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SENTIENCE

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Bloodshed At IISER!

After hours of wracking our brains with furious, animated discussions on how the Sentience Team should come up with something new, something different, we finally concluded that it was time we started supporting social causes in and around IISER.

The first of these initiatives was the Blood Donation Camp organised in association with Janakalyan Raktapedhi on the 25th of August. The day started off with volunteers from the organisation swooping in and setting up the camp in the lecture hall. Who would have thought that the lecture hall could be used for something that was actually useful!

There was an initial lag phase, during which people had to fill up medical forms to assess whether they were eligible to donate blood or not. Many an enthusiastic would-be-donor was turned down because they



The IISER house-keeping staff donating blood

missed the mark, be it by a kilo, 0.1 on the haemoglobin count, because of a typhoid or rabies shot taken ages ago or a slightly higher level of mercury on the sphygmomanometer. We express our heartfelt condolences to them.

The blood donation itself was a slow process. While the donors lay

relaxed on beach-chair-look-alikes, posing for photos, the crowd outside warmed up. Soon afterwards, donors poured in large numbers and, surprisingly, waited patiently for their turn. They also used this opportunity to convince certain haemophobic individuals (including one of our own rank) to donate blood. The collection included a few units of the rare O -ve blood and some from people with an exceptionally high Hb count. For some, the sole motivation was to donate blood, while for a few others it was the hot *samosas* and *chai*. Of course, the certificate from the blood bank was also something everyone was proud to hold on to.

After seven long hours, 140 donors - including people from all walks of life like Profs, undergrads, PhDs, housekeeping staff, *messwalas* and security staff - and the tireless efforts of the volunteers of Janakalyan Raktapedhi and the Sentience Team, the camp successfully ended with a total collection of 49 litres of blood and a satisfied smile on everyone's face.



Members of The Sentience Team accepting a token of appreciation from Janakalyan Raktapedhi

Onashamsagal!

HARINI S and PRASHANT P

Milind Watve (3D)



The HR4 reception decorated with a floral *rangoli*

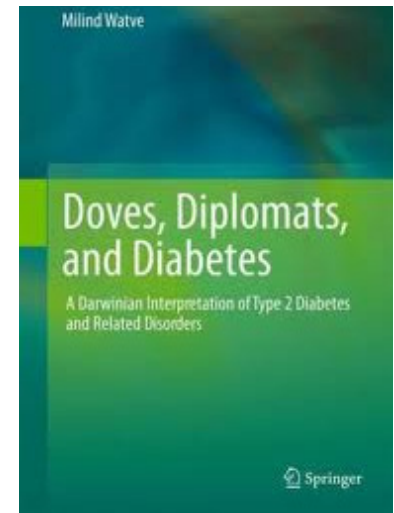
Back home, this would have been a different day. As far as I am concerned, it would have been a lazy holiday scheduled with a good long nap and delicious food. But it is no longer so. One of the many things I came across in the past few years of my stay in Gods' own country is the way in which festivals are celebrated and the lack of discrimination on the basis of religion or caste.

Celebrated over a period of ten days, Onam brings with it the fragrance of flowers and mouth-watering *sadya* (traditional Keralite food). The day starts with prayers and temple visits in traditional attire to seek the blessings of elders and the Almighty. The festival has some traditional programmes like the famous boat races in the backwaters of Alappuzha, the *pulikali* (traditional dance by people decorated in beautiful tiger patterns), *vadamvali* (tug of war) and lots more.

The *pookalam* (floral carpet) on all the ten days are different, with mud moulds of Mahabali (the alleged Demon King of Kerala) and Vamana (the dwarf *avatar* of Lord Vishnu) on the final day. The *sadya* with the

payasam (*kheer*) is the main attraction for kids, along with the new movies that release on the occasion.

With Malayalis forming a significant proportion of the IISER population, the celebration was no less here. HR4 welcomed everyone with a beautiful *pookalam* that was the result of a night-long effort by the second year girls. The girls were all dressed in beautiful sarees and half-sarees while the guys kept to the traditional *mundu* (the Keralite version of the dhoti). The girls had another special celebration - the modified *tiruvatira kali*, a slow traditional dance interspersed with jingle rap. The Malayalis decorated the notice board with articles in Malayalam and English, highlighting the significance of Onam. They even brought in a flavour of their backwaters, the coconut trees and the boat races with their colourful drawings and caricatures. The mess made its own little contribution with an awesome *kheer* for dinner. The phrase '*Onashamsagal*' (Onam greetings) floated in the air. In the end, it was a glorious day packed with merriment and fun.



Hear ho IISER folks! As we all know, in recent times, Prof. Milind Watve has been busy compiling a book of his own. The book, titled 'Doves, Diplomats, and Diabetes : A Darwinian Interpretation of Type 2 Diabetes and Related Disorders', published by Springer, has come into circulation in August and since then, has received a great response and excellent reviews. Priced at a whopping 149,95€ (approximately ₹10650), the book is an ecological and evolutionary account of the roots of 'life-style diseases' such as diabetes. A must read for all Prof. Watve enthusiasts. We extend our hearty congratulations to him.

Correction

In the August '12 issue of Sentience, it was incorrectly mentioned that 'Bachpan Banao is completely under Disha, IISER Pune'. Bachpan Banao is actually an independent enterprise and Disha is helping it with resource material and volunteer mobilisation. We apologise for the error.

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tiny.cc/sentience

Karavaan Is Happening!

