' to them, or pretending to be them (for example, there are more confessions for UG1 'females' each year, than there are females in that batch). On a similar note of anonymity, the cross-entry protest was organised recently, following which, a form was set up, and a lot of the counterpoints given for cross entry revolved around people not feeling comfortable enough around people of the other gender. Also, some of the responses received on the form clearly showed that some students did not have any respect or consideration for the people of the other gender.

This issue is not just restricted to the students, as certain staff members have also been seen making comments such as 'girls should not wear shorts,' or asking if a male student wanted to rape someone. Certain male students have also been asked if they are a girl, by another member of the staff, under a specific circumstance.

These instances clearly show that despite the institute's efforts, there is a fair amount of insensitivity still going around, among both the students and a small portion of the staff. Given the large number of students and the skewed gender ratio, along with the students' apparent unwillingness to attend or take part in any events to discuss such issues, it seems as though this will be a problem that is here to stay. ■



Practical Guide to Moving on

-Dushyant Goel

The suddenness of the event shocked you - but now it's done. You have had a heartbreak, it's been a month. Any lingering doubts you nursed in the first week are gone - it is now certain as death that there is no romantic relationship down this path. Your crush has sternly warned against contacting them - and let there be no doubt, contacting them again *is* harassment. How do you now get closure ? I hope this article helps.

There are a multitude of responses that we may have to an unexpected rejection. For a while it is okay if we are unable to

control anything about our thoughts - it happens to all of us at some point in our life. Every little thing reminds you of your beloved. You expect to see them wherever you go - the ghost of their presence haunts you. You turn around every time the lab door opens, you see their shape in people walking by at a distance. Then sadness kicks in.

It is at this point, when it becomes increasingly hard to get out of the bed every morning; that a well meaning interlocutor will notice, and advise us to lose ourself in work. As a temporary



fix - it does work for most people, but it is akin to kicking the can down the road. A primal hurt not addressed turns neurotic, and in time manifests itself in the form of increasingly risky behaviour. A person may take to the bottle or pick up any manner of mind numbing addictions. Another person may experience sudden explosions of anger, may turn off-puttingly narcissistic, or become unable to ever be anything but outwardly and loudly cheerful. Inside tempest rage, self-doubt cripples and periods of hedonistic euphoria are followed by all consuming lethargy. If this is happening to you, intervene immediately.

First of all, we need to give space to our undirected sadness. Romantic rejection can seem like a repudiation of one's self worth. While it can be rationally argued that your self-worth is independent of another person's opinion, emotions are rarely moved by reason. Just as we celebrate to give shape to our happiness, we need to mourn to properly identify and legitimize our sadness - and end it. There is nothing like having appropriate friends to call upon when we mourn, but we must be brave enough to do it privately if need be. But mourn we must, we must make it a ceremony, something akin to a macabre birthday party.

In love we put the object of our admiration on a pedestal, in mourning, we must now remove them from it. We will need to interrogate our intention, not just to prove to ourselves that we are a loser, but also to give credit to our defiant vulnerability in the face of failure. We will have to remember the good in our upbringing that etched onto us the lofty ideals we expect of love, and also acknowledge the quiet biases that slipped in alongside. We need to give our parents more credit for how they affect our ideas of romantic love. We will have to see our inherent humanity, and the flaws that come with it in ourselves, but then also in the person opposite. Finally, we must carry out a symbolic act of loss, destroy a totem that represented this love or let out our anger on paper. A letter, a painting or like.

