

## FOREWORD...

Clichéd though it may sound, I cannot help but remark that it only seems like yesterday when I embarked upon the most important journey of my life. Those 26 hours to Delhi appeared awfully long. Longer still were those six hours to Pilani, for I was curious, eager to know where I was to stay for the next four years.

In my mind were images of camels, of sand dunes, and of village belles in their colourful attires. The sheer romance of it all, I had dreamt many times over. All through those six hours, my eyes searched, searched in vain. No, I did not come across lush green fields, but there was no way in which you could term these lands as parched. So, the Indira Gandhi Canal has lived up to its reputation, I wondered. If there was disappointment here, can you imagine what happened when I entered the campus? I was exasperated, completely shattered.

Oh yes, I appreciated the greenery. But, the buildings were all bathed in yellow. Yuck! What a jaundiced look! And is this the shape of the things to come? Dull, drab and dreary? Didn't someone say that variety was the spice of life? To make matters worse, it rained. There was humidity, and there were those things that I later learned were called LGMFs. The mess wasn't particularly great. The auditorium had wooden seats. Gosh, not even air-conned! Not to mention the crows and the sand that always got in your hair. Four years! They felt like a lifetime.

No discos? No restaurants? No pool parlours? No shopping malls? No cell phones? No internet (well first two years anyway)? No amusement parks? No clubs? But, then I discovered that no disco could ever hope to match the sheer electricity of Music Nites. Paris cannot boast of better open-air street side eateries than C'Not. The magic of carom tournaments in the common rooms completely overwhelms the charm of snooker in some obscure corner in a joint. Why have the pubs when you have the wing? You do not need shopping malls when Gem Boys and Mittal's can do the trick. Cell phones? I think passing gatecalls is much more fun. The internet becomes redundant when personal computers hold the same required content. Give me a barefoot walk in Sky any day to a day at Appu Ghar. I never had such a great time in my life in any club other than the Department I was a member of.

Can you forget the late night sessions, the midnight snacks, the QT bonfires during winter, the phenomenon of Oasis, the fun in working together for any 'occasion', the Bhawan's Nites, the song singing at IC, the noise during Diwali, and the colourful mess during Holi? The people who added that extra little bit of sparkle in our lives? Chimpu's shakes, Pappu's chai- they are a part of that life like patchwork in a quilt... going beyond the common place transactions to give us the gift of their friendship.

Celebrations we made- the reasons be damned. Test maxed? Treat. Test zooked? Treat. Going psenti? Treat. Co-ord treat. GRE treat. Job treat. This treat and that treat. Phew! There was never a moment when you could think of nothing to do. Vela? Wetti? Fine. Run through the sprinklers in D-Lawns, walk amongst the breathtaking profusion of flowers in spring, stride through the fields in the gliding club, sit on that C'Not wall with your wing, dunk someone in Sky Pond for the sadistic pleasure it offers, put laccha, and, even if everything else fails, sit on that Audi porch sighing and feeling that curious sense of belonging amongst that great vastness.

*Did we ever work here, except for fests? Assignments in one day, projects in a week, skipping classes, photocopying notes, splooshing a test or two... the endless cribbing... the intensity with which everyone did that is quite admirable. The heady feeling of independence... the sense of accomplishment in being able to manage your life all by yourself. We have all been a part of that race, and it is a fast one that runs in this village.*

*Yes, it is a village, with all the closeness of a small community. At times, it got to us. Whatever you did, someone else knew. Lousy memory, forget something? Ask a friend, for there was always someone who remembered. We resented this, but also drew the curious twisted pleasure of being known. People knew you existed. They were interested, for whatever reason, in what you were doing. We could rant and rave, mostly with good reason, about how people should mind their own business, but in the end... well... it was like being a part of a huge family, complete with its contingent of nosy relatives.*

*It's about bonding. We dream of the mating of souls, of making that connection with someone that makes the passage of time a pleasure. We might not have made that connection with someone. But, we have definitely made it with ourselves.*

*You need to acquire this taste of BITS, Once it gets in your blood, instead of thinking how you might have needed to travel six hours to get to some sort of civilised entertainment, you thank your lucky stars that you were in a place where you had clean air to breathe. You'll remember being awe-struck by the beauty of the night sky. How often have you longed for that peace in the middle of your mad life? The summer evening and the winter afternoons spent at Sky, the temple visits to ease that feeling of depression- these and many more you shall forever cherish.*

*I have tried my best. But, capturing all the moments would be akin to packing the entire 4.5 billion years of earth's existence in to a two-hour film. "Get the important things!" do I hear you ask? But, who decides that? To the person who has felt those feelings, thought those thoughts, lived those moments, each one is as important as the other. It would be making a mockery of everything that has been most precious if I were to select a few.*

*Throughout the entire time I spent at BITS, I cursed. I cursed the system, cursed the place, cursed the women (or was that non-males?), cursed the profs, and, if I could think of nothing else, cursed myself for being there. Forgotten I had the bright streaks of silver lining amidst the dark clouds. On the contrary, there was so much of it that it appears as though there was the occasional dark cloud amidst the silver lining.*

*I hate goodbyes. They are tear-jerkingly, mind-wringingly depressing. Ah! Goodbyes... Endings... Synonymous...*

***This is not the end...***

***This is not even the beginning of the end...***

***This is just the end of a beginning...***

***(Of a beginning well made.)***