After a month of indecision and erratic activity, Karavaan 2012 is on the verge of breaking into the IISER scene. The only leash holding it back is a solid nod from the Director. Sections of the 2010 and 2011 batches deserve pats on their backs for raising Karavaan from its grave of passiveness. The past few weeks, hearteningly, have seen regular meetings, intense discussion, and a slow but steady increase in enthusiasm. It will be wonderful indeed if this level of enthusiasm remains an increasing monotone till the fest actually happens. As of now, the tentative dates of Karavaan '12 are the 2nd and 3rd of November, conveniently placed three weeks after the mid-sem break so as to give ample time to the performers and organisers for preparation.

The sudden wave of activity has hit the normally inconspicuous clubs as well. As most IISER clubs will be functioning as Karavaan-event-generators for the next few

weeks, they are having weekly meetings to decide on potential events and performances. IISER folk interested in contributing or participating may attend these meetings. The schedule is as follows:

Wednesdays, 7:30 pm: Music club

Wednesdays, 9:00 pm: Photography club

Thursdays, 9:00 pm: Drama club

Mondays, 9:00 pm: Art club

Fridays, 8:00 pm: Literary club

Any ideas for events, potential sponsors, t-shirt and poster designs can be mailed to: karavaan@students.iiserpune.ac.in

Candidates interested in performing for the IISER Showcase should note that auditions will be held sometime in the week after the mid-semester break. So, they must be ready with their performances by then. No requests for special auditions will be entertained later. So let's hope for and work towards a better and an awesomer Karavaan!

Spacetime Is A Goldmine!

Recently, the Physics lovers of IISER were treated to a week-long lecture series on the Special and General Theories of Relativity. The series was given by Prof. Soumitra Sengupta who justified the title of this blurb in numerous ways. While both Prof. Sengupta and the students attending his lectures realised that one week is too short a time to fully grasp these concepts, he tried his best to familiarise us with the basics and was rather rigorous in doing so. He began by showing us where Newtonian Mechanics fails and why we cannot separate space and time. After discussing Lorentz transformations and Special Relativity, he went on to build a mathematical background for the General Theory – Co(ntra)variant

vectors, Riemann curvature tensor, metrics of curved spaces, etc.

Then, with a plethora of examples, he showcased the genius of Einstein in equating spacetime curvature with mass. This equation revolutionised the way we think about gravity. He ended with a discussion about black holes, whose existence was predicted by Einstein's equations long before any were observed. The lecture series ended on a friendly note with Prof. Sengupta asking all the students to feel free to bug him anytime and in anyway if they had problems with the material covered.

If you missed out on this lecture series, don't worry! Prof. Sengupta will be back to give another one in December!

Academic Buzz

SIDDHARTHA DAS

1. Groups, Geometry and Dynamics, CEMS, Kumaun University, Almora

Duration: 3rd-16th December

Link: <http://goo.gl/leqmn>

2. IIST Astronomy and Astrophysics Winter School, Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST), Thiruvananthapuram

Duration: 3rd-12th December

Link: <http://goo.gl/4qetS>

Deadline: 20th September

3. Winter School on Stochastic Analysis and Control of Fluid Flow, School of Mathematics, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Thiruvananthapuram

Duration: 3rd-20th December

Link: <http://goo.gl/dBQK7>

Deadline: 30th September

4. Winter School and Conference on Computational Aspects of Neural Engineering, IISc Bangalore

Duration: 12th-21st December

Link: <http://goo.gl/RWU5>

Deadline: 10th October

5. Mitacs Globalink Programme for internship in Canadian universities

Duration: May-August 2013

Link: <http://goo.gl/Ts4Wa>

Deadline: 12th October

6. Recent Trends in Ergodic theory and Dynamical Systems, Department of Mathematics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara

Duration: 18th-29th December

Link: <http://goo.gl/2Nq9b>

Deadline: 15th October

7. DAAD-WISE Programme for internships in Germany

Duration: May-August 2013

Link: <http://goo.gl/ZhI3O>

Deadline: 1st November



KREDA JUNG



Kreeda Jung, IISER's Annual Sports fest, took off this year amidst much mayhem. Despite the not-so-nominal entry fees and the perpetual bankruptcy of IISERites, much enthusiasm was recorded. Sentience brings you updates on some of the ongoing events.

Watch this space for more scores, trivia and gossip.

Citius. Altius. Fortius.

Tug Of War

The girls of the 2010 Batch were truly invincible when it came to their game. After defeating the other teams of 2011 and 2012, the final match was against Team Curie (2012). With three straight wins in the Finale, they finished in style.

Winners : Team 2010

Rachana B (c), Krithika V R, Kshiti M, Krishna A, Neha B, Meghana R, Maitreyee M.

Runners Up: Team Curie (2012)

Player of the Series: Rachana Bhawe

FIFA Standings

GROUP 1	P	W	L	D	T
Himanshu R	4	2	1	1	7
Abhilesh D	3	2	0	1	7
Atharva Patil	4	1	1	2	5
Aditya Katti	3	1	1	1	4
Harjot Kumar	4	0	3	1	1

GROUP 2	P	W	L	D	T
Omkar M	4	2	1	1	7
Siddharth M	3	1	1	1	4
Yagyik	2	1	1	0	3
N Jocinth	2	0	0	2	2
Abhijith G	1	0	1	0	0

GROUP 3	P	W	L	D	T
L Santosh	4	3	1	0	9
Anurag Mishra	4	2	1	1	7
Viraj D	4	2	1	1	7
P Shiva	4	1	2	1	4
Favaz Ahmed K	4	0	3	1	1

GROUP 4	P	W	L	D	T
Sujay Mate	4	3	0	1	10
Thameez M	3	1	1	1	4
Ankur Paliwal	2	1	1	0	3
Gaurav Bhole	1	0	1	0	0
Bhargava T	2	0	2	0	0

Age of Empires Standings

POOL A				
Team	P	W	L	T
W_Clan	2	2	0	2
The Dictators	2	1	1	1
The Assassins	2	0	0	0
Untitled	0	0	0	0

POOL B				
Team	P	W	L	T
Lord of Westeros	2	2	0	2
Crusaders	2	1	1	1
Plotted Plants	2	0	0	0

The Science Crusades

SHRUTI PARANJAPE

On the afternoon of August 24th, three excited IISER Pune souls, namely Tanmay Patankar, Varun Prasad and I, stumbled into the Asian Science Camp 2012 orientation session at HBCSE, Mumbai - fashionably late. On further investigation, I found that the others were from institutes like CMI, CBS, IITs, IISc, St. Joseph's, ISIs, IISERs etc.

