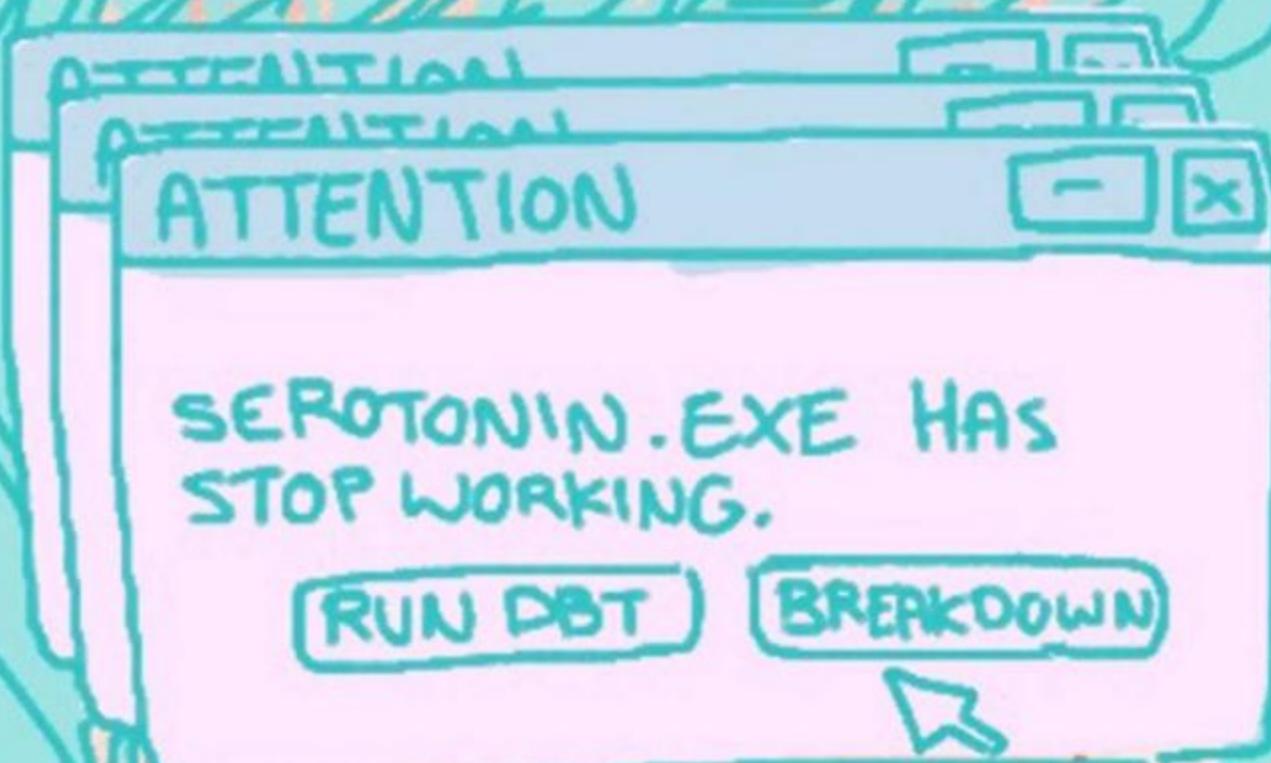


pWug!

January 2019



మో అన్నవరం

pg 35

*On Mental
Health, And
The Lack
Thereof*

pg 25

Ping! is an independent magazine of the students of IIIT Hyderabad. The views presented are not representative of the institute, and the institute is not the publisher of the magazine.



Editors

Mahathi Vempati
Zubair Abid

Design

Adarsh Dharmadevan
Ahish Deshpande
Jaidev Shriram
Jalees Jahanzaib
Jyoti Sunkara
Shaunak Badani

Thanks to Shelly Jain for proofreading, Abrar Ahmed for editing and designing the Telugu article and Himanshu Maheshwari for holding sessions on magazine design.

Please send your valuable comments and suggestions to ping@students.iiit.ac.in.
And don't forget to visit our website at pingiiit.org.

*On the road to OBH.
Credits: Mohit Chandra
Cover art from:
<https://virginns.tumblr.com/>*

04 Editorials**CAMPUS**

- 06** **The Veg | “Non-Veg” Casteism Dilemma**
Jaidev Shriram, Mallika Subramanian

- 09** **New Canteen, Newer Problems**
Mahathi Vempati

- 12** **Isle of Dogs**
Gautham Venugopal, Jalees Jahanzaib

- 16** **The Invisible People Behind OBH**
Shreedhar Manek

- 19** **Cracked-mia: Visible Cracks in Academia**
Shantanu Prabhat

PERSPECTIVE

- 22** **BOOOONEEE**
Deepti Mahesh

- 25** **On Mental Health, And the Lack Thereof**
Atreyee Ghosal

**FILM
SYNDROME**

- 29** **The Rocky Horror Picture Show**
Kripa Anne

**EYE TO THE
FUTURE**

- 31** **The Forgotten Century**
Abhigyan Ghosh, Zubair Abid

PEN STAND

- 35** **Ma Annavaram**
Sriya Deepika Kamarsu

HUMOUR

- 36** **Cynical Cindy**

Editorials

The Spring Semester Reporting Date

The surprise and rather delayed announcement of the reporting time for the Spring semester sparked yet another all-too-familiar dispute on email just before the commencement of the winter break. More specifically over the penalty. As the Dean's email stated, if some student did not "report to the hostel by midnite on 30th Dec", then said student would be marked as absent for two classes for the courses finally registered in the Spring 2019 semester.

The Dean's official reasoning for such a decision was, in summary, that—without the fine for late registration that existed earlier, students were missing classes in their first week (when the first two days of the semester are New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, one wonders why) leading to a lack of seriousness in academics for that week. And because no attendance was taken in the first week because of the Add/Drop period (yet another contested fact), the decision was taken as "it is logical to assume that a student who reports by the deadline is attending classes in the following days, while one who does not report is absent."

Several replies followed rapidly picking apart the decision at every level. On the conceptual level, there already existed in use a system for transferring attendance to the final courses of choice after the Add/Drop period, why discard that? The consequences for someone reporting an hour late at 1 AM on the 31st of December seem to be as bad as those for someone attending their first class on the 7th of January, so how is this fair in any way? In turn someone registering by the 30th could disappear for a week and suffer no consequence at all, a strong case against the claim that this move would help with "academic seriousness" (assuming the administration's take that attendance is equivalent to seriousness) in any way.

From the implementation perspective—why was the announcement so late? The Dean's statement was that the almanac was not finalised as Felicity dates weren't decided. But flights back to Hyderabad had already been booked. Anyone violating the Cindarella-esque midnight deadline would need to rebook at much monetary loss—something that could've been avoided had the administration informed just the reporting date (without preparing the entire almanac). The timing was such that it particularly hurt students flying in from outside India because of much higher international travel costs.

Many questioned such drastic decisions being taken without any input from the Student Parliament. Others asked why the administration had such a laser sharp focus on attendance when other crucial factors of student life, including, but not limited to, basic healthcare on campus, have consistently been ignored. Yet another

question raised its head again—why have college at all on the last and first days of two years, recognised by most institutions as holidays?

The administration does have an answer to that (early start) -- "Spring semester has several disruptions in the first month in the form of Sankranti and Felicity. It also ends in April when the heat of summer sharply rises making conducting/-facing exams even more difficult. An early start of the semester is desirable to balance all these factors, facilitate academics and ensure comfort for the community". Because two more days in April makes all the difference.

Past all arguments laid out, the issue reminds us again of concerns about the way the college administration operates. The administration's response , or lack thereof, to legitimate student concerns remains extremely troubling. Alongside a prioritization of systems to ensure seriousness by forced attendance (a system that, as we saw in an article in the previous issue, doesn't exist in many top 20 world institutes like MIT or Oxford) there is an equal aloofness when it comes to student well-being, Aarogya being the prime example in the case. Despite student representatives and extensive efforts to reason, the decision was unilateral, practically unchallenged, and a callback to several other policy matters and decisions in the past year. It seems as if institute is an oligarchy with the bare facade of a nominal democracy, but why wear that mask at all?

Removal of Post-Midnight Signing in for the Girls' Hostel

While the midnight reporting issue caused much uproar, there was a small but welcome change related to hostel reporting after midnight the previous semester. Till the beginning of the last semester, all the girls had to sign in a register if they entered the hostel after midnight, unlike the boys. (This rule was in place for the UG2k17 first year boys as well, but then taken off after). This semester, after complaints from a few fourth year students, the hostel committee met with the Parijaat warden and caretaker, and the rule was thought over and removed. While it may seem like a really small issue, it was frustrating for a lot of students knowing that they would have to sign in when they came back after 12, only because they were girls. It is delightful to see the already largely gender equal campus continue to take steps to reduce any form of discrimination, big or small.

Firecrackers in the Hostels

As residents of IIIT found out recently (or what would have been recently had this issue been published on time), bursting firecrackers in corridors does not particularly make for the best hostel environment. Diwali 2018 and the near end of end-sems saw multiple instances of firecrackers being burst both in Bakul and OBH, much to the annoyance of several residents. The in-hostel Diwali celebrations were met with a strong email backlash from a section of the students in

OBH and a stern mail by the Bakul Caretaker; with complaints targeting primarily the sheer irresponsibility and lack of concern for others, with cases of crackers being burst outside people's doors and reports of residents throwing firecrackers at the puppy that then resided inside the Bakul lawn. And that was just Diwali. The corridors lit up again come end-November, a time when many batches still had exams and some, placements. On this occasion the targets seemed to be the bathrooms. Several broken basins later it is yet unclear as to the reasoning behind such targeting — was this a response to how shit our “college life” appears to most residents? Regardless this obvious lack of concern for one’s fellow residents and the non consideration of obvious consequences for actions is a deeply concerning indicator of a deeper malaise in parts of our community —one that should ideally be tackled at some level. But how?

Prompt Responses at help.iiit.ac.in

Students have often used the help portal to fix hostel LAN issues, however not many have made use of the other facilities that are available on the portal. One can raise tickets for almost any issue, ranging from broken tubelights to fixing AC's and repairing water coolers anywhere in campus. The responses by the help team have been extremely prompt and barring a few, those who have raised tickets on the portal have had pleasant

experiences. According to a parliament member, there is a fixed time period for a ticket after which the registrar is notified if the ticket has not been cleared. Students should use this facility to help make the campus a better place for themselves, and others.

Lack of Response from the Engineering Department on the Water Bill Issue

When two authors from Ping! set out to cover the water bill issue, they had to approach several authorities to find out details. They sought information on various aspects of the issue from the Student Activities Committee (the SAC), the engineering department, the parliament and the representatives of the student community who had attended the several meetings on the issue. While the SAC was prompt in responding to the questions and concerns, the engineering department did not heed to the queries at all, despite having sent several emails, meeting them twice and even a request from the registrar to the department to provide information. This opacity makes it difficult for students to understand college issues.

The authors await a response from the parliament and the student representatives to know what happened in the time between the discussions, and the apparent resolution of at least part of the issue, that is, the refunds received in the water bill component of last semester's fees. ■



The damage and mess caused by the firecrackers.



Credit: Life mailing list

The Veg | “Non-Veg” Casteism Dilemma

Jaidev Shriram and Mallika Subramanian



'UPPER' CLASS ?

Credits: Vanalata Bulusu

The whiff of biryani and the ensuing rush to procure it is unmissable. Some make plans to reach the mess at 12:30 sharp, some get vegetarians to register as non-vegetarians so that their friends get a few extra chicken pieces. The demand is massive and it's at moments like this that a hidden Indian divide presents itself. Vegetarians are asked to sit on a different floor, opposite Yukthahar, making us question if Kadamb itself is trying to segregate the meat lovers and the rest.

A lot of personal interactions and stories convey different reasons for this but each one of them show one inconsistency- there is no official reason for separate seating; it all depends on the whims and fancies of the Kadamb employees. But before we dive into IIIT's kitchen, let's go back a bit.

Vegetarianism, is often assumed to be the norm in India, encouraged or imposed by ideologies of religion and caste. However, recent studies reveal that this may not be true in all parts of the country. Tracing back into Indian history, it is evident that there were considerable differences among people with a predominant caste system in place. The segregation of people into upper and lower caste merely on the basis of birth was common in those days. So much so, this divide extended even to food!

In the ancient Vedic period(between 1500 and 500 BCE), although the laws allowed the consumption of some kinds of meat, vegetarianism was encouraged. Some vedic texts quote that, "There is no sin in eating meat... but abstention brings great rewards." A ubiquitous belief was that food was not just a means of sustenance but your choice of diet determined your social status. Food was equated with wealth because a person who had an unending access to food was a successful person.

For instance, the brahmins who were the first tier of the caste system refrained from eating foods that contained

onions and garlic, the reason being that our mind becomes evil, we tend to be more angry and our mind can never be got under control. This mimics a concept known as the Flight of the Elite, where Elite try to intentionally separate themselves from common folk by looking down on some of their practices. Its safe to conclude that the attitude that people have towards food is indicative of something that might have been considered as a form of casteism in the past.

"Only fools argue whether to eat meat or not. They don't understand truth, nor do they meditate on it. Who can define what is meat and what is plant? Who knows where the sin lies, being a vegetarian or a non-vegetarian?" - Guru Nanak

The Worldview Paradox

Day 1. Speech 1. The Director P. J. Narayan begins an inspiring speech on "Worldview", a concept that IIIT supposedly follows with the goal of preparing us for what's outside. With such progressive and liberal thinking, we must ask ourselves, is this non-veg - veg divide a worldly concept?

No.

