

technik

february, 1997

hostels 5 and 11

indian institute of technology bombay

smoking kills!

Smoking causes cancer of the lung, larynx, mouth, oesophagus, pancreas, bladder and kidney; emphysema and chronic bronchitis; coronary heart disease; strokes; peri-natal mortality; and smoking in pregnancy carries a higher risk of still birth. Passive smoking causes these problems in non-smokers also.

It kills about 100,000 people a year in the UK alone.

Cigarette smoking is the chief avoidable cause of death in our society and the most important public issue of our time.

Dying of cancer can seriously damage your health.

If you're killed, you lose a very important part of your life.



Technik

February, 1997 AD

Featuring

Life, the Universe and Everything

Cack Session Topics

Interview with Milind Kopikare

SNIGCOM - Uncut!

The Call of the Sahyadris

Substance Abuse

and more

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements

for the

Lit. Calendar '97

by

Hostels 5 and 11

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay

**towel not
included!**

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Editorial

There were many issues that we were eager to examine in this Technik. Ultimately, we had to settle for the ones that we felt most concerned about, such as sexism and email privacy (both part of the article, Life, the Universe and Everything). Since everybody of consequence in the institute administration had already been interviewed by previous Techniks, we chose to interview a remarkable student by the name of Milind Kopikare, who has recently done IIT proud by his performances in the swimming pool (he swims), and Dr. Ram Puniyani for the article on substance abuse.

So what concerned us, in general? Well, mainly the remarkable propensity shown by the institute to control every aspect of student life. Even though ragging cases came down drastically in 1993 and 1994, freshie hostels were created. Freshies today have been effectively eliminated from student activities as no one is willing to take the risk of being seen talking to them.

And now there seems to be a dress code for entrance to the library and computer centre, and an 11:30 rule for all hostels (although all students are above 18). Mood Indigo '96 saw a truncated Live Wire. There were even attempts to ban Channel [V] and MTV from the hostel television network on the grounds that these were "obscene." And when satellite dishes first made an appearance in the campus, there was an attempt to ban those, too. Fortunately, better sense has prevailed.

What has come as a whiff of fresh air is the decision to allot Technik to hostel pairs, thus ensuring that it comes out on a regular basis. Kudos to the Dean, SA, for allowing complete freedom in the matter of content. It is heartening to note that a forum has been provided where IITians may air their opinions.

Life, the Universe and Everything

Rohit Grover

Based on the Technik Survey, Feb. 97

No names have been mentioned at the request of respondents.

sexism in IIT

girls just come to IIT to get a degree...

How many women out there on the IIT campus have heard such callous remarks from faculty members? Believe it or not, this statement was made in 1997 AD (by a male faculty member) - and the women in question are furious.

Whether we choose to believe it or not, women seem to be getting a raw deal in IIT. As part of a survey, we asked the respondents to consider the following statement from an institute notice: "Despite repeated reminders, staff members are not notifying the hospital about changes in family status, such as marriage of daughter, employment of son..."

So was this considered sexist¹?

Well, a majority of people found it sexist, but harmless. They felt that a change would be a good idea, but it wasn't something to make an issue of. Surprisingly, one female student felt that it wasn't sexist since it was just asking for changes in family status. One male faculty member justified it saying that "it has to be considered from the aspects of social practice."

The same person felt that giving women faculty members a tag (Ms, Mrs etc.), which occurs in the Courses of Study² wasn't sexist - "Why does one think that calling a lady a lady is sexist?" But a majority felt that this was sexist and ought to be changed - one male faculty member felt that Mr/ Ms should be used for symmetry, but it would be better if the concept of mentioning the sex could be dropped altogether. A student had this to say:

Yes. But it's standard practice. Besides, what goes of anyone's father's?

so how are women treated in IIT?

Around half the people said that they had experienced or witnessed incidents of sexism on campus. Some felt that the attitude towards women was as "good" as outside, while a few felt that it was probably better. Male students appeared to resent the attention showered on 'females':

Prof's always treat females better - esp. in labs, workshop, etc. Also true in liby, hospy, acad office etc. Once I saw two people returning overnight issue books late. The guy had his i-card confiscated and paid a fine; the girl (whose book was *three* days late) just got a frown and a 'don't do it next time.'

Workshop sideys fawn over females. Certain professors crack jokes in poor taste with females present.

One response, which seemed to reflect the attitude of male students, went "People don't give a damn for the not-very-beautiful females within the campus." It is perhaps such an attitude which is responsible for the female opinion that the situation in IIT is a lot worse than in the city of Bombay. This is what a female student had to say:

Life in the campus is terrible for a female. When one is studying in the library, for example, it can be very threatening to see the kinds of things people write about oneself or one's friends on the tables. Obscene pictures and bawdy rhymes are everywhere.

¹ Note that the statement is based upon the definition of a family as per the rules of the Government of India. The argument could then be about sexism in such rules. - *Ed.*

² also the name boards of female faculty members and their names as listed in various IIT publications.

That male students have a highly chauvinistic attitude is no secret. Consider the social put up by a hostel last semester, in which a female character was given the same name as a female undergraduate. Further references to the character and the manner in which it was developed left no doubt as to the intent. The depiction was crude and revolting - insulting is not an adequate enough description. What exacerbated matters was the cavalier manner in which protests were dismissed.

The social was adjudged the best.

the skirt factor

Only students were surveyed, and asked to comment on the existence of the skirt factor. One female student said that it was a reality, but was more imposed on them than invited:

... in the first year workshop, ED labs, one is not allowed to do her own job even if she wants to. Not all jobs require physical strength, (e.g. the smithy). Other than that it does not exist any other place.

Another had this to say:

I did all my jobs on my own, without assistance. I refused help whenever it was offered, which was frequently. The sidey just comes and ruins the job. And I got AA's in both my workshop courses.

There was a near consensus among male students that women are favoured by the skirt factor and that it is rampant.

Girls never get XX's and rarely FF/EE's. Of course, XX's have been khatched now.

I have seen a professor pass a lady when she couldn't do anything in the end sem.

Female students felt that although it exists to a limited extent, it goes against them and hampers them rather than help them (academically or otherwise).

computing facilities

big brother is watching³

There exists a policy of monitoring emails sent and received by students⁴. In certain cases, students have been asked why they sent or received certain mails. Students have found the system administrator checking their email regularly in at least one department⁵.

A majority of the faculty members felt that emails of students should be checked, and that students should not expect privacy as regards email. The reason given is that students do not show responsibility and send obscene emails. Sending jokes ("non-academic emails") has also been censured, perhaps rightly - after all, the facility is for an academic purpose.

The problem is that what with the SMTP port⁶ (disabled only on agni, the Mech. Engg. server), and web based remailers, it is improbable that anyone would use his own account to send "obscene" emails. It would be remarkable to find people sending such emails from their accounts since their names would turn up in front of the email.

This means that what people write to each other in the normal course of a day is being checked for 'the obscene.' In this case, what's obscene has to be decided by the receiver and sender (this opinion was expressed by quite a few people also). Where the system administrator figures is unclear.

³ The Oct 96 Technik had done a related interview with Dr.Sudhakar, head, CC.

⁴ One professor said that this has happened to her also.

⁵ There was a limited incidence of this following a complaint about obscene emails in the Physics Deptt. Chemistry Deptt students have experienced this for quite some time. CSE students' subject field is checked (or so a lot of students believe). HSS Deptt students and faculty members have also had problems.

⁶ try 'telnet localhost 25' (UNIX or LINUX) to find out more. Type 'help' for the command list.

One faculty member said that emails should be accorded the same privacy, that normal post (snail mail) is. He said that he found it "sick" that emails are being checked and hoped that the practice would be put to an end as soon as possible. Another defined parameters for checking email:

In my opinion, monitoring e-mail (or reading any user file) is legitimate only when there is some evidence/concern (from system logs etc.) that there is abuse of facilities

- like attempts at system break in
- misuse of resources to do things specifically disallowed (this may be discussed).
- faking e-mails to put others in trouble
- bypassing the system to avoid paying for e-mails

A group (2 or 3) responsible people who are in-charge (or nominated for this purpose) examine the evidence and decide that further investigation is warranted. This group alone investigates and makes a report of what they looked at and the results of the investigation to HoD.

The following view was expressed by a student:

Students in general have not been very responsible in their use of computing resources (maybe a few bad apples spoiling the whole lot). So snooping/ checking can't be done away with. The interesting question is "Who frames the rules?", "What are the rules?". In this both the system administrator and users (students etc) should have their say. Further just as the users are checked whether they adhere to rules, someone (maybe higher up) should check whether the sysadmins adhere to the rules.

Why email cannot be treated like snail mail, and accorded the same privacy is not clear - nobody bothered to tell us the difference. It appears that whatever can be controlled with ease will be. Of course, one faculty member did say that in most departments it is not a policy to do so; emails are checked only when there is a complaint. And usually the complainant is a student.

So what can we do? Nothing? Well, not really. There are ways to encrypt your incoming mails and if you feel that they are being read, just crypt them as they come in.

On agni, crypt is disabled.

Oh, well!

but VSNL charges only Rs. 550 for infinity mail and text-based internet access...⁷

"Try VSNL!" - a faculty member

Although web surfers regularly indulge in many MB of data transfer, emails are charged at Rs.6 per email (most emails are less than 50 kB in size). IIT pays a fixed amount per year to lease a high capacity line for internet access, and the charges seem to be rather arbitrary and definitely on the high side.

While some students felt that email facility should not be free as it will lead to a lot of "general" mails, they said that there should be a one-time blanket charge, and that net access of all forms should be charged. The problem with having a one-time blanket charge is that the concept of *paisa-vasooli* will take over and misuse will probably increase.

Putting things in perspective was a statement that the issue should not be brought up as net access might get blocked.

what is abuse?

To arrive at a definition of abuse, we asked the respondents to decide which among four issues (downloading pornography, use of abusive language on-line, hacking into others' accounts and downloading jokes/ lyrics/ games) constituted abuse.

All faculty, and most students felt that hacking and downloading porn was abuse. Use of abusive language is where the two differed - students felt that as long as the persons involved do not complain, the institute should have no reason to worry. Hacking was universally considered abuse.

⁷ the charge has since been revised to Rs. 6.00 per hour of login time for the student accounts. -Ed.

Very few faculty members (and even fewer students) felt that downloading jokes/ lyrics/ games was abuse. Consider the following view about the definition of 'abuse,' from a student:

Well... in the narrowest sense I would say 'anything that doesn't justify the purpose for which it has been allotted'. So say a faculty member's sending personal emails MIGHT NOT be justified (just like they can't use the xerox machine to xerox notes for their children)... similarly, a student's visiting www.mtv.com. We are in an academic institution with well defined rules. So we should use whatever facilities we are given (not only internet but the rest too) for purposes which justify that role. But this doesn't happen (for other facilities). Why? Because some things are always in abundance. In that sense I would say if the internet (bandwidth) is not a scarce resource then it's justified, which our law permits. Otherwise it has to be rationed and using it for anything except one's own ration is an ABUSE.

Most of the problems would disappear if there was some movement towards privacy of computer accounts. Take strong action against irresponsible use (wait for someone to complain instead of going through the accounts on a regular basis), treat students as responsible adults, and the situation will show dramatic improvements. Pornography can be sent by snail mail, so can jokes, lyrics. Usage of abusive language - the judge is the person with whom the conversation is being carried out. If there is no complaint from either side, it seems silly for officialdom to jump the gun. Mails should be checked only if there is a strong suspicion of wilful misuse, with criteria defined for the same.

And as far as hacking into others' accounts is concerned, it is an invasion of privacy and should be invite strong action. One faculty member even suggested that punishment should not stop at a fine or suspension of computing facilities; the minimum punishment should be a one semester suspension.

academics

should there be compulsory attendance?

Most students felt that it shouldn't be compulsory. The following quote seemed to summarise student opinion reasonably well:

ABSOLUTELY NOT. If you crack an endsem without attending a single lecture, well and good. It means you've understood the course (unless the endsem is shady, in which case you're not to blame), and that's all that's required. Note that it's always the sidey professors who take attendance. If your lectures are so dull and useless that no one wants to attend... Anyway, you can always attend and pay no attention. So what's the use?

There were opinions of all shades from the faculty side.

No! We should make our classes more interesting so that students should be compelled to attend and IIT students are mature enough to know their welfare.

Perhaps. In any case, the students' "knowledge" is not being "destroyed" by attending classes. Students not attending classes basically while away their time. There is no harm in imparting education in a certain organised manner. If going for a lecture is compulsory for the instructor, why not for the student?

Yes. It is necessary because class-room interaction with an expert in a subject (i.e. the teacher) and other learners is very valuable.

the work culture

Many faculty members and students felt that the work culture among IITians was 'OK'. Others felt it could use a lot of improvement. Some had the following to say ([s] = student, [f] = faculty):

[s] Despo lukha. Much worse than the REC's. We get away with it because we're smart, but ought to have stricter tutorials, more class assignments (non-coggable), quizzes etc... Fourth yearites, ha, ha, ha!

[s] Non-existent. IITians are always trying their best to get by with minimum work. What little they do is done at the last minute. Only a very small fraction of students (UG's, at least) are genuinely interested in their studies. The rest are here for the IIT name. For schols, jobs and resume value. All their efforts are motivated not by enthul/ interest, but by the desire to crack grades. After bumming around for the entire sem, junta suddenly take nbd and maaro nightouts at end sem time.

[s] Frankly, the work culture around here is pathetic.

[f] Most (50%) look too burned out. Maybe preparing for JEE for two years takes its toll. All participation - academic, cultural, sports - is sporadic and finally hyped up to hide lack of participation. PAF and MI prove this.

[f] Students (not just B.Tech.) want good grades and complete seminars and theses with minimal application of effort.

[f] UG's - terrible. PG's - good.

shorts should be banned?

During the last semester, a male student was refused entry into the library during the end semester examinations. He was wearing shorts. The watchman said, "*Yeh koi college-wollege nahin hai, yeh IIT hai, yahan chaddi nahin chalega.*" A similar policy seems to be in force at the Computer Centre.

We asked the librarian if this was an official policy. It turns out that it isn't an official policy. Then there was a hasty addition to the statement. While it is not officially official, it is unofficially official as readers have complained that they feel 'uncomfortable' if someone is wearing shorts.

Interestingly, the rule applies to males only.

Do such readers exist? Do shorts make a noise? Is it impossible to read the *IEEE Journal of Selected topics in Quantum Electronics* if the chap at the next table is wearing shorts? Or any other journal for that matter? This is what one particularly voluble student had to say:

TOTAL BULLSHIT. The liby is there for us to read in, not to look good in. Let public wear whatever they want, as long as they're comfy. One possible justification: that we're giving a bad impression to visitors. If so, impose a dress code from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Personally I'd rather see a liby packed with casually dressed people than an empty one with a smattering of immaculately attired students.

While one faculty member felt that the ban was fully justified since "there has to be some difference in casual wear at home and at work," another felt that they should be allowed as "they are certainly a part of casual attire."

girls and boys

Almost all the students in IIT are above the age of 18 (the so-called 'age of consent'). We are allowed to vote and decide the fate of the country. But not the right to go to a hostel for the opposite sex to pick up notes at 12:30 a.m. or study for the quizzes, midsems, endsems (a common enough practice before the rule). Forget notes, whatever the reason - it is not allowed. When a person of the opposite sex is in the room, the door of the room should be open at a certain angle and so on⁸.

Are these rules archaic and puritanical?

Not really, if we go by the opinion expressed by some. Firstly, no one is willing to treat students in IIT as adults. "We have not been brought up that way." No one talked of students as men and women, it was always boys and girls. Consider the following statement:

We can't allow it since we don't know what girls and boys will get up to...

(One might argue that they seem to know exactly what girls and boys might get up⁹ to...)

While some faculty members were surprised that such a rule exists and even found it funny, this is what one male faculty member had to say (we refuse to comment):

... there are so many negative arguments. Girl students can always exchange notes during the day time. On one hand you battle of privacy for emails. What about the privacy of other residents in front of members of the opposite sex in hostels. I think members of the opposite sex should not be allowed at all during *any* hour of the day/ night. If you are not convinced ask your parents what do they feel about it.

⁸ The 45° rule (as it has become known), basically says that the door of the room has to be open at an angle greater than 45° when a person of the opposite sex is present in the room. It is, however, followed more in the breach than in the observance. - *Ed.*

⁹ down?

Student reaction is, predictably, against the rule:

It is time the institute started treating students as adults. Imposition of Victorian rules and codes will never work and only cause resentment. The institute administration probably realises that this is the year '97. What seems unclear is whether it knows that this is 1997, and not 1897.

There is nothing to stop someone from doing anything one wants before 11:30. Such rules aren't going to prevent or promote anything. They are futile. At max., such rules hamper freedom after 11:30.

The average IITian works well past 11:30 (sometimes starts then!) What is the point of this rule? ... As regards privacy, isn't it better inside a friend's room than outside on the road or in the lounge, where others will be disturbed?

And that just about sums it up? Not really! Here's another view (male faculty):

Adults too do need help and things may go wrong with them too. It is not very easy to handle more intimate interactions in the post-11:30 p.m. period. Institute is ACCOUNTABLE socially for what happens on the campus. So, again, codes of conduct are necessary even for adults. For a smooth and stable social life, the codes are necessary. It is, of course, best to evolve such codes through consensus and discussion, rather than to impose them from outside.

special mentions

compulsory attendance?

[s] More optional courses should be introduced, so that only students really interested in the course will attend. This interest should, in principle, reduce the need for compulsory attendance. However, a minimum attendance requirement may still be demanded.

work culture

[s] Students are made to work in fields where he is least interested. Given the opportunity to work in the field of interest, students will automatically work more.

[s] People are not very co-operative - group projects are invariably the work of one member.

[s] Highly co-operative, but students should take more enthu towards acads :-(

[s] There is more of an anti-work culture prevalent in IIT. Usually, work is postponed to the absolute last minute - not simply academics, but everything. Often, students are labelled *nbdu's*, and generally looked down upon by other students.

[s] A mixture of diligence and dilly-dallying. Many seem to be geniuses with in-built capacity to comprehend things well, rather than toiling and pondering much.

shorts...

[s] Many people outside IIT would be shocked to see us wearing hawaii chappals. It is accepted here¹⁰ - they are convenient and comfortable - why not shorts?

[s] If people feel comfortable in shorts, what's the problem? They should be accepted as a part of the normal dress code. If mini-skirts, figure-hugging T-shirts are allowed, what's wrong with shorts.

[s] It is really unfortunate that in a place like IIT these unwanted vestiges of old conservatism are still nurtured.

[s] There may be a point - there should be a rationale for every decision. However, students should realise that many of them will be wearing ties¹¹ to work and not cribbing too much in 3-4 yrs. A little discipline never hurt anybody.

¹⁰ The institute instructions for convocation specifically prohibit hawaii chappals. IIT is probably the only institution (!) where this has been found necessary.

¹¹ We may safely assume that this will be in addition to other items of clothing - *Ed*.

[f] The ban is justified because maintaining a dress code in public places in an academic institutions is not a bad idea.

[s] Might be... It is cold there and the health of students might suffer ;-)

I won't answer these questions!

Two faculty members refused to answer the questions that the Technik Survey raised. The grouse seemed to be about the questions on sexism. The conversation has been reported in full to avoid misunderstandings.

[f] Would you ask such questions to your father? (Yes) But I am an old man - young people should feel free to discuss these issues - just leave us old people out. (Sir, what was specifically offensive?) No, no, nothing offensive, it's just that us old people, we don't like to discuss these things - you carry on, but you should ask the young people.

[f] I cannot answer these questions. The issue is a lot more serious that you can imagine, and does not merit mention in a student magazine. Students should not be asking such questions.

Cack Session Topics

In parallel with the survey, we asked respondents to tell us what they felt would merit further discussion (in future Techniks, maybe)...

Even though Chinks is a self-service place, it charges Rs.9.00 for cold drinks (the printed price is Rs.8.00). When asked why this was the case, the cashier snarled at us and said, "Be thankful I am not charging you 10.00" (!).

Another problem faced is that the chaps at Chinks charge Rs.10.00 for a bread loaf worth Rs.7.00 (printed price, as on 15th Feb., 97). When questioned, we were greeted with a snarl, and no excuses. Apparently, the prices were decided by a student (!) committee. And then approved by the Dean of Student Affairs.

Will it be too much to ask of the student committee to do their work? There have been horror stories about cockroaches in the soy sauce. The workers have remained the same, only the chap who accepts cash has acquired a new (not improved) look, with rudeness added on for effect.

[s] The rule banning canteens like the one at Tansa is not justified. By removing all competition to Chinks, the students are the worse sufferers, having to shell out more for the same dismal stuff.

[f] The students are becoming very arrogant, they don't know how to deal with their teachers.

[f] I believe IIT education should foster more creativity and should move away from pedantry. This requires greater responsibility from both sides - faculty and students. Students should not expect to be taught like school students or as in a coaching class. Faculty should not be overanxious to dump loads of material and designing ever harder but irrelevant problems. There should be freedom for students to select whatever they learn from a menu that faculty can provide.

Instead of pre-determining everyone's 'branch,' sequences of courses can be identified as essential for receiving such-and-such specialisation. And degree can be awarded in the branch *after* the courses are done by the student. In particular, if a student would rather do a stream in civil like structures and then communication courses in EE, that's his choice. Then he gets a general B.Tech.-IIT. It may also take him a semester more to do."

[f] lack of seriousness about the B.Tech. projects and low attendance at lectures

[s] Academic sincerity of students.

[s] Kick motorised vehicles off the campus, student hostel area. At least 18-25 year olds can bloody well walk a few kms daily to preserve pollution free campus, do them good too, spoilt brats. With NRI admissions, we may have a horrible thoroughfare where we have a pleasant road. Notice that most motorised junta go "Huh! Duh!" when you drop words like "green," "clean" into the conversation.

[s] While the institute seems nice and trigger-happy about everything that it can do, it seems rather surprising that they haven't taken the one step that would endear them to a lot of non-smokers: that of banning cigarette smoking outside hostel rooms (if not altogether). There was some talk of this already being the case, but what with people smoking with impunity all round, will some steps please be taken in this direction?

[s] The administrative staff is rude and incompetent. They make you run around for the smallest of things. I ran into trouble because of a lack of co-ordination between the acad office, the accounts section and the cash section - I had to prove that I had been paying the fees over the two years of my stay in IIT...

Technik Interview - Milind Kopikare

The first thing that strikes you about this guy is his uncanny similarity to Allan Donald - except that this is a more genial version, ready to bare his braces at a moments notice. Milind Kopikare, of the swimming and bald head fame, has many medals in his bucket (he keeps his medals in a bucket).

Having returned from the World Sea Swimming Championships (Sorrento Beach, Australia) in January, he found himself selected for the World Swimming Championships to be held in Switzerland, starting July 14, 1997. At the recent IIT Open State Level Swimming Gala, he won two golds. On Feb.10, he won the State Level Long Distance Swimming Championships. **Rahul Kopikare**, also of IIT, came fourth. At these championships, IIT was also represented by **Amit "Torpedo" Vishwanath, Ashish Singhvi and Sameet "Muttu" Mudbidri.**

Milind Kopikare now has his own page on the internet, constructed by the IIT administrator. It is accessible from <http://www.iitb.ernet.in>. The page is all about his achievements - as a swimmer, and as a student in IIT.

T: We hear you swim very well...

M: Yes, I mean, what? (*LONG pause*) Uh, I am thinking so much because I don't want to sound stupid - no, don't put that! Cut it out!

T: How did you start?

M: Well, I started swimming when I was around 3 - 3 1/2 years old - or so my mother tells me. I had asthma then, and swimming is supposed to cure one of asthma - which it did for me. Also, I started winning a few prizes, so then there was no stopping me... Um, that sounds quite vain, na?

T: How was the experience at the World Sea Swimming Championships?

M: The place was excellent - Perth was beautiful! I felt I was right in some Archie comic. People out there were very nice. I met this very nice Indian who would wake me at 4 in the morning to show me kangaroos hopping about with the sunrise in the background, and who took me to a casino. We weren't allowed in because of our shoes, so he bought us very posh shoes right then! Which reminds me - I ought to send him a thank you card.

T: Meet any Betty's and Veronica's, did you?

M: Mad or what? Well, there were many, but they had their own Archies and Reggies... (*wistful look*)

T: When did you hear of your selection for the World Swimming Championships?

M: When I came back to Bombay. Actually, I read it in the papers - the team manager never mentioned it to me.

T: How long have you been training for the World Swimming Championships?

M: I won the nationals in '95, after which it wasn't very sure if I'd be sent or not, so it was only last summer that I started practicing seriously.

T: What's your training schedule been like?

M: During the vacation, I would train in the morning and the evening in the IIT pool. I was supposed to go for a camp in December, but I wanted to stay back and enjoy Mood Indigo, which is why I practiced here.

T: How are the facilities in IIT?

M: Great. Many of my friends in swimming circles had given up because they don't have any facilities, now that they are in college. I guess I too would have given up swimming if it weren't for being in IIT. The coach here is good, and he trains very scientifically.

T: How's acads?

M: Last sem was tough. This sem is relatively relaxing, but maybe that's because I only practice one hour in the evening.

T: How do you manage to crack 9+ SPI's and devote so much time to swimming?

M: I think its because I take a lot of nbd - if there is a swimming competition, I take n nbd about practice, and even if it's a small quiz, I take n nbd about mugging for it. I guess nbd propels one forward. Though at times, it makes one question its necessity.

T: Do profs crib about attendance?

M: Some of them are very helpful and even enquire about my swimming. But some do make me run around for 'letters from the dean' excusing me from attendance. But I guess they are just following the rules.

T: What do you do in your spare time?

M: Don't have any spare time!

T: We hear that the initials S. S. mean a lot to you...

M (*very innocent look*): S. S.? What S. S.? Actually, there has been a very wrong rumour going around, and if anyone is interested, I suggest they get the proper story from me. I hope she doesn't read this.

T: So what is the proper story?

M (*turns red*): What proper story? I am not saying anything! Abbe, this sounds like some 'Filmfare' interview¹²... Do you have to write everything I say? (*covers his face*)

T: Where do you see yourself ten years from now?

M: I'll have these braces off, for one. I'll have to use measured words... (*big grin*) I'll be 30 years old. Do you think I'll have a kid by then? Ae, idiot don't type that - this is obscene. I'm leaving... it sounds stupid also.

Well, (*seriously*) maybe a job with some multinational - or some business of my own. If you had asked fifteen years, maybe I'd have said 'teaching my kids to swim!'

T: What would you like to say to our readers?

M: Never let yourself be interviewed for Technik - esp. by Grover!

¹² Thanx! - Ed.

We Don't Need No Computation...

SNIGCOM - Uncut!

Rahul Shah and Rajneesh Hegde

SNIGCOM is the Special Non-Interest Group in Computers, started by some students of the Computer Science and Engineering Department. The group consists of students who are against what they call 'labgiri.'

The birth of SNIGCOM

The birth of SNIGCOM, like that of any great organisation occurred during a cack session. During a discussion of their OR project, a group of students (as inevitably happens in a group study) ended up in what they describe as an eye-opener of a cack session - "...all our repressed desires came out, and we realised that we disliked hacking immensely. The culture of hacking had been thrust upon us. It was time, we decided, to rebel. The situation was so bad that everything on a CRT became intolerable - even erotica!"

We asked the SNIGCOM members how they arrived at the name. It turns out that the name is a take off on SIGFIN¹³, SIGSYS¹⁴ and the like...

"Organisations such as these purport to consist of people who are interested in the stuff. SiGSYS, in particular, reflects a philosophy so alien to the IITian way of life that we were disgusted.

We never have had a forum to air our discontent with the current system¹⁵. So it became imperative that we start an organisation to reflect our beliefs and lack of enthusiasm for labgiri. Labgiri is basically having to hack, spending long periods of time at the terminal."

Incidentally, the name SNIGLAB was proposed first. But then it was dropped because SNIGCOM sounded better. However they were unaware of the potential consequences.

SNIGCOM takes shape

The cult of SNIGCOM was formalised by introducing rules and regulations. Technik gained an exclusive look at the constitution:

Rule 1: Disobey all rules.

Rule 2: The following words and concepts are taboo: WWW, http, HTML, URL, GNU, LINUX, Java, tar, gzip. Attempts to enlighten fellow SNIGgers about their import is a heinous crime.

Rule 3: To know that .html is a possible file extension is prohibited. Having a file with such an extension is an unforgivable offence and automatically means disgrace and disqualification from SNIGCOM for life.

Rule 4: Never read news. Usage of tin should be strictly to further one's academic prospects. Any newsgroup which starts with *rec* is out of bounds.

Rule 5: Never edit an email before forwarding. If possible, never forward emails.

Rule 6: Never read emails either.

Rule 7: Never log in.

Rule 8: Accounts should never be more than 1 Mb in size.

Rule 9: Cogging is fundamental to life and compigiri. All learning in life should be due to this. The ideal of any SNIGger should be to be an expert in the use of the command *cp*. Remember, before submission, change is fundamental to life....

¹³ Special Interest Group in Finance

¹⁴ Special Interest Group in Systems (pronounced "sis-teems")

¹⁵ pronounced "sis-teem"

Unfortunately, one SNIGger applied Rule 1 to Rule 4, and made a (self contradictory) posting to some newsgroups about SNIGCOM. This led to some problems...

SNIGCOM goes into hibernation

The name led to a major misunderstanding because some professors assumed that SNIGCOM has a general hatred towards Comp. Sc. and they need "counselling." Taking into consideration the potential danger it posed to the moral fabric of the department, the alarm bells were rung.

SNIGCOM went underground.

However, the popular perception that SNIGCOM is dead is incorrect. (SNIGgers don't die. They pass out!)

Technik was given an exclusive look at some of the correspondence that the SNIGCOM members carry on amongst themselves...

The SNIGCOM memoirs

Hi Sniggers!

I have composed some great work which I think should be awarded the status of being the SNIGSong. Pay extra attention to its rich lyrical content !

The SNIGsong

(To be sung to the tune of ***Another Brick in the Wall***)

We don't need no computation,
We don't need no net control

Assignment locked us in the lab-
room,
Teacher leave the SNIGS alone

Hey! Teacher! Leave the SNIGS
alone
ALL in all is just another SNIG
cogging all.

Dear SNIGgers,

Our nascent organisation is in **mortal danger**. Of late, I have noticed some of our members engaged in some very reprehensible activities. Although such follies are presently not very widespread, they nevertheless must be summarily curbed lest they debauch the minds of the

other members. Some of the aforementioned activities are:

1. Forwarding mail by editing; one of our fellow SNIGgers (I wouldn't like to name him) had committed this act a few days ago, as you might be aware. I suggest that this fact may be noted while considering the said member for any post in the future.
2. Using the internet - this is another unthinkable crime which has been committed by a SNIGger.
3. Maintaining a gargantuan account - I have noticed that a lot of SNIGgers have a quota of over 1MB, which is really shameful.

I earnestly exhort my fellow SNIGgers to desist from perpetrating such heinous crimes against our organisation. Also, if they notice anybody doing them, they should bring such incidents to the notice of the others.

A humble SNIGger.

PS: I think A----- should be more careful about his spelling when writing to SNIGCOM. We may be bad at practical compy stuff but not at orthography.

SNIGCOM *mara nahin*. SNIGCOM *marte nahin*...

What's the Buzz?

H2 goes up in arms

The students of Hostel 2 are alarmed over the institute's decision to allocate them 220 freshies next semester. Already, the mess gets extremely crowded due to the large number of inmates - it had been designed for 250 students, and this decision looks like it will cause further trouble. There was a heated argument with the warden, Prof. T. Anjaneyulu during a GBM, with one student getting so worked up, he yelled, "Sir, *hum bhi insaan hain!*" The Coordinating Warden and the Dean of Student Affairs have been invited for the next GBM to debate the issue. Similar views have been echoed by inmates of hostel 9.

We applaud

the recent decision by the Comp. Sc. and Engg. Deptt. to have seminar and BTP reports printed on both sides of the paper. Apparently, this welcome step is a consequence of a faculty member overhearing a conversation between two students about the merits of recycling paper, and their disparaging comments about the rule about one-side-only printing. It is hoped that other departments will follow suit, since in this age of word-processed and photocopied (as opposed to typewritten with carbon copies) reports, the rule is unnecessary.



The cult of Zem

Contrary to popular opinion, the message "Zem was here," found scrawled in chalk all over the institute on the morning of February 16 is not a consequence of a prank by H10. Far from being a linguistic variant of the H10 G.Sec.'s name (Zemobia?), or an invisible animal in IIT, this is in fact the name of mattresses from the planet Squornshellous Zeta. In fact, *the Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (that truly remarkable book) has this to say:

Very few things actually get manufactured these days, because in an infinitely large Universe, such as, for instance, the one in which we live, most things one could possibly imagine, and a lot of things one would rather not, grow somewhere. A forest was discovered recently in which most of the trees grew ratchet screwdrivers as fruit. The life cycle of ratchet screwdrivers is quite interesting. Once picked it needs a dark dusty drawer in which it can last undisturbed for years. Then one night it suddenly hatches, discards its outer skin which crumbles into dust, and emerges as a totally unidentifiable little metal object with flanges at both ends and a sort of ridge and a sort of hole for a screw. This, when found, will get thrown away. No one knows what it is supposed to gain from this. Nature, in her infinite wisdom, is presumably working on it.

No one really knows what mattresses are supposed to gain from their lives either. They are large, friendly, pocket-sprung creatures which live quiet, private lives in the marshes of Squornshellous Zeta. Many of them get caught, slaughtered, dried out, shipped out and slept on. None of them seem to mind this and all of them are called Zem.

"We live quiet retired lives in the swamp, where we are content to flollop and vollue¹⁶ and regard the virtues of wetness in a fairly floopy manner. Some of us are killed, but all of us are called Zem, so we never know which and globbering is thus kept to a minimum."

¹⁶ for the meaning of the word 'vollue' and 'globber', buy a copy of *Squornshellous Swamptalk* at any remaindered bookshop, or the *Ultra-Complete Maximegalon Dictionary*, as the University will be very glad to get it off their hands and regain some valuable parking lots. - *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Two Different Days

Rohit Grover

Wednesday Morning, 7 a.m.

Beep, beep, beep, beep....
"Grover!" (from over the partition)
"Ahmmmm?"
"Your alarm is ringing!"
"Thank yoummmmm"
"Shut it off, you [expletive/unprintable]"
"Sure"
Beep, beep, beep, beep...
"AAAARGH" (roomp, not me)
"O...K...mmmmmm"
Beep, beep, beBANG!
"Thanx!"
 The hills are alive with the sound of
 music,
 with songs they have sung for infinity
 years...
"Grover!"
"Yo?"
"I'm sleeping."
"Congratulations."
"WHAT? I mean, switch off the damn thing!
What time is it?"
"7:00 a.m."
"[expletive/unprintable]"
 Alleluia, alleluia!

 How do you solve a problem like
 Maria?
 How d'you catch a cloud and pin it
 down...
CLICK!

 Hello, this is Mohan Kapur, aur aap
 dekh (?) rahe hain, Radio Star, 107.1
 FM! Aaj ki tazi peshkash, the cool surd
 from the refrigerator (just kidding!) from
 Punjab, actually Delhi, with the song
 Dardi, Rab Rab...
"Grover! Arre, please daya kar de!"
"You prefer Sound of Music -- or maybe Tom
Petty and the Heartbreakers?"
"NO, I AM SLEEPING."

"Badhai ho!"
"NOOOO!"
 Into the great wide open,
 Under them skies of blue,
 Out in the great wide open,
 A rebel without a clue...
"Oh well, I might as well wake up... Grover,
wait, what day is it?"
"Wednesday"
"Thanx... Wednesday? I don't have the first 2
lectures, you [expletive/unprintable], you woke
me..."
And another day dawns in IIT.

Friday afternoon, 12:30 p.m.

"Thomas, I am taking a bath."
"What, again?"
"No, that was last Friday, bum! Give me
company?"
"Chal... Say, DeMello, do you think neural
networks believe in God?"
"Well, let's see, BRRRR! Say, did you switch
off the geyser?"
"No, did you?"
"No."
"Then why is the water so cold?"
"The geyser must be off."
"Ah!"
"Should we try onning it? It's very cold water,
you know."
"I feel reasonably clean, now that I think about
it."
"Ditto"
"Monday seems like a lot better for this kind of
thing, don't you think?"
"Just what I was about to say... Did you know
that Tolkien wrote 'the Lord of the Rings'? Got
it off the Asian Age trivia page... It's the same
chap who wrote 'the Hobbit'"
"You're kidding! I never... Well, who'd have
thunk it?"
And two clean IITians emerge from the baths.

The Call of the Sahyadris

Amey Parandekar

(Secretary, Mountaineering Club)

A question often asked by junta in IIT is, "Why do you climb mountains?" To many it would seem a futile activity: clambering up endless piles of rock. But if you have experienced the breathtaking view, the breeze in your face and the sense of freedom that pervades one's being - then you will know the answer to this question.

The love of nature and the prospect of the unknown have eternally drawn IITians to shed the comfort (?) and security of their hostels to venture beyond the blue ranges on the horizon, to explore forests, rivers mountains and valleys. An insatiable quest drives the trekker to be a part of the wild, unspoilt by the harsh encroachment of mankind.

Trekking is an activity which develops love for the mountains and an appreciation of their grandeur. It leads to a close interest in flora and fauna. It inculcates the values of physical exertion and comradeship. A sense of adventure adds excitement along the way.

IIT Bombay has a long tradition of weekend hikes and treks. The nearby Sahyadris offer numerous trekking paths. These vary from the very easy to the highly technical climbs. The favourite season for hikes and treks is the rainy season. Amidst the heavy rains, the mountains exhibit all their splendour. The landscape, dotted with green meadows and glorious waterfalls, offers an ideal setting for freaking out. Mountain peaks play hide-and-peek among the clouds. Hiking during the monsoons has a special charm which no other season can provide. During the monsoons, one-day-hikes to places around Bombay are the norm. Bhimashankar and Rajmachi are runaway favourites.

The period after the monsoons is just as spectacular. The days are sunny and the skies are clear. Waterfalls left over from the monsoons abound. After the monsoons, the air is fresh. Winter brings its own charms and colours. Away from the dust that obscures the night sky in Bombay, the stars come into their own. Sunrise and sunset are a glorious experience.

In winter, the brown, dry grasses contrast beautifully with the deep blue skies, providing some spectacular effects for the photography enthusiast. Harishchandragarh, Ratangarh and Sudhagarh are interesting places to hike to in winter.

In IIT, people prefer to organize their own groups for treks and hikes. As a result, wing or hostel treks are common. Sometimes, treks are organized at the institute level. After a peak in enthusiasm over the last two years, the general enthu for trekking is on the decline.

Hopefully, we can continue this tradition because to miss the splendour of nature would be very sad.

Fresh nurture and new strength of blood
From the free would suck I
Nature to me is fair and good
Who on her bosom lie

Our boat is cradled by the waves
In time with the oars beat
The mountains' cloud-capped heaven high
Watches and hail and meet.

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Advice for Rock Bands in Trouble (ARBIT)

Dear Ed,

We are a rock band. We were wondering if you could let us know how exactly a sound check should be conducted. - *The Reasonably Good Band, Bombay.*

Dear Reasonably Good Band,

A sound check is one of the first things you should learn about before starting a rock band. The other is hair (see below). A sound check is when you fiddle with the knobs on your sound equipment trying to pretend that you can make out subtle distinctions that your audience are too unrefined to grasp. At the same time, it gives the audience a chance to go to the loo, since the 2 hour wait before your band comes on stage is sure to have provided the soft drink vendors with business - people always like to gaze deep into each other's eyes while sipping a Coke and daintily picking each other's noses. I was fortunate to be at a concert by Millennium, and the sequence is as follows:

"Mike, I want more volume on the bass." (This is the most important one - never forget this.)

"Could we please have some more volume for the lead?"

"Hello, 1-2-3." (This is usually greeted with 4-5-6 by the audience, to pre-empt any further instructions in counting from a long haired, stubbly freak - the lead singer, that is. Of course, the lead singer is clever: he can count to 9, so this does not work.)

This goes on for some time, till everyone is happy.

The lead singer introduces the band, yells a few expletives - he is educated, you know.

Then he says, "Mike, increase all volumes to full and let's begin, a 1 a 2 a 3, and...."

Dear Ed,

We are a rock band. We need advice on hair. - *Disaster Area, Papua New Guinea.*

Dear Disaster Area,

Of course you do!

Hair is dead - really. It is made of keratin, and it smells terrible when burned. You are strongly advised against burning your hair in concert, unless you want to sober your audience from the pot stupor they will almost definitely in. This is a bad idea, since they may then hear your music, and it could end up being a losing strategy. Therefore, desist.

Depending on what kind of music you play, the hairdo will be different. For example, if your target audience is the middle aged housewife, I'd advise short hair (NOT a Mohawk cut - just a short at the sides kind of cut) and sappy songs about love and forgiveness.

On the other hand, if you play the kind of music I think you do, I'd advise long hair coloured to resemble radioactive waste - preferably green. It is very good if you can get a decent imitation of gook to hang from it; real gook will also work, but is difficult to obtain in large quantities, unless you know someone like S. N. P. (name withheld).

Be very, very careful, though.

Questions to Ed for the ARBIT column may be sent to The Editor, Technik. ARBIT supports all environment friendly causes and solicits your cooperation in saving the dolphin, spreading AIDS awareness, anti-drug messages, anti-smoking messages and low fat messages. No animals were harmed during the writing of this article.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse among teenagers has been a constant source of worry to parents. IITians are just as susceptible to anxiety and peer pressure as kids in any hostel, and a large fraction of IITians smoke to feel good, be cool and to be a part of the crowd.

At any given time in a hostel, one may find an IITian lighting up. Tobacco is the most addictive and harmful of the three most commonly abused substances - tobacco, alcohol and marijuana (also known as grass/ pot and smoked as joints). Many faculty members smoke in the departments - some of them even share their fags with their students.

Abuse of painkillers and anti-anxiety drugs such as valium is not unknown. Less prevalent today is the use of charas, which is said to be still available easily - one student recounted how he was forced to do charas for a while because grass was not available when he needed to get high! But, he added, it was a never again scenario. One wonders what will happen the next time grass is unavailable...

In the eighties, it was not uncommon to find entire wings devoted to heroin. In hostel five, a group of students who found the cost of IMFL unbearable, and who were unwilling to risk *deshi daaru*, started making booze in the wing, and a very successful venture it was too. It succeeded for a year, but then one day 37 of them suffered food poisoning, and ended up in the IIT Hospi, and that was the end of that.

Students are especially prone to the use of amphetamines, which delay fatigue and increase tension and cough syrups containing codeine (a cocaine derivative). Cough syrup causes euphoria because of its alcohol and codeine content. Also popular are Iodex sandwiches, and a mixture of cigarette ash in tea or coffee.

Alcohol can be very dangerous because of the tendency to drink-and-drive. Alcohol abuse starts as being a psychological addiction, but soon becomes physiological in nature.

Last year, a student died and the pillion rider suffered many injuries when the motorcycle they were riding on skidded because of speeding on a wet road. He had consumed beer, and had seemed to be in 'control.' In the best IITian tradition, neither was wearing a helmet.

Which is why alcohol is so dangerous. Alcohol affects the body in three stages: the first is when the person starts feeling very amiable (< 2 pegs). There is a tendency to forget oneself, and to lose touch with one's surroundings. Then there is depression of the Central Nervous System and reaction time increases, and sudden decisions, such as those that have to be taken during driving, become impossible (2+ pegs). Beyond this there is loss of muscle coordination and the person may be unable to walk and may even pass out.

In addition, alcohol binges and chronic alcohol abuse cause deficiency of Vitamin B1, portal hypertension, hypoglaecemia, pancreatitis, gastritis, haematemesis (vomiting of blood due to opening up of blood vessels in the stomach), and hypovolumic shock due to loss of blood. In addition, it may cause heart disease, arteriosclerosis, strokes, liver failure and cancer. Alcoholics usually die of cirrhosis of liver.

An additional problem among students is the tendency to 'do' cheap alcohol, which may contain methanol. Methanol causes blindness and is potentially fatal.

Also of concern is the abuse of caffeine through tea and coffee. Caffeine is an alkaloid and potentially fatal in large doses. It is also a carcinogen, mutagen and may cause impotence.

Technik spoke to Dr. Ram Puniyani about these problems. Dr. Ram Puniyani is a part of the School of Biomedical Engg. and a consultant physician at the IIT Hospital.

T: How exactly would you define substance abuse? When does something become 'abuse'?

P: Use of a substance for which it is not meant - most of the substances in vogue are meant for something else. Their use for the purpose of getting high is abuse. Quantitatively, use in amounts far exceeding their medical limits.

T: What is the exact difference between physiological and psychological addiction?

P: Psychological addiction is the initial stage of most addictions. The person in question feels a urge for a substance because of underlying social habit or emotional weakness and problems of personality.

Physiological addiction occurs after prolonged abuse. The body becomes used to the presence of the substance and needs its presence for normal functioning. At this stage, stoppage causes what is called withdrawal symptoms. These manifest themselves as cramps, intense anxiety, restlessness and colicky pains.

T: What causes students to look for a high?

P: There are many factors. The main one is the non-resolution of social tensions and a rising intensity of career oriented pressures. Students are in a vulnerable age group where they are unable to resolve the problems of social pressures. It is a mixture of various factors.

T: When would you say a person is addicted to a substance - what are the danger signs?

When there is a deep urge to keep taking a drug. Medically, what we talk of is a persistence of effective drug levels in the blood. The signs vary from drug-to-drug. By and large addictions manifest itself in the form of laxity on attitude, non-performance and social withdrawal.

T: What would you say to students who want to experiment for the knowledge of how it feels?

P: Once in a while is a different cup of tea, So long as it remains experiments, it's OK. This is usually temporary and a passing phase.

T: How dangerous are coffee and tea?

P: In moderation, tea and coffee are innocuous. In excess, they can cause acidity. A poisonous dose needs 100 cups of coffee¹⁷, so it is improbable that anyone ever died from them. In small amounts (2-3 cups a day), coffee may even be good for the body.

T: What kind of counselling programs would you recommend for students feeling tempted to take up drugs?

P: There are no compulsory counselling programs at present. They are offered on demand. In professional colleges, where the competition is intense, counselling and group therapy should be a compulsory part of institute activity. There can be campaigns and the ban on smoking should be enforced.

T: Finally, students seem to mistrust the IIT hospital and prefer to indulge in self-medication - what is your reaction to this?

P: Most public hospitals lack a personal touch - there is too much of professionalisation. Patients like there to be a personal touch. That is probably lacking. Self medication is OK for minor ailments. But over a period of time, unsupervised medication may cause toxicity and should be avoided.

to end...

When we tried to discuss this issue with a habitual smoker of tobacco and marijuana, who drinks and drives at a high speed on a regular basis, this is what he had to say:

You're doing a serious article on substance abuse? Give me a break! It is of no consequence, *yaar!*

¹⁷ one cup of coffee contains ~200 mg of caffeine and one cup of tea contains ~80 mg.

A Ball of a Time

Amit "Torpedo" Vishwanath

September - and it is time for the IITB swimming team to put together their show. We are blessed with the most enthusiastic (read demanding) coach, thanks to whom there is absolutely no problem in trouncing all the other teams at the annual inter-IIT aquatic meet. Be it the water polo matches or the medley relay, we make sure that the competition is left gasping. Captain Milind Kopikare is the latest in a long line of state and national level swimmers who have led the team to victory.

Getting onto the team is a very simple matter. All you have to do is to hope that it has lost a couple of talented swimmers with the batch that passed out. Then, con the current fourth yearites on the team to do their BTP. If you get lucky here, the poor suckers might actually decide to spend some time on it. Having dispatched these chaps, you will find that there are only about a dozen other aspirants alongside you. Despair not.

Did you say that you found the last 12-hour swimmathon a piece of cake? Good! Because then you will find the selection procedure a cakewalk. Junta starts getting into shape in August. After spending long hours in the pool to build stamina and emerging with prune-like fingers, you may take your first steps towards playing water polo. Even as you start, you will be overcome with a sinking feeling. Take heart, splutter. Cough up that water. Try again. When you finish spluttering, you will be blessed with the realisation that this game involves treading water. Pedal furiously to keep your head topsides. With enough practice you will cut down your water intake and leave some water for people to swim in.

Next you will meet that bright yellow, slimy object they call a water polo ball. This will soon grow into the most dreaded object in your miserable life. It will repeatedly slip out of your desperate fingers at inopportune moments (when the hawk eyed coach has chosen to watch your ball control). Occasionally it comes flying out of the blue and lands on your head. But don't give up. This ball holds the key to the game. The idea seems to be to get it over to the opponents half of the thirty meter playing field (uh, if we can call it that). Hurl it with all the force you can muster into the wee goal that you see there. Hard luck if the goal happens to be guarded by the great Srikanth Aithala. IITB's outstanding goalie, he puts killer whales to shame, leaping right out of the water to intercept it (the ball). Also, you may be hindered by a ridiculous rule that says that you can touch the ball with just one hand at a time. Keep up your courage. Clench your teeth and learn to dribble around with the ball without losing it.

Enter our champion defenders, KC and Muttu. These chaps are well versed in the various methods employed in depriving an opponent of the ball. It is pertinent here to raise the question - "which ball?" (Many unfortunate victims will tell you our champions do a pretty good job of relieving the opponent of his swimming trunks.) If pitted against them in practice matches, wear a spare set of trunks and tie that knot tight. Also pray that the fabric doesn't give way when in the fray. The best way out is to sprint as fast as you can and stay out of their reach - not that this guarantees safety - you still have the Kopikare brothers to contend with. They can outsprint anyone and range far and wide. Rahul, the younger Kopikare, is the new star of the team and is noted for the gurgling sounds he emits to psyche the enemy as he rushes towards the goal like a torpedo. And Torpedo... he is the new team water-boy. Making fouls at critical moments is best left to our aforementioned defenders. But Anirban Hazra, the centerforward, is usually at the receiving end. Enemies do all they can to ensure that he doesn't send the ball gracefully pirouetting into the goal. But if you manage to pass to him, he'll work his magic. Ever graceful under pressure, he is often complemented for his gentlemanly style and total lack of animosity towards opponents.

The other team members, Mehta, Sujeet Ratnani and the vice-captain Singhvi all do their bit to add to the score. And what a score! This year we routed Delhi (12-3), Madras (10-2) and Kharagpur (11-0).

So that's the grand team you're trying to gatecrash. Keep at it. If your fairy Godmother is watching over you, and if KC decides to spare your trunks, there is just that chance that you may do sufficiently well at the trials to catch Coach Reddy's eye. And become a part of the team...