After the orientation (we got a bag and a t-shirt each), we all bonded immediately. We flew to Tel Aviv via Amman and then drove down to Jerusalem. After registration in the Ramada 5-star Hotel lobby, I met all the Israeli delegates. And They. Were. Awesome. They were friendly, kind, and spoke very good English. Dinner was followed by an orientation and speed-dating session where we got an idea of what the other delegates were like.

The next day, the Minister of Education came, with impressively little fanfare, and greeted us. I was honoured to attend a lecture by Prof. Lee (the founder of ASC), but the highlight of the day was Prof. Auman's talk about a game theoretical approach to war and peace. I also got the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to interview Nobel Laureate Prof. Kornberg. The Israelis also have this beautiful concept of playing a little bit of live music between talks which we all loved. In the afternoon, I donned a saree for the Opening Ceremony. The President of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres arrived on the dot. He was humble, charming and gave a wonderful speech. The ceremony was crisp with funny bits (a fake Einstein walked in) and great music that included a live performance by David D'or.

The academic highlight of the second day was definitely the discussion with Prof. Segev on neuroscience and Prof. Lifshitz's talk on quasicrystals. I got a chance to personally discuss with Prof. Segev and got video-inter-



The Indian contingent at Temple Mount, Jerusalem

viewed by the documentary team. After an early dinner, we went on an evening tour of Jerusalem. All buildings in Jerusalem are made of the same kind of stone called, not surprisingly, Jerusalem stone. And in the streetlight, the city comes alive and gives one a sense of pure unadulterated awe. Within the Old City walls, we were treated to a sound and light show and a walk along the walls that made the night magical.

The next day, I attended a very memorable discussion on cancer and chromosome instability by Prof. Kerem and Fields Medallist Prof. Shalit's talk on squares. A Brain Science session followed.

After a random walk to a beautiful viewpoint with two cute guys, was a fun student activity called Think-Out-Of-The-Box. The Israelis and Indians were neck-to-neck but finally we allowed the Israelis get the better of us.

The following day was the tour! In the morning, we roamed the markets of the Old City trying out our bargaining skills, but only after we visited the church where Christ was crucified. It was a moving experience - seeing so many devout people with tears in their eyes. We then proceeded to the Western Wall, also known as the Wailing Wall. Many Jews from all over had come to this Wall and it was humbling to stand next to those pious

people, to put my wish into the wall... I even prayed a little.

The young and hip Tel Aviv was next. Following my spectacular slip into the Mediterranean, they took us to a show by a group called Momentum. Once back in the hotel, frantic poster preparation and dance practice (for the closing ceremony) preceded the much-needed, but barely grabbed, sleep.

The highlight of the next day was Prof. Kobayashi's talk on particle physics. In the evening was the highly-awaited poster presentation. After helping an India-loving Israeli girl into a saree, the closing ceremony began. This included energetic performances by the Indian and Israeli delegations. There were tears in everyone's eyes because we couldn't believe that ASC was over. Though the after-party till 1 am brought everyone's spirits back up, the goodbyes were still plenty and tearful.

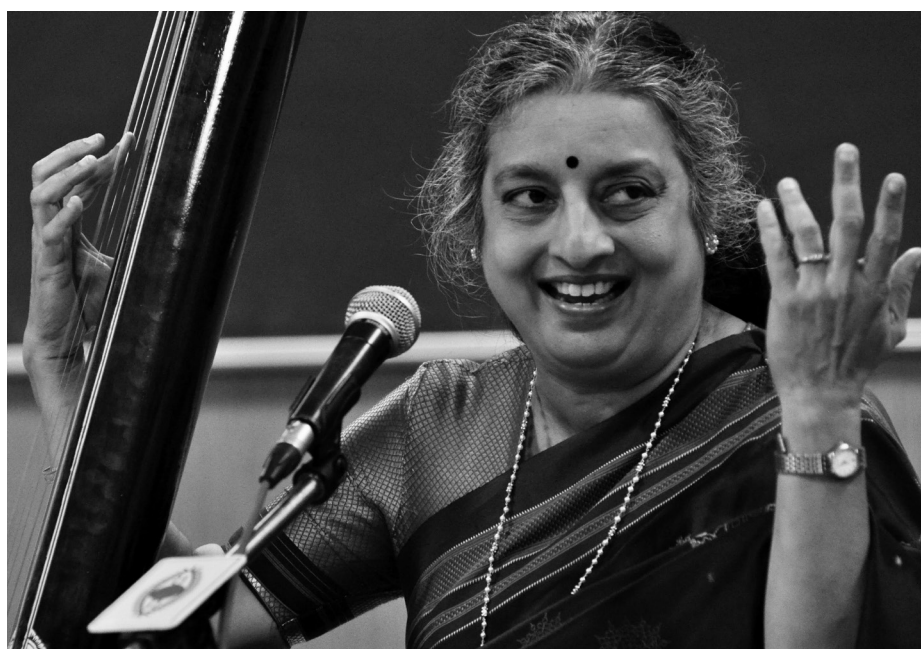
The next day, the Indians, Nepalis and Sri Lankans visited the Dead Sea (it's not a lie - you do float!) before going to Tel Aviv airport. The journey home, made my new-found friends and I desperately sentimental and closer than ever, leaving all of us wondering how we could have become such good friends in just a week! And hence ended one of the best, most life-changing trips of my life.