In fact, it's an Indian one. The very term 'non - vegetarian' is an Indian English word (Cohesion. Nehru Institute of National Integration. 1970.) , a negation of what the rest of the world often considers as normal. For ages, nomenclature has been taken for granted but what people do not realize is that the name of an idea is crucial to the reception. Take the pro-life, pro-choice argument for example; by naming one side as pro-life, it gives people a false idea that by not supporting it they endorse murdering unborn babies. It's a concept that linguists consider to be vital to influencing public perception. Similarly, the term non-vegetarian strikes down the right of meat eaters (as they will be referred to henceforth) to consume what they enjoy. To this end, in a free world, it is no nation's or university's place to segregate those who prefer different types of food. The harsh reality for those who see value in such separation is that it doesn't exist anywhere else. Despite the rise of veganism in the US designated vegan and meat areas aren't available in restaurants. How is IIIT's atmosphere encouraging worldview then?

The plot chickens...

IIIT's On-Off Affair with Meat

It is indeed interesting to trace back the history of the Kadamb mess-the only mess that serves meat on campus. To begin with, neither of the four messes served meat. As a compensation for this, the guest house canteen used to serve as a proxy mess for three meals a week. This was one of the first initiatives taken towards the introduction of meat on campus. Following this in 2016, the Kadamb mess started serving meat, thus meeting the appetites of the meat lovers. At first the separation amongst plates existed; considering the radical vegetarians who also visited the mess. Nevertheless, the washing areas and the waste bins were common. Gradually the mess authorities brought about a change and the separation in the washing areas and waste bins was introduced. Gradually the mess authorities brought about a

change and the separation in the washing areas and waste bins was introduced. Furthermore, the present scenario is such that the division not only exists amongst the plates, washing areas and waste bins but also the areas of dining! The logistics involved in separating the waste is beyond the IQ of these writers unfortunately. Perhaps we may be illuminated another day but until then, this can be seen as a glaring example of the divide that exists for reasons beyond logistics.

Naturally, the responses received to these changes were mixed. There was a section of people who endorsed this divide and on the other hand another section was against it. Based on the replies to a survey and poll conducted on Facebook for the students, it was observed that more individuals supported the divide or didn't mind it than those who didn't support it. However, their opinion was primarily on the basis that they consider this division "neutral" and harmless, and want to maintain the status quo. Is this entirely true? Perhaps, you, the reader wonder the same. What difference does it make?

The difference lies in whether or not we are willing to put in more effort to eradicate the idea of the divide being a normal occurrence. Having a nation that doesn't feel the need to endorse and cater to meat eaters and vegetarians separately is a part of unification. Given the massive number of lynchings that happen on food based grounds, how can one argue that the division in food is an irrelevant matter with little consequence? Laws are effective only in the hand of justice, cultural change on the other hand is effective across time. There isn't any neutral stance on this issue either. If you don't mind it, you effectively endorse it. If you oppose it, well... you oppose it.

The one reason that may partly justify why such a divide persists is a personal one. One person we interviewed had this to say when asked about having a common wash basin for meat and veg food:

(Slightly paraphrased): "I don't like the idea of the sponge touching meat and then later touching the veg plates. It's not that I disrespect non vegetarians, it's just that I don't want the stench or any particles to end up on my food."

Unsurprisingly, individuals like him were easy to find. To its credit, IIIT does have a lot of diversity in the people who come here with many have grown up following strict family rules about meat and cleanliness for religious reasons or otherwise. Hence it's completely understandable that when the idea of a single plate is brought up, they get disturbed.

There is a very obvious solution though:

If the idea of non vegetarian food disgusts you, move to any of the other 3 messes which serve equally good/bad food.

Citing the various reasons why the vegetarians believe that this divide ought to exist merely widens the gap more and more. As three among the four messes are purely vegetarian messes, there is a good variety available. With due respect to the vegetarians with certain beliefs, they can avoid the Kadamb mess if it causes them trouble. It is purely illogical

for strict vegetarians to expect segregation done for them when they could bring their own plates if they were that particular. **Isn't expecting segregation a form of casteism anyway?** The belief that vegetarian food is pure and contaminated by sharing a space with meat eaters is purely a personal decision that is riddled with issues, issues that are not meant to be taken up by the mess admin. Especially when you consider the fact that IIIT controls the Kadamb mess.

Are we alone in this fight?

Nope. IIIT isn't the only premier institute to be pushed back by such discrimination: IIT Bombay's Hostel 11 seems to have a nearly identical issue. At IIT, the recently introduced chicken dishes came as an unwelcome surprise to many steadfast vegetarians with outrage that forced the administration to separate plates for meat and vegetarian food. The only difference is that the story blew up nationally. Twitter in true twitter fashion, argued that this was the modern version of casteism while some dismissed it as an overblown issue. In the end, if you do think that this is a tiny problem, understand that letting even the tiniest form of prejudice is harmful in the long run, especially when we fail to realize that it exists in the first place.

India's so called liberal institutions are plagued by this modern form of discrimination. If it wasn't for the constitution, it's not far too expect separate plates for different castes is it? The extremist ideologies of a few individuals are what cause a tiff at times. Ideally, this "casteism" is wrong. Everyone is entitled the freedom to choose to eat whatever he/she prefers. Even in the worst case scenario, if some vegetarians are extremely particular about their food, then it would be beneficial for them to opt for a pure veg mess, than the one that serves non-veg too.

In conclusion, this issue is part of a toxic Indian intolerance towards meat. Intolerance that is so ingrained and intertwined in our culture and ways that lynchings have been increasingly common for simple matters such as consuming beef, all because there is a sense of elitism that comes with being vegetarian in India. By permitting the aforementioned divide on campus, IIIT is taking what it feels is a neutral stand for the sake of safety from backlash instead of stepping its foot on the ground for what's right. Choosing what to eat is a personal decision and no one deserves to be questioned or judged for taking that step. Definitely not the institute that's supposed to make its students better citizens. ■



The non-vegetarian waste bin.

Credits: Zubair Abid

New Canteen, Newer Problems

Mahathi Vempati

It was an unusually quiet 1 am at JC - as IIIT's Juice Canteen and the area around it is popularly known - as I was walking towards the milk place. It was during the vacations, so there weren't any students around. Rajshekhar, the milk bhaiyya wasn't at the counter, and I saw he was deep in conversation with Dinesh, the juice bhaiyya on the other side. When he caught my eye he came towards the milk place and swiftly jumped across the Tantra serving area and settled in there.

I found this a little amusing, and I must have laughed. He laughed too, and said 'Do you know that's the only way I can get in and out of the counter at this time?'

He went on to tell me that to come out of the milk area, he would have to go through the door into the Tantra kitchen, and then come out from the other door there, but since the Tantra canteen closed at 11pm, and locked their kitchen door as well, he made do with jumping across the serving area.

This led to a lively conversation with both Rajshekhar and Dinesh about the new renovated canteen, both lamenting about how they preferred the old place.





The current fruit storage area.

Credits: Suryansh Srivastava

Juice Canteen

Dinesh came to IIIT in 2005, and made a shed with wood from the jungle. They have been here on contract basis since 2008. In 2015, the stallcom of the batch that was leaving college then had asked them if there was anything they could do to make things more convenient, and so they had a better shed built, the old JC as the second years and over know it.

The old JC, the shed outside the Tantra canteen, was a pretty decent place according to Dinesh. It was spacious enough to work conveniently and fruits would be stored in the now washing area of Tantra canteen. The JC also supplies fruits to all the messes, and it was easy to do the supplying without disrupting work when the fruits were close to the work area.

In the renovated area, however, the JC faces several issues. The biggest issue, Dinesh feels is that the fruits are stored all the way in Bakul, where some of them get spoiled too, due to lack of ventilation. Enough fruit cannot be kept handy, so sometimes, they are unable to provide some fruit juices because they would have to get them from Bakul. This is also inconvenient while supplying fruits to the messes.

The serving area is not suited for a juice place either.

The old JC had two platforms, a shorter one on the inside at waist height where juice could be conveniently made and a taller one where it would be served. Now, they have only one broad platform, all for the serving, and the making juice is restricted to a small area in the side, where sometimes all three workers have to work together.

There is no place for a fridge either, which was the main reason the sitaphal juice, which needed a lot of preprocessing and storage, was discontinued. They have also been unable to store strawberries or give out cold cut fruit in the summer. There is a cupboard on the outside, that can store a few fruits, although it is nowhere sufficient to house the nearly two-ton supply they get every week. The fruits stored there are susceptible to heat and rain as well.

During the summers, the juice customers come in and fill in the entire canteen, leaving little place for the Tantra canteen customers. In fact, about 2-3 months ago, the Tantra canteen put up a sign board saying that outside food wasn't allowed during lunch time as several people were coming in with their own lunches, occupying the seats, and sometimes ordering just the juice.

Milk Canteen

Rajshekhar has been around here about seven years, but got his contract just after this canteen was renovated. He says he finds the service area too small, and the window too restrictive. Previously he would get a 180 degree area to interact with customers, and the students aren't unaware of his order taking skills, efficiently serving the sometimes twelve or so people surrounding him. The current setup allows for him to see only about three or four people at a time.

Sometimes, new customers think that the milk counter and the Tantra canteen are the same business and paytm the wrong numbers. "This leads to squabbles between us" says Rajshekhar. There is also no cupboard to store vessels and cooking equipment but a doorless shelf.

General

There aren't as many tables and chairs outside as there used to be, and the place is largely wasted, with customers of juice, milk and Tantra all making do either inside or right outside the canteen.

The cash counter of Tantra canteen also unnecessarily takes up too much place, which could have been used for seating.

And there is only one door to come out for the Tantra canteen and the milk people from the backside, which they have to use even for doing small tasks like cleaning or clearing up a few tables.

Communication Before

Rajshekhar and Dinesh were not informed or asked for suggestions before the renovation of the place. They came to know of the construction when they were asked to shift to Basketball Canteen (BBC). When they saw the construction happening in ways that might inconvenience them, they spoke to the administration to change things but it was met with a response of "We need to follow the original plan".

Communication After

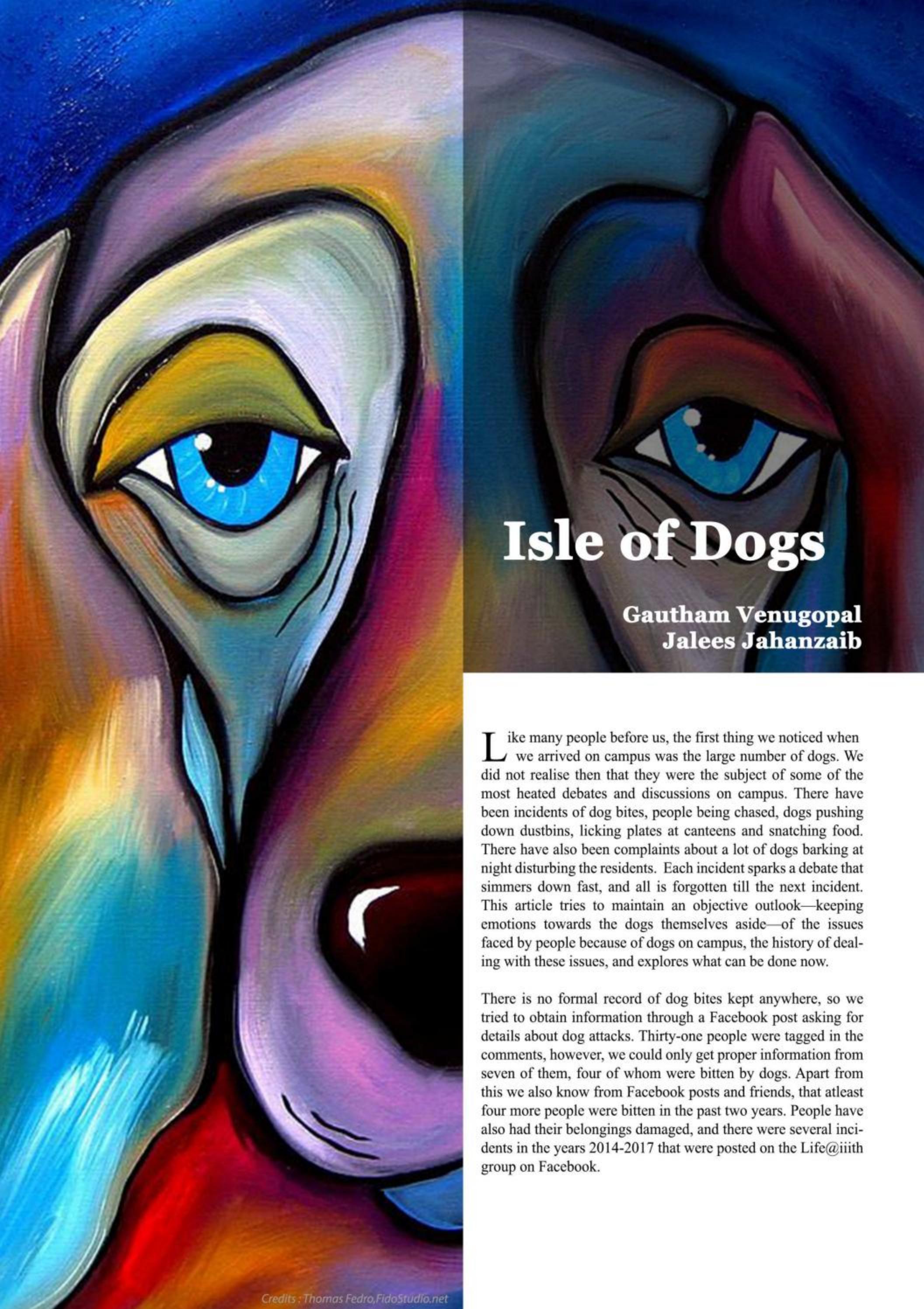
They complained to the student parliament and stallcom right after it was built. The issue is being taken up by stallcom and parliament. Building new stalls next to David's stall is being considered. This would give them enough place for storage and service, and will keep their customers outside, leaving enough place for the Tantra canteen customers.