And then throw it away. ■

- अनुभव शर्मा -

बचपन

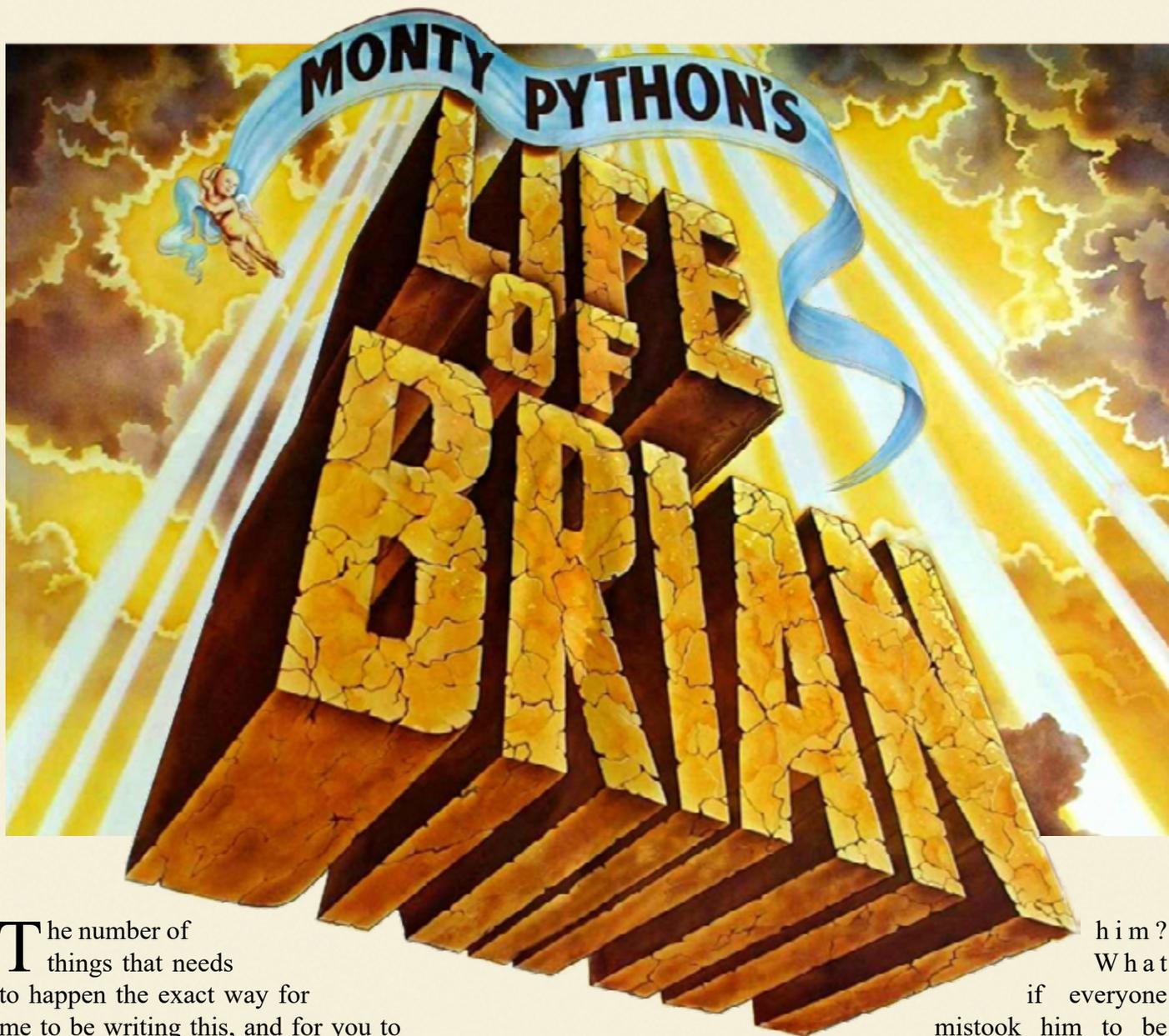
During the time of war in Syria (beginning in late 2014), thousands of children were killed or forced to immigrate under dangerous circumstances where, in most cases, they couldn't make it to live. Their entire childhood of cheerfulness and curiosity is taken away from them. This is a poem describing those happenings. The title of the poem is - बचपन (meaning 'childhood').

ज़िन्दगी के हर दिन को ख़्वाब की तरह जीना है बचपन,
और उस ख़्वाब को नायाब बना दे, यही सीखना है बचपन ।
लेकिन उन्ही मासूमों का रक्त से सना चेहरा देखकर दिल रुक सा जाता है,
उनकी चीख़ पुकार सुनकर, इंसान के नाते, सिर शर्म से झुक जाता है ।

खून के फव्वारे में होली खेलना किस जिहाद ने सिखाया ?
अरे भई, उसी जिहाद ने तो सदियों तक आपसी भाईचारे को बढ़ाया ।
कहने वाले तोह यह भी कहते है, "मर तो वो रहे है ना, तो क्यों रोता है तू" ?
क्योंकि इंसान को तड़पता देख हाथ आगे बढ़ाना, यही इंसानियत ने दिखाया ।

क्या मासूम होना कसूर है उनका,
या जीने की भीख मांगना नाजायज़ फितूर है उनका ।
ये किस वर्चस्व की लड़ाई है यह मेरी समझ से परेह है,
पर क्या इस वर्चस्व का होना इंसानियत पर भी अजेय है ।

इस खेल में किसकी जीत, किसकी हार यह कहना फ़िज़ूल है ।
मज़हब की आड़ में जोशीला रक्त बहाना, ये किस दीन का उसूल है ।
अरे सुना था बचपन में की, "धर्म ही तेरी आत्मा है" ।
तो उसी आत्मा का गाला घोंटना, ये कैसा सुकून है ?