Rhythms Divine

An increase in randomness in the corridors and the stairs, a sudden rise in the number of traditional clothes in the campus, flowers and *rangoli* colours on the floors, a busy music room (without the usual clash of cymbals and rat-tat of the drums) - all of these suggest just one thing: a SPIC MACAY concert.

SPIC MACAY activity started this semester with a Hindustani Classical Vocal concert by Dr. Ashwini Bhide Deshpande, a renowned artist of the Jaipur Atrauli *Gharana*. She has an intimate understanding of *bandish* (composition) and has created many of her own *bandishes*, which she has published in her book, *Raag Rachananjali*.

Ashwini *tai* started off with a pleasant evening *raaga*, *Shree*, in which she sang the *Bada khyal*. This was followed by an unconventional interaction session in which the audience delighted her with their interpretations of her *raaga*; one felt that it was like a prayer to the Lord, for another, it was an unending journey, while for yet another, it was a ride on the clouds. Then, while describing her own emotions during the song,



Ashwini *Tai* performing at IISER Pune

Photo by:- Sana Sohoni

she mentioned that it is the *raaga* which decides how the song will proceed. She said that although she has learnt a particular way of singing the *raaga*, it is still different and surprising every single time she sings it.

Following this was a *tarana* in a mixture of two *raagas*, which started off slowly but then built up to a faster pace. The audience was utterly

mesmerised by her amazing voice and sense of *taal*. Next in line was a *bhakti geet* which gracefully flowed into an '*abhang*'. Concluding with the *raaga bhairavi*, she left everyone mesmerised and wanting for more. The SPIC MACAY team decided to go green, and as a token of appreciation to Ashwini *tai*, presented her a small sapling. The students, especially the first years, followed her to dinner where she was pestered with several questions about the intricacies of Indian Classical Music and much more.

A few days before the concert, Dr. Kiran Seth, the founder of SPIC MACAY, had graced the multipurpose hall of IISER with his presence, where he addressed the Pune volunteers in front of a hastily hung "eye" (the official SPIC MACAY symbol). His words about the humble origins of SPIC MACAY and its current success in various institutions all over the country inspired all the newly recruited members to contribute to SPIC MACAY in any way possible. The session ended with a few words by Prof. Shashidhara who promised to have a minimum of twelve concerts every year in IISER Pune.



Dr. Kiran Seth addressing the IISER audience

My First Month At IISER

A month ago, a group of 112 students in various states of excitement entered the newly inaugurated hostel block for the first time. After a day of endless waiting, making new friends (whose names were promptly forgotten), and a hurried lunch, where parents and students alike were impressed with the quality of food, we were finally allowed to lug our enormous luggage into our brand new rooms. The four bathrooms were meticulously inspected and stamped with our approval. The (almost) overwhelming first day ended in a flurry of goodbyes to our parents where more than one eye shed a few tears. After getting acquainted with our new roommates, unpacking by a few of the more sincere students, and another satisfying meal, we crashed into our freshly made beds filled with anticipation of the days to come.

After two days of orientation and cold showers, we arrived eagerly for our first class well ahead of time (perhaps for the last time!). With a concentrated (or constipated) look on our faces, we were determined to hang onto every word of the Profs. This determination lasted for about ten minutes before we decided that our fellow classmates were more interesting. The bonds of friendship within

our batch and with our seniors were quickly forged during *Janmashtami* celebrations, where we were caked in mud. Having thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, we termed the day a success. Last minute preparations for the fresher's party and much needed sleep concluded our first week. By this time, we all felt as though we had lived here for months and our classmates were already lifelong friends. We strutted around with confidence oozing out of every pore, much to the annoyance of our seniors (especially our invasive campaign of the atrium).

The following week was a potpourri of various club meetings, late-night gossip sessions, catching up on sleep during lectures, dire warnings from wardens and PhD students alike, solving the mystery of our new washing machines and bus timings to Sai. While trying to understand the complexities of our lifts, separated for boys and girls, heralding its arrival on every floor and breaking down at the drop of a hat, we were generally running around from place to place leaving chaos in our wake. For our first weekend, we recruited the Pune localites, who stayed behind to herd us to the "IISER hotspot", F C Road, where after a reversal of the usual shopping trends, the refreshing

PAPIA BERA and SAHANA SRIVATHSA

change in cuisine and lack of nutrition was much appreciated. The first birthday of the year was celebrated with much gusto on the girls floor and the astonished birthday girl just had a few seconds to feast her eyes on the delectable Dutch chocolate truffle cake, before it was reduced to a mere fragment, save a single piece to bribe our security guard with.

As the days passed, we learnt to appreciate the 'subtleties' of computer programming, the 'infrastructure problems' faced, the endless discussions on 'What is Life?' and 'Why Life?', and the fear induced by the Physics lab in contrast to physics classes, where the Prof's words of wisdom, "Textbooks are a waste of time", were followed diligently.

During the last two weeks, we have gotten the chance to interact with our seniors. As each day passes, we're continually surprised by our seniors' generosity and general awesomeness. The last month was filled with adventure, challenges, memories and tons and tons of laughter, all of which are sure to continue throughout our time here. We have been very dedicated to the cause of providing a veritable source of entertainment to our seniors and we hope that this article does the same.

