

The NISTian, Vol 2, Issue 8, September, 1999

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Goodbye to the batch of 1996 and a very hearty welcome to the NISTians of the 2000 batch! I am sure that you have taken admission at NIST to pursue your dreams of getting a sound engineering education en route to a rewarding technical career. We have to relentlessly work together to make sure that NIST remains an exemplary island of excellence in the sea of academic mediocrity that threatens to obliterate India's rich educational past.

NIST guarantees that there is no ragging of any kind on our campus. However, this must not be construed as a license to be rude to your seniors. Behave respectfully in all your interactions with your seniors and I assure you that you will be rewarded with their help and assistance in various areas. Contrary to what you might gather from watching brash young guys in films and TV, Indians continue to cherish some simple old-fashioned values like respect for elders. Behave rudely and you will find that, in a very short time span, the news gets to every member of the teaching staff of NIST that so and so is a headstrong and rude student. Behave politely and your seniors will pass on their wisdom to you in how to handle the grueling four years of study at NIST.

As you begin your journey of four years to get an engineering education, let me tell you that these will be four years of hard work. You will work harder than you have ever worked before if you want to pursue excellence. And you will learn very soon that there are no shortcuts for hard work. You must plan your career goals as soon as possible and start working on them immediately.

Exciting things are happening in the world of technology. One of the most exciting being the convergence of various computer and telecommunication technologies where your television, cable TV, Internet connection, electricity connection, telephone, cellular phone, and personal computer will evolve into a single machine. And being at NIST, you will have the unique opportunity to experience and participate in this upcoming technological revolution.

Very soon you will see an additional computer lab for high end computing. You will also see networks based on Sun Solaris and Linux. NISTians will have access to the networks in the near future.

This year, apart from the technological innovations, we are committed to a massive increase in our sports facilities. The international size tennis hardcourt is almost ready. A basketball court and volleyball court will be finished as soon as the rains stop.

Another plan for this year is to increase the time spent on extra curricular activities.

Wishing you all the best in everything you do!

FROM THE PLACEMENT DIRECTOR

The college is only a step in the long ladder, that you call your career. It is never too early to start planning for your careers. Here at NIST, we encourage you and provide you with all the help that you might require for charting out a glorious career for yourself.

It is time for you to take some time off, sit down and think about what you want to be and what you want to do in your life. Decide where you want to be ten years from now and chart out the course to that point. For doing this, I request all the students once again to go through the Career Guidance Booklet thoroughly. It is our hope that this booklet shall be of a lot of help to you in planning out your careers and achieving your goals in your life.

The first batch that graduated from NIST ie the 1996 - 2000 batch did quite well in the various spheres. Seven students were selected by Satyam Computers Ltd. Six were selected by HCL Infosystems, four by Integra Microsystems and so on. Many of the students also appeared for the MBA entrance exams. Seven of them were selected by Xavier's Institute of Management Bhubaneswar, Reshma Rout who gave GRE and TOEFL managed to get admission into some of the Top Universities of the US. She was also able to get a Scholarship which includes a complete Fee Waiver and a stipend every month which is more than enough to lead a comfortable lifestyle in the US.

Several students writing GATE exam also qualified for the exam, securing a high percentage and have joined reputed M. Tech Colleges like Jadavpur, Shibpur etc. We encourage the new batch of students to start thinking about their career options from now itself, as career planning in these days of high competition requires information, effort and time from the beginning itself.

For the students graduating in July 2001, already companies like Wipro, Satyam, IBM Global Services, have conducted Campus Recruitment. Congratulations to all the selected students !!!

For the Third year students, I urge them to seriously start preparing for GATE, MBA and (GRE+TOEFL). All the GRE and TOEFL exams should be taken before end of November to enable the Universities to consider them for scholarships. The Institute can help students in getting scholarships - those who have got good TOEFL and GRE scores.

The Institute of Management Studies, Bhubaneswar has agreed to conduct some review sessions for MBA exams (Thanks to Bapi Dash for his efforts!!) Students must make use of this opportunity.

For students of Second and First year - All companies have a Cutoff Percentage for recruiting students. For example Satyam and Wipro conduct campus test only for students with 65% marks and above. Hence doing well in Academics is very important to be able to appear for any Campus Selection Process. For getting through any Campus Interview one has to be able to get through 1) Aptitude test consisting of Arithmetic, Analytical, Logical Reasoning, 2) Technical Test 3) Group Discussion (In some cases) and finally 4) Interview. Practice in these areas should begin from now itself, because these things cannot be learnt overnight.

The second year students must start planning for the various career options. Those who want to go for MBA must get enrolled with IMS/Brilliants/TIME etc.

Companies are looking for the following 1. Attitude 2. Communication Skills 3. Knowledge - in that order form the students. Hence there should be a good effort by the student to develop a Positive attitude and good Communications skills besides doing well in the Academics.

Wishing you success at every step of your life.

MIRAGE

"Hey Nisha! Hurry up. Come on, get up!", someone shouted. Nisha half turned, stretched her arms to see her mother with an inquiring look on her face. A gust of cold air made her shiver and a lazy, "umm..ee.." escaped her mouth. Her eyes shut once again. She never liked getting up early or for that matter even being disturbed in her sleep and that too in such an inclement weather. Each morning brought with itself an endless train of deadlines for assignments, project reports, seminars... But today it was something different. She had to go to face the campus interview of ABC International, one of the most highlighted, talked about and eagerly awaited event in the college for the past few weeks. She jumped out of bed, the urgency notable in her expressions and demeanour.

Outside it was raining cats and dogs. Nisha dressed up in a dappled blue suit. It was her lucky colour. She looked confident enough and conscious of her personality. The bus-stop, a bare two minutes walk from her house, was another ordeal in the slush atmosphere. She looked at her watch. Moisture had taken its toll and the watch has crawled to stop. The road was muddy, narrow and flooded with stinking drain water. She walked faster, wobbling in her stride. The bus stop had transformed into a pond. The place was deserted. No boats!?! No passengers!?! The empty bus-stop convinced her that she was late and had missed the college bus. "It always happens with me", she moaned.

