

Glass Panels

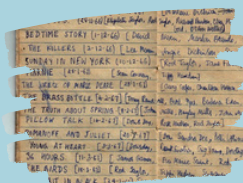
Nov
2025



Heritage Centre
IIT Madras



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GLASS PANELS



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ABOUT US

Glass Panels is the Heritage Centre's bi-monthly magazine. Over the last few years, it has gained immense popularity among alumni, campus residents and students. The magazine contains articles, poems, cartoons and much, much more. If you haven't got the opportunity to read this publication, it is never too late! Scan the QR code shared on this page and flip away!



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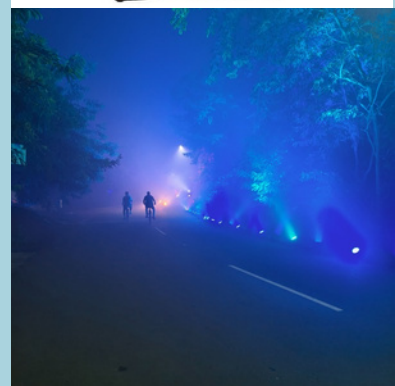
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Ministers, entrepreneurs, authors, Nobel laureates...the Centre is never short of stories of dignitaries gracing it with their presence. Glimpses of some distinguished visitors.

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Snappy the Snail

Find out what has been going on at the Heritage Centre in the last couple of months!

Adieu...



The Heritage Centre bids farewell to Prof. P. Sriram, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre (5th from left), who has retired, and Project Associate Diya Mariam Satheesh (4th from left), who has left to pursue her higher studies abroad. We wish them good health and happiness.

EXPLORE THE HERITAGE CENTRE VIRTUALLY!



Letter from the EDITOR



We have had a packed few months, hence the delay in publication this time around. As I write this editorial, it is already December. A couple of changes have taken place at the Heritage Centre. Prof. Arun Menon has taken over as Faculty-in-Charge of the Centre following Prof. P. Sriram's retirement. More about him can be found in the News Bites section. Prof. Menon is a versatile and enthusiastic professor who has been involved with the Heritage Centre for some time now. In fact, he wrote an article in the May 2024 edition of *Glass Panels* titled *A Visit to the Birthplace of Swaraj on World Heritage Day*.

His article was based on a trip he organised along with the Heritage Club on 18 April 2024 to Gokhale Hall on Armenian Street in the northern part of the city. I was fortunate to be a part of this visit. The heritage walk, if I may call it that, was an extremely enriching and impressive experience thanks to Prof. Menon. We are indeed fortunate to have him head the Heritage Centre!

Ramanathan Srikantaiah, a 1969 B.Tech. graduate from IIT Madras, has contributed a wonderful article to this edition of *Glass Panels*. As a student, Mr. Srikantaiah maintained a diary where he noted down a list of movies screened at the Open Air Theatre during his stay at IITM. His article will probably encourage you to start journaling and maintaining a diary (if you haven't already!).

Abhishek Kumar, a current student, has shared a brilliant story that he wrote some time back. Luckily, it has not been published elsewhere, and I am honoured to include it in this issue. The story deals with time travel, a popular subject in the sci-fi realm. What makes it all the more interesting is the fact that the story is set right here, at IITM!

Jyoti's introspective poem *The Banyan Trees Whisper* is an important work of art. Again, set on campus, it makes us look up at the mighty banyan trees around us in awe and wonder. She ties institutional legacy with the natural world—something that eco-critics would possibly love to explore!

The *Classified Divertissements* section is, yet again, populated with some interesting observations and thoughts. The former Faculty-in-Charge, Prof. Nagarajan, paid a visit to the Heritage Centre one fine evening in September. Find out why in the *News Bites* section!

I am happy to present to you *Glass Panels* November 2025, the last issue of this eventful year. Here's to wishing you all a happy and healthy new year!

- Bhuvanesh Santharam

Our readers write...

RESPONSES TO THE SEPTEMBER 2025 ISSUE



Dear Heritage IITM team,

I am Vishaal, a research scholar from the Dept. Of MME. I am writing this e-mail to extend my appreciation and warm regards for the work your team has been doing. I recently stumbled upon one of your *Glass Panels* releases, the September edition to be more specific. In short, I loved every bit of it.

In the middle of research, publications and classes, most of us often tend to lose track of what's happening in the institute. This series of publications really fill that gap, and man I must say, they feel very refreshing. Being someone who has been involved in content creation and having held editorial positions in the past, I have a good idea of the effort and inputs that go into such productions. I must generously appreciate you for the effort you're pouring into this, trying to bridge more gaps than you think.

Please keep the good work coming, and thank you for doing this.

Warm regards,

- Vishaal Harikrishna Kumar
Research Scholar, Dept. Of Metallurgical and Materials Engg.

Send us your
feedback!



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Bhuvanesh Santharam



The Heritage Centre was formally inaugurated by Dr. Arcot Ramachandran, former Director of IIT Madras, on 3 March 2006. It is a repository of material of heritage value and historical significance to IIT Madras. "Heritage Centre - Reimagined" was inaugurated on 18 December 2022 by Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman, Honourable Finance Minister of India.

Located centrally on campus, the Heritage Centre has an exhibition space that enjoys an abundance of natural light. The Centre also has a small theatre and a particularly pleasant reading area that offers incomparable views of the green campus.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Heritage Centre or IIT Madras.

From 16 mm to 35 mm

EVOLUTION OF OAT MOVIE SCREENINGS

When you mention the Open Air Theatre (OAT), it stirs up so many nostalgic thoughts in the mind, even after over half a century since graduating from IIT Madras. While dementia might not be a strange companion for most of my aged contemporaries in our late seventies, the Saturday night movies at the OAT will always remain an enduring memory. And what a memory! One that is still filled with inexplicable pleasure, filled with movies (mostly from Hollywood), stars, storylines, and scenes. The expectation of every Saturday made this an eagerly anticipated event, a chance to let off steam, so to speak.

I joined the B.Tech. course in July 1964, and the first years were all "herded" into Godavari Hostel to protect us from ragging, though ironically it made it easier for seniors to rag many of us together simultaneously!

"Our first movie at the OAT was on 18 July 1964. All in all, it was a real heady feeling for us to become an integral part of the fabled story that was, and more so now, a revered and elite educational institution of the country."



Diaries in which I maintained a list of movies screened at the Open Air Theatre (OAT).