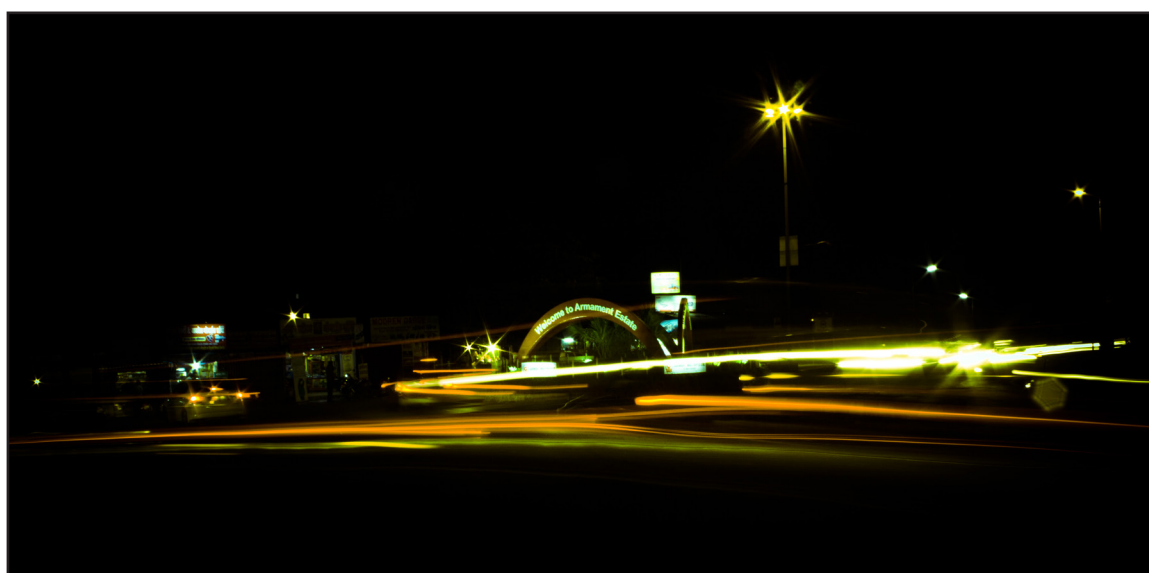


PHOTO
OF
THE
MONTH

Clicked by:-
VISHNU K N

'Un'clear Vission

SREEKRISHNA SHEKHAR

The people and the town of Koodankulam have been given a lot of press coverage recently, because of the nuclear power plant that the government is trying to set up there. Koodankulam is situated about 25 kilometres north of Kanyakumari, and has traditionally been the home of fisherfolk because of its proximity to the sea. Now they are all embroiled in a massive battle with the government, attempting to stop the construction of the nuclear power plant in their backyard.

In 1988, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed an inter-governmental agreement with Russia to set up a nuclear plant at Koodankulam. Following this announcement, several groups¹ raised their concerns over the safety of the nuclear reactor as well as the potential impact of nuclear waste entering the local ecosystem. There was a massive movement organised, with over 1 million signatures being collected to hand over to Mikhail Gorbachev during his visit to India. On 1st May 1989, the fisherfolk and other residents around Koodankulam organised a peaceful rally in Kanyakumari, which was disrupted by the police. In the firing that ensued, one person was shot dead. Post these events, the protests largely died down due to the chaos in Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In 2001, plans were again in place with Russia to set up the reactor, and once again these plans were met with protests from the local people. The protests which started then have come to a head in this last week, with police lathi charging and firing tear-gas shells on a peaceful gathering on 11th September 2012. Despite television crews capturing police firing on a peaceful crowd, the police insist that it was the protesters who instigated the violence.²

Meanwhile, the Indian government



A woman protesting on the beach near Koodankulam

is insisting that the protesters are 'anti-development' and 'anti-India' for not wanting to set up the nuclear reactor. The government has stated that all possible precautions have been taken into account, and safety measures are in place. But the government has not conducted any safety drills or evacuation procedures despite their claim to the contrary.

After Fukushima, the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) commissioned an independent study to audit the safety of existing and future nuclear power plants. The findings of the report conclude that it is impossible to cover for all the eventualities and there is always a risk of a malfunctioning plant.³ This, in the light of the Department of Atomic Energy's (DAE) report in 1986 stating that "In India, tsunamis and seiches do not occur, hence cyclones alone have been singled out for detailed study".⁴ Considering how incorrect our scientists were about predicting the tsunami, it seems absurd to risk the life of over a million people for the sake of "development". It is true that we need power, and currently we are at a shortage. But nuclear power is definitely not the only op-

tion, as we would be led to believe by the government and the media. India has a transmission and distribution loss of about 40% in its power grid, compared to Sweden's 7%. If we can improve the efficiency to about 90%, the savings would be equal to about 60,000 MW, or 60 Koodankulam-sized nuclear power plants, at a fraction of the cost to implement and maintain.^{5,6}

According to the Indian Wind Energy Association, there is 65,000 MW to be tapped in wind energy alone, with a further 4,00,000 MW from solar and 15,000 from small hydro power. If as much money was invested into researching these far safer and as viable alternatives, we could turn our energy shortage into an energy surplus with far less risk to human and natural life.

