



As we walk through the campus everyday, we pass by so many people, each one of them leading different lives, all connected by a single thread of belonging to the IIIT family. With this series of articles, we will look at these interweaving threads of fates as we watch the stories of familiar faces around us. We watch how they started, how they came to be here at this very moment with us, and how they are weaving and linking all of us. It is so surreal to think of how all of these dots on the map have travelled to different places, yet all collided in this very spot that is IIIT. For today's story, we started by interviewing one of the Parijaat guards - Rajeshri, David and Ruby from the bakery, Ajitha - the yuktahar in charge, and the librarian Dr. Muralidar.

“Hardworking student cum breadwinner”

## **Rajeshri Parijaat Guard**

Starting with our very own multitasking guardian eye, we have Parijaat Block-C guard, Ms. Rajeshri. This hardworking student cum breadwinner has begun her studies for BA at a local college 3 hours away in Karnataka this year. She balances it out by choosing a program where she only has to write exams every few weeks and can study the rest independently, though she claims that problems do arise when taking out leave for those days when she has to travel all the way out to college and back. Having started out newly at this job, Rajeshri did not go through the rough covid work period. Now working 12-hour shifts from 8 AM to 8 PM or 8 PM to 8 AM weekly with almost no holidays in between, she says it is indeed a rough balance between work, study, and life. Although there is this struggle for balance, she claims her parents and family help her out. This dedicated woman says her mother, who packs food for her daily and helps her at home after work, is her constant support.

## Ajita Yuktahaar Incharge

Next, we head to a familiar face to those sitting down at our college's health-conscious mess. Ms. Ajita, having studied B.ED and Bachelor of Science, hails from a wealthy family in Vizag, Andra Pradesh. She moved to Hyderabad looking for a job after her family's business fell and started as a school science teacher. Simultaneously, she also learned how to cook using raw veggies, fruits, and multigrain millets, from a 13-day yoga program to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

A year later, her then neighbor, our previous yoga teacher, fascinated by her honed cooking skills, approached our friendly neighborhood healthy cook, asking her to come and start a nutritious 'yoga mess.' She decided to try out for the job and cooked a bunch of dishes for the faculty. Now, 12 years later, Ajita still remembers the day she was welcomed to the IIIT family, '22nd May 2010'.

"Students cross others' roll numbers or share with their friends, but she doesn't mind it"

Ajita's day starts with her commuting from outside to college at 9:00 AM and ends with her leaving around 5:30 PM. She claims that while the mess had 12 people working initially, at present, 10 people are working the mess, with everyone taking shifts from 6:30 AM to 3:00 PM or from 3:00 PM till 10:30 PM. She states that while they no longer had to come for work during the covid era, they were paid their full salary for the first three months, while the next three months, they received about 75% of it, while they finally returned back to normal in the December of 2021. Ajita also recalled how she sold clothes and dress materials from her apartment to continue earning through the peak-covid times.

Ajita proudly exclaims that she loves the collaborative student atmosphere in IIIT, starting with the mess committee, which she also claims are the final decision makers on the menu after consulting with her. Earlier she used to be allocated 20000 Rupees

weekly for her groceries, but now she states that the mess committee takes care of that as well. She says that student favorites are always the paneer and chole days, during which they always make sure to prepare extra. She claims that it does happen pretty often that students cross others' roll numbers or share with their friends, but she doesn't mind it as it's just food and everyone deserves to be fed. Finally, we ended the interview with this cheerful and bubbly person by asking about her favorite thing about IIIT, to which she exclaimed, "the students' fashion trends, of course!".

## David and Ruby The Bakers

Next up, we visit our friendly neighborhood bakers, David and Ruby! David's story begins back in 2005 when he started as an assistant baker in a bakers association in the city. Quickly rising through the ranks, he became the head chef. Soon enough, he left the association to start an independent stall just like the one on campus for a company, this being his learning grounds for running a bakery and business. After his contract ended, he moved his stall to IIIT through friends and networks.

During our interview with David, he would not stop exclaiming about the tremendous support he received from the students and institutions. Starting with 900 Rs at the bakers association, he claimed that the institution and its management's continuous support to parties like him is why his business has exploded from sandwiches and baked goods to biscuits and more from outside vendors as well.

As the college grew, so did the student's support for his business, which he says is why he decided to open his business till 3 AM. When Covid struck the college, they were given an initial 15-day

leave period which later continued, but David exclaims how the student body gave them 4000 Rs monthly to ensure they were taken

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care of and weren't forgotten. While the pandemic did bring them down, David and his wife started sanitizing their stall a month back and bringing it back up to what it once was a couple of years ago.

Ruby, having finished her M.Com in her hometown, is a constant presence in the business and a familiar smile to those of us who frequent the stall. She and David stay up till 4 AM, clearing up the day's business before heading to the city to their home. While they are always welcome to eat at the college messes, they prefer cooking in their stall's kitchen.

When asked about his customers, David firmly quoted, "Be it a professor or student, as long as you treat them with respect, they will keep coming back, and at the end of the day, that's all we want." And with that, we asked him the most awaited question, 'his favorite item in his canteen,' to which he said without missing a beat, 'My brownies - the best and cheapest you'll find.' So, do try out his famous brownies (my recommendation - with the vanilla ice cream) and give a shout-out to our most welcoming bakers!

## Dr. Muralidhar G. The Librarian

Dr. Muralidar, starting his tenure as a librarian in 1994, has been long at his passion for the past 28 years. Having done his Masters, Ph.D., and UGC NET in library sciences, Muralidar worked in various private and research-oriented institutions such as Warangal before joining IIIT in the January of 2005.

As a librarian, Muralidar's day starts with procuring book requests from students and faculties, curriculum-required textbooks, securing vendors, analyzing and bringing availability quotations, and then getting approvals from faculty and committee. They further search for course and research-related publications. He states that if these publications are available in India, it will take 2 weeks to procure them. In comparison, it would stretch to 6 weeks for international editions.

He claims that this whole library is run by just three professional staff, managing it from 9 in the morning till 12 midnight, often taking morning and evening shifts. They only observe Sundays and 6 cultural events - Independence and Republic day, Dussehra, Christmas, Sankranti, and Ramadan as holidays,

thus working almost year round.

When asked about the effects of the pandemic, Muralidar claimed that the library's resources were always accessible through the library's portal and IIIT VPN. From 2018, the library's online collection substantially increased to almost 6394 online journals and claimed 10181 e-books under various collections. It also has an institutional membership to the National Digital Library of India and access to NDLI e-Resources.

Talking about the library resources, Muralidar proudly acclaims the library's rich collection of 37618 books in Computer Science, Electronics, Civil Engineering, and Social Science and Humanities in the form of textbooks, reference books, general reading, and 75 journals of both international and national repute in print. Their collection also expands to various rare books and handbooks on different subjects. Around 1370 Compact Disks and 940 theses from all Research Centres are readily available for students' reference.

However, the job doesn't end with the procurement of the books; the library also sends out emails and updates the portal monthly for their new book collection. The current library portal, also developed by a IIIT student, is maintained by the library staff, but Muralidar claims that they do have plans for a more dynamic website underway. While the plethora of online resources is endless, he acclaims that physically reading a book is preferred in academic society and is, in fact, the primary motivation for the recently developed reading spaces in the upstairs library.

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The most underused library resource, Muralidar states, is the book request section in the library portal. Receiving less than 20 monthly student requests, he hopes students discover and use it more with this interview. Before we reached the end of this interview, we had one final question for Dr. Muralidar, 'his favorite thing in IIIT'. To this, he claimed with fondness, 'the familial nature of the IIIT student and faculty committees.' ■