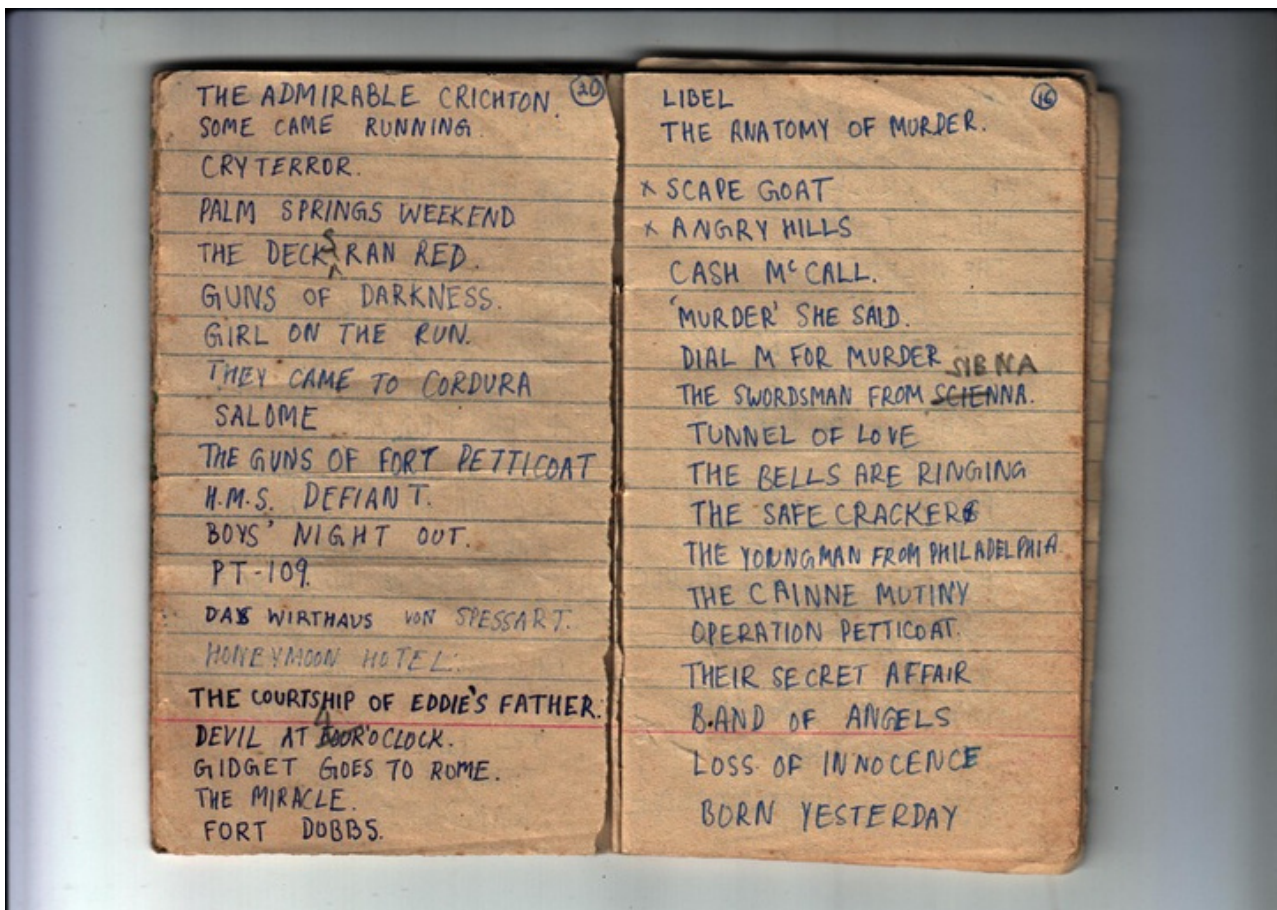
“Our monthly mess bills used to be just around Rs 60-90 for vegetarians over our 5-year period and around Rs 80-120 for non-vegetarians.”

There were no hostel security guards then as at present. Going to the OAT also meant that we went in small groups rather than as individuals. But the dirt-cheap rates of being charged just 25 paise per movie or Rs 1 per month (added to our mess bill) were heaven-sent for the wholesome entertainment every Saturday after a gruelling academic week. Being just out of our teens then and getting into adolescence was a heady experience, and suddenly exposed to the wide world of movies. Most of us would have hardly seen many movies in our pre-IIT days, and that was often accompanied by our parents. Our monthly mess bills used to be just around Rs 60-90 for vegetarians over our 5-year period and around Rs 80-120 for non-

vegetarians; and a haircut at the then Shopping Centre (now completely renovated with a shopping plaza) was then just a rupee to a rupee and a half.

The Saturday mess dinner (each hostel then had its own mess) would normally consist of simple fare like fruits (usually oranges or bananas) and curd rice with pickles as the main course, supplemented with cutlets for the vegetarians and eggs for the non-vegetarians. This was to give the mess staff a break from full meal preparation. So one would gobble it all up soon after 7 pm and rush to the OAT. Some bold and naughty types would save the orange peels for the missile-throwing-in-the-dark exercise at OAT. Later, oranges were off the dinner menu.

The attire for the OAT movies was most casual and even irreverent, with shorts or dhotis/lungis, and just home-use t-shirts, and of course, just bathroom slippers. Since the initial screen format was just 16 mm, there was always a rush to grab vantage seats with a straight view rather than the latecomers who were forced to see the movie from the corner of their eyes. The unforgiving concrete gallery seats made having your own cushion a real comfort for aching backs and



An excerpt from my diary featuring movies such as Dial M For Murder and Honeymoon Hotel.

bottoms! If memory serves me right, the overall numbers would have created a 120-degree audience huddled around the small 16 mm screen view.

It was only around 1967 that we went in for a 35 mm projection facility. This equipment was all hired from local audio-visual equipment, but was subject to frequent interruptions, sound problems, etc. Yet, it totally changed the whole dynamics of watching and enjoying movies on a large screen (even though a makeshift cloth screen). Since it was a single-projector-only setup, inevitable reel changes made for some unintended breaks, leading to joyful wisecracks, loud comments, and even mischievous pranks. Even after we got the big screen projection, the students were confined to seating in the concrete galleries, while the central well of the OAT was reserved for faculty and staff members, who usually brought their own folding chairs.

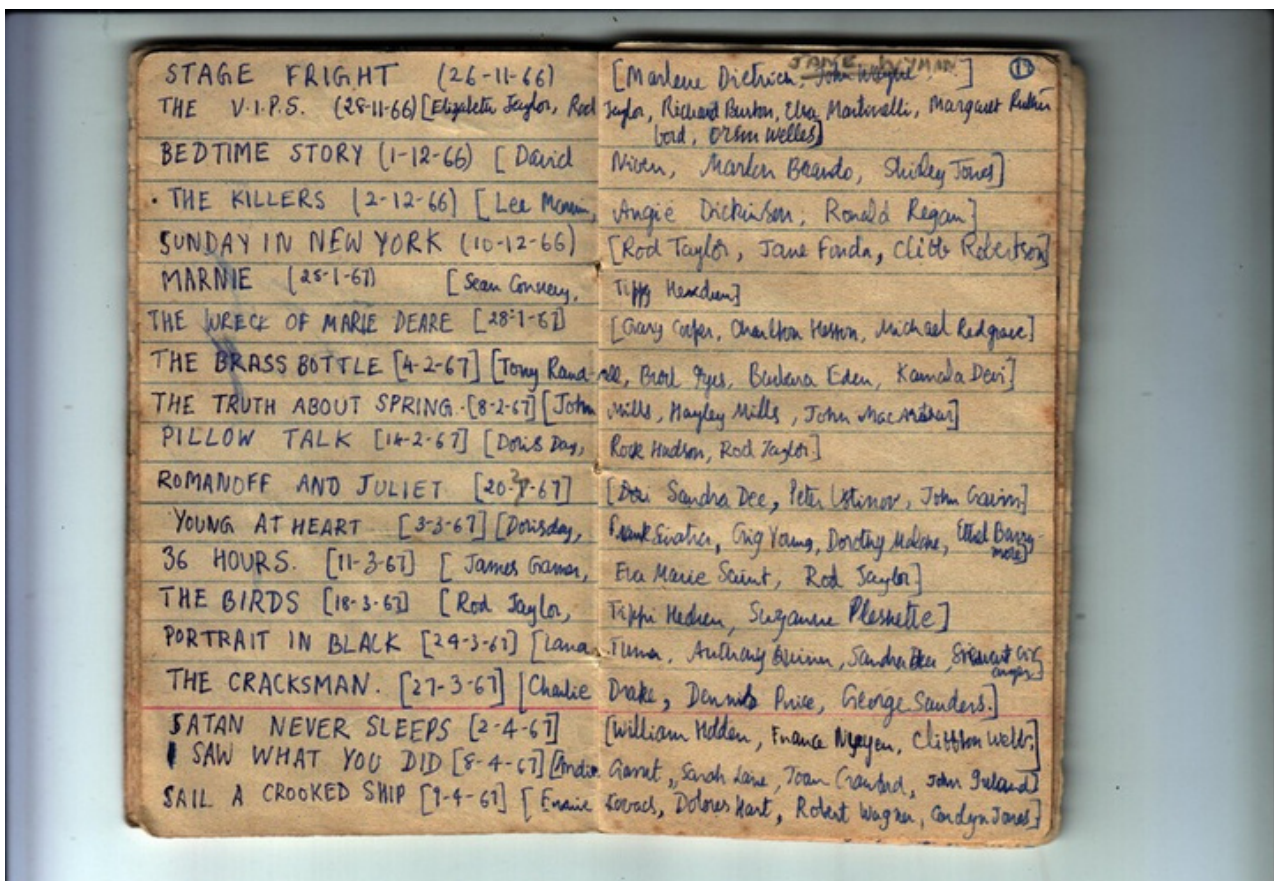
During the rainy season, it was the "done" thing to continue watching the movie, since, anyway, the projector and the projectionist were protected from getting drenched. Smart alocs with umbrellas were booed to close their umbrellas or move to the rear of the galleries.