References

1. <http://goo.gl/EmT8y>
2. <http://goo.gl/ho54f>
3. <http://goo.gl/VINJK>
4. <http://goo.gl/kALbO>
5. <http://goo.gl/6XiiC>
6. <http://goo.gl/JH5df>

Sentience's new logo, starkly reminiscent of a literary version of the Black Power Movement, perhaps has a lot to do with its current standing in the eyes of the administration. In the recent 'meeting', more appropriately described as IISER's *Kumbh Mela*, in the physical presence (and complete mental absence) of nearly 500 undergrads, the Director served a severe blow to Sentience by calling it negative and pessimistic. As murmurs arose, one of the editors fainted and another set a world record in sneezing. Recovering from such infirmities and regaining mental strength, as they would say in Italy, *ex post facto*, the editors arrived upon the grim realisation that the Director might not have been entirely false after all.

Sentience, however, refuses to accept the blow alone and remain silenced. Analysis has revealed that the average IISER student cribs about 13 times in a single day, the average being higher on weekends. This mean is significantly larger for a fourth-year undergrad, followed by the third years. With such negativity sporulating in the air around IISER, Sentience has to sniffle a little and pick up a napkin. But is there a way out of this infinite loop of echoing complaints and unresolved issues? There must be. One chiselled to perfection by the blades of an Occam's razor, simple. A student government is in order. I do not suggest that all of IISER's Administration, Finance and Judiciary (or the pretext of it) be taken over by a bunch of power-hungry autocrats who claim to represent the student community. But numerous concomitant events in the recent past have thrust a bottleneck and forcefully called for a Renaissance.

Do we need a student body of governance? Practicality - the answer can be found in the locked up music room, the dance club waiting for ignition, the disused posters for Karavaan. Activities and clubs at IISER, including sports, are disorganised to

the point of utter chaos. There are no fixed schedules or constructive activity sessions, nothing in fact until necessity takes over the reins. This has caused much mayhem and almost led to the cancellation of Karavaan, IISER's cultural fest, not to mention worming into the blacklists of many valued faculty members. Morality - on a completely different note, student rights and complaints, though presently murmured and sworn, need to be channelised and befitting action needs to be taken. A representative government is essential in identifying such issues and bringing them to the limelight. The administration, being disconnected and distant from actual student affairs, can never fully understand these issues. Legality - the Lyngdoh Report submitted to the Ministry of Human Resource Development by a committee

“Do we need a student body of governance?”

headed by J M Lyngdoh, former Chief Election Commissioner deals with the issue of Students' Union elections in colleges in India. After much detailed data collection and analysis, on the 45th page of his 88 page report, Lyngdoh states, and I quote, that 'universities and colleges across the country must ordinarily conduct elections for the appointment of students to student representative bodies.' Having recently been indicted an Institute of National Importance, it is IISER's holy duty to set a good example to Indian academia by following the recommendation of its advisory committees.

Considering the status quo at IISER, even a student government seems pointless, another club in a sea of rotting corpses. Any self-respecting, GPA-expecting undergrad would take offence to be used in the same sentence as it. It has all the signs of a black-hole for time, energy and mo-

tivation leaving you drained for lab work, quizzes, fun and frolic. However, the mere existence of such a body and a decent amount of regularity and organisation within it will blanket all student issues, cultural activities and hopefully bring some linearity to non-linear dynamics in event organisation at IISER. The current political scene at IISER will see a new dawn with students being able to celebrate and drink soft drinks without fearing expulsion. It will put in place a skeleton, a blueprint for the future batches of students to build their ideas upon.

As is the case with any association, a student council comes with its own risks and statutory warnings. There is always the fear of unwanted memberships, people with different interests infiltrating into it and jeopardising the whole system. This risk is higher by a few orders of magnitude in the case of the students' union as there is nothing that satisfies the ego than pure, unadulterated power over other people's lives. However, the solution to this lies in the very nature of a parliamentary democracy, elections. Another hurdle to overcome would be the issue of free and fair elections. Unhealthy forms of student politics and elections will only end up deviating us from our primary aim of doing good science. Yet another issue is that students might perceive this as just a platform to air their views and get their interests promoted. These, however, are more appropriately described as concerns rather than issues. A carefully laid out set of legislations and policies would easily take care of such lurking evils. Another concern that it raises is whether it will do any good at all for the students and student affairs as, ultimately, all power is vested in the administration and their decision is final.

There will be confusions, disagreements, downright wars on a few issues but as George Bernard Shaw put it, 'will ensure that we shall be governed no better than we deserve'.

Wise & Otherwise

NILIMA WALUNJKAR

Wise & Otherwise is a collection of fifty narratives written by renowned philanthropist and entrepreneur Sudha Murthy. They are vignettes of her experiences at the Infosys Foundation. Her social work has taken her to the farthest nooks and corners of our country where she has encountered a number of surprises and diverse personalities.

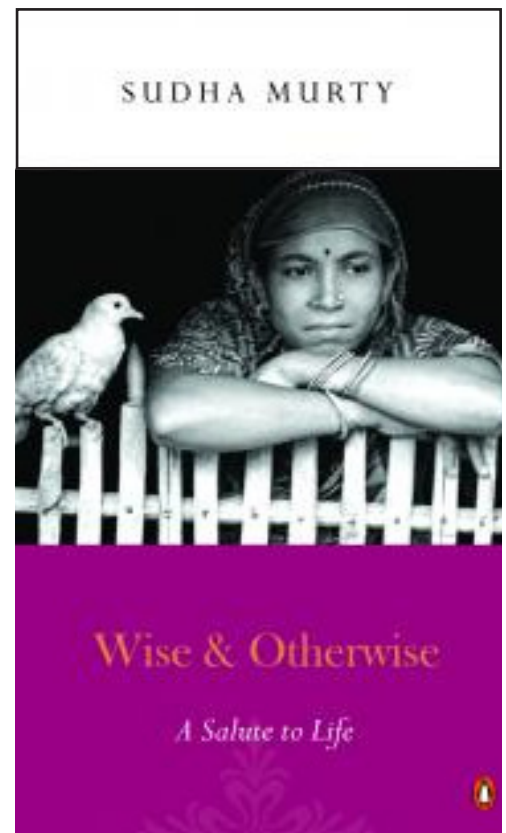
The lack of materialistic desire in a village from a remote part of Orissa where people thought that India was still a colony of the British, and a valuable life lesson in hospitality from the Chief of a tribe residing in the Sahyadris - such are the examples of the life changing experiences she has had.