Both of them hope that something can be done as soon as possible. After all, their service has been appreciated by the students for a long time now. ■

The serving space has reduced drastically.



Credit: Suryansh Srivastava



Isle of Dogs

**Gautham Venugopal
Jalees Jahanzaib**

Like many people before us, the first thing we noticed when we arrived on campus was the large number of dogs. We did not realise then that they were the subject of some of the most heated debates and discussions on campus. There have been incidents of dog bites, people being chased, dogs pushing down dustbins, licking plates at canteens and snatching food. There have also been complaints about a lot of dogs barking at night disturbing the residents. Each incident sparks a debate that simmers down fast, and all is forgotten till the next incident. This article tries to maintain an objective outlook—keeping emotions towards the dogs themselves aside—of the issues faced by people because of dogs on campus, the history of dealing with these issues, and explores what can be done now.

There is no formal record of dog bites kept anywhere, so we tried to obtain information through a Facebook post asking for details about dog attacks. Thirty-one people were tagged in the comments, however, we could only get proper information from seven of them, four of whom were bitten by dogs. Apart from this we also know from Facebook posts and friends, that atleast four more people were bitten in the past two years. People have also had their belongings damaged, and there were several incidents in the years 2014-2017 that were posted on the Life@iiith group on Facebook.

The Beginnings of the Campus Canine-Management Cell (CCC)

Dogs had always been around in campus, but as their number started increasing and the problems caused by them became apparent—predominantly the problem of dogs snatching food from people—it was realised that something had to be done about it.

And thus, CCC was started by Prof. S Roy Choudhury and Prof. Abhijit Mitra in the year 2014 to resolve these problems. At that time CCC was not very serious. After Prof. S Roy Choudhury left, the CCC was mainly managed by Prof. Prabhakar. They proposed feeding dogs at designated places at designated times to control the dogs from snatching peoples' food at night.

However, it was not until Royal—a dog both awed and feared—started behaving uncontrollably (and with it a few other dogs behaving aggressively as well) that CCC came to imbibe what they say in the introduction page of their website today (refer to their goals). At that time in mid-2015, a meeting was called by Prof. Prabhakar due to the large number of dog incidents. A list of around thirty incidents were compiled by Sai Krishna, now an alumnus. Several students and professors attended the meeting.

The Laws

When one searches for what the law says in this regard, it isn't initially very straightforward whether dogs can be relocated. In fact, the law that most people cite—Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules 2001—does not mention the word relocation or anything related to it.

The Prevention of Cruelty against Animals (1960) law says:

If a person ... without reasonable cause, abandons any animal in circumstances which render it likely that it will suffer pain by reason of starvation, thirst ... they shall be punishable by law.

However, according to the Animal Welfare Board of India website, in a document titled 'Animal Protection Laws for the Guidance Of Police, HAWOs, NGOs AND AWOs' relocation is not permissible at all, and courts have ordered against relocation multiple times.

'Under the Govt. of India, Animal Birth Control Rules 2001, no sterilized dogs can be relocated from their area. As per five different High Court orders, sterilized dogs have to remain in their original areas. If the dog is not sterilized, the society can simply ask an animal welfare organization to sterilize and vaccinate the dog. They cannot relocate them. Relocation is not permissible, as it would cause more problems such as an increase in dog bites as new dogs will move into the area who are unfamiliar with residents and therefore more likely to be hostile.'

Infact, in the same document, they also mention:

While residents and Associations are free to address institutional agencies for redressal of grievances in this matter, no resident/association will interfere with the freedom of other residents in caring and attending animals. Intimidating in any manner, those who feed and care for animals is a criminal offence. Apart from action under appropriate criminal law, such persons will render themselves liable for action under CCS Conduct Rules.

Achievements of the CCC

Given this framework, to achieve the objective of decreasing the population and eventually removing dogs from campus, CCC does the following:

1. Vaccinating and sterilising the dogs
2. Making sure dogs are fed in order to avoid aggression on account of hunger
3. Spreading awareness about common dog behaviour
4. Consulting the vet on account of injury or disease

Sterilization, apart from ensuring that dogs cannot reproduce also ensures that dogs are less aggressive, and both dog fights and aggression against human beings decreases. CCC has been somewhat successful in limiting the dogs on campus by sterilizing the ones already on campus and getting puppies adopted (that were born on campus back when the dogs were left unsterilized), and decreasing aggression by feeding the dogs.

People generally complain about sudden surge in population of dogs on campus in past two years but when cross checked with CCC members, the numbers don't seem to add up. "The net increase of dogs after CCC was established is estimated to be around five and most reports of seemingly drastic increases in the number of dogs are partially false, as the 'new' dogs which many people have referred to were just dogs that used to formerly reside in the forest area" says a CCC member.



A vaccination drive.

Credits: ccc.iiit.ac.in

Limitations

Although CCC is an institute funded body, it is also basically just a group of volunteers (IIIT students moreover, with assignments, exams and whatnot) who get nothing in return for feeding, vaccinating and sterilizing the dogs. Thus, the CCC is limited in its capability to help the situation. While they can be expected to find holes in the campus walls through which dogs may come in and report them to the engineering department (a division of the administration), they cannot be held responsible to get the holes themselves fixed, which would require them to constantly badger the engineering department.



Credits: Dogs of IITH

"I have conducted multiple inspections of the campus wall and wherever I spotted holes or breaks in the wall I reported it to the Engineering department and Mr Ramana V.V, Deputy Registrar, General Administration Office. But there is a limit to how much supervision I can do to ensure that these holes are closed. After all, CCC is a voluntary group." says Shreedhar Manek, who has been involved with CCC since its beginnings.

According to Yashas Samaga, another CCC member, when new dogs enter, they are not fed, and non-CCC members are told not to pet them when seen. "I don't think CCC members can do much about it," he adds.

Similarly, they do try to get the dogs sterilized, but it is a very challenging task and there is little they can do. For example, Whitie, a dog who is most likely pregnant now, kept running into the forest area whenever the sterilization van arrived, and CCC members couldn't pursue her into the forest for the fear of endangering themselves.

Other Attempts to Reduce Aggression

Last year, Prof. Saswata Shannigrahi sent public emails complaining about defecation of dogs on campus. Soon after, the institute employed Veerappa¹, to help clean the defecation, separate dogs during occasional fights, and feed the dogs in the morning. The professor also tried to collect evidence from everyone on how dogs were causing harm to the residents so as to register a complaint with the municipality, but the plan didn't materialize.

Sai Krishna used ultrasonic dog deterrents (see section on ultrasonic deterrents), and attempted to make them more widespread.

The parliament did not comment on the issue when contacted.

Shortcomings of the CCC

Members of the CCC have been accused of not being sympathetic to those who are afraid of dogs and complain about them, and enforcing their ideals on everyone else. They have also been accused of downplaying issues, and citing laws to

close the matter, implying there are no other solutions to problems.

Also, most members of the CCC are dog lovers, and therefore do not empathise with the problems faced by people. The intro talk is generally attractive to dog lovers, and few people join CCC because they dislike dogs, the members almost want to learn how to live with dogs. And being a voluntary body, there's no incentive to actively look for solutions to the issues.

While neutered dogs are marked with an ear being snipped, vaccinated dogs cannot be distinguished from dogs that aren't vaccinated. Unless one is familiar with the campus dogs, they cannot tell the vaccinated ones from those that come in. The collars only signify that a dog is friendly. The CCC says there have been issues with trying to do this. The vaccination was last done on 28 September, 2016.

Most importantly, the CCC does not keep a record of dog attacks on campus, which is why we had to go around asking. If there are mails received, those exist, but there are no clear statistics about the number of dog bites by which dog, and the dog attacks that have taken place.

Possible Solutions and Feasibility

1. Having an Accountable Committee

While shortcomings of the CCC are valid, the body being made of volunteers is not accountable to anyone. There needs to be an accountable body, either a student body, or part of the administration to take care of issues like dogs coming in through holes in the campus walls, marking vaccinated dogs and recording of incidents. The IIM Ahmedabad administration took the help of the NGO - HSI/India to help with their dog issues.²

2. Garbage Disposal

According to the CCC website, with open garbage bins it is unlikely that a dog will find no food, (and therefore want to stay on campus). The canteens, messes and restaurants in the campus are still lacking in managing their waste disposal systems. The college has recently taken to setting up closed garbage bins on raised platforms, which will prevent the dogs

¹ In an unfortunate unexpected incident, Veerappa passed away recently.

from finding food on campus.

3. Restricting Dogs to a Part of Campus

This is actually something that is implemented successfully to some extent in some of the bigger university campuses of India. However it is actually quite infeasible to restrict the dogs of IIIT to a particular fenced small area (we can't afford to designate a significant part of the campus just for dogs) of the campus especially, when you try to address needs of the dogs such as food and water.

4. Taming of Dogs

Although this seems like an ideal solution, it is a bit expensive. A permanent instructor(s) would have to be present on campus, and dog trainers charge around 2.5-4K a month per dog in India, for a few classes a week. Older dogs are also harder to train.

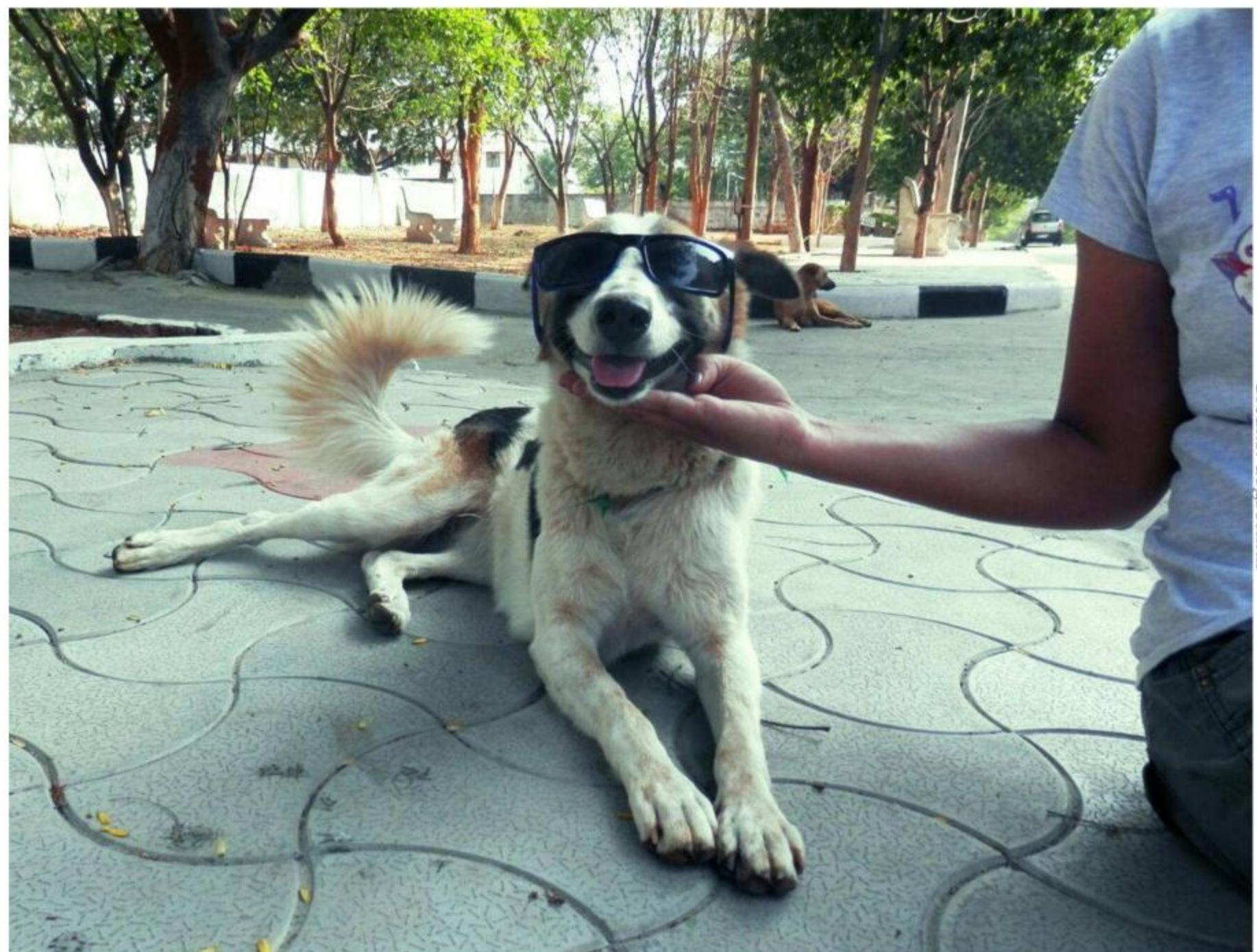
5. Usage of Ultrasonic Dog Deterrents

Ultrasonic Dog Deterrents (also known as dog dazers) are equipment that would cost between Rs. 850 to Rs. 1650 that send sounds of certain frequencies that are not audible to humans but produces discomfort in dogs. They are widely used by dog trainers around the world as it is

believed to only cause minor discomfort. Also, as such devices are quite small, one can easily carry it in a pocket and dogs will probably not identify that it is the device that is causing the discomfort. Thus the negative reinforcement will be associated with the user themselves and so, after using it for some time, it may not be required to use it any more. Thus, it has been suggested that use of ultrasonic lasers by just 20-30 people who regularly go out in the night or early morning would be enough to prevent dogs coming towards humans.

Authors' Opinion

The main conflict between the CCC and the supposed "Dog Haters" is more of a conflict of ethics and beliefs rather than logic. While the CCC believes that it would be a violation of the rights of the dogs to dislocate them from campus, others find it absurd that they have to read up on how to deal with dogs, sort of as a prerequisite to attending IIIT. Thus, the conflict becomes much more harder to resolve. ■



Credits: dogsofinith

² <http://www.hsi.org>



The Invisible People Behind OBH

Shreedhar Manek

We approached Saraswati*, a lady in her mid-late 20s sitting on the mud ground with her little son, requesting for some of her time to answer a few basic questions. She was gracious and scampered away asking us to wait, in order to pull out a couple of chairs from inside one of their homes. The walls and roofs of these homes were made of tin and roofs covered with tarpaulin. We told them that chairs were unnecessary and we could talk to them standing, but she desisted only after being unable to find the chairs she was looking for after looking inside two of their homes.