Travelling in a private bus and that too in the treacherous weather was a harrowing experience. The bus never left until it was jam-packed with few passengers hanging out of the door. Reluctantly, she boarded a private bus and raised a half-torn, wet, old piece of paper to the conductor, which he managed to recognise as a two-rupee note. She looked outside. Closed cabins, still-glowing streetlights and the perpetually running taps were all she could make out. Nothing unusual except the closed level crossing. "It always happens with me", she moaned.

For the last few days she had been preparing for the interview, learning how to walk; how to talk; how to smile and even how to think. People said she had everything to make a success but attitude. She was working on that front assiduously. She knew that she had to do some acting if she needed the job and that too some good acting because she had to fool some real discerning eyes. Nisha knew that she could pull it off.

What if they inquire about her plans after B.E. In reality she didn't have any plans only dreams. She was beautiful, intelligent, technically educated, smart. She dreamt of getting married to a prince someday. Life would be so easier. She would be crowned in De Beers. Life would be spent luxuriously on a seashore. Can a job give her more satisfaction? Can a job guarantee her a lifetime of luxury? Never!! But Nisha wouldn't have said all these things to the interviewers. She would rather say that she wanted to join an esteemed company like theirs which offered a challenging work environment, a scope to prove her mettle, her creativity and her technical proficiency.

A sudden jerk brought Nisha back from her reverie. The driver was managing to get into every pothole with amazing accuracy. She held onto the iron rod lest she got thrown off her seat.

The rain had intensified. The college building was looming over the swaying palms and high hills like a fortress. Nisha got down from the bus and her lucky blue dupatta got caught in the sharp tin edge of the door slightly ripping it. She adjusted it to hide the rip, opened the umbrella and started walking towards the college building. She almost ran. Some of her friends were loitering in the corridor and some were reading. Nisha relaxed a bit. She was on time.

The notice board had a list of all the eligible students who could appear the interview. She saw her name at the 13th position. Unlucky number!! "It always happens with me", she moaned. Hours passed. The rain abated but still there was no sign of the company representatives. Nisha waited patiently, hunger rumbling inside her stomach along with all her enthusiasm, talents, creativity, proficiency and dreams. The sun started to sink in behind the swaying palms.

The company didn't turn up but sent a fax, "We have set up our operations in India only recently and don't have the adequate infrastructure to accommodate too many talented professionals from a national institute which is internationally financed. The company hopes to improve its base by next year so that it can recruit engineers from your institute." "It always happens with me", Nisha moaned.

OMERTA

Don Vito Gates III

Santino Balmer

Fredrico Capellas The Don's Sons

Michael Premji

Tom Drucker, consigliere to the Don

Barzini Penfield Jackson

Tattaglia Ellison Conspirators against the Don

Kay Fiorina, Wife of Michael

Act I, Scene I

Scene: The family headquarters.

Enter Sonny and Tom

Son: I think its time we launch another offensive against the state through the media else we don't stand a chance.

Tom: The way things are right now with Barzini and Tattaglia spying and rallying around to split the family into two, it reminds of Jedburg justice. They hang first and try afterwards.

Enter Don and Michael

Mike: All Tattaglias think themselves to be Gods. This is their fault. No Don does. That's his.

Don: I'll make him an offer he can't refuse. We'll stay the order.

Tom: This time lets include Kay. The lady isn't the girl next door. She's the girl, the Barzinis are praying would move next door.

Mike: Sounds logic, considering she loves apples, penguins and rainbow flowers. She's been there. Done that. Made her bones.

Don: After this we shift our PC-based technologies to the handset. This might soften our friends, the Barzinis and Tattaglia for a while.

Son: I suspect the state's crackdown on us has more to do with dominance over infotech than any real concern for business ethics.

Scene II

Scene: An apartment in Redwood Shores, California.

Enter Tattaglia and Barzini.

Bar: I find it hard to believe he's pulled it off again after almost two years of legal wrangling. All this from the man, who rarely looks at you when he talks which is disconcerting, but does so when he's driving which is doubly disconcerting. It's catch-22.

**Scene: Tattaglia's booth, Comdex show.
Enter Journalists, employees, and visitors.**

Tat: (Thundering on the dais) Let's not forget there is no room for the PC in the future. The Don had always been a follower rather than a leader. The truth is he differs very little from Bing Crosby who borrowed a tune here and a tune there and turned them into great hits. Repackaging has turned him into a monopoly (His PA comes.)

P.A: (sotto-voce) Sir, you have just overtaken Don Vito by 666 points. His family is behind you.

Tat: (Smiling from ear to ear) As I predicted, the PC is a dinosaur. It's extinct.

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(Gunshot sound. Tattaglia falls forward with eyes widened. As people scramble towards him, Kay Fiorina walks out of the booth)

WHY MEN CAN'T WIN

- If you put a woman on a pedestal and try to protect her from the rat race, you're a male chauvinist.
- If you stay home and do the housework, you're a pansy.
- If she has a boring underpaid job, it's exploitation.
- If you have a boring underpaid job, you should jolly well find something better.
- If you get a promotion ahead of her, that is favouritism.
- If she gets a job ahead of you, it's equal opportunity.
- If you cry, you're a wimp.
- If you don't, you're an insensitive so and so.
- If you thump her, it's wife bashing.
- If she thumps you, it's self-defence.
- If you make a decision without consulting her, you're a chauvinist.
- If she makes a decision without consulting you, she's a liberated woman.
- If you ask her to do something she doesn't enjoy, that's domination.
- If she asks you, it's a favour.
- If you try to keep yourself in shape, you're vain.
- If you don't, you're a slob.
- If you buy her flowers, you're after something.
- If you don't, you're not thoughtful.
- If you're proud of your achievements, you're up on yourself.
- If you don't, you're not ambitious.

- If she has a headache, she's tired.
- If you have a headache, you don't love her anymore.

FACT OR FICTION

One of the greatest mystery that is yet to be solved is the existence of God. What is the force which binds this universe? Who created it all? These and many more questions have been baffling humans from ages. Is it all a figment of human imagination or something concrete. Since human race realized that the universe was created by some force, they have tried to give it a form and name. Christians call him Jehovah, Muslims named him Allah and the Hindus moulded him into different forms.