Our 1969 batch started classes on 1 July 1964. Immediately, we were very fortunate to be witnesses to the first-ever Convocation of IIT Madras held on 11 July 1964, with the then President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, delivering the Convocation Address. Our first movie at the OAT was on 18 July 1964. All in all, it was a real heady feeling for us to become an integral part of the fabled story that was, and more so now, a revered and elite educational institution of the country.

As I recall, our first OAT movie was *No Room for Wild Animals*, a documentary film produced by the brothers Michael and Bernhard Grzimek. It was a movie made to protest the indiscriminate slaughter of Africa's wild animals.

Anyway, we all thought, Wow! What a privileged place to be in to pursue our engineering education, and also enjoy whatever else the campus has to offer us for the next 5 years at least.

Being an ardent movie buff myself, I kept a detailed record of all the movies shown at the OAT over my 5-year stay. I kept them all recorded in my handwriting in a diary, which I still have. It was only much later that I



And the list goes on!

“I kept a detailed record of all the movies shown at the OAT over my 5-year stay. I kept them all recorded in my handwriting in a diary, which I still have...This remains one of the proudest possessions from my IIT days.”

transferred all these details into computer files. I then noted down the names of all the actors involved, the producer and director, and also the music director and other key people involved. This remains one of the proudest possessions from my IIT days.

On average, about 45 movies were screened every year, making it around 200 movies during my 5 years. These sheer numbers would not have been seen if we had just stayed home with our parents. These movies covered all genres and types—westerns, crime and suspense thrillers, romantic comedies, war-related and courtroom dramas as well. But mostly made in Hollywood. I will briefly dwell elsewhere on other language movies.

For those of us who were not strong in the English language, these movies were a great learning ground. They were our window to the outside world, though knowingly artificial. Picking up the English language, understanding American accents, having armchair travels to exotic foreign locales, watching famous film stars, *et al.*—all left indelible impressions on our young minds.

But one bottom line was that, irrespective of any forthcoming periodical tests (our biggest bugbear then!) or any exams, attending the OAT movie was taken for granted. It had become an important and inevitable part of our IITM lives.

There were a few really memorable movies that I can still recall vividly, like *Zorba the Greek*, *What a Way to Go*, *Boeing Boeing*, *Operation Petticoat*, and *Charade*, amongst many others. Of course, each of us had our own favourites.

While movies at OAT have been the focus of this article, one cannot ignore the overall movie scene in Madras itself. The city's cinemas featured memorable movies like *My Fair Lady*, *The Sound of Music*, *Wait Until Dark*, *Hatari*, *The Guns of Navarone*, *Dr. Zhivago*, various *James Bond* films, *Carry On* series films franchise, *Cleopatra*, *Ice Station Zebra* and other Alistair Maclean book-based films, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* and other spaghetti Westerns such as *The Graduate*, and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

“On average, about 45 movies were screened every year, making it around 200 movies during my 5 years. These sheer numbers would not have been seen if we had just stayed home with our parents. These movies covered all genres and types—westerns, crime and suspense thrillers, romantic comedies, war-related and courtroom dramas as well.”

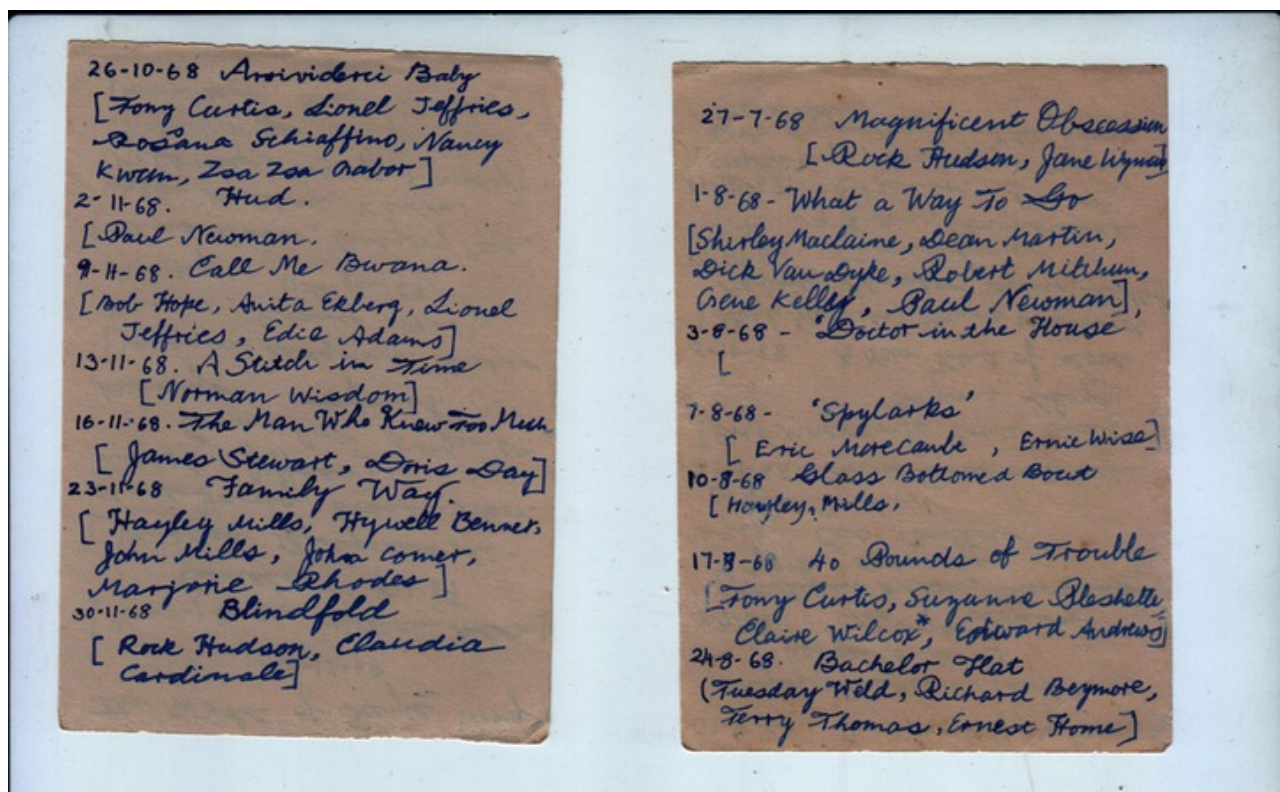
I recall one particularly memorable episode in 1965 or 1966 when the first James Bond movie, *Dr. No* was released at the Rajkumari Theatre in T. Nagar. Though still not qualifying to be a real adult then, many clamoured to see Ursula Andress in the briefest of bikinis. I was told that the ticketing queues were a kilometre long, and tickets were being sold in the black market at around Rs 100-150 (against the normal of around Rs 3-5).