Over the years, the number of shanties behind Palash Nivas, or OBH as it is popularly called, has seen a gradual increase. After the construction of the new girls hostel was completed, work on campus has been limited and a number of shanties are now unoccupied. There are seven shanties with each housing families of four.

The people living in these shanties are the invisible people of IIIT. They exist, but only in the shadows. We see them sometimes, but never really notice them. That there are shanties behind OBH and are occupied by people may come off as a surprise to many.

"It was scary when we first came here. There were snakes, mosquitoes. No proper place to stay. But now we are used to it," says Saraswati. She tells us that cobras are spotted often. But they are used to it, even with her son—who must not

*name changed



Residents of the shanties.

have been more than four—scurrying about on his small plastic cycle toy. “Wild boars are also spotted sometimes... one was right here, the other night,” she says, pointing towards some of the homes further in.

Saraswati’s family and the other families living in the shanties work as labourers in construction. Before coming to work here in IIIT, they were agricultural labourers back home in their native villages. They are all from within Telangana, some of them from the adjoining Medak district. Men and women both work in the construction on campus. However, with less work these days, the women were staying at home while the men did the working. As daily wage labourers, it was apparent that this meant a substantially reduced family income.

By now, a number of women have congregated next to Saraswati. She says that she has been here for three or four years now. One of the very few men around also gets involved and says that he has been here for seven years. Most people have been staying here for three to four years, though a few have come as recently as three months, and some others were here for a while but left as the availability of work on campus decreased.

Once the man joined in, the women were visibly quiet unless specifically addressed. The man took over the conversation, before attending to a call and leaving for work.

They have a bathroom with water access provided by the institute. However, they say that it was only built a year ago. Before that they did have bathrooms but with no water access. It is no surprise, then, that they preferred to go “outside”. In other words, out in the open in the adjoining forest area. Any early lark who has lived in the E-Block of OBH before a couple of years, will tell you about the daily sights of people uncomfortably squatting in the bushes with a mug in hand. The mud path that leads from OBH to the faculty quarters would then become unusable on account of the consequent stench.

Drinking water is accessible through the water cooler in OBH. They use old Bisleri water cans in order to have their fill whenever required.

The houses with their tin roofs can get especially hot in the summer. They have electricity access through OBH, they say, pointing towards a lone insulated wire which seemed too exposed to be safe. Most houses have fans. Stand fans—not ceiling fans—but three families don’t. “They are yet to buy them,” they say. Very few, about two or three families, also made use of desert coolers in the sweltering summer heat. But neither fans nor coolers or other appliances such as light bulbs were provided to them and had to be bought.

Even though they all have Aadhaar numbers, they seemed to be unaware of the government’s Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) which would give them access to LPG cylinders. They used firewood collected from the adjoining

woods in order to cook, some of which they had stored under a shed right next to where we stood. Apart from being inconvenienced, women are the primary victims of the negative health consequences of firewood smoke, which they are directly exposed to while cooking.

In addition to the limitations that they have to how they cook, what they cook is limited by the lack of access to fresh vegetables and the unavailability of refrigeration. They get their vegetables once a week from the market in Lingampally, which is 8 km away. Due to this, they consume more of vegetables which do not spoil soon, such as potatoes and onions.

Health issues crop up every now and then. Mosquitoes are a major problem. They would often request security for the regular fumigation that the rest of the campus frequently undergoes, but little heed would be paid to their requests. One of the men once got malaria, for which he had to be admitted, first to a government-run, and later a private hospital. Minor fevers are much more common.

The residents of the shanties do not have any institutional health support. They have to run pillar to post for any ailment, big or small. They have only the one point of contact with the institute, Mr. Srinivas Goud, who they say has been quite helpful in the past. He has given them rice and sometimes money when required for a special occasion, but he could not help them get access to even a rudimentary health-care service on campus. They lamented this lack of a "health card" which they could use. Mr. Goud, on his part, does not

seem to be a permanent staff member of the institute and may not have the awareness of Aarogya or the authority to allow them to use it. This results in the exclusion of perhaps those who need the services of basic medical aid the most. Construction workers are susceptible to injuries and inhale concrete dust which further causes health issues, both in the short and long term.

Housing for construction workers has been managed exceptionally by IIT Gandhinagar, who back in 2014 got a Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) award for "Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment". Times of India reports, "IIT Gandhinagar ensures dignified and sanitary housing conditions for construction workers by including special conditions in all its contracts that obligate contractors to construct clean, hygienic and well ventilated workers' housing with adequate water supply, electrical and sanitation facilities." They quote S K Jain, the director of IIT Gandhinagar, saying, "We aspire to prepare graduates who are sensitive to societal needs. This cannot happen if the institute does not exhibit its own strong commitment to the less-privileged members of our community."

Saraswati and the others may have migrated to Hyderabad in order to work and earn their livelihood, but they say they preferred it back home where the least they had were pucca houses. For now, they make do with visiting whenever there is a festival approaching. ■

The author thanks Sraavani Gundepudi for her invaluable help in interacting with the residents.

Housing complex at IIT Gandhinagar.



Credits: twitter.com/iitgn



Cracked-mia: Visible Cracks in Academia

Shantanu Prabhat

Vivek* completed his research well in time to prepare for what follows after his PhD. He submitted his thesis to his advisor for a review. What follows next is the kind of stuff horror stories are made of. To begin with, his thesis takes three months just to get his advisor's attention, who takes another one whole month to review it. Delayed by four months already, Vivek works on the feedback for a month and pushes it in the review pipeline to his external reviewers. It's anyone's guess how long the review process by the external members would take, and how much longer would it take to fix a thesis defence presentation.

This episode paints a very grim but an almost accurate picture of the academic setup, specifically in our college. Vivek is not alone. The review processes are slow, the guidance is often inadequate and there are no guidelines for either the advisor or the advisee on the ideal way to pursue this. There are some visible cracks in our academic setup, which we have grown to accept —either because we have grown fond of them, or are too scared to disturb the status quo. A five minute conversation with any Master's or PhD student would inform you of the sorry state of affairs.

To begin with, academic setups and incentives aren't well aligned towards students' well-being. This creates a grossly mismanaged system with little or no checks and balances. There is no incentive per se for an advisor to care, and there are no high penalties either. There are few or no committees or guidelines, or any culture for any recourse. Information is opaque, and there is no authority to appeal to.

*name changed



To gauge the magnitude of the problem, let's get into some other familiar scenarios. As a dual degree student you enter your fifth year, and are now registering as a masters student. Your advisor informs you that they don't have enough funds to pay for your tuition support. You sulk and go back and ask your parents to pay for one more semester—a research semester. You wonder if this could have been avoided if you had an inkling of your advisor's inability to support a student back when you started your Honours project with them in your third year. You realise there isn't much you can do about it now, and get back to your research. Like most things academic, your hands are tied and there are regulations and procedures you weren't aware of.

Shalini* burned the midnight oil for days to get her paper through in this prestigious conference. She puts her name on the paper, and then grudgingly adds her advisor's name too. He is unaware of what Shalini submitted, but says he has full faith in what she did. A day before the conference is scheduled, her advisor takes a five minute brief about the paper from her and then flies off to the US to present it, leaving her behind. She shrugs the whole incident off.

Ashish* took an interesting course on Deep Learning (DL) in Natural Language Processing this semester. He has some fair degree of proficiency in DL techniques, but his work in CVIT doesn't inspire him much. He thinks detecting sarcasm through DL is a much more interesting problem to work on than using DL on handwriting recognition. He is convinced that he should change his domain and hence his advisor. Ashish is scared of putting this idea forward to his advisor, who he thinks won't take it very well. He thinks it's best to wait out another semester. It's risky business and this semester's honours grades are still with his current advisor.

There are several such commonly occurring incidents that we come across. These incidents force us to ponder over some important questions.

Should change of advisor be an easy task? If students are seen as an equal partner in research, shouldn't they have the flexibility to choose who to work under and in what capacity? Especially as an undergrad, when you are constantly learning and exposing yourself to new fields and altering research interests. Moreso in IIIT, students are expected to pick their research advisor at the end of their second or third year. While there is significant investment that an advisor has put in a student and they must have a say too, the greater say must lie with the student. It should be ensured that the student's transition from one advisor to another be smooth without the harrowing consequences of pride of their advisors.

How much control should an advisor exercise over their students? Currently there are a host of permissions one must take from their advisors for different things (Mess exemptions, TA approval, Course approval etc). While certain things may have some rationale, like permissions to go on internships, other things like credits overloading must not have unilateral veto. Internships are like another job and your current advisor must have a say if you are taking up another work, but academic courses are more reliant towards the students' interests and obligations and the rationale of a unilateral veto makes little sense.

This brings us to the other question. Is there fair work expectations from students? There is no recourse to take if your advisor expects you to work on holidays and weekends, or is not sympathetic to your desire to go for that coveted research internship in a university abroad because of their strict policy on working in summers no matter what. There are fair work practices in the industry, but we don't have anything of that sort for our student researchers in academia. While the common argument to make is one of—you are a student and this is a phase of exploration and learning, and your guide knows what is best—which would work if it was purely work of learning but papers out of these research is critical and important for advancement of your advisor's career. So, is it labour? And if the students are creating work of value (hint: like employees do), shouldn't they have fair work hours and other similar protections too?

*name changed



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

And *drumrolls*, the biggest bone in contention—the issue of sharing authorship in papers. Conventional wisdom suggests authorship must reflect the amount of effort that goes into writing the paper. But more often than not, this is not exactly how it pans out. Often times, it is expected to include your advisor's name in the paper immaterial to their actual contribution. It is a difficult conversation to have with your advisor if the default is to have their name in the credits. If the default wasn't to share authorship no matter what, it may even lead to more fruitful discussion and involvement with the student over their work. Since there is no incentive to get involved and guide because authorship would come anyway, professors can afford to neglect their students and their research. Like Vivek's*, the papers take long to get a feedback or the meetings are few and far in between. Systematically removing such a social and cultural expectation in academia could foster an environment where advisors can negotiate their authorship and also view their students as important colleagues in their research groups. Moreover, the decision to present the paper at conferences and talks can similarly be discussed between students and professors and not lie solely under the professor's discretion.

The premise of academic pursuit is—A motivated student pursues their research under the ambit and scholarship of their research guide. This guidance comes in forms of identifying a research worthy problem, helping explore key papers and concepts of the field, guide them through solutions to those problems or allied issues that might prop up. The student is expected to grow academically in their pursuit through these years of study and come out as a “trained researcher” from the other end of the tunnel. This long scholarship under a certain research guide often gets fraught with issues, some of which could be enabled by the setup and system we have. Understanding that an advisor-advisee relationship has a huge power gap, we must create systems to keep them in check. There must be ways to appeal for faster review of a thesis, or lodge a complaint over some neglect. Like all professional relationships, there must be a written contract which specifies roles of both the parties clearly. Graduate students are increasingly unionising over fair pay and work hours in the United States. Columbia University students went on an indefinite hunger strike this December over recognition for

their union. Similarly, Iowa graduate school students are on a strike over other issues.

After all who likes to wait forever to get their manuscript approved? Or be informed that they would not be getting any stipend this semester? Horror movie material, I know. ■



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM



BOOOONEEE

Or How Brooklyn Nine-Nine Churns Comedy Out Of Crime

Deepti Mahesh

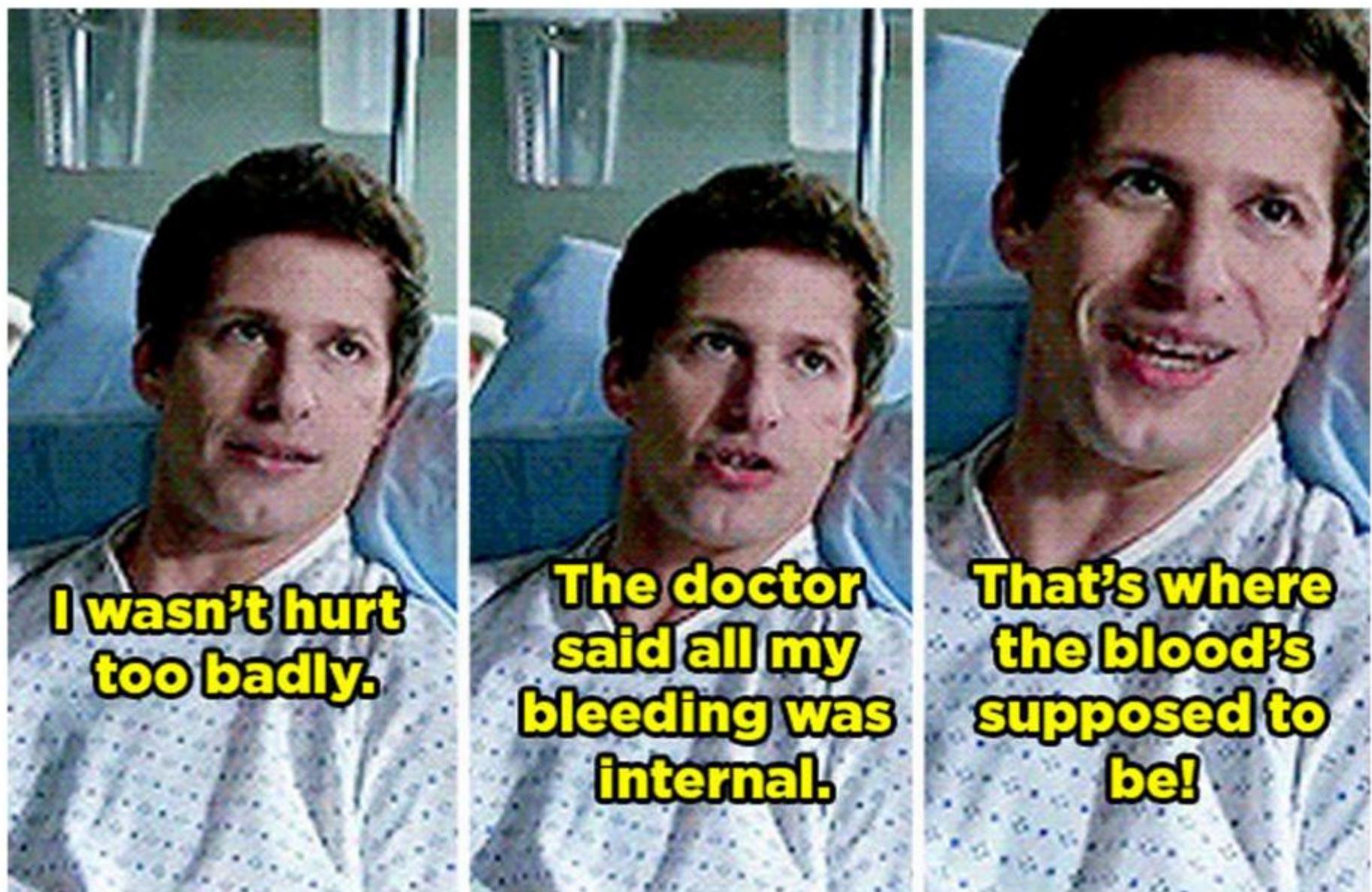
TV is always such an uncertain business. Shows loved by almost everyone that watch it often don't make it past the first season (*Firefly*, anyone?), whereas some shows that hardly anyone seems to watch run well past the sixth season.