She describes acts of kindness by total strangers which shatter the notion that the world outside is bleak. But she has also portrayed the harsher realities of life, such as an

ungrateful man who abandons his father in a home for the destitute but later returns to claim his inheritance.

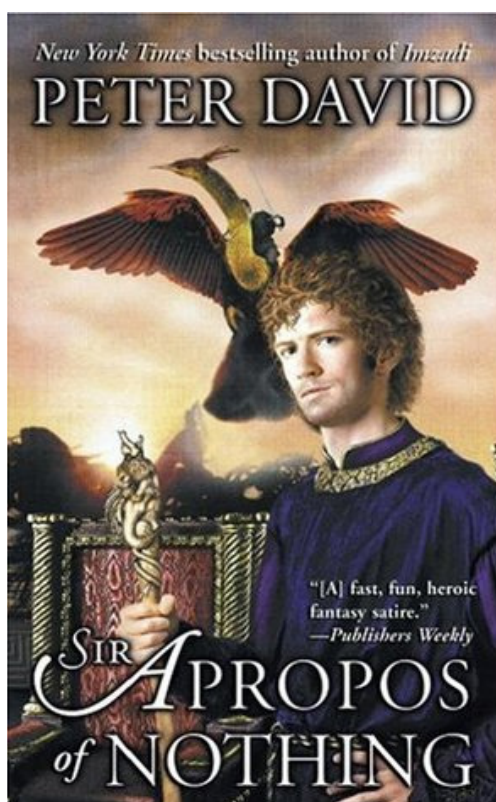
It invokes a myriad of emotions - hope and despair, happiness and sadness, appreciation and disapproval, anger and humility. It is like a mirror that reflects the Indian mindset and humanity. We can use it to assess who we are and what we should be. The book makes you realise how little you have given back to the society and the enormity of problems people face on a daily basis.

Aptly titled, the book indeed imparts pearls of wisdom but at the same time tells horrific tales of indifference, hatred, cruelty and otherwise. *Wise & Otherwise* is an inspirational piece of work written in simple language that teaches you to appreciate the simple things in life and not take them for granted.



AVANI GOWARDHAN

Sir Apropos Of Nothing



For the readers of fantasy just coming off a mammoth 10-part series, or an exhausted student looking for an engaging light read, Peter David's *Sir Apropos of Nothing* series fits the bill perfectly. Set in a vaguely medieval era, it's the tale of Apropos (of Nothing), a thoroughly despicable character (not one of those anti-heroes who redeem themselves with saving the world or what-not at the end) through his journey to find his rotten scoundrel of a father. Lame since birth, with dark and questionable origins, he takes himself to the court of the good King Runcible in his quest to line his pockets, finding himself at the bottom of the pecking order as a squire to the senile knight, Sir Umbrage of the Flaming Nether Regions. It all goes downhill from there.

Everytime it seems that Apropos will do something to redeem himself, with a spark of nobility, a dash of selflessness... .. he doesn't. As the blurb says, 'The only reason chivalry isn't dead is because Apropos isn't done with it'. Filled to the brim with puns, crazy wandering kings, the princess Entipy, who's possibly a homicidal pyromaniac, and stupendous bad luck for our anti-hero, it's a fun read for the idle hour. It isn't a predictable romp, subverting enough clichés to leave the reader guessing till the end. But for a fun - filled afternoon resting your brain cells, pick up this book. (Warning - Don't start this book with any false expectations of a sensible plot, endearing characters, or heartwarming scenes. At the most, Apropos will inspire a mildly amused pity).

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the students' corner

Distractions

YAGYIK GOSWAMI

Lights. Bright, cheerful lights. They stood out against a black sky in a persistent show of *joie de vivre* that was actually rather stoic when you stopped to think about it. Most wouldn't, and this isn't the story of one who would. To her they were but indications of possibilities. The lights themselves held no fascination in her mind. They were simply there.

Ah, but the possibilities; they sang to her in a way that was undeniably fascinating. They pulled, nagging, at her, inexorably, towards the bright yellow blotches on a pitch black canvas. To the casual observer, the lights had her all abuzz; and she took to the winds with deadly purpose towards them despite an almost visceral aversion that filled overwhelmingly, what seemed now to be a small corner at the back of her mind. Yes, these lights were less than desirable; yet, they belonged to people, people with beating hearts and pumping veins, unbelievably delicious, turgid with blood.

Blood; sweet, warm blood. Her mind crooned at the thought. Her wanderings might have been akin to following the scent of a trail, and yet, it wasn't. This perception made its way somewhere deeper into her mind. In any case, it was what led her here, within sight of this patch of light, the prospect of a full blood meal.

She spared not a thought for her would-be victims. Focus; it was that sweet escape from the trappings of meandering thought, thought that seemed an exercise in freedom, yet left one stuck inexplicably at the same place, forever. There was no possibility of remorse or regret, there was little question of doing wrong. One simply lived, and to do that, one must feed. Pity, though; that was mire that

clothed inaction in shining garb of rightness. It would question her hunger, present options and alternatives; what she was doing would bring pain, there must be a better way, and so on and so forth. No. Focus; tonight she would live. It helped to think of the future. Hope; that didn't mess with focus. Hope, it was always there; it painted her actions with purpose, made her desires, her hunger something to be considered that little bit more seriously. Predators were optimists. Ah, the countless little ones that would one day be born, to live, as she was doing today, to hunt people in turn, as she did today. At a different time, in a different reality, she might have wondered if the people would try to negotiate. Not tonight. Focus; she was close.