I understand that quite a few were turned away for not being adults, but many still managed to sneak through to see it.

One may wonder why these could not be screened at OAT. Besides their tremendous box-office popularity, concerned distributors were not willing to make available such movies for screenings for non-profit institutions like clubs and educational institutions. I was told that such movie charges paid by IITM then were just Rs 140 for a black and white movie and Rs 160 for a colour movie for a single screening, irrespective of their audience numbers. Later, there were special arrangements with Mumbai film distributors to give us movies at decent rates, which were also then shared with Guindy Engineering College, which screened the same movie on Sunday.

"That period also saw blockbuster Tamil films released in the city. Some of them were: *Kadhalikka Neramillai, Vennira Aadai, Thillana Mohanambal, Enga Veettu Pillai, Pasamalar, Navarathri, Uyarnta Manithan, Parthal Pasi Theerum, Server Sundaram, Deiva Magan, Aayirathil Oruvan, Anbe Vaa, and Adimai Penn.*"

Of course, true movie buffs amongst us used to patronize the city theatres and see these movies, especially at the Safire tri-theatre complex, Anand, Casino and Elphinstone Cinemas, as also Minerva (in the Parry's Corner area with cane chair seating).



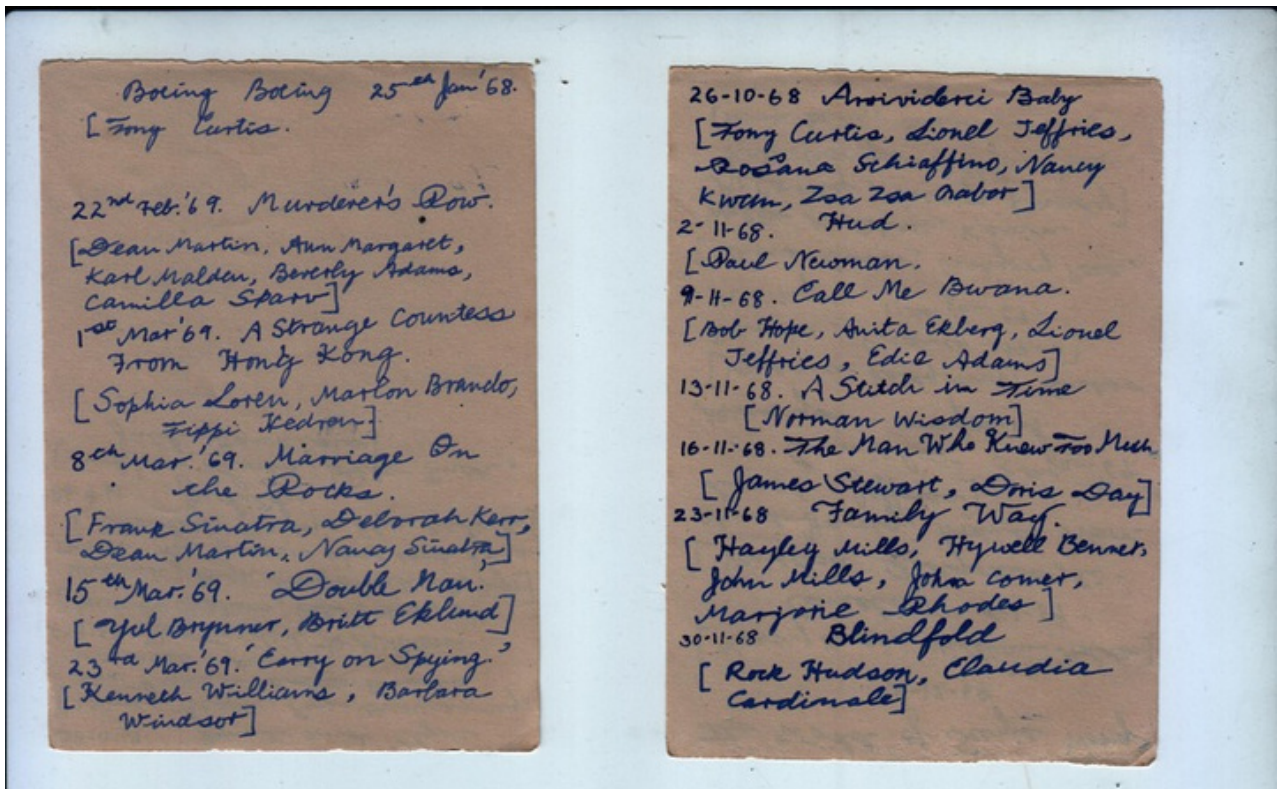
More pages from the diary.

“During our time, there was also an instance of a Tamil film shooting on campus around the Gajendra Circle featuring (late) Jaishankar. But I think the commotion it created with students gawking at them and bunking classes put an end to such permission given by the IITM administration.”

That period also saw blockbuster Tamil films released in the city. Some of them were: *Kadhalikka Neramillai*, *Vennira Aadai*, *Thillana Mohanambal*, *Enga Veettu Pillai*, *Pasamalar*, *Navarathri*, *Uyarntha Manithan*, *Parthal Pasi Theerum*, *Server Sundaram*, *Deiva Magan*, *Aayirathil Oruvan*, *Anbe Vaa*, and *Adimai Penn*. Most of these films were dominated by stars like Sivaji Ganesan and M. G. Ramachandran.

A notable Hindi movie released in Chennai was Raj Kapoor's *Sangam* in 1964 and shown at the Shanthi theatre. But the Hindi movie releases suffered later in Madras due to the local anti-Hindi agitation in early 1965. Non-English movies at OAT were then very few and far between. Notable ones were *Kashmir Ki Kali* (Sharmila Tagore's debut film) and the Malayalam film *Chemmeen*, which won the National Film Award for Best Film in 1965.

A significant milestone in OAT's movie history then was the screening of the first ever Tamil film in 1968 on Tamil New Year Day with the September 1967 released movie *Ninaivil Nindraval* starring K. R. Vijaya and Nagesh amongst others. We did have a few other films in Kannada, Malayalam and Telugu during special occasions. However, I somehow failed to keep records of them.



How many of these films have you watched?

One great boon for English movie goers was the unique Safire Blue Diamond Theatre, which had continuous shows at just Rs 2.50 per ticket, where one could go in and out at any time during the movie screening. For those of us with no family or relatives' homes in Chennai, this was the best thing to do on a Sunday evening. The nearby Woodland's Drive-In Restaurant or Buhari, or various Chinese restaurants on Mount Road were the regular food jaunts before getting back to the Monday academic grind.

Another memorable feature of our IIT days was the prevalence of "travelling/tent/touring cinemas" just outside our hostel environs in Velachery and Taramani, which were real villages then! These were just thatched-roof temporary structures with lower-class floor seating on beach sand and on benches for us higher-paying patrons. They usually featured Tamil double-feature movies. This was an apt outlet for those nights before public holidays coming mid-week.

