**An Introduction to Computers**

*By Richa Kulkarni, BE 2/4 CSE-3*

To many of us, the question “what is a computer?”might see silly at this stage in our education. Surely, without knowing the answer, we could never have come so far. However, a look back at how far we have arrived will only help us decide where to go next.

With this aim, then, let us ask ourselves this question: what is a computer? The vast (and often overwhelming) variety of answers available all means one simple idea: a computer is a machine that receives information from a user, performs certain operations on that information, and gives the results to the user in a useful form. This purpose is achieved through the combination of hardware and software, hardware being the physical components of a computer, and software being the programs that interact with the hardware.

That brings us to our second area of interest: programs. What is programming? Again, simply put, programming means designing a sequence of steps that will perform a particular task and represent that in the form of instructions that can be understood by the machine. It is important to note here that with the plethora of programming languages available, we would be remiss in focusing on learning only new languages, and not on imbibing new ideas. The study of programming is as much about ideas, logic, and critical thinking as it is about Java, Python, or Ruby.

Now that we have laid down the original definitions of a computer and programming, we must look at the computer not only as a complex and intricate machine that qualifies to be a work of art but also as the most indispensable tool in our hands today. With increasing digitization and growing technology, it has been rightly said that the future belongs to computers. Let us make sure that we are ready for it.