The number of things that needs to happen the exact way for me to be writing this, and for you to be reading this is mind-boggling. If I had seriously studied adequately for JEE Advanced, I might not have been here. If you had decided not to be an engineer but be perhaps a climate change activist, you probably would not be reading this. And these are just the major decisions. Our life and our choices have been affected by countless random things, and one not happening might lead to a butterfly effect and things would be starkly different. This trope is popularly referred to as 'For want of a nail' based on the famous poem, where because of a tiny nail missing on a horse's shoe a merchant ends up losing everything he holds dear.

Life of Brian explores this trope with a fascinating premise. What would happen if someone else was born at the same time as Jesus Christ just next door to

UJWAL NARAYAN

him? What if everyone mistook him to be the "Messiah"? Released in 1979 with the trademark Monty Python brand of snark and wit, this film was outright banned in countries like Norway and Ireland, with bans lasting in some cases for decades. In response to this, in typical Monty Python fashion, they marked the movie in Sweden with posters proclaiming, "This film is banned in Norway. Imagine how funny it must be".

The story follows Brian played by Graham Chapman, who grows up detesting the Roman Occupation of his homeland of Judea. He joins one of the rebel factions, the People's Front of Judea (not to be confused with the Judean People's Front) not out of any grand ambitions to free his homeland, but because he saw a girl who looked cute in that party. The movie progress with his various shenanigans, involving

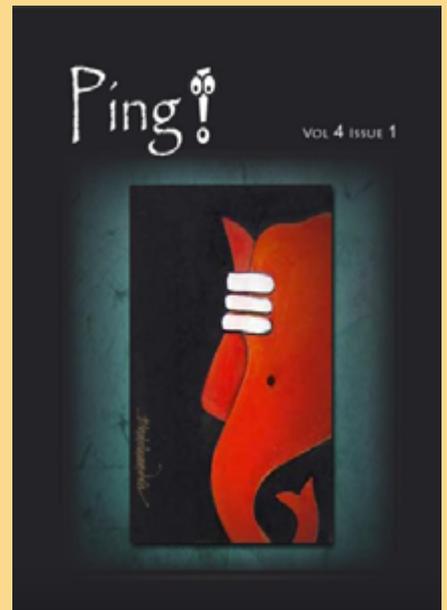
plans to raid their resident Roman senator's mansion while he was hosting his good friend, "Biggus Dickus". In a way that Murphy would be proud of, Brian's plan goes horribly awry, and he is the only survivor of the party. While escaping from the guards, he falls into a square, filled with prophets all trying to convince bystanders to join their latest religion. He repeats some of the things, he has heard Jesus say, and unsurprisingly people like what he's saying. Post this; he gets a series of unwanted followers who follow him back to his house. They took every word and action of his as gospel, and the slightest unusual thing was hailed as a miracle. Even with him appearing fully nude outside his window, his mom shouting, "There is a mess here but no messiah", the mobs refused to budge. The Roman guards finally catch up to him and capture him. Judith, played by Sue ones-Davies, the girl mentioned above who made Brian join the revolution in the first place, manages to get the order to free Brian passed. But by this time, Brian is already well on the way to Crucifixion.

Filled with observational humour, and puns going all the way from side-splittingly hilarious to ones that make you groan and repeatedly facepalm yourself with an iron brick, there is not one dull moment throughout the movie. At the same, amidst all the laughing, they ask profound philosophical questions that strangely does not detract attention from the comedy.

Monty Python's influence has been immense. Von Rossum loved them so much; he gave their name to the language he designed. My first to introduction to Monty Python was the various references being thrown around on Reddit. It grew to such a number that I knew I had to know what was happening. What started with the "Holy Grail", I quickly succumbed. And I love every minute of it. Dry wit, amazing acting if you haven't watched it already do it now. ■



HandMade Films



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