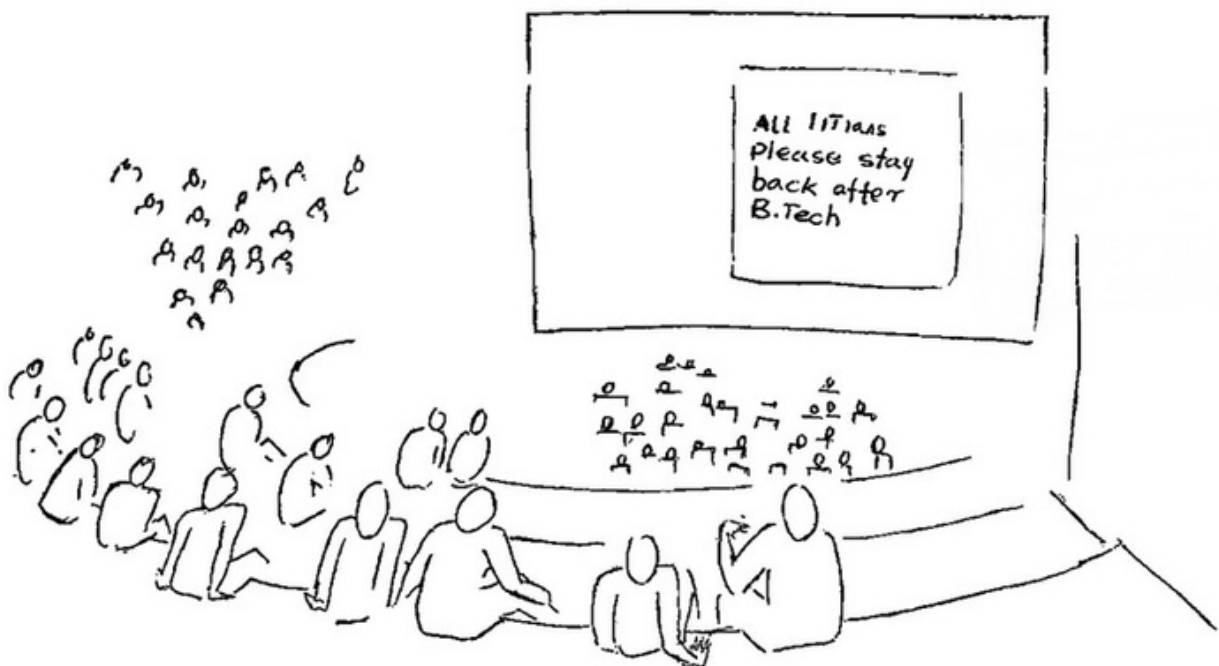
Many of my mates tell me that it was watching these movies that helped them to pick up the Tamil lingo in all its myriad colours!

During our time, there was also an instance of a Tamil film shooting on campus around the Gajendra Circle featuring (late) Jaishankar. But I think the commotion it created with students gawking at them and bunking classes put an end to such permission given by the IITM administration.

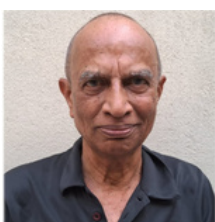
One memorable prank played by the Film Secretary on all of us during 1967, when a special movie, *What a Way to Go*, was announced for the first of April. Only after half an hour or so, there was a slide message to say it was April Fool's Day! As it finally happened, this 1964 movie was shown to us later in 1968.

All said and done, the movies at OAT were an important and unforgettable part of our IITM campus life, with fond memories even today. Long live the OAT!

Editor's Note: During intermissions, announcement slides would appear on the Open Air Theatre screen. The cartoon below was inspired by messages such as "All team captains stay back after the movie to meet the Sports Secretary." It also lightly nods to a well-known trend from that era, when many B.Tech. graduates chose to pursue opportunities in the US soon after completing their studies.



An illustration of a Film Club movie screening at the Open Air Theatre, published in the September 1983 issue of Campastimes. The illustration was made by Mr. Joseph Joy.



Ramanathan Srikantaiah

earned his B.Tech (1969) and M.Tech (1972) in Electrical Engineering from IIT Madras. He served at DRDO's Aeronautical Development Establishment, Bangalore, until 1998, specializing in flight test instrumentation, telemetry, telecommand, and electronic system reliability. Post-retirement, he consulted on railway safety systems. His hobbies include philately, numismatics, photography, digital restoration, and culinary arts. Passionate about teaching Physics and Mathematics to young school students, he now resides in Bangalore. Srikantaiah wrote this article with supplementary inputs from his batchmates

K. Sashi Rao and K. S. Loganathan.

The Banyan Trees

Whisper

The moon ascends in the sky,
Like a silver-clad quintessential bride,
Spreading its mesmerizing ashen hue,
With soft, subtle pride.

Dew-kissed clouds drift lazily,
Casting mystic shadows on Luna divine,
Forming silhouettes of ethereal beauty,
A celestial ballet where shadows entwine.

The air shines twinkling bright,
With the dew's luminous gleam,
Like diamonds dancing in Luna's light,
In the mizzle's silken dream.

'The lady of the night' awakens,
Her sweet fragrance intoxicates all,
Her charming beauty unveils,
As white petals in the dark unfurl.

The lullaby of the cool breeze,
Cradles the swaying leaves,
Jui blooms' fragrance floats,
Soothing the soul's vast sea.

The ancient trees spread their canopy,
In Banyan Avenue,
Their thick, textured branches like art,
Look forever fresh and new.

Bats hang upside down, soundless,
Owls peep in the nighttide,
Their soft hoots echo, across the sky,
A mystic nocturnal delight.

Beneath these enigmatic banyan trees,
Alone I stand and gaze,
At the Luna's splendour in the hush of darkness,
In silence and reverence...I am in a daze!

In the misty, enchanted alchemy of darkness,
The spell seems magically strong.
I hear the warm whispers,
Coming closer, clear and long.





Indeed, the banyan trees whisper,
In Banyan Avenue,
To those keen to hear,
Under the silvery, dewy hue.

Their branches stretch like arms,
Beckoning me with loving grace,
Like a mother calling her child,
To her lap, a warm, sacred space.

Their leaves whisper softly,
A gentle feathery tone,
A haven from life's hassles,
Where love and peace are sown.

These timeless trees rekindle,
Golden memories of the institute's past,
They echo with sweet applause, cheers of acclaim,
For grand legacies that forever will last.

Roots of strength come down slow,
From branches high to earth's bosom below,
A symbol of humility they truly show,
And wisdom in silence steadily grows.

Amidst the banyan's resilient might,
Tall cacti bloom with gentle pride,
Thriving together, a wonderful sight,
Nudging us to set our ego aside.

In their serenade in the moonlit night,
Truths – both new and old resound,
Transcending knowledge and wisdom,
To find their enlightened ground.

They point to the guiding stars,
For true dreams to be pursued,
They widen our horizons and visions,
And elevate our spirits with fortitude.