When Brooklyn Nine Nine was axed in 2018, the show began trending worldwide on Twitter. The massive outpouring of fans wailing, bitching, and declaring their unhappiness brought publicity to the show like never before. It startled a lot of people (who hadn't even heard of Jake Peralta before) that the likes of legends and celebrities such as Mark Hamill, Guillermo del Toro and Lin-Manuel Miranda were among these passionate fans agonizing over the recent events.

But at what point did such a traditionally structured comedy show gain so much cult following?

Roots

Brooklyn Nine Nine was created by Michael Schur and Dan Goor. Schur, mostly known for his work as one of the excellent writers of *The Office*, has become one of the greats in the show-running biz. He co-created *Parks and Recreation*. He pitched Golden Globe nominee *The Good Place* to NBC on his own. These shows are not only some of the best comedies ever, but they also enjoy a certain fame that usually comes with a massive cult-like worship



In the 40s and 50s, TV series focused on work or on the family but rarely were they combined or brought together. One offered a respite from the other for example, home meant comfort and a vacation from the anxiety and stress of work. But from the 70s and 80s, this divisive line was blurred giving rise to what is common today: "work families" or the "pal-com". Home life was now defined as a chosen loving network made up of co-workers and friends rather than biological family.

The show takes you on journey with these characters and their unconventional portrayal of family as they get through life relying heavily on humor and irony but without undermining the goodness in them. The core characters in these series are not yelling for attention about the feats they have accomplished. They're quietly working, accepting and giving love and improving upon themselves.

But nonetheless a cop comedy is hard to pull off, because how exactly do you churn out comedy from crime?

What Makes It Special

The answer lies not so much in the murder, but more in the way each crime is dealt with by the squad. The undeniable chemistry between each and every cast member and the strong, platonic bonds forged between their characters sets the show up for a great run. Most scenes, whether it involves Holt's paternal attitude to Jake, Jake and Amy's genuine and healthy relationship, Rosa's no-nonsense badassery or even the lengths Hitchcock and Scully go to avoid doing any work, are brilliantly delivered with the jokes getting more and more absurd; but never at the expense of heartfelt

scenes. Moreover apart from the all of the regular tropes, an aspect of the show that sets it apart is in its approach of serious issues not typically dealt with by comic shows of this nature, especially while still retaining the "comic" aspect.

Approach to Serious Issues

Brooklyn Nine-Nine doesn't often get serious, but when it does, it makes it count.

When asked by a fan about how mental illness is tackled on the show, Andy Samberg (Jake Peralta) said that it's important to treat those storylines with respect. "Anytime we tackle something that is tricky like that... it has to be the right story so we are walking the line correctly and it doesn't come across as us making a joke about it and giving it proper respect," he explained. "That's why episodes like Rosa deciding to come out or the episode 'Moo Moo' where Terry is racially profiled in his own neighborhood, those episodes take a lot longer because if you f**k it up it's bad."

Diversity and Inclusion

B99 is also famously known for its more diverse cast and that has given them options. Lazy cultural stereotypes are always a fall back when portraying a largely diverse cast but they are a fall back this show does not seem to need. Each scene remains unique and sometimes particularly funny, purely due to the fact that the show rarely gives in to the usual tropes that are imposed on them. Many of the cast members admit this was what made them so interested in the characters they were called on to play. When Schur contacted Andre Braugher about playing Cap-

tain Holt, Braugher was intrigued that Holt was a gay man in a stable relationship, whose sexual orientation was never played for cheap laughs. How many other shows ever had a character like Terry Crews' Sergeant Jeffords, who's a caring mother hen built like a brick house? Stephanie Beatriz, who plays Brooklyn Nine-Nine's badass, bisexual cop Rosa Diaz, commented on how surprised she was to be cast on the show after Melissa Fumero had already been signed on to play Amy Santiago. Two Latinas (Amy and Rosa) on the show still remain uncommon, but even then B99 never acknowledged it as a main plot point, other than the fact that they share a few commonalities which rise above their highly conflicting personalities. It simply is a fact.

Female Empowerment

When Amy (Melissa Fumero) was first introduced on the show, it was easy to predict what direction the show might go in. The dynamics between Jake and Amy suggested that she was the follower of rules, thus trying her best to make Jake toe the line. Whereas Jake who did things his own way, would still manage to be the best detective on the show. Boy, did they prove us wrong. Throughout the next five seasons, her character continues to astound. Here is a woman who strives perfection but still can't seem to get over her addiction to cigarettes. Here is a woman who loves rules but still isn't afraid to find loopholes in them or outright break them when they're unjust.

Comedy often involves exaggeration and this leads to certain shows cruelly mocking their characters for certain traits. Pop culture has always reinforced the idea that intelligence and looks and desirability can't go hand in hand for female characters. Amy Farrah Fowler from The Big Bang Theory and Alex Dunphy from Modern Family are examples of women who suffer from a social penalty for being the resident smart person. Audiences so rarely witness a female character who is well-written and who resonates strongly among them in television comedies.

In the commonly cited book ie, the 2007 Geek Chic: Smart Women in Popular Culture, Innes (the author) cites cultural

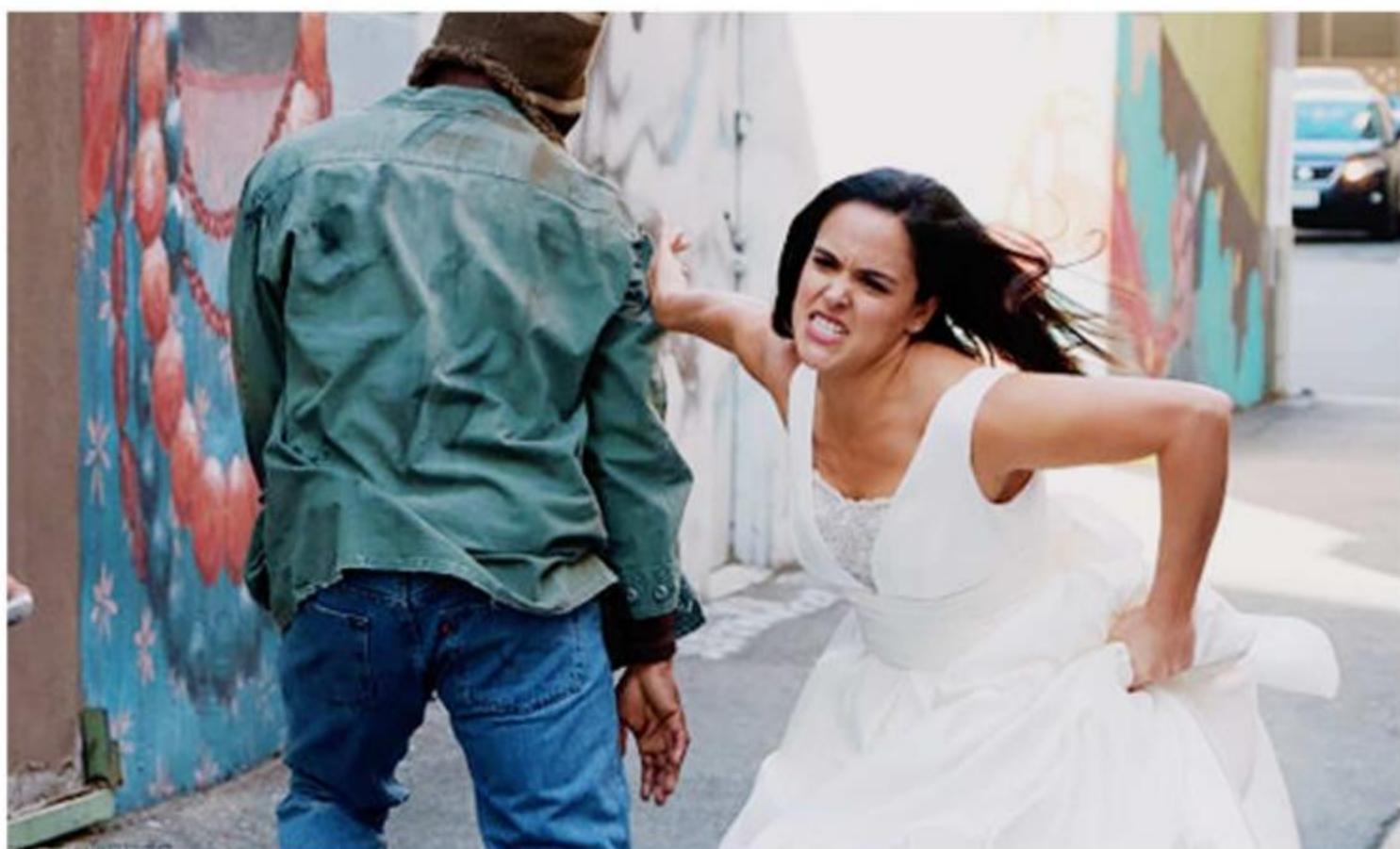
studies scholar Judith Williamson who notes that the most successful films or, in this case, television shows "are those which strike on some contemporary problem or insecurity in the issues they raise, while resolving these issues in a satisfactory or unthreatening way."

When Amy is promoted to sergeant and Jake and Amy are set to get married (Season 5), Rosa comes to the realization that Amy has been hiding the fact that she has been looking at wedding dresses. She shuts the laptop so Rosa doesn't see a boutique's website open and even averts her gaze when they later walk past a bridal store. This is humorous but also a sobering thought, as Amy confesses the reason behind her "nutjob" behavior. She feels insecure as a leader in the historically male world of law enforcement and abandoning her "girly" side seemed the logical way to go about it. She says, "Because being a female sergeant is difficult. I have to work twice as hard to gain my officers' respect and looking at girly dresses isn't going to help". Soon after, the episode culminates in an action sequence with Amy in a puffy wedding dress which Rosa had cajoled her into trying on in her break. Amy chases after a perp vaulting over a couch, tearing the veil around a corner, pushing past people and finally apprehending him with the sash of her dress. She was "Wonder Woman."

Rosa finally gives Amy the assurance she needs: "You are an amazing cop and a great leader and you've proven that a billion times over." and makes her admit that she would like a prettier dress after all. And thus, Brooklyn Nine-Nine stays true to their history of doing right by Amy (as well as Gina and Rosa) and all she represents.

Final Thoughts

Almost every episode of this show subverts traditional cop stories on the regular, and it does so with emotional honesty, all the while celebrating humanity, goodness and silliness. Brooklyn Nine-Nine returns January 2019 and with a cast such as this, it's difficult not to welcome them back. ■





On Mental Health, And The Lack Thereof

Atreyee Ghosal

Most people talk about mental health as a short-term problem and short-term, everyday disorders or acute disorders—something that can be cured with medication, counselling and a change of lifestyle. Doubtless a lot of people experience it this way. However, that is not my experience, and I will not talk about that here.

The positive definition of mental health would be satisfactory emotional and behavioral adjustment. The negative definition would be an absence of mental illness. This is a simplification of a complex set of sometimes disjoint criterion put under a very large umbrella.

Concerns of mental health range from behavioral adjustment to disorders of the brain. As such it is not straight forward to have a conversation about mental health without getting something wrong or overgeneralizing something. Now considering the fact that each of these problems along the range of behavioral adjustment to psychological disquiet to psychological disorders to disorders of brain chemistry and brain structure, there is still one fact that remains constant. The fact that these concerns are real to the person experiencing them. The problems are not only about how much psychological pain they cause the person but also that they affect the quality of life and often more importantly stop people from functioning properly, leave alone flourishing despite obstacles. Oftentimes people find themselves stopped dead in their tracks.



Overwhelmed

If the aim of life is not only to exist, but to exist and flourish, then mental illness is a problem that needs to be recognized.

Multidimensional and Ugly View of Mental Health

Mental illness is not the one-dimensional thing that it is shown as in media—either the teenaged girl made suicidal purely because of external causes, the college student suffering from depression and anxiety shown staring into the distance with a sad expression on their face, or the polar opposite misrepresentation—the stereotyping of 'extreme' mental illness as crazy, dangerous, degraded, so different from us that we cannot even hope to understand them, held up to us as looming threats of what might happen if we go off the beaten, neurotypical path. Or misrepresented and dramatised with near-magical abilities, both feared and awed—think of the very common misrepresentations of people with Dissociative Identity Disorder, as one example.