“Blood; sweet, warm blood.”

The blotch had grown larger, and soon, she would feel the heat of her victim's bodies, scent the blood that she sought so dearly; it would quite literally make her day. The light had grown large, an enormous portal into a place she had never seen, yet knew intimately; the hunting ground. She went in, and the world disappeared.

Light; blinding, hateful light. It bore down on her mind and left her incoherent. The wind swirled in malicious currents, furious at her intrusion it seemed as it tried to eject her viciously. The light that had once sung to her now screamed at every inch of her awareness as it drove out everything else in a furious torrent, like a dam bursting. There was no thought, no world around her, no memory. Only the vague scent that had promised her life, somewhere near. Yet, she was dying. She needed

to get away, but the winds wouldn't let her. The enraged light might have relented in the moment of agony that had passed but she didn't dare hope. She wasn't the predator anymore. Somewhere in the distance a rumble issued, and drew up to her as she buffeted the winds frantically as they threatened to sweep her away into so much nothingness. She didn't know where she wanted to go or if she wanted to go at all, but she knew she had to resist the winds, and action distracted her from the fear. The rumble had turned into a roar, as if enraged at her continuing presence. It seemed to come from everywhere, as if creation itself had turned on her to convey through every possible sensation that she did not belong. A fraction of a moment passed. The roar was everything but the light in her world now; it was close. It seemed to have dimmed the light. Good, she thought, and in an enormous thunderclap, all thought ceased.

Marcus felt the weight of eternity upon his shoulders. Ages of toil dominated his memory; he did not even remember when he had begun, and yet, he could not trust this to be an indication of the time that had passed. As he wiped the remains of a dead mosquito from his hands, he reflected on the time since he had stopped working to stare out the window, watching the mosquito drowsily as it buzzed through the open window. The fan turned idly above him. “Wasted minutes”, his mother would say. He didn't really care, he was tired of solving problems. Still, loyally, he tried briefly to get back to work, (there was little else to do; his mother had ensured that), until finally, “Irodov, you son of a bitch...” and he went to bed.

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the students' corner

Movie Review:Barfi



Barfi, this month's hot new release is sweet, light and entertaining, quite as the name suggests. Ranbir Kapoor, in and as Barfi, has done a praiseworthy job in portraying the complex character of the deaf mute. Barfi blends in stark traits of various famous characters like Charlie Chaplin and Guido Orefice of 'Life is Beautiful'. Surprisingly, Priyanka Chopra has donned the role of a differently-abled girl quite well (if you

Buzz Your Brain

There exists a frightfully difficult equation in Mathematics-
 $12^a - 12^b = 1997k$
where $a, b, k \in \mathbb{N}$

We wish to show that there exists at least one combination of a, b and k for which the equation holds true.

The solution is based on a very simple principle known as the "Pigeon Hole Principle" : If you have to put $N+1$ or more pigeons into N pigeon holes, then there must be at least one pigeon hole which consists two or more pigeons. This principle seems pretty simple and obvious, but we can easily solve the above problem using this principle.

KRISHNA ANUJAN

overlook the minuscule details during the slow-motions, that is). This movie is not a sentimental soap that invokes pity at the plight of the disabled and the differently-abled. Instead, it attempts to look at serious issues in a light and optimistic perspective. The storyline is, in fact, inspired and appliquéd from a wide spectrum of popular cinema and yet manages to be novel in its own right.

For those interested in technique, the movie showcases exceptional cinematography, the effect of which is augmented by the beautiful Bengali landscape, be it in the colonial Darjeeling, the bustling metro of Kolkata or the green countryside. The witty lyrics make your stomach hurt with laughter, almost as much as the hero's antics do. Reserve your ticket now but be prepared to walk out of the theatre filled with mush.

ARUSHI BODAS

For example, now the equation is :
 $12^a - 12^b = 1997k$
Rewrite the above equation as :
 $(12^a/1997) - (12^b/1997) = k$

Since k is a natural number, the remainder of $(12^a/1997)$ and $(12^b/1997)$ should be the same.

Here we have 1996 pigeon holes – the remainders, and infinitely many pigeons - the numbers a and b .

By the pigeon hole principle, if we choose any 1997 natural numbers, at least two of them corresponding to a and b will give the same remainder and the equation will hold. Isn't it amazing how easily we could solve the problem using pigeons!

Foodie Corner

AASHAY PATIL

It was my friend's birthday. When there are birthdays, there are birthday parties. So, the birthday boy demanded that he would give a party in a restaurant which is easily accessible, is not very expensive, but not too tawdry either, has good Indian food, and is situated in close proximity of famous dessert joints (he is a sumptuous eater). Now this is not a piece of cake (no pun intended!); finding a restaurant to suit everyone's taste is an arduous task.

Sharvaree in Hotel Parichay is one such restaurant. It has something to offer for everyone. It offers a wide range of north and south Indian dishes. You can start your meal with the Honey Chilly Mushroom (highly recommended). For *paneer* lovers, the *Paneer Hariyali Kebabs* are quite good. Among the curries, you must try the *Dum Aloo Punjabi*, which packs a punch. Desserts are not that good and I won't recommend them. A hearty meal will cost you around ₹300. The ambience is quite good, but the service is bit slow, which can be irritating some times. Overall, it's a good restaurant to hangout with family and friends.

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