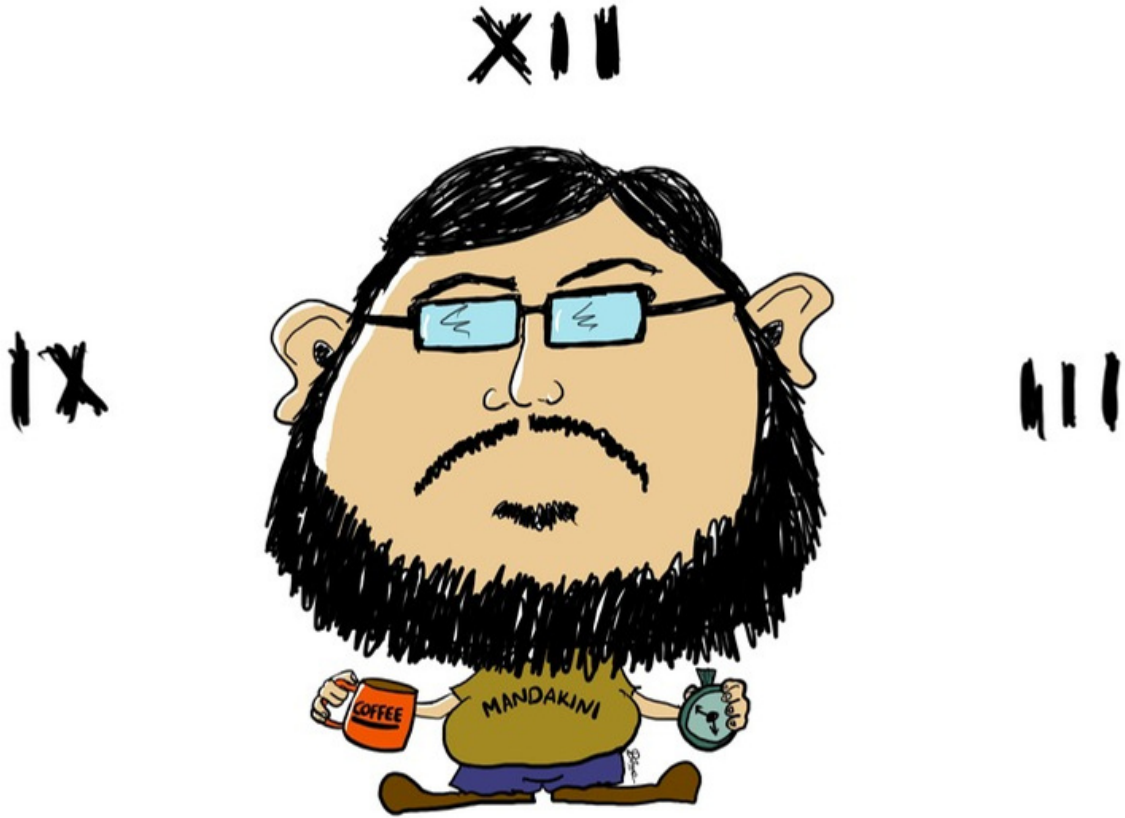


Jyoti Sahu

is an accomplished professional with nearly two decades in IT and business innovation, contributing to Deloitte, DXC, HP, HCL, and STMicroelectronics. Skilled in product development, market strategy, and sales enablement, she has driven strategic growth across industries. With an MBA from the University of Missouri and a B.E. in Electronics & Telecom Engineering from Odisha, she also publishes Odia poetry and paints narratives that let colours bloom beyond data.

The Time Machine

HOW I ALMOST BECAME A PHILOSOPHER BY ACCIDENT



It all started with a cockroach.

Not the metaphorical kind that haunts your soul after a bad quiz, but a proper, six-legged menace that darted out of a cracked tile in Mandakini's fifth-floor corridor during my third coffee of the night. I screamed. Not out of fear—obviously—but as a form of battle cry. A war declaration. For some reason, I thought I could kill it using a flip-flop and sheer moral superiority.

Instead, I chased it halfway down the corridor, past the night guard who watched with no small amount of judgment, and into a locked utility room. Only it wasn't locked. The door creaked open like it had been waiting for me.

Inside was not what I expected. I had assumed mops, empty paint buckets, maybe a mattress with questionable stains. But no. Inside, under a layer of glorious neglect, was something that looked like an old industrial fridge with wires sticking out of it, and a faint

blue glow humming around its edges. Think retro sci-fi meets Central workshop lab.

A Post-it note, barely clinging to the surface, read:

"PROPERTY OF DEPT. OF PHYSICS. DO NOT ENGAGE UNLESS YOU UNDERSTAND RELATIVITY. OR ARE REALLY BORED."

Now look—I'm not a physics major. But I was, undeniably, *really bored*. I pressed the only visible button.

The machine groaned like a Brahmaputra washing machine loaded with bedsheets, there was a spark (and I'm fairly sure I heard someone whisper "Aiiyyo!" in the static), and everything went black.

When I opened my eyes, I was still in Mandak.

But not really.

It was Mandak, yes—but modernised beyond reason. The walls glowed softly, nameplates were holographic, and instead of ceiling fans, there were tiny drones hovering politely above each bed.

Outside, the usual IITM chaos—blackbucks screaming, monkeys planning psychological warfare, students power-walking at 8:59 AM—was nowhere to be seen.

In their place: sleek walkways, solar-lit paths, and something that looked suspiciously like a Starbucks outlet embedded into the SAC wall. A digital banner overhead said:

"IIT Mars (Chennai Node) – Orientation Day: July 11, 2097."

I did what any sensible IITian would do. I panicked quietly and walked to Gurunath.

Except Gurunath was gone. In its place stood **"Gurunath Quantum Café™"**, a café where AI baristas offered emotional support along with almond milk.

I stumbled inside, ordered a "Low-Anxiety Latte," and tried to figure out what had just happened.

The cashier-bot scanned my face and paused. A red dot blinked.

"Unregistered consciousness. No biometric history. Estimated arrival from temporal anomaly. Alerting authorities."

I didn't wait to find out what authorities looked like in the future. I bolted, coffee in hand. The good news: I had travelled in time. The bad news: I had no idea how to get back. The worse news: I still hadn't submitted my quantum game theory assignment.

After a few hours of walking around campus (which now had air-conditioned corridors between departments, because of course it did), I realised I wasn't alone. I mean, obviously, there were people. But no one talked. Everyone was wearing a soft-glow headset, eyes glazed, interacting with some invisible interface in front of them. Every conversation was AI-mediated. Every answer was optimised. Even Saarang had become fully virtual—no more sweaty jam-packed OATs, just "Immersive Sonic Pods with curated social interactions™."

It was beautiful. It was awful.

I missed the noise. I missed the mess. I missed watching Omkar argue about GDP growth with Shiv at 2 a.m. over chai. I missed Singhal's deeply unnecessary 1 a.m. existential lectures that made you question everything—including why you were even in Brahmaputra in the first place.

I wanted to go back. That's when I met Aditi.

She was sitting alone on the SAC steps, feeding digital crumbs to a peacock drone. Her T-shirt said "Reject Routine. Embrace Chaos." She looked like someone who'd been allergic to the Algorithm since birth.

"You're not from here," she said without looking up.

"How did you know?"

"You're looking at things. Most people stopped doing that in the 2060s."

I laughed, half-relieved. "Yeah, uh...I sort of time-travelled. By mistake." She nodded like I'd told her I took a slightly different route to CLT.

She took me on a mini tour of this future IIT. It was efficient, optimised, and almost entirely...soulless. Students no longer chose branches; the AI assigned you one based on predicted emotional resilience. Clubs didn't exist anymore because interpersonal messiness was considered "inefficient." The most rebellious act on campus? Attending a real, live conversation without AI filters.

"So why haven't you left?" I asked.

"Because someone needs to remember how this place used to feel," she said. "Before everything started working too well."

That night, we broke into the Central Library (now called KnowledgeCore v9.7) and looked for old campus maps. I tried to explain the location of the machine: Mandak, second floor, utility room that didn't exist.