Mental illness can mean—cutting oneself to function in class, having a high CGPA kept afloat at the expense of taking care of one's mind. It can mean lying for days in bed without getting up, sleeping through important events because you just don't have the will to get out of bed. Mental illness can be a woman abusing her children, yelling psychotic nonsense at them, and it all being kept within the family. It can be a father drinking himself into oblivion instead of dealing with his family.

Mental illness is not pretty, and it is not a problem that can be handwaved away by ad-hoc solutions like student volunteer training or simpering HV lectures and workshops in the name of students' well-being that do nothing for the significant population of mentally ill people on our campus.

The Kind of Change we Need

The college's response when one reaches out for help is quite positive and one can apply for mental health leave and take the time out to recover. However, we still need social, institutional and structural change to help students with mental illness.

Many times, people in positions of authority think that they can solve the problem of mental illness within their family or institute, via some stroke of organisational brilliance. Many people have their own ideas, ranging from compulsory yoga in a bid to make sleep-starved students more "healthy", shamanistic happiness seminars in a bid to teach students unverified philosophy that, the organizers swear, are the key to a vaguely-defined "happiness", and the like, to wilder schemes. The one thing all these strokes of brilliance have in common is that they disregard the agency of mentally ill people, and add extra burden to a population that is already straining under a heavy academic load.

The truth is, we cannot personally know what is "good" for someone's mental health unless we are the person themselves, or their chosen confidante or psychologist. But we

can make small changes to our social structures to make life more livable for mentally ill people.

One part, of course, is societal—removing the stigma around mental illness, making it okay to talk about it and seek help. Making people accept that taking temporary medication for mental illness is okay, that it's not very different from taking medication for a particularly long-term flu. Informing people about therapy and making the idea of professional therapy and counselling more acceptable—not any longer a marker that someone is “mental” or wrong, but an indicator that a person’s seeking help for a common problem.

However, structural change—change in how our institutional—and since I’m in IIIT, educational structures work, is another important part of the process.

During the POPL class of 2018, Professor Venkatesh Choppella tested the idea of conducting remote video lectures, streamed in multiple classrooms and even, if possible, on students’ personal laptops. I was delighted by the idea because video lectures would mean that I could learn even on days when leaving my room is hard, that I can disengage from the lecture at any time, calm myself down and then come re-engage, and that I didn’t have to play the game of “go to class and be overloaded and unable to work all day, or stay in and miss class?” every time I had a bad morning or a bad stretch of days.

(Unfortunately the reality of completely remote lectures didn’t pan out this semester—the lectures were broadcasted

only within the POPL classroom, and attendance was still compulsory.)

I don’t think that making life easier for neurodivergent students was the professor’s intention in testing this, but this is an example of how a change that benefits all students to various levels can be a life-saver in particular to mentally ill students. Making teaching, learning and assignments easier to access and to do—not by reducing the difficulty of a course or assignment itself, but by reducing the difficulty involved in the logistics thereof—adds a +10 of ease to everyone else’s life. And since some people live life on a default setting of -10, this enables them to be on par with their neurotypical peers.

Apart from general solutions that make a student’s life easier, several universities abroad offer accommodations to students with mental issues, that help them function better. I’m not going to include a list here, but I will say that the concept of giving academic and structural accommodations to mentally ill students is by no means a new concept.

Being Insane, and Making Your Peace with It

The popular narrative of mental illness—in progressive circles, where there’s enough conversation about mental illness to have a popular narrative—is one of onset of symptoms, a period of suffering in the metaphorical darkness, visiting a therapist, “seeing the light”, medication and/or therapy, and recovery. “Recovery”, as in, these symptoms will eventually disappear and one lives a “whole” life again.



Some things don't go away. There are diagnoses that are permanent features of the brain—autism spectrum disorders, for example. There are diagnoses where the end result can never be a complete “cure”, but management of symptoms to the extent that one can once again flourish, not just survive.

Besides, mental illness, or neurodivergence in general, is not entirely negative. This might sound strange—given that I have spent most of the article talking about mental illness as a problem—but, well, things are multifaceted. Or rather, I should say that some things that we call mental illness intersect with the wider umbrella of neurodivergence, and neurodivergence can be both positive or negative.

Neurodiversity. What is neurodiversity? To quote:

“The neurodiversity paradigm suggests that it’s not altogether a bad thing that human brains vary quite a lot. This perspective is in opposition to the medical model of brain variations and disability, which takes for granted that ‘normal’ brains are both real and desirable, so that any deviations from that norm represent disorders, mistakes or diseases.”

Being significantly abnormal can be okay. An example: in popular culture, having “multiple personalities”—multiple people or personalities sharing a single “person”—is a horrific disorder. However, many multiples—people with MPD, or now diagnosed as DID—formed communities in the 90s and quietly protested against the “abnormalization” of multiple personalities. Healthy multiplicity is the term for acceptance of several identities or personalities existing within the same body, instead of treating it as a disorder. In fact, the philosophy emphasizes that trauma-based multiples are capable of learning to cooperate and function in a healthy fashion, so that integrating the personalities is unnecessary.

There are emerging, successful therapies that suggest trying to work with “abnormal” people is a better method of therapy for some disorders, than stubbornly trying to cure people into “normal”. There is a growing body of psychiatrists and psychologists that view mental issues as being on a spectrum from healthy, everyday behaviors to disorders.

Functioning

I have a small army of tips, tricks, lifehacks and coping mechanisms for functioning in college. Some among them: I’m very sensitive to noise, so I often wear noise-cancelling headphones around the campus. For the same issue, I wear earplugs in classes, that let me hear the professor lecturing but damp the noise to a bearable degree. I carry fidget toys and plushies around campus to soothe myself - those annoying fidget spinners? Yeah, they actually help people like me. I cope with my brain’s constant, unceasing demand for mindless stimulation by sewing- I’ve found that it is a soothing, repetitive activity and also one that gets me cool

purses and gloves and things.

I use my phone in class sometimes. Having a phone may take away some of my attention. Having a panic attack in class will take away all of it, so I compromise. In a way, living with mental illness is a lot about finding the halfway point between what society wants you to do, and what your brain will allow you to do.

I’m good at hyper-fixating on a topic for days in a row and pouring all my time, thought and emotions into that one topic, so I’m focusing on research where—to an extent—I can choose my fixation.

(I’ll note here that the above paragraph sounds very faux-inspirational “My life is completely in order, look at all these wonderful things I’m doing to cope!”, but I’m only showing the nice happy coping mechanisms I’ve tried here, and also only the ones that have worked, here. Please don’t get the impression, from the above paragraphs, that my life is in any way put together.)

Also, anecdotally, I’ve seen communities and support groups—hell, even a “support group” that consists of two friends bitching to each other about their respective malfunctioning brains—to be immensely helpful. One part of mental illness is feeling like one is alone, that one is wrong and broken. Knowing that there were other people out there with brains like mine—and not only that, but that they led their own lives, good or bad—helped immensely. Another reason that communities help is that they consist of people who are involved in the day-to-day drudgery of living life with mental illness, and thus one finds very specific and actionable advice on forums and online communities. In my case, the entire reason I was able to stay afloat until I got to the second year of college and met a therapist, was because of help and tips from communities and forums of other people like me.

Last Words

Most of all—it’s okay. I know this sounds corny or untrue, but well, this is the best advice I can give.

It’s going to be okay. Yes, it’s going to be harder struggling through the added burden of a mental illness, but you can do it. And no matter what your brain or your environment or society tells you, there are beautiful things in this world still worth living for. ■



Credits: Jyoti Sunkara

THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW



Kripa Anne

Warp yourself back into the dingy midnight shows and fabulous rock-n-roll of the 70's with The Rocky Horror Picture Show, a movie that continues to entertain, engage and inspire forty years after it was first released. Rocky Horror is a mix of every genre that makes cinema so addictive – except, maybe, common sense. But that hardly stops you from having the time of your life while watching and grooving along to the catchy soundtrack and infectious dance moves. In fact, I couldn't help but wonder if a stable plot line would have much of an effect on the film itself.

Jim Sharman's movie adaptation of Richard O'Brien's show has become a cult classic for many since its release in 1975. To attend a Rocky Horror screening was to become part of the show itself – the audience would dress up in drag or as their favourite characters, shout lines back at the screen and throw all manners of objects around the theatre. Many elements in the movie were considered kitsch and garish, which was why this was neglected by the mainstream - and yet it has turned into a social phenomenon over the years.

So let's assemble our components: Brad and Janet - a recently engaged couple, straight out of the Textbook for Cliche White Characters, with a dialogue that sets the feminist movement back about sixty years, Dr. Frank-N-Furter - a strangely attractive Transylvanian transvestite who's got a mean temper and a meaner baritone, a straight-faced narration by a man known as the Criminologist, who occasionally blesses our screens with equally straight-faced dancing, and our eponymous Rocky, a Frankenstein-esque creation whose entire life's objective is to fulfil Frank's surfer boy fantasy. Frank's cronies include the hunchbacked handyman Riff-Raff and his partner Magenta, along with Columbia, a groupie tap-dancer. As the movie progresses, more characters turn up like Dr. Scott, a rival scientist and Eddie, the deep-frozen delivery boy but by then, I'm assuming you really won't care. An ensemble of racially diverse Transylvanians forms the backdrop for most scenes.

The movie kicks off during a beastly thunderstorm, when a stranded Brad and Janet arrive at a large castle hoping to use their phone. What they expect to be a quick in-and-out scenario quickly turns into one of the strangest journeys they've ever been on. The castle is inhabited by an eccentric scientist named Dr.

Frank-N-Furter, his housekeepers and a bunch of Transylvanians attending a convention. With towering black heels, fishnet stockings and striking red lips, believe me when I say that no protagonist has ever had such an entrance as Dr. Frank-N-Furter. He may just be a sweet transvestite from Transsexual, Transylvania, but he's also batshit crazy and soon unveils his latest creation Rocky, a shiny, sculpted blond man in a gold Speedo. That night, amidst all the sexual debauchery with Frank, Brad, Janet and Rocky, in every possible permutation,

Frank's rival scientist, Dr. Scott arrives at the castle looking for his missing nephew. At this point, Frank is one pissed-off transvestite. He uses his Medusa Transducer to turn everyone into Grecian inspired stone statues. (On a side note, you shouldn't be allowed to call yourself a scientist unless you own a machine that can turn people to stone.) More chaos ensues which includes a considerable amount of drag costumes, double-crossing aliens and a swimming pool kink-party but in the end, Frank finds out that all the evocative ballads in the world weren't going to help him get home alive and he dies in a tragic radio-antenna accident. Of sorts.

One of the more endearing aspects of the movie is how it embraced the low budget it was given to fully deliver a parodied tribute to the sci-fi/horror B-movies of old Hollywood. The gaudy costumes, sets and props only make the experience that much more entertaining. After all, what horror movie is complete without a classic haunted castle? Interestingly, the costumes used in the movie inspired the punk-rock fashion trend of the 80s. Moreover, the opening sequence initially proposed with clips from old films was scrapped as it was too expensive and in its stead, came the now iconic ruby red lips crooning Science Fiction, Double Feature, taking its place as probably the 2nd most famous set of disembodied lips. Till date, Rocky Horror boasts one of the greatest movie musical soundtracks. With music from Meatloaf, Tim Curry and Richard O'Brien, the rock n' roll tunes range from humorously whimsical to deeply empowering, not once losing its power or energy. The Time Warp has cemented itself as the signature dance song of the movie; you wouldn't find a midnight Rocky Horror viewing party without at least one performance of the Time Warp. After all, it's just a jump to the left...

The most fabulous part of the movie is undoubtedly Tim Curry. From the moment he appears on screen, dressed as the sexiest transvestite you'll ever set your eyes upon, he bewitches you with his strong performance as the mad Dr. Frank. What with his significant acting chops and robust vocals, he commands every scene he's in. Moreover, Tim's portrayal of a bisexual genderqueer character in the 70's was groundbreaking in its own right, as was the film, with how it embraced themes like sexual liberation and androgyny and became a beacon to people on the fringes of society. Many people believe that most of Frank's journey through the film was reminiscent of David Bowie's creation of Ziggy Stardust, in all his glamour and eventual loss of control.

I believe that the case I'm building to convince you to watch Rocky Horror isn't a strong one. And that's just the way it should be: Rocky wasn't made to please everyone. It isn't meant to be taken seriously either. A lot of critics have tried and failed at dissecting the scenes at an attempt to garner a deeper meaning. But frankly (pun wholly intended), Rocky is a guilty pleasure. In an age of political correctness, it is a beacon of mindless fun and ridiculousness. So pop in this flick in the depths of the night and give yourself over to absolute pleasure! ■



The Forgotten Century

Zubair Abid
Abhigyan Ghosh

Professor Nimmi Rangaswamy's thesis that was stored in a floppy disk can't be accessed now. So it lies with a ribbon around it, erving only as a souvenir.

Art by: Vanalata Bulusu

The absence of time travel means that we as humans are incapable of experiencing events before our time. Directly, anyway. Our knowledge of the past is heavily dependent on physical records of events and daily occurrences - in pictorial form, by physical evidence left behind, and most often by means of writing. Any hindrance to access or recognition of such records means loss of our history. Information before (or in) our time that we have no memory of is, to say the least, a bit of a problem. History needs to be conveyed to the future. Written down.

And with the advent of rapid advances in modern technology and constant recording of every form of information imaginable, we are paradoxically in a time where future historians are more likely to know more about the start of the twentieth century than they will about the twenty-first. But how?