Any physical phenomenon or law must be proved or derived mathematically before it can be believed. Albert Einstein had stated just days before his death that he was very near to God. Did he mean that God can be achieved only after death or was he very much near to deriving the Unified Field theory (a theory which would combine all the basic forces of the universe into a single entity.) But even if God existed then would he allow the humans to know his mind as we are mere puppets who act according to the strings attached. According to Sir Stephen Hawkings, if we do discover a complete theory, it should be understood by everyone and not by just a few scientists. Then we shall be able to take part in the discussion of the question of existence of God and if we find a answer to that, then it would be the ultimate triumph of human reasoning—for we would then be able to know the mind of God. It is as if we are standing in front of a mirror trying to get through to the other side, yet all we can see is our own reflection. Maybe the person staring back at us from the other side of mirror is God himself!!

INDISPENSABILITY

Sometimes when you're feeling important,
 Sometimes when your ego is in full bloom,
 Sometimes when you take it for granted
 You're the best qualified in the room.
 Sometimes when you feel that your going
 Would leave an unfillable hole
 Just follow these simple instructions
 And see how it humbles your soul
 Take a bucket and fill it with water
 Put your hand in it up to the wrist
 Pull it out and the hole that remains
 Is the measure of how much you're missed
 You may splash all you please when you enter
 You can stir up the water galore
 But stop, and you'll find in a minute
 That it looks quite the same as before
 The moral in this quaint example is
 Do the best that you can
 Be proud of yourself, but remember
 There is no indispensable man

THE TURNING POINT

Le Chatelier's principle says that whenever a system in equilibrium is put under constraint then changes takes place within the system so as to nullify the effect of the change and to restore the equilibrium.

Changing the scale of the above principle from science to our daily life, it simply means—"The Fittest Survive." This is the secret of life. Starting from an ant to an elephant, each has to produce a "fitness" certificate, so as to qualify themselves as living beings in the real world. Everyone has to choose the path of least resistance in order to fall in step with the surroundings.

The wheel of time has landed us at the outset of our professional career and at the threshold of a new battlefield, leaving behind miles and miles of memory. The myriad chapters of pleasure and misery are worth being flashed at the door of our exit. We will carry with us the lingering memories of unity, loyalty, mutual respect, partnership, camaraderie and most importantly 'esprit de corps' shown by all the students as well as the faculty while passing through the different portals of this illustrious phase of our life. And all these memories will guide us in attaining greater heights in future.

I'm sure the divers experiences and plethora of knowledge gained in these four years will not only give us the courage, clarity, conviction to achieve grand success, but also help in learning about the ground realities of life. I hope the newly breezed confidence will not let us to be distracted so that we can vitalize our career to the right extent. Bidding goodbye and stepping down the memory lane...

PARTYING AROUND

In this age of ever mushrooming political parties, comes a new entrant; a party with a difference; a party which is "with it"—the Pajama Party. Rock the vote with the leader of the Pajama Party—Nara Yadav. Here are excerpts from an interview with him.

- What is the manifesto of the Pajama Party... The Pajama Party (pronounced as pie-ja-ma) is the answer to all your problems. We are the party with the answers to all the problems that our nation faces. Under our own rule, the country will become one of the most powerful in the world. Most important, there will be no poverty once our party comes to power. That is because there will be no poor people. They will be deported. We will sell them and make a lot of money to do good for our country. There will be no unemployed educated youth. Because if they don't find a job within 15 days of getting out of their educational institution, they too will be deported. Women have been fighting for equal rights for a long time. And now the time has come. So, all the men will stay at home while the women work. Jails will be air-conditioned. Have to look after my brethren.
- Your surefire method of ensuring votes... Laathi ki bhasha. Booth capturing. Rigging. That surely works.
- The party's USP... The "nara". The nara is very important. It holds up the pajama. It is very symbolic. Because, similarly the Pajama Party will uphold the nation.
- The party that changes its tune most often... I'll tell you after the elections are over.
- What lies between the topi and the head? My hair. The basic idea of the topi is to cover as much as possible, so as to expose as little of yourself as possible.
- The spiciest of the Spice Girls... It is very difficult, because I've been going around with Baby Spice since I was 14-15. And you know how it is... Then Posh Spice was born, and... Anyway I'm off spices for the time being. Strictly on the doctor's advice.
- The international rockstar who has inspired most Indians... I think it's Michael Jackson. A lot of people in India have started dressing like him—tight pants, leather jackets, wearing a glove just on one hand. And have you seen the cricketers, walking back to the pavillion? They take off one glove and wave with the other... and while facing the fast bowlers, they do this jig around the crease, very much like MJ!
- What is the teenage anthem... "We Will We Will Rock You" by Queen. The other all had to do with girlfriends. Other people's girlfriends.
- The wackiest song ever... There's this song by Bappi Lahiri that goes like, "Tu Meri Chicken Fry..." That has so much feeling, so emotional. His order must have taken very long to be delivered.
- The party with team spirit...

The Pajama Party, of course!

So guys and gals! To make sure that happy days are here again, vote for the Pajama Party.

END OF DAYS

Is this the end?

Or the beginning of the vibration

That tortures the mind?

Freeing the self from a sunken past,

And escaping into another frustrated world;

Is this the means to minimise troubles?

The futureless brooding present

Looming over the arena of life,

Makes the potential absurd and Darkness more darker.

The passionate unborn yearning,

Resounding echoes.

Yet no fulfillment.

Spending many sleepless nights

Meaningless dreams,

And forcibly trying to bury reasons

Beneath illusive thoughts.

Everyone is mistaken

With septic mind and bold footsteps

He carries on his journey

An endless, aimless walk...

He ceaselessly moves towards a place

Where all desire, dreams, happiness
And passions end,
Where the sun of life sets,
Yet life retains
Everything ends with his death
Only his life lives on
Behind an acting memory,
That is his only reassurance,
That he lived till the end of days.

SCUM OF THE EARTH

I have recurrent nightmares, that I covered with ashes, tearing my hair, my face scored by clawing, but with piercing eyes am standing before all humanity, recapitulating my shames without losing sight of the effect I'm producing and saying: 'I'm the lowest of the low'.

I was on rails and speeding ahead. As if purposely, peoples praises increased. And that's just where the trouble came from. You remember the remark: 'Woe to you when all men speak well of you!' Ah! The one who said that spoke words of wisdom! Woe to me! Consequently, the engine began to have whims, inexplicable breakdowns.

Then it was that the thought of death burst into my daily life. I would measure the years separating me from my end. And I was tormented by the thought that I might not have time to accomplish my task. What task? I had no idea. A ridiculous fear pursued me, in fact: one could not die without having confessed all his fallacies. Not to God or one of his representatives. No, it was a matter of confessing to men, to a friend, to a beloved woman, for example. Otherwise, even if there were only one lie hidden in a life, death made it definitive. No one, ever again, would know the truth on this point since the only one to know it was precisely the dead man sleeping on his secret. That absolute murder of a truth used to make me dizzy.

You see, it is not enough to accuse yourself in order to clear yourself; otherwise, I'd be as innocent as a lamb. One must accuse oneself in a certain way, which has taken me considerable time to perfect. I did not discover it until I fell into the most utterly forlorn state.

I can't keep myself bottled up anymore but whom should I confide in. we rarely confide in those who are better than ourselves. Rather, we are more inclined to flee their society. Most often, on the other hand, we confess to those who are like us and who share our weaknesses. We merely wish to be pitied and encouraged in the course we have chosen. I have ceased to like anything but confessions, and authors of confessions write especially to avoid confessing, to tell nothing of what they know.

I still haven't changed my way of life; I continue to love myself and to make use of others. Only, the confession of my crimes allows me to begin again lighter in heart and to taste a double enjoyment, first of my nature and secondly of a charming repentance. But when you don't like your own life, when you know that you must change lives, you don't have any choice, do you? What can one do to become another? Impossible! One would cease being anyone, forget oneself for someone else, at least once. But how?

You see, we can divide human beings into three categories: those who prefer having nothing to hide rather than being obliged to lie, those who prefer lying to having nothing to hide, and finally those who like both lying and the hidden. I'll let you choose which case suits me best.

But what do I care? Don't lies eventually lead to the truth? And don't all my statements, true or false, tend towards the same conclusion? Don't they all have the same meaning that I was, I am and I always will be (no matter what) I... but it's too late now. It'll always be too late.

THE QUEST

When I woke up that morning, I felt a bit different. The usual banging on the bathroom door, the pushing and pulling in front of the only mirror in the mess, the galls that accompanied it seemed so much less cacophonous. The food in the hostel mess seemed unusually less tasteless. The bus ride to the college felt less bumpy. Even the classes were surprisingly sufferable.

I tried to analyze what could have changed. I called upon my years of experience of watching Hindi movies and added to them, all the mushy Mills 'n' Boon novels that I had read and I finally looked at it through the prism of the 112576 Hindi film songs that I have heard. Finally I came to the conclusion that I was in love. There was only one slight problem though. From all the treasure troves of knowledge that I had referred to, it seemed that, to be in love meant one has to

be in love with someone. I couldn't possibly argue with Sahir Ludhyanvi or Javed Akhtar or any other knowledgeable lyricists for that matter. So I decided to start searching for that "someone".

The most obvious place to find a girl would be the girls hostel, only if I tried starting my search over there, I was at a risk of being skinned alive by the hideous warden. Since I needed my skin unscathed, I decided to try my luck somewhere else.

I tried to start modestly. I sent someone a V-day card but she refused to accept it. So in true filmy ishtyle, I wrote to her in blood. Pat came the reply, "I am in love with someone else". I had seen enough love triangle films to know that in such situations one ought to try "sacrifice". But the ultimate winner was the one chosen by the director himself. Maybe our director didn't see that film. So now that I couldn't be the director's choice, I went straight for "Officer's Choice".

Next, I tried the "flooding" approach. In a network when a source machine has to send a data packet to a destination machine, it simply sends the packet on all outgoing lines hoping that at least one packet reaches the correct destination. The flooding algorithm almost always succeeds. In my case the success rate was too high. I got not one but two positive replies. The only movies with bigamy as their theme were all remakes of South Indian films. Since I couldn't grow a moustache thick enough to look like a southie hero, I decided to beat a retreat. I did not reply (in a network all packets are time stamped and are valid only for a fixed period. If a machine doesn't respond, it is assumed to be dead and the communication link is broken off.). Thank God!

I tried to impress them, took them out to lunches and parties. But soon the realization dawned on me that I couldn't possibly carry two weights at the same time: my wallet and my girlfriend. It was a bad investment. I might have been well off if I had invested in a sick public sector unit. Sorry! Love is too expensive for me!

I tried the postal variety of love. The Dil Se Ankhon Tak type (ref: Sirf Tum). Only both our eyes popped out when we finally met. I wished I had gone out on a blind date before going through this experience. I'm sure she too would have felt the same, as we never wrote to each other after that.

So here I am, still very much deeply in love, still watching Hindi films and still searching for that "someone". These days I sport a To-Let sign over my shirt pocket where my biology book tells me, my heart is. A heart full of love and in love...

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

We are some of the final year students (here "we" means our group of 18 or 20 --better known as The Hooligans of NIST by Dr. Reddy). We have barely a month left in this college. After recalling all the happenings of these last 4 years, what I concluded was that it was full of adventures, ego-hurting bull fights, a dozen B-grade infatuations and a couple of strong love affections, liked by some and hated by many (including some of the faculty members) and last but not the least, no studies, but a somewhat nostalgic feeling.

I always count my memories by smiles, not by tears. In these years, I found many students complaining about the college; infrastructure, faculties and facilities, etc. But Rome wasn't built in a day and it'll surely take some time before everything falls into place. As for me, well, I'm not a hypocrite. After having 5 DC appearances per head, we never expected a good image out here but when the institute expects to get praise then it should be ready to face the criticism as well. We have seen the making of NIST and we have faced the stiffest times in its history. We have equally shouldered the hard times with the management. So its our college, not only ours.

We are no Bill Gates or Richard Bransons, but the day will come when we will show the world how things should be handled and managed (it is the voice of the so called Hooligan group) and I'm 100% sure of it. We are the legends, the backbenchers. We are the warriors, who never found a healthy and free atmosphere to fight... we are the last of the Mohicans or so we term ourselves from days of a simple mess strike to the hunger strike in the University, as we advanced from simple warnings to temporary suspension from college. Given a chance, we can fight the world war and change the world. We may not be here next year, but our ideas will be and I hope that there will be someone who will be ready to accept our ideas and continue to fight for justice and self-esteem, because HOME THEY BROUGHT THE WARRIOR DEAD...

So best of luck in all your future endeavours and may God bless you with everything you need. This is the beginning of the end.

TWILIGHT

The sun is sinking down the horizon,
With daylight merging into twilight,
Painting the sky, reddish hue,

With darkness coming into sight.
 The birds are returning home,
 Tired after a long day's flight,
 Retiring to their cosy nests,
 With heart so cheerful and light.
 The farmers, toiling hard,
 In their fields all day long,
 Are anxious to return home,
 And wearily trudge along.
 The gypsies, who wander all day,
 With horses pulling their caravans along,
 With a cheerful smile on their lips,
 Sing together a lively song.
 They stop together and rest for the night,
 Beside a wood or by a stream
 Chatting merrily and sitting around,
 And watching the campfire gleam.
 The streetlights have been switched on,
 To flood the streets with brightness,
 Lamps have been lit in the houses,
 To shoo away the darkness.
 The moon has begun to come out,
 With daylight waning away,
 The crimson sun is sinking,
 Waiting to peep out the next day.

STAYING COOOOOL

What do you do when you're caught in a jam, are in a soup, all knotted up, confused in general, frustrated in particular. Do you feel like taking the next off-season ticket to Tibet? Or does a recruitment into the LTTE seem a better prospect? On second thoughts, you could even whine like my well-fed dog Juicy who has an attitude problem. No more, Relax! Coz the surefire guide to 'What To Do When All Hell Breaks Loose' is here. For starts there are a few sick but golden rules nevertheless. For example, No Pain, No Gain; Haste Makes Waste; Rolling Stones Gather No Moss. But first, the part where we categorise the kinds of soups you could get into. The bad, the worse and the worst. Use personal discretion in matching your miseries with the ones to follow.

- What do you do when...your best friend walks away into the sunset with your girlfriend? Simple. Don't get mad, get even. So? Walk away with his! Better still, tell ol' Lolita all about his empty bank account, his shady past and voila, you shall see her fly back to you like the bird to her nest.
- What do you do when...your bike insultingly chooses to cough incessantly like a TB patient and conks off like a jilted lover just when you had convinced your dream girl into accepting a lift on your jalopy? No worry! Remind her about all those Jane Fonda tapes her aunt sent from Chicago and how she cheated on her scales. That should leave her guilt ridden enough to settle for a walk. A warning: your friend could cruise in with his Cielo (model depends on luck with the bulls and the bears) at just that moment. So while you might have the cake he could be eating it. So hail an auto.
- What do you do when...taps run dry right when you enter the hostel 'spa'? a) Don't take it too personally. b) Take to the canned marvels of technology, e.g., deodorants. c) Take to body odourising. Come to think of it, you could be driving those ladies nuts with your masculine odour!!! d) Just don't bother. Life isn't all that wonderful to call for a bath anyway.
- What do you do when...your father insists on taking a look at your marksheet? a) Pretend you have not heard him b) Refuse to recognise him c) Tell him the college building has collapsed. If none of these work run away to Mumbai.
- What do you do when...your hairdresser messes up with what you call hair? a) Rave and rant in front of friends about this fab French hairdresser who gives these designer haircuts. b) Declare your allegiance to ISKCON. c) Tell everybody about that incredible lightning episode.
- What do you do when...the earth stops moving?

a) Come to grips with facts, the world will not come to an end. At least that's what science has taught us. b) On the other hand you could support the death-of-the-earth-is-near group and take up its life membership at a discount.

So, before the blink of the eye we have come to the end of a session of global gyan. So? What do you do when you have the surefire methods to...?

MY MAGIC POTION

I was lying on the sofa and watching my favourite TV show, "Whatever is on TV When I'm Lying on the Sofa." I was in a good mood until the commercial came on. It showed an old man (and when I say "old man," I mean "a man who is maybe 10 years older than I am") helping his son learn to ride a bicycle.

I was watching this, wondering what product was being advertised (Bicycles? Lucent? Dentures?) and the announcer said: "Aren't there enough reasons in your life to talk to your doctor about Zocor?" The announcer did not say what "Zocor" is. It sounds like the evil ruler of the Planet Wombax. I figure it's a medical drug, although I have no idea what it does.

And so, instead of enjoying my favourite TV show, I was lying there wondering if I should be talking to my doctor about Zocor. The only time I go to my doctor's office is when I am experiencing a clear-cut medical symptom, such as an arrow sticking out of my head.

Television has become infested with commercials for drugs that we're supposed to ask our doctors about. Usually the announcer says something scary like, "If you're one of the 508 million people who suffer from parabolical distabulation of the frenulum, ask your doctor about Varvacron. Do it now. Don't wait until you develop boils the size of flowerpots.

At that point, you're thinking, "Gosh, I better get some Varvacron!" Then the announcer tells you the side effects.

"In some patients," he says, "Varvacron causes stomach discomfort and the growth of an extra hand coming out of the forehead. Do not use Varvacron if you are now taking, or have recently shaken hands with anybody who is taking, Fladamol, Lavadil, Fromagil, Havadam, Gungadin, or breath mints. Discontinue use if your eyeballs get way smaller."

So basically, the message of these drug commercial is:

- 1.You need this drug.
- 2.This drug will kill you.

I realise that the drug companies, by running these commercials, are trying to make me an informed medical consumer. But I don't WANT to be an informed medical consumer. I liked it better when my only medical responsibility was to stick out my tongue. That was the health-care system I grew up under.

Earlier we did have TV commercials for medical products, but these were non-scary, straightforward commercials that the layperson could understand. For example, there was one for a headache remedy that showed the interior of an actual cartoon of a human head, so you could see the three medical causes of headaches: a hammer, a spring and a lightning bolt. There was a commercial for a product called "Serutan." I was never sure what it did, but it was definitely effective, because the announcer came right out and stated—bear in mind that the Food and Drug Administration has never disputed this claim—that "Serutan" is "natures" spelled backward.

You, the consumer, were not required to ask your doctor about any of these products. You just looked at the commercial and said, "A hammer! No wonder my head aches!" and none of these products had side effects.

Life was simpler earlier, as opposed to now, when watching TV sometimes makes me consume a certain medical product. I know it's effective, because its "reeb" spelled backward.

IT'S ALL ABOUT MONEY, HONEY!

Recently I received a press release from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Treasury Department. Naturally my first move was to verify, via chemical analysis, that it was genuine. There has been a sharp increase in the number of counterfeit Treasury Department press releases, as an embarrassed CNN found out last month when it reported, incorrectly, that the RBI Chairman, has done all the voices on the popular cartoon film Bindaas Bandar. (In fact, he does only the voice of the Bandar.)

But this particular press release turned out to be authentic; it announced that, this fall, we'll be seeing a new, redesigned Rs 500 note. This is part of an anti-counterfeiting program to redesign all of our old currency, which has become too

easy to duplicate with modern color photocopiers--a fact that was made all too clear when the Xerox Corp., in its 1999 annual report, reported profits of Rs 850.236407 trillion. Why does counterfeit money represent a threat to the nation? And how can we, as consumers, be sure that we have spelled "counterfeit" correctly? To answer these questions, we need to understand what money is, and what makes it valuable.

Back in ancient times, when people were much stupider than they are today, there was no such thing as money. People transacted business by trading actual, physical things. For example, if you sold a cow, the buyer would pay for it by giving you, say, 14 physical ducks. Even in those days, that was a lot of ducks to be carrying around, and the bank wouldn't let you deposit them, because they fought with the chickens. Also the automatic teller machines were disgustingly malodorous. Finally, the ancient Egyptians got sick of this and invented the first unit of paper currency, called the "Simoleon": The way the Egyptians explained the concept to their trading partners was: "For your convenience, we're going to start paying you with these pieces of paper, which are valuable because they have a picture of Ulysses Grant." The trading partners were not crazy about this concept, but they went along with it, because the Egyptians had also invented spears.

Today, the basic principle remains the same: "We trust money because our government stands behind it". A counterfeit Rs 500 note is worthless piece of paper backed by nothing; whereas a real Rs 500 note, issued by the RBI has value, because any time you want, you can take it to the Bullion Depot (our very own Fort Knox), and exchange it, no questions asked, for a duck. Try it yourself! If they give you any trouble, mention my name, Ratan Tata. But the point is that, starting this fall, you're going to start seeing a drastically redesigned Rs 500 note. Among the major changes are:

- To thwart would-be photocopiers, instead of saying "FIVE HUNDRED RUPEES," the new Rs 500 notes say "FOUR HUNDRED RUPEES."
- The engraved portrait of Gandhiji has been given a new, up-to-date hairstyle, patterned, according to the RBI Treasury Department press release, "after Baba Sehgal." He also has been given a vivacious new facial expression that seems to say: "I am looking good and I am READY TO PARTY with the engraved portraits on other currency denominations!"
- On the back of the bill, in the engraving of the Parliament, on the far right-hand side, in the engraved shrubbery, is a tiny crouching engraving of Manoj Prabhakar (with a spy-camera of course!).
- For verification purposes, the new bill is impregnated with plutonium particles that emit a distinctive pattern of atomic radiation. "This poses absolutely no health danger whatsoever to humans," notes the Treasury Department, which adds: "Do not EVER put the bill in your pocket." These improvements, plus the top-secret "auto-detonate" feature that I am not allowed to mention in this column, will make the new Rs 500 note-- which is costing the government Rs 657.223233 per unit to manufacture-- the most advanced anti-counterfeit currency in the world. But the whole effort will be wasted unless you, the consumer, do your part by keeping a sharp eye out for "funny money." The Treasury Department is asking that you regularly inspect all of your bills, of all denominations.

If you notice anything suspicious-- according to the press release, this especially means "foreign words, bald man without wig, strings of numbers, a greenish colouring of some kind, a flag flying over the Parliament House"-- you should immediately put the suspect notes into an envelope and mail them to: The RBI Treasury Department, Anti-Counterfeit Task Force, c/o M. Mishra, AG Colony Bhubaneswar. Please help. Only by joining together to fight this thing can we, as a nation, buy me a giant mansion with servants and deer parks and a lake. It will have lots of ducks too. Thank you!!!

MOMENTS...

"It all began on a fine day in the month of August, 1996..." Looks like the starting line of some best-selling novel, doesn't it? Well, nonetheless it is a starting... the starting line of our journey that encompassed four years and all that remains are moments; moments that have left everlasting impressions on our lives. Some forgettable, some regrettable, some lovable and some unforgettable. These years have been a pot-pourri of joy and sorrow. Perhaps the best part of the entire journey was that at the end of it we emerged a little less ignorant. The lessons learned have made us more mature and have contributed a lot in shaping our character.

So, August, 1996 it was when we took the (needless to say-brave) decision of joining this institute. September saw 180 eager faces set foot on the soil of Berhampur and the first sight of the building was enough to down the spirit of Indiana Jones. It was like Lord had cheated the slaves of the "Promised Land" and had thrown them into much greater soup than they were earlier. It was as if Moses had played the greatest joke of his life on us. Where is the sea? Where are the hostels? Where? Where? Where? We all cried aloud. Some must have asked themselves what sin they had committed to deserve this. This was one moment, a moment of frustration, a moment of repentance and unrest. Then

slowly the reality soaked into our psyche and we overcame this feeling to a certain extent, yet it still exists in traces inside us.

The month of November brought some relief to the frustrated and tired souls in the form of the first ever "Waves" in the history of NIST and it makes me proud to say that I was a part of the celebration. Yes, that was a moment of happiness, of enchantment where every person could relax from the hectic schedule of studies. Without a doubt it was surely a pressure reliever.

The moments of first year would remain incomplete without the mention of the famous "Mess Strikes" of 1997. The "Food Wars" could be another name for it. Those days had mixed moments of frustrations, anger and surprises. Life has been full of surprises since then (and that doesn't mean there were none before). Only these surprises were a little jarring than the earlier ones. The "Mess Wars" taught everybody something worthwhile as a whole or as individuals.

Then the second year saw the famous races (no marks for guessing). These were moments of cold perspiration for some and entertainment for others. Needless to say the participants perspired and the onlookers enjoyed. These were colourful moments filled with laughter, fun and of course little rage. We saw several Pied Pipers in action. People who never cared how they combed their hair now started applying layer upon layer of gels, creams and what not. But all their efforts didn't go down the drain. One positive result surely came out of the entire show—the poor shopkeepers of Gopalpur didn't remain poor. Perhaps this could be termed as "Social Service" however unintentional it might be. God bless Pied Pipers!

By the third year, the scene got less lively as we started realizing where our marks were taking us. The beginning of 1999 saw two strikes in Berhampur University. I am pretty confident no one can ever forget the day when the whole of the first batch of NIST was taken for a ride in the "Big Bus of Sudhanshu Uncle". Did we regret it? Naa...

The third year also gave us a big surprise. Satyam Computers came to NIST for campus recruitment. That was something! Suddenly there was a hullabaloo and everyone became concerned about his or her future. It was like something big had hit us fast and hard on the face. The realization that in one year we would pass out jobless was very painful. Some had contingency plans and other... well for them it is still in progress.

The final year saw a great change in our lives. We had grown but it was so sudden. Everybody became future conscious. From the 7th semester thus started moments of tension, a future that was uncertain and is still uncertain for many of us. Everybody started running from one place to another in search of jobs which were very illusive. Perhaps the final year passed the fastest because nobody sat still or cared for the date or time of the day. All that kept ticking in everyone's mind was the deadline, the end of engineering and the dark future that followed it and everybody ran as if some kind of madness had gripped them. The moments of the final year can perhaps be captured in seconds because nobody kept record of hours.

Staying in Berhampur was a nightmare in the beginning but looking back now it seems that without the nightmare we'd all been alone and sad. So, here we are, preparing to leave the college (by the time this issue is out we'd have left the college) and enter the hard and harsh world of reality where no one knows what awaits him or her. We can only pray for each other—that we all succeed in achieving the goals we've always aspired for.

So let us all be hopeful of our future and have faith and always remember the moments we spent together in this college. Yes, I may have dropped many moments in this write-up but then I'm sure we won't be dropping them from our heart and minds. In end, what line could be more appropriate than, "It all ends on a fine day in the month of August 2000."

WE'LL PASS THIS WAY BUT ONCE

Catching the fleeting joy of a sunset.
Feeling the soft caress of the wind.
The gentle sun like
A lover's touch upon our skin
The world we live for. The love we'd die for.
And all because,
We'll pass this way but once.

The memories of those days still come flooding back to the mind. It all started on 18th September, 1996. The Occasion—Orientation of the first batch of NIST. We were a little under 180 in number then. And to think that all has come to an end makes one emotional. We came from all directions: North, South, East and West to seek knowledge,

after all we're mere mortals. Ours was a perfect mosaic—varying attitudes, differing backgrounds, wide ranging approaches. Quite a menagerie you could say. But the class of 2000 had it all in them.

One is staggered by the number of parameters in which we were Number One. Number One in terms of intelligence. Number One in terms of depth of cultural talents. Number One in terms of being decent and well behaved... well relatively at least. And, alas, Number One in laziness. To convert tremendous potential to terrific performance, we would have to get over the last named Number One.

Our batch was the hippest of them all. The mood of our batch in the institute was 100% avant garde with students dolled up in high heels of fashion. Stripes, checks, woodlanders, hawai, tight drain-pipes, bell bottoms, psychedelic Tee-shirts et al. lent to the United Colours of NIST. Even the dhobis of Berhampur pitched in when they condescended to give the clothes such a wash that they emanated colours and shades you never knew existed before (United Colours of Dhobis!). As far as the class attendance was concerned, voice modulation, intonation and subtle nuances were used to make the absentee's presence felt.

Going by the number of experiments conducted on us, we should be rechristened "guinea pigs" instead of "seniors". If we survived the experiment, it was passed on to the juniors in an unadulterated form and if we didn't then it was still passed on but in a milder form. Our backbreaking routine has given most of us a constipated look.

Things have changed a lot. Talking about changes, we all have grown up. The girls have grown up from the days of Barbie dolls, ice-creams, pony tails, baby frocks to become ladies and the boys have grown up from the days of Amitabh, MJ, cricket, autographs to become gentlemen (barring a few who became perfect gentlemen.)

The world could change, the people could change but three things would remain unchanged for us: Reliability of our friendship, Sanctity of values and Dignity of work.

I'm sure this has been said myriad number of times and will probably be repeated a couple of times more, but what the hell, if you've heard it so often, what's another once--we hoped and prayed that our junior batch would be as enthusiastic, fun-loving, intelligent and hip as us. They more than met our expectations. Barring some initial unpleasantness, we integrated very well (Ask Sushrut if you don't believe me?!).

And now a short message for the Class of 2001 from the "veterans." You need to show initiative in everything you do. Because we approached the Dawn of the New Millennium, and the question is: How are you, the Class of 2001, going to respond when the Clock-Radio of Challenge emits the Irritating Buzz of Opportunity? Are you going to roll over and hit the Snooze Button of Complacency? Or are going to wake up and, after performing the Bodily Functions of Preparedness, boldly grasp the Toothbrush of Tomorrow?

I hope so, Class of 2001: I hope you are ready to take over, because our batch is getting old and tired. And we have good reason to be tired: We won the World War II. No, wait, that was our grandparents. But my batch did watch a lot of grueling movies about World War II. So we're basically finished, and time has come for us to pass the torch on to you. But before we do, we must ask you a very important question: Where the heck did we put the torch? We can't find ANYTHING anymore. By conservative estimate, my batch now spent 50 times as much time looking for it suitcase keys as it ever spent striking and cursing.

So it is up to you, the Class of 2001, to do whatever it was I was saying. And now is the time! Think of the opportunities you have! You have the Internet! When my batch needed a piece of information, such as the population of Jamaica, we had to haul out the encyclopaedia, which was a bunch of dusty old heavy books that smelled like unlaundered socks. Things are easier for you, thanks to the Internet. All you have to do is type in the words "population of Jamaica", and within a few seconds, the number appears on your computer screen: 467,298. This is not the population of Jamaica, of course: This is the number of web sites that contain the words "population," "Jamaica" or "of." So you start clicking away with your mouse, and 14 hours later, you find yourself looking at the web site entitled "Poison Frogs of Congo Delta." You have no idea how you got there, except that along the way you purchased two weeks in February at a time-share condominium in Sastakachewan and saw 566 pictures of Pamela Anderson. This was not possible in our day, we didn't even HAVE Pamela Anderson! I'd better stop my blabber (I'm already feeling like a T.Rex. Extinct! We ain't that old, I assure you!)

It's a funny feeling to know that the next batch is going to turn out better than our own; it makes us feel kind of proud and sad together. Proud because they belong to our institute (where four of our most formative years were spent) and will do good for its image and sad because we wished our batch could be there. Nonetheless we are glad that we're passing on the torch (I still can't locate the darned torch!) to a batch which believes in the true Olympian spirit of Citius, Fortius, Altius.

The four years have come to an end within the blink of an eye. But inside each of us lies a reverence for everything that came to be associated with our four years in NIST—the authorities, the building, even the elevator into which we were never allowed (I assure you our batch didn't break the 5th floor elevator button... with a Mitsubishi pen!!)

After innumerable flings, crushes, and infatuations; after numerous fights and strikes; after loads of good and bad times, we've survived. We may have lost a few battles in the way but ultimately we're the ones who would win the war.

Individually we may be a little out of tune but together we brought harmony; controlled pandemonium you'd say. Ambitions and overriding career never came in the way of meaningful, lasting relationships. Looking back it's been sweet and at times sour. Sometimes we laughed and on occasions we've cursed. But what the heck? (Variety is the spice of life!) These moments spent together are what we have and would cherish for years. One can never break off these moments from the branch of time.

I want to tell you all that our lives are enriched by simple things and no matter what happens our small family will always reach out to each other in both deep anguish and great joy because in the end, each other are all we have and all we need. Six years down the line we'd all be creating ripples if not tsunamis. Please stay tuned! But I still can't recall whether it was a Reynolds or a Mitsubishi.

We came like water and like wind we go.

(Have you entertained the notion that editing a magazine would be just your dish? If so, this little piece is intended to give you pause. No job in the world offers a sure and quicker promise of a first-class case of stomach ulcers, and if you don't believe me, you have only to take a canvass of all the dyspeptic specimens now extant.

Finding new writers and artists, and then holding onto them, avoiding libel and plagiarism suits and getting copy to the printer on time for every issue was only part of our problem. We also lived under the perpetual fear that something was going to happen while a number was on press or about to hit the stands that would have made one of the leading articles look ridiculous. It wasn't an easy job. Tender egos were exposed and had to be massaged. Some people took umbrage to the fact that real life had been exposed in print (our reputation as yellow journalists did nothing to help this process.) But many precious words and juicy disclosures were wiped off the pages. But this magazine started off with us; it has grown with us (from a leaflet to a booklet!) and may it flourish even after us. "The NISTian" is a reflection of how we perceived ourselves. Given the fact that all of us had something to do with its making one can hate it, like it but can never ignore it! Adios!

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Another issue of "The NISTian" is in your hands. One fine day, my editors, Pijush and Harsweta appeared seemingly out of nowhere, handed over a hardcopy of the articles and the floppy, and told me - "This will be the last issue of The NISTian that we will be doing. Please get new editors and do not forget to send us a copy." I decided immediately that we will start the practice of mailing the NISTian to our "alumni". It was a strange feeling thinking that our fledgling Institute is old enough to have "ex-students"!!

As Pijush and Harsweta left with a wistful look, I realized how hard they had worked on this magazine. On behalf of every member of the NIST family, I want to say a big THANKS to Pijush and Harsweta who drove this magazine for the last three years.

As I write this editorial, so many things are swarming into my mind that I have decided to itemize them.

Goodbye to NISTians of the 1996 batch - After a hectic round of BE project presentations and Grand Viva-voce examinations, we bid farewell to our batch of 1996 in a simple farewell function organized in the new OCTAGON building. It was very satisfying to see that every one left the Institute in high spirits and with ambitious plans for the future.

So, it is time for us to start an alumni organization and wait for our own Vinod Guptas and Kanwal Rekhis to come back and donate a few million dollars to NIST!

The Placement Splash - One person going around with a huge smile of success on her face is Ms. Geetika Mudali, our Placement Director. It must be a great feeling to see her hours of hard work yielding fantastic results. Congratulations and wishing many many more repeats of these events!!

NTCS, New Delhi begins Operations - Seven NISTians from the 1996 batch have kickstarted the NTCS branch of New

Delhi. They are working on exciting software projects involving AutoCAD, Web Design and Client-Server projects.

Four other NISTians have joined NTCS, Berhampur. This is the year when we plan to develop NTCS into a serious software development center.

Junior Lecturers take up classes - Several NISTians of our 1996 batch who are studying for either GATE and/or GRE have agreed to take up teaching duties on a temporary basis. We welcome them to the NIST family in their new roles.

Message for the Freshers - Welcome to NIST! By choosing NIST, you have chosen to be a part of an extremely hardworking Institution, an Institute which leaves no stone unturned in its quest for quality education. But before you get the benefits of this education, there are certain ground rules you must understand.

Number One - DISCIPLINE is the foundation of any good educational Institute. In most +2 colleges, discipline is a forgotten word. Therefore, you may find it a little strange when you are reintroduced to the concept of discipline in your first semester at NIST. You may squirm and squeal for a few days but after that you will get used to it.

Number Two - We take the idea of "respect towards women" very seriously (unlike many +2 colleges!). And don't try to find out how seriously!!

Number Three - Attendance is sacred! If you are found to be missing from classes, you are inviting serious trouble from your teachers. And, once again, don't try to find out how serious it can get!

Number Four - Read the "RULEBOOK 2000" provided to you and understand every rule. If in doubt, consult some faculty member.

Message to All Seniors - Please read the "RULEBOOK 2000" and ingest the new material on ragging. And don't try to find out whether the rules will really be applied! They will be!

Wishing everybody a joyous Puja Vacation!!