We didn't find any record of it. Instead, we found something stranger.

A file titled: **"Chrono Return Protocol – Subject: Abhishek. Status: Pending."** It had my face.

And a single line:

To return, answer one question: *What is the point of all this?*

I stared at it for a long time.

All this? As in...campus? Life? All-nighters? Hostel LAN fights? LAN ban? Why do we keep going despite knowing that Quizzes 2 will come back with a vengeance?

For a moment, I felt...blank.

And then I remembered.

I remembered sitting in the Brahmaputra common room with my Naka buddies (Naka- that's my hostel wing name), watching a random cricket match where none of us knew the teams. Omkar screaming at the screen anyway, Tarun predicting an economic crash based on the pitch condition, and I quietly making Maggi for everyone. I remembered that week we all

collectively forgot to do our laundry and tried to "barter" socks. I remembered the all-night debates about whether life was deterministic or just badly coded.

I remembered laughter echoing down the corridor. People half-asleep on bean bags. The smell of late-night soap from just-cleaned bathrooms. That inexplicable sense that everything was falling apart and coming together at the same time.

So I turned to Aditi and said, "Because even when everything's messy and frustrating and illogical...it feels real. And that's enough."

The screen blinked. A soft chime played. And a message popped up:

Answer accepted. Portal unlocked. Return pending. Pack coffee.

I was back in Mandak's utility room.

My slippers were still warm. The cockroach was nowhere to be seen (I choose to believe it's now an assistant professor in the future). Outside, the corridor



Courtesy: Abhishek Kumar

was dim, filled with that familiar pre-dawn silence—the one you get when the night owls are crashing and the morning weirdos are waking up.

It was 5:45 AM. I hadn't gone anywhere. Or maybe I'd gone *everywhere*.

I walked back to the Brahmaputra. The wing was quiet. Omkar's door was slightly ajar—he'd probably fallen asleep mid-podcast again. Shiv was already at the loo, reciting poetry to himself (we still don't know why). And Singhal had texted me "Bro coffee?" at 5:49, as if we were telepathically synced.

I made myself a cup and sat by the window. The sky was turning orange. A monkey was eyeing my biscuit. And I felt oddly...at peace.

I never found that room again.

They sealed it up. Or maybe it only appears when you need it.

Maybe the real time machine isn't a fridge with wires. Maybe it's a memory. A feeling. A 3 a.m. conversation. A song someone hums while brushing their teeth.

Maybe IIT Madras isn't just a campus.

Maybe it's a very complicated, very lovable, very chaotic kind of time machine on its own.

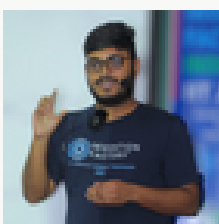
Moral of the story?

Never chase a cockroach on an empty stomach. Never underestimate a broken coffee machine. And never, ever forget what it felt like to be 22, half-awake, half-lost, and totally alive in Brahmaputra.

And years from now, when this place is just a flicker in some corner of my mind—when deadlines are replaced by taxes, and Maggi nights by boardroom mornings—I know I'll still come back to this. To the breeze through the trees outside Brahma, to Shiv's wild theories, Omkar's fiery rants, Singhal's chai, and a version of me who thought the world could be fixed with one good story. Maybe that's what IIT really gives you—not just degrees, startups, or placements, but a little glitch in time where life feels wonderfully pointless, painfully beautiful, and just real enough to remember forever.



Photo: Kavin Chakaravarthy



Abhishek Kumar

is a Dual Degree student with B.Tech. Engineering Design and an Integrated M.Tech. in Quantitative Finance at IIT Madras. He has contributed to deep-tech innovation through the Maker Bhavan Foundation, pursued research in green technology and economics, and completed an academic exchange at Université Paris-Saclay. Passionate about interdisciplinary problem-solving, he continues to explore the intersection of technology, policy, and development. His hobbies include writing and reading blogs, articles and books (authored a book), along with singing and teaching school students.

The Heritage Square

CLASSIFIED DIVERTISEMENTS

WARNING: TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY MAY RESULT IN RAISED EYEBROWS AND MILD CONFUSION.

CAMPUS DENIZENS IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Undergraduates: The dominant subspecies of humans on campus. Exhibit distinctive herd behaviour and tend to move around in large herds on cycles. Best places for sighting would be the grazing spots (Himalaya and Nilgiri being prominent ones) during midday and night.

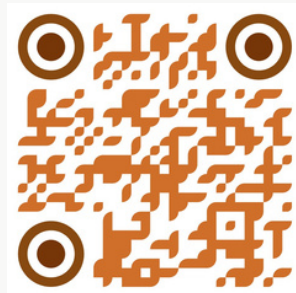
Research Scholars: A rather vocal species, they can be regularly heard voicing their woes about being underpaid and overworked to anyone who will listen. Can often be spotted roaming in the corridors near the faculty offices, usually on the hunt for their guides. Their rather ineffectual hunting strategies include requesting appointments or lying in wait outside occupied classrooms and meeting rooms. However, they are easily outwitted by their prey with tactics such as last-minute cancellations and offering to be available 'anytime after 10 AM' but only appearing post-lunch.

Interns: A regular migratory visitor, they can be spotted in the summers and winters trotting dutifully after their chosen senior within departments and labs.

First-time Visitors: An invasive, but tolerated species on campus. Easily identifiable when they whip out their phones to photograph deer or blackbuck with varying levels of awe.

Non-Teaching Staff: A vital, if often overlooked, part of the ecosystem. They can be spotted in different camouflage all over the campus. Simply look for the quietest and most efficient person around, and you've probably got yourself a staff member!

- Ashita Yedida



SUBMIT

your entries for the next issue!

EARN

₹500 per entry if you get selected!

'MONK-EW' ALERT: TRADING MONK-ERY FOR BRAIN-ERY

A monkey troop has gone missing in action from their usual banana-filled high jinks from around the Shiva temple during the Maha Kumbhabhishekam. Done with their steal and peel, they decided to upgrade to 'Monk'ery during that divine muhurtam. They pledged to attain 'monk-nirvana' by shedding their monk-ew business and become monks of honor. But instead of meditating, they meddled with Physics. One's already in the Physics department reading instructions and helping the IITM AC technicians - indeed who needs a ladder, when a monkey is there! Don't pick his brain during work. He's cool with you learning by osmosis! Please be on full cognitive readiness as their banana shenanigans are now charged with extra potassium!

- Iluvwatchingmonkeyshenanigans

IITM THE GAME UPDATE V5.10.2025

RTX: Enabled
Fog Density: 300%
Weather: Super Rainy
Reflection Quality: Ultra
Frame Rate: Dropping faster than attendance after midsems.
Players are advised to proceed carefully - random cyclists now appear as jump-scare NPCs.
Side Quest Unlocked: Cycle from Alakananda to Biotech without getting the back of your shirt decorated with mud.

- Kavin Chakaravarthy

MISSING: MS. PETROLHEAD P-HEN

Last seen - New C2 residential buildings judging rooftops of expensive cars.

Description - Former resident of Guindy National Park; has strong materialistic value orientation - loves expensive cars and living in secure high-rise gated apartment complexes.

Favorite hangout - Rooftops of Honda City cars in the warm hearted C2 area.

If found, please guide this affluenza enthusiast peahen back to C2 area. We have found for 'Her Majesty', a BMW - its rooftop as her royal perch.