The Technical Problem

"We are nonchalantly throwing all of our data into what could become an information black hole without realizing it. We digitise things because we think we will preserve them, but what we don't understand is that unless we take other steps, those digital versions may not be any better, and may even be worse, than the artefacts that we digitised"

Vint Cerf
The father of the Internet

The key issue here is not with the journalling of information in the first place as was the case in prehistoric times. It's with (future) access to this data. If all the information in the world could be saved in permanent, non-degrading data stores but future generations were unable to decipher what it meant, then it is as good as lost. At a basic, technology independent level this loss is already exhibited - **interpretation issues** as with language of the Indus civilisation (i.e. artefacts we do have are undecipherable), and **information loss by destruction of medium**, such as writings on papyrus and parchment that no longer exist.

But with digital data, the situation is exaggerated - primarily for two reasons. The matter of the sheer volume of information coded into a digital form making losses that much more obvious is significant (for reference, we have till date generated about 16 Zettabytes [ZB] of data, with an estimate for 163ZB by the year 2025) but the second, more crucial factor, lies in the nascently of digital media combined with the multi-level tech stack needed to make sense of the same.

Digital data is varied. While in essence just strings of zeros and ones, the information has to be encoded in a specific format at several levels of the system. There's decisions at the hardware level, error correcting codes, general compression algorithms, software specific file-types, filetype encoding formats, and so much more that's often unaccounted for. All of these levels of information encoding and ways to interpret it need to be known by the interpreting system (both the software and the hardware) in order to make sense of strings of (what would be otherwise) gibberish. This is not in itself a problem. It is a solution to other issues with software development and information theory. But it does become one when the stack is unstable. And the technological stack we use is. There's obsolete hardware (like floppy disks) no longer in production, and often hard to find or replicate. File formats, especially proprietary ones with no documentation and custom interpretation software are known to effectively "lock" all their contained data when the software goes off the market and eventually most systems (or its usage license expires). NASA has lost data from some of its earliest missions to the moon because the machines used to read the tapes were scrapped and cannot be rebuilt¹. Laserdisc doesn't exist anymore.

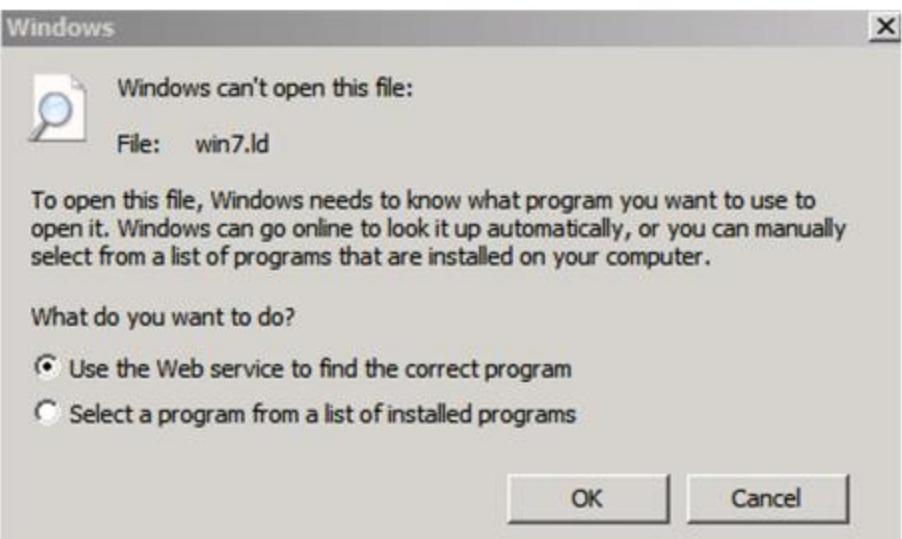
In 1086 William the Conqueror completed a comprehensive survey of England and Wales. "The Domesday Book", as it came to be called, contained details of 13,418 places and 112 boroughs—and is still available for public inspection at the National Archives in London. Not so the original version of a new survey that was commissioned for the 900th anniversary of "The Domesday Book". It was recorded on special 12-inch laser discs. Their format is now obsolete.

The Economist
April 28, 2012

Admittedly, it's not an immediately obvious problem at first sight. A lot of what we have today "just works". Most major files use standard formats interpretable by a majority of systems, hardware seems to work just fine with the overlaying software (unless it's Ubuntu and Nvidia GPUs), JPEG loss and other issues associated with lossy file formats are largely memes outside of the enthusiast community. For a large majority of current systems we work with today, everything looks fine and very functional.

The gaps start to show on looking at it historically. Like the example with floppy disks. It certainly is still possible to get hardware that will run and read the files off the disk, but it will require at least the existence of old hardware, and if not that a blueprint to reconstruct the hardware from. Once that's done, maybe an obscure interpreter is required to make sense of some obsolete word processor output file. But it can be done. For another example try opening a word document made in Office 365 (but not with compatibility mode) in Word 98. The list can go on. VHS. Old console games made for the Amiga. Trying to play a PS3 game on your PS4.

This is still a solvable problem, given enough time and effort into finding the right interpreting system (or building one). Complications arise when there exists none such - and building one is infeasible for whatever closed source reason. Considering this you might wonder how exactly such an unthinkable event could possibly happen. So imagine this situation. A computer system was developed in the 1960s using Integrated Circuits for the first time, with poor documentation (nothing out of place as most of us are well aware of) of system architecture and nothing resembling



Data files are largely meaningless without accompanying software

¹ "Bit rot - Digital data - The Economist." 28 Apr. 2012, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2012/04/28/bit-rot>. Accessed 30 Oct. 2018.

modern operating systems, and custom data formats custom developed for the job. Data was collected using the system and for it, and then archived in magnetic tapes. Then, in a couple of years or five, the computers were thrashed. Repurposed. No documentation of the working system existing (WHY? I hear you ask. Because people are stupid). In say fifteen more years you want to read the data again.

But how?

In this context consider the future with our current systems, is the possibility of data loss by such means really such a far-fetched concept?

Summarising the technical problem in a systematic way, we look at the ways in which it can manifest itself:

1. Media or Hardware obsolescence: Lack of hardware to read data formats, such as the NASA tapes, the 12 inch laserdisks containing The Doomsday Book, or VHS tapes in the future. This is particularly a problem for any removable media that are theoretically readable only as long as a suitable hardware reader is found.
2. Software and format obsolescence: Lack of software to read available digital formats.
 - a. Proprietary file formats are very susceptible to this. Considering how many such are poorly documented and closed off to inspection, in the event of software fault and/or the group behind it ceasing to exist all the data contained within is unreadable. The seemingly everlasting argument of VHS vs DVD is now history.
 - b. This is also an issue with data protected under DRM. This gets tricky because the question of ownership becomes a factor to consider here; a matter for a separate write-up and a few legal battles in its own.
3. The Legal and Regulatory aspect of it. A bulk of critical data generated across the world data is access and use protected, not only in the case of official government secret acts but also with copyrighted material like books, software, and the like. As The Economist puts it, "Although technical problems can usually be solved, regulatory obstacles are harder to overcome".² Laws force copyright libraries, such as the Library of Congress, to seek permission before archiving a website. Attempts to archive such copy-protected data regardless often finds activists on the wrong side of the law, such as with America's DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act). One starts seeing why this would be a problem when considering that in the time the copyright expires (which might even be as long as seventy years or more), the file may no longer be comprehensible to existing systems.

The Impact On History And By Extension, On Society And Culture

"If we're not careful, we will know more about the beginning of the 20th century than the beginning of the 21st century"

Adam Farquhar

British Library's digital-preservation efforts in-charge

Why do we need history?

² "History flushed - Digital archiving - The Economist." 28 Apr. 2012, <https://www.economist.com/international/2012/04/28/history-flushed>. Accessed 1 Nov. 2018.

From the given discussion so far, it is obvious how unchecked information loss can affect our records of the present for the future, affecting record of history. But why is that a such a crucial problem, one that deserves separate mention?

This section looks at just the impact of history, having cleared the fact of loss earlier.

Loss Of Cultural History In Larger Society

India has a rich history which has been passed on to us for generations over generations for the past 2000 years when it was finally written down formally into books. All that history is recorded and has been relatively well preserved over time. Not necessarily the case with today. Imagine, ten years from now, the information about this article may be lost just because it wasn't backed up. Maybe the printed version will survive a few more years before it gets decomposed in the municipal dump. **History that is being created everyday is getting lost.** And it is not just the trivial bits but even the (relatively) more important ones. Non-print fringe newspapers, relying on solely web releases might disappear without a trace if the domain name expires and the web archive hadn't stored a snapshot. Hobbyist forums, dedicated channels - not obviously useful to all but relevant nonetheless, every loss is a missing puzzle piece in the larger picture. An argument can be made that data important to us is preserved, as in the past; and for response I redirect you to the case of NASA and the tapes.

Such loss of history is a negative. Without information on one's past, there is no culture, no sense of belonging or recognition with the past. Achievements are held in individual glory with little regard for an overall contribution to a larger "whole", and there is a sort of disconnect between the individual and the society they reside in. Moreover, with no record of past history people stop expecting preservation of their present, so contribution is seen as futile; so why should people bother? For a working demonstration of this situation, look no further than IIIT itself. Although this is more a case of no information being recorded than one where information is lost, it has by large a similar impact. As a quote from an earlier article in Ping! explains,



The PS Vita is a system that hasn't been emulated yet, with little discernible effort being made as of date.

*"When you know that what you are doing won't leave a legacy, you aren't as enthusiastic anymore. It's selfish. It's human. The sense of change for worse or better, has always been the missing ingredient. A sense of apathy creeps in, when there is no sense of legacy, where there is no urgency. This college-wide disinterest is the manifestation of an Orwellian dystopia; a culture without its own history, a culture without an identity. Where in the Orwellian world, history was perpetually rewritten, here, it's lost for never having been written in the first place."*³

Anurag Ghosh, "Memento"
Ping!, Monsoon 2016

We couldn't find anyone better. Again.

The Effect on Personal History

Personal records are particularly vulnerable to such loss. Physical record of personal history - photo albums, certificates, and other such assorted items - aren't invulnerable to physical decay or being misplaced, but with them people are well aware of possible factors affecting their shelf life and take measures to preserve the ones they hold dear. With digital data, this is often not the case. Unlike major IT-core corporations that (hopefully) make conscious efforts to ensure business critical data is accessible over time (more on this later), the average user treats the digital land as it were a physical locker, saving photos to their local hard disk with little regard for forwards compatibility; if the photos they took were in a proprietary RAW format that will lose support in another year they would conveniently ignore the folder until a decade later when they need to show their friends that they did really go to the London Eye but now there's no compatible player to show the photos.



One could say the (personal storage) situation is improving, as more and more people opt for cloud based services to store their images. This definitely seems to be more sustainable, as such cloud services are expected to maintain compatibility for all their data to avoid losing their customer base. This is not necessarily the case. If the data is stored on the server of some no-name company with a poorly defined data exit policy, it's pretty much as good as gone⁴. And even with "reliable" providers, the service is almost always proprietary with questionable legal restrictions; consider the (rather ironic) example of when Amazon removed all copies of the book "1984" from the Kindles of customers who had seemingly *bought* the book.⁵ It is unlikely such extremes would be seen on a regular basis, but over time it's not altogether an unlikely event.

Measures We Can Take

There is no be-all end-all solution to the problem.

The technological world is nascent, ever changing. As long as the situation stays the way it is, the stack of requirements for information access shall remain temporal. But measures can be taken to minimize the impact, potentially maintain enough till permanent solutions can be found.

There are different ways to tackle this issue all the way from personal to industrial. On a personal level, one may keep a backup of all their personal files on the latest available stack which is least bound to get replaced in the near future. From this if we consider that using a popular format to store a particular bit of data is effective, we should also consider the possibility of some formats just dying out. And in this case what should be given preference? Data that can be losslessly encoded in a given format, or the popularity of some other format that is more lossy? For example FLAC vs MP3 files to encode audio. FLAC stores more information losslessly, but lossy MP3 is more popular; and if (hypothetically) FLAC dies out before MP3 than the “lossy” format is effectively more lossless, isn’t it?

Another important step that can be taken is to use open file formats; and open specification systems in general. In such case, even if the hardware is wiped completely off the face of the earth, it is theoretically possible to reconstruct a reader. Not the best “cure” to data incompatibility per se, but you know what they say about prevention. ■

³ "Memento – PING!" <https://pingiiit.org/memento/>. Accessed 3 Nov. 2018.

⁴ "The hug heard around the company. : talesfromtechsupport - Reddit." 4 Apr. 2017, https://www.reddit.com/r/talesfromtechsupport/comments/63frsn/the_hug_heard_around_the_company/. Accessed 3 Nov. 2018.

⁵ "Amazon Erases Orwell Books From Kindle Devices - The New York" 17 Jul. 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/18/technology/companies/18amazon.html>. Accessed 3 Nov. 2018.

మా అన్నవరం

రచయిత్రి : శ్రీయా దీపికా
ఎడిటర్ : ఆబ్రార్ అహ్మద్

మా ఇంటో పాద్మన రెండు గంటలు, ఇంక సాయంత్రిం రెండు గంటల సమయం మాత్రమే పనిచేసిన అన్నవరం మా ఇంట్లో మనిషి లాంటిదే.

నాకు మా బామ్మగారు మామూలుగా కంటే అన్నవరం తో పాటు కలిసి నడవడమే ఎక్కువ గుర్తుంది. వృద్ధాప్య దశ లో మా బామ్మగారికి సహాయం చేయడం కోసం అన్నవరం మా ఇంటికి వచ్చింది. దొరికింది తినటం తప్ప బ్రూతకడానికి ఏ పని తనకు రాదు. అప్పటికే తనకి ముగ్గురు పిల్లలు, ఒక భర్త. వున్నది లేనట్లు లేనిది ఉన్నట్లు చెప్పడం లో తనకుత్తానే సాటి. అలా తాను అల్లిన కొన్ని కథలు మీ కోసం.

వచ్చిన కొత్తలో తోమిన గిన్నెలను సద్గుడం కూడా చేత్కాడు అన్నవరానికి. మా అమ్మనిత్యం వాడే మాట "హా! పడేశావా? సరే పగిలినవి నాకు మిగిలినవి నీకు." ఇలా కొంత కాలానికి మాకు తాను, తనకి మేము అలవాటు పడిపోయాం.

ఒక రోజు మా అమ్మ పుట్టింటికి వెళ్ళింది. ఆ పూట మా నాన్నగారికి కూర వండడం రాక వండిన అన్నం కూడా అన్నవరానికి ఇచ్చి పెట్టాల్ కు వెళ్లిపోయారు. అది చూసిన అన్నవరం మా నాన్నగారికి మా అమ్మ మీద బెంగ వచ్చి అన్నం తినడం మానేశారు అని ఏది మొత్తం చాటింపు వేయించింది. అమ్మ తిరిగి వచ్చాక ఇరుగు పొరుగు వాళ్ళందరూ చెప్పింది ఏని నవ్వాలో ఏడవాలో అర్థం కాలేదు.

అన్నవరం వాళ్ళ భర్త సముద్రం మీదకి వేటకి వెళ్లాడు. ఒకవేళ వెళ్లకుండా రోజు మొత్తం తాగుతూ కుర్చున్నాడా, ఆ రోజుకి అన్నం పెట్టాడు పైగా చెప్పా దెబ్బలతో సత్కారం. ప్రపంచం మొత్తంలో అన్నవరానికి భయపడే ఎక్కు వ్యక్తి తన్

భర్త మాత్రమే. వాళ్ళాయన్ని తిట్టినా కొట్టిన వెంటనే గొప్ప పని చేసినట్లు మా ఇంటికి వచ్చి చెప్పంది. అది కూడా నిజమో అబద్ధమో తెలియని మేము అన్నవరం అమాయకత్వం చూసి నవ్వకుంటాం.

అన్నవరానికి మొత్తం జీతం పది రూపాయల నోటుగానే ఇవ్వాలి. ఒక వేళ 100, 500, 2000 నోట్లగా ఇచ్చామా కొట్టువాడికి వంద నోట ఇచ్చి తిరిగి చిల్లర తీసుకోకుండా వచ్చేసిన సందర్భాలు చాల వున్నాయి.

అలాగే ఒక రోజు నా తలితండ్రులు ఇద్దరునా సోదరుడిని ఇంటికి తీసుకుని వద్దాం అని పారశాల కు వెళ్గా దాన్ని చూసి నా సోదరుడిని ఆసుపేత్తి లో చేర్చారని ఏది మొత్తం ప్రచారం చేసింది. వారు వెంటనే మా తలితే ఉండుల్ని సంప్రదిసే కానీ తెలీయలేదు అన్నవరం కథ అల్లీనట్లు.

అన్నవరానికి దొంగ బుద్ది ఉండా లేదా అని కూడా మనం పసిగట్టలేము. ఒకవేళ తనకి నచ్చి ఎద్దెనా వస్తువు దొంగతనం చేసినా తన దగరకి వెళ్లి "నా వస్తువు ఒకటి పోయింది నీకేమైనా దొరికిందా?" అని అడిగితే "ఆగో ఆద దొరికినది!" అని చెప్పి ఇచ్చేస్తుంది.

ఇన్ని సంఘటనలు జరిగినా మా అన్నవరానికి మాకు వున్న బంధుం విడదీయరానిది. మా అమ్మకి ఒక రోజు అన్నవరాన్ని చూడకపోయనా ఆ రోజు రోజులానే గడవదు. మా ఇంటో రోజు వుండే సంభాషణ "అన్నవరం నిన్న ఎందుకు రాలేదు?" అంటే "రాలేదు!" అనేసమాధానం మాత్రమే. అదే పదాన్ని సమాధానంగా ఏని నవ్వకుంటూ మేమందరం పది ఎండ్లు గడిపేసాం.



Cynical Cindy



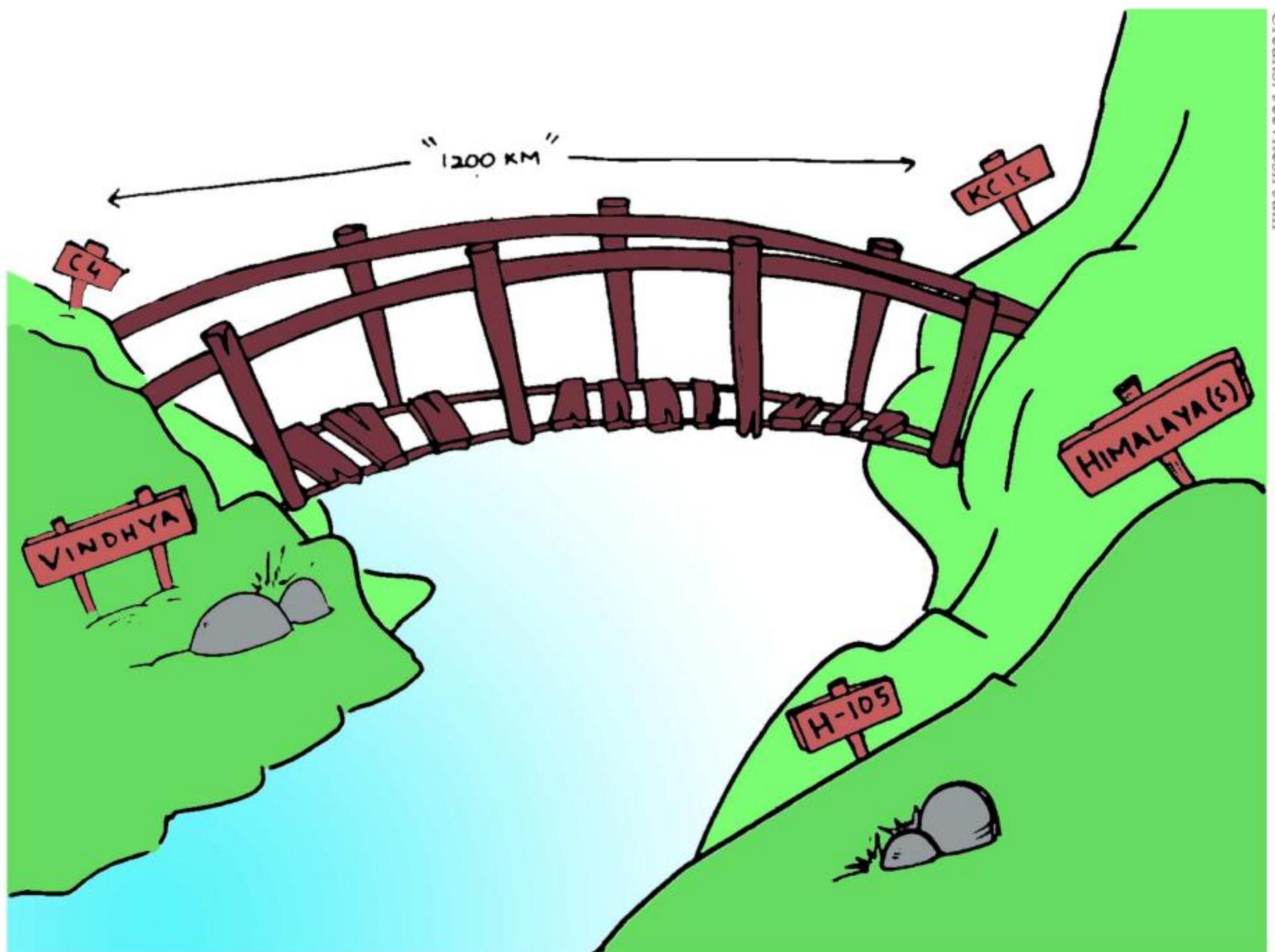
All views here are expressed in good humour. Take them the way they're intended, or not at all.

~ Cindy

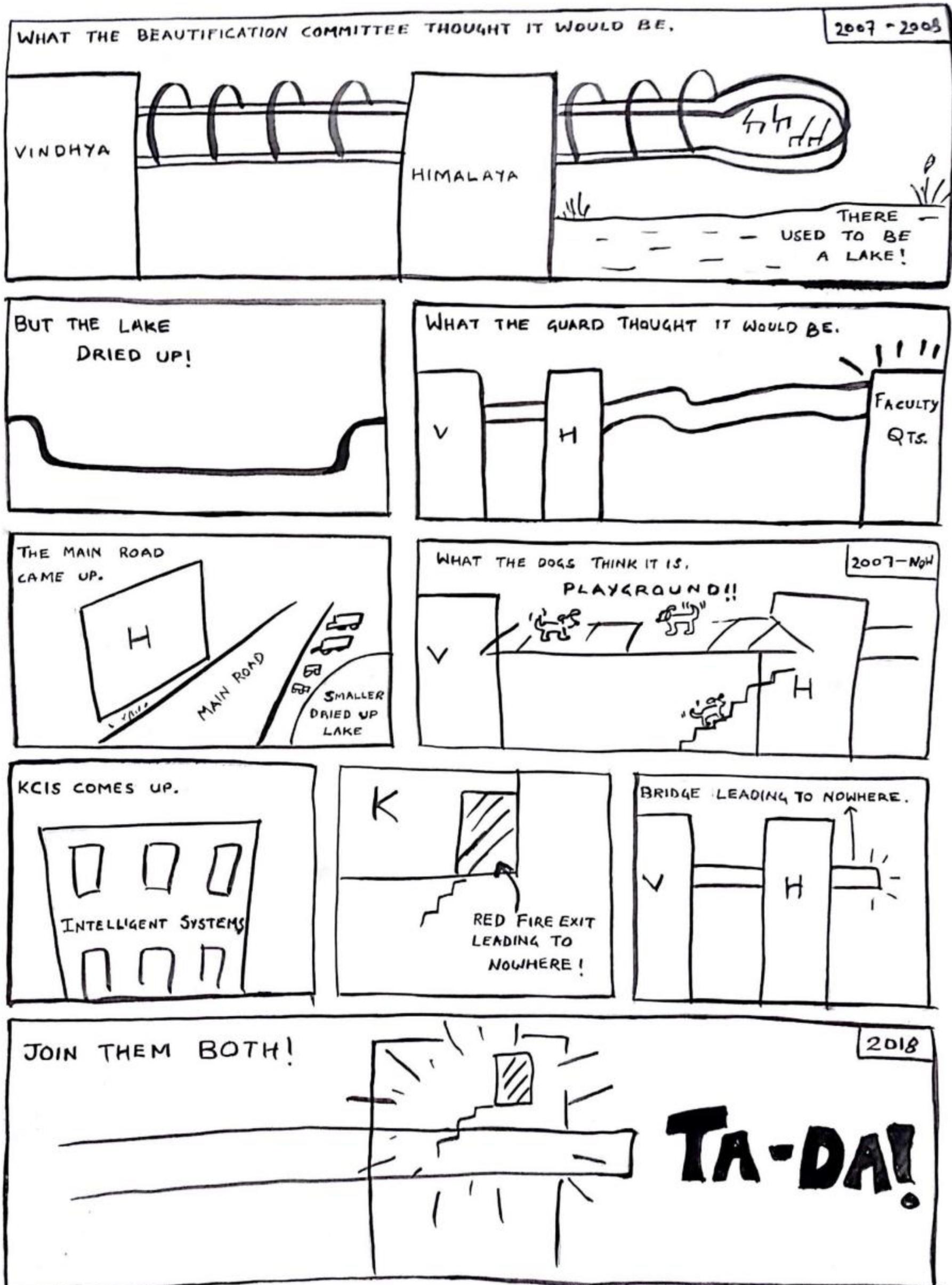
The Bridge that Wasn't Finished

The bridge between Vindhya and Himalaya has been around since 2008, and ten years later I am convinced that it is actually finished, and the seemingly unfinished bridge's sole purpose is to serve as a metaphor to the dual degree program—being in the state of nearly done forever.

Or maybe delays are only to be expected? It is between *Vindhya* and *Himalaya* after all.



But why have a bridge between two buildings that are twenty metres apart? And why take so long to build it? I embarked on an enlightening journey to find some answers to these questions and of course, make some up.



Making Print Easy

Our Value Proposition

Print 'on demand'

We stand true to our tagline of 'easy, one-stop printing' by providing a portfolio of 2000+ products. From business cards to merchandise, from letterheads to corporate brochures, from indoor posters to external signage, we do it all.

World-class quality & service

Our print facilities are equipped with the latest in printing (HP Indigo) and finishing technology and industry beating automation.

Multi-location presence

With presence in 7 major cities and additional fulfillment centres, Printo provides the capability to deliver all your prints to your local office in the fastest possible way, while still giving you the flexibility to keep your billing centralised. No more worrying about those last-minute prints before an important event.

Online ordering

We provide the facility to order regular daily use items directly from our website while controlling and monitoring costs. We even offer dedicated portals for companies, for centralizing all printing and gifting needs across the employee base.

Printo is green

Printo respects the environment and understands that the only way to grow is by taking a sustainable approach. Our primary digital production hub has incorporated green principles in waste management and energy conservation.

Marketing Collateral



Standees, Brochures, Banners, Tent cards, Flyers & more.



Business Stationery



Business cards, Letterheads, Envelopes, ID cards, Uniforms & more.

Personalized Gifts



Photo frames, Canvas prints, Posters, Mugs, T-shirts & more.

Corporate Gifts



Trophies, Gift products, USB's, Keychains, Pens, Bags & more.

Helpdesk: +91 9243 406 106

Any Enquiries : Cluster Business Manager : +91 97018 79800

printo.in

YOUR AD HERE

To donate to Ping! or advertise in this space, reach out to us at
ping@students.iiit.ac.in or call us at 9559404288.