Reward - 'Regal Living - Your Obvious Mindset', this free session with Ms. P-Hen and a peacock feather.

- A Warm Hearted C2 Resident



Distinguished Visitors

It is always a privilege and delight to welcome eminent personalities to the Heritage Centre. From ministers and entrepreneurs to authors and Nobel laureates, the Centre has never been short of inspiring stories of distinguished visitors. Here, the past, present, and future of the Institute are carefully documented and displayed, making the Centre an essential stop on any visitor's itinerary. Presented below are glimpses of some of our most notable guests from September and October.



Prof. Kaori Hayashi

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

"Beautiful, green campus and nice mix of engineering and tradition!"

1 SEPTEMBER 2025



Mr. Racha Aribarg

CONSUL GENERAL OF THAILAND

"It is a pleasure and privilege to visit IIT Madras to foster collaboration between the institute and Thailand. Thank you."

9 SEPTEMBER 2025



Ms. Richa Singh

CEO, YOURDOST

"It has been an honor to visit IITM. The enthusiasm & intellect of students is infectious...the greenery, animals makes you travel to a different time... thank you IITM."

10 SEPTEMBER 2025

16 SEPTEMBER 2025

Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh

MUSICIAN

"It is truly an honour to be here and see the journey of a monumental institution like the IIT. Mamata Ma'am is filled with pride and passion for the cause of this institution. We truly thank her and her team for their efforts."



23 SEPTEMBER 2025

Prof. Jürgen Lehmann

PRESIDENT, HOF UNIVERSITY

"A great impression about the links between Germany and India. Thanks for the vision and support to everyone. These are the bridges we need in the future."



27 SEPTEMBER 2025

Mr. Anand Narasimhan

MANAGING EDITOR—SPECIAL PROJECTS, SENIOR
ANCHOR AT CNN-NEWS18

"Know the past, be in the present, act for the future. The Heritage Centre at IIT Madras captures this brilliantly. My love for this premier institution grows a little more!"





Mr. Mahesh Natarajan (1)

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, BRITISH PETROLEUM

Mr. Dushyant Sharma (2)

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, BRITISH PETROLEUM

"I am deeply impressed by the Heritage of IIT Madras. IITs have long been the fulcrum of innovation and engineering. The Heritage Centre brings this to life!" (Mahesh Natarajan)

1 OCTOBER 2025



Mr. Björn Schubert

HEAD OF UNIT, INNOVATION MARKETS,
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, INDUSTRY,
CLIMATE ACTION AND ENERGY (MWIKE),
STATE OF NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA (NRW),
GERMANY

"Thank you so much for the interesting insights!"

16 OCTOBER 2025



Mr. Thorsten Peter (1)

ADVISOR FOR INNOVATION MARKETS
(SOUTH ASIA & AFRICA), MWIKE

Ms. Stephanie Beeres (2)

HEAD OF BUSINESS UNIT INDIA &
AUSTRALIA, NRW.GLOBAL BUSINESS

Ms. Alona Chajka (3)

PROJECT MANAGER, TALENT BRIDGE
INDIA

Ms. Ambika Banotra (4)

CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE, NRW GLOBAL
BUSINESS INDIA

16 OCTOBER 2025

23 OCTOBER 2025

Padma Shri Dr. Rajani Kant

GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE HUMAN WELFARE
ASSOCIATION, VARANASI

"Excellent to see the heritage and
continuing the legacy with dignity."



29 OCTOBER 2025

Mr. Peter Winther-Schmidt

CONSUL GENERAL OF DENMARK

"What an impressive heritage and
beautiful and inspiring institution.
Preparing the next generation of
leaders. Not only to India but for the
benefit of the world."

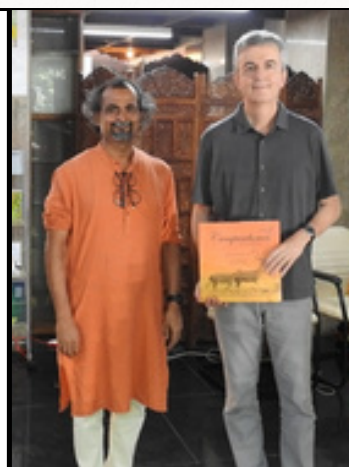


29 OCTOBER 2025

Prof. Carsten Ullrich

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

"Thank you for the wonderful overview
of the interesting history of IIT
Madras!"





News BITES

Latest news from the Heritage Centre

November 2025

Prof. Arun Menon is new Faculty-in-Charge of HC

Prof. Arun Menon, from the Department of Civil Engineering, is the new Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre.

Prof. Menon holds a first degree in Architecture and a Ph.D. in Earthquake Engineering from the University of Pavia, Italy. His research focuses on the structural behaviour of historical constructions, seismic performance of masonry structures, and earthquake-resistant design for heritage buildings. He has authored or co-authored approximately 75 technical publications in these areas.

He currently leads the National Centre for Safety of Heritage Structures (NCSHS), a research initiative supported by the Ministry of Education (Government of India) and based at IIT Madras. His international contributions include serving as an Expert Member on the International Coordinating Committee (BICC) for the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bagan, Myanmar, and as a Member of the Expert Advisory Group to the International Conservation Committee (ICC) for Vat Phou, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Laos PDR.

Prof. Menon's conservation work spans several countries, including India (Rashtrapati Bhavan, IIM Ahmedabad, Madurai Meenakshi Temple), Bhutan (Tango Monastery, Wangdue Phodrang Dzong), Myanmar (Bagan), and the Philippines (San Sebastian Basilica, Manila).

Prof. Menon was awarded the Young Faculty Recognition Award (YFRA) by IIT Madras in 2016. He also received the Best Outgoing Student (Academic Profile) from the Regional Engineering College



Prof. Arun Menon delivers a talk during Heritage Centre Day 2024

Alumni Association (RECAL), Tiruchirappalli, in 2000. In the same year, he received the Architect Kharche Endowment Award for Best Architecture Thesis from REC, Tiruchirappalli.

Welcome

The Heritage Centre welcomes their newest team member, M. Krishna Priya, a history postgraduate from Madras Christian College.



A talk by Prof. R. Nagarajan



Prof. R. Nagarajan delivered an engaging talk, Mannargudi to Madras - A Move in Movies & Mayhem, on 26th September 2025 at the Heritage Centre.

The event began with refreshments and informal socialising. Faculty members, campus residents, and project staff gathered to listen to the interesting talk, which covered Prof. Nagarajan's early years in Mannargudi and formative influences. Prof. Nagarajan then talked about the films and books that left a lasting impression on him.

The evening was a nostalgic journey as Prof. Nagarajan shared memories of his childhood in Mannargudi, the movies and books that shaped him, and his transition to life at IIT Madras. His stories painted a vivid picture of campus life and culture in the 1970s and 1980s, offering a unique

window into that era. A video recording of the talk is available on the Heritage Centre's YouTube channel.

After the talk, first-batch alumnus Dr. R Mahadevan presented a customized memento to Prof. Nagarajan.



Members of the audience share a laugh during Prof. Nagarajan's talk.

HERITAGE CENTRE



WANTS

YOU

**Send in your articles, art, poems and more to get featured
in the next issue of *Glass Panels*!**



NEW MERCH ALERT!

From running between hostels and lecture halls,

Every IITian knows bicycles are a way of life.

Now, you can find them on a comfy cotton tee!

The T-shirts were meticulously designed by Aryan J. M. [@renjm_art](#)

Do visit the Heritage Centre and grab yours!

- Hunter S. Thompson



To know more about the work we do,
SCAN THE QR CODES:

