

Sandpaper [2.0]

BITS Pilani Alumni Magazine, Winter 2008



- Quarterly BITSian: Raj Sisodia
- CEL Mantra Awards 2007
- Piping hot: BITSAA news

Web 2.0 — Angels & Demons



THE BEGINNING

BY ASHISH GARG ('97-'01 INSTRU)

IT'S five thirty AM on the Eleventh of December, Two Thousand Seven. I am home. In Dehradun. I landed in India two days ago at the New Delhi Airport and then took the arduous ride lasting two hundred and seventy one kilometers to beloved Uttaranchal. Now is when the jetlag is at its worst.

I lie in my bed listening to the alarm clock go tick tock, tick tock. I also hear *bhajans* from nearby temple, *gurubani* from the nearby gurudwara and *namaz* from the nearby mosque. No, this is not a Manoj-Kumar-Mera-Bharat-Mahaan-Bollywood-Movie script. These sounds are real and are the only things that have stayed the same since I left home ten years ago. Everything else has changed. Very rapidly.

I like the change for the most part. Just that I have no friends left in my town. Everyone I knew is either in America, Bangalore or at some call center in Gurgaon. Actually all but one. Aishwaraya Raina an old classmate is still in Dun. Why don't I ping her and find out if she is really in town. Good idea. The only problem is how do I get in touch with her. I don't have her phone number, or address. And it's five thirty two in the morning.

Brain wave! I log into the Cambrian Hall (my high school) community on Orkut. Find Aishwarya's profile and guess

what, she has her email id listed for public view. Two seconds later I am sending her an email asking her if she would like to meet for coffee later that day.

This is Web 2.0 in action. Or that is what Sandpaper's young editors Arun Maharaj and Uzma Barlaskar will have you believe. In the cover story for this issue, "Web 2.0 – Angles and Demons", Arun and Uzma educate us on what Web 2.0 is and how it is changing our lives forever. Web 1.0 was about websites. Web 2.0 is about communities. Online communities allow many more of us than ever to collaborate, communicate and find long lost classmates.

As Don Tapscott, writes in Wikinomics, if you want to be a successful Internet entrepreneur then replace *website* with *community* in your dictionary. The cover story itself is an excellent example of Web 2.0ish collaboration. Arun (in Germany) and Uzma (in Hyderabad) wrote the entire story based on interviews conducted (over email) with BITSians all around the world.

This also happens to be my last editorial for Sandpaper. Taking over from me is Dileepan Narayanan. One of Sandpaper's most prolific writers, little-boy Dileepan has grown in our organization over the past three years. He managed the Sandpaper

newsletter, lead on-campus teams, wrote cover stories and hand-produced this entire issue from scratch. Little-boy-no-more Dileepan is now ready. To take over the magazine to even greater heights.

So here it begins. The wait, in suspense, for Sandpaper. For the next issue to appear in my Inbox. Magically. And unannounced.

- garg@bitsaa.org

Ashish Garg in 2008



Sandpaper [2.0]

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TEAM SANDPAPER – 4319 Renaissance Drive San Jose, CA 95134 USA

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Sandpaper 2.0 is created by a global team with members spanning seven countries in four continents. It's a great place to gain organizational leadership experience, network with the alumni community and enhance your writing skills.

Please send your articles, nominations for Quarterly BITSian, letters to the editor, feedback and requests to join the team to: garg@bitsaa.org

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BITSAA SANDPAPER VISION

Focus on the BITSian community - alumni, students and administration.

Build a close knit BITSian **community** by promoting

Increase BITS brand equity

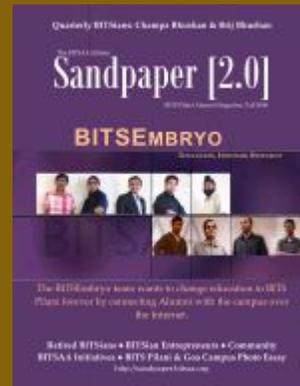
participation, evoking feelings of nostalgia, **pride** and

An emphasis on building engagement through awareness and debate

connectedness by keeping everyone in the community **informed**.

Our news, achievements in academics, business and in the community. What's happening at BITS and at BITSAA chapters around the world

To read past issues visit the website:
<http://sandpaper.bitsaa.org>



WEB 2.0 – ANGELS AND DEMONS

BY ARUN ('99A8), UZMA ('03 A7)



A mixture of perspectives about a revolution undeniable.

If you think writing on people's 'wall's is graffiti, 'scrap' is not a verb, or only birds 'twitter'ed then you are missing out on a revolution. This revolution (or evolution as some consider) is silently but determinedly sweeping the web world and changing the way we look at the internet.

The chances that you are viewing this issue of Sandpaper on the Web are 9 out of 10 and if not do check it out on (<http://sandpaper.bitsaa.org/>). It's pretty clear that the internet and the World Wide Web have changed our lives. But then sometimes, the evolution of something so revolutionary can go unnoticed especially when it's as ubiquitous as the internet. Oh yes, it's been evolving not only in size, content, reach and all the other obvious way but then, it's been evolving also in its very nature. At least a part of it has been evolving in a very silent but powerful way...something which most of us might have been unwittingly acquainted with...Web 2.0.

Any idea what Web 2.0 means? It is very probable that you would have heard of it somewhere but then what is it? When we sat down to write this article, some random ideas popped into our heads including "oh yeah, Web 2.0...must be a new version of the internet". Only later did we realize that

this was as rustic as saying "I am my dad 2.0". Getting the drift?

There's a lot more than meets the eye to this term. It also became clear that this cannot be clearly defined because there exist no boundaries. Therefore, it was interesting to ponder on how to approach writing this piece. After a million milli-seconds of thought, we decided to get as many viewpoints as possible, talk to people, listen to what they have to say and learn along the way.

So what you are about to read is a modest but honest interpretation of what this is, whether it's a phenomenon, is it just a fad, how is it affecting our lives, how is it benefiting the common man, how is the common man benefiting it (oh yeah, when it comes to Web 2.0, this makes sense), the entrepreneur angle, the big internet companies angle and of course the BITSian angle in it all.

What is Web 2.0?

In the box to your right are some of the definitions that we came across and heard. Some of them represent what Web 2.0 is imagined to be (so far) and others represent what others think of it.

Web 2.0 refers to a perceived second generation of web-based communities and hosted services — such as social-networking sites, wikis, and folksonomies — which aim to facilitate creativity, collaboration, and sharing between users.

- *Wikipedia*

Web 2.0 signifies user interaction. The emphasis in Web 2.0 is on the community. It is about providing the user with a system with which she interacts along with other users to create content.

- *Anand Morzaria, CEO, Pennywise Solutions, India*

Orkut/wikipedia/ajax ☺

- *Ramu, Graudate student, Computer Engg, CMU (USA)*

A bunch of bullshit.

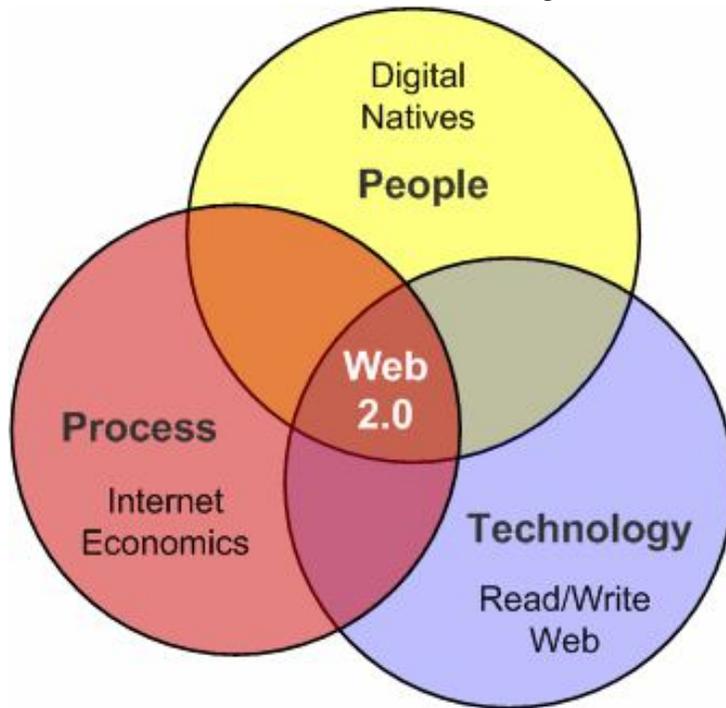
- *Shashank, Software engineer, Efficient Frontier, California, USA*

I have no idea.

- *Ashish, Chief editor, Sandpaper 2.0*

Erm...yes...I mean...ob da machan! (Man, am I clueless!)

- *Arun, before doing his research*



Venn 2.0: What Web 2.0 is mostly about.

Ever since the word AJAX was coined by Jesse James Garrett in February 2005, there has been a pseudo-revolution of sorts in the internet world. Infact no one gives credit to Microsoft for developing the technology that forms the backbone for this wave, generally known as Web 2.0. This was in a way favorable for the nerds and Microsoft-agnostic techies as this technology would not have been accepted, the way it is now, if Microsoft had marketed it.

Pointy-haired bosses, consultants and MBAs (who constitute a majority of the venture capital/angel investor scenario) got caught in the bandwagon. Their love for jargons led to the baptism of what they imagined to be the new world wide web as Web 2.0.

Anand Morzaria, CEO of

Anand Morzaria
CEO, tolmolbol, Pennywise
Solutions, India

Pennywise solutions and their latest venture tolmolbol (www.tolmolbol.com) ventures boldly into the Web 2.0 space. Tolmolbol is a portal that helps you find local service providers across a whole range of service categories be it a hospital, a restaurant, a dance school or any other business. Apart from local search for peer-reviewed businesses, it provides the residents of scores of Indian cities a forum to ask questions, share experiences, write reviews, post classifieds, discover events and connect to people in their locality.

What is interesting about Web 2.0 is that it is not a geek sitting in his cubicle that we owe it to. It is you and me who are driving it. The blog that you wrote about your funny encounter with the lady at the book-store, the video that you posted on YouTube, the photos of your vacation in Hawaii last year shared on Flickr or your long lost school friend that you scrapped on Orkut - you and me are ushering it in. As Anand points out, "Web 2.0 is



about providing the user with a system with which he or she interacts along with other users to create content. The real power in Web 2.0 is in the hands of the user. This is a shift from the earlier model where the creator of a portal served the content while the users were the consumers. In Web 2.0 the user is both the creator and the consumer.”

Viddu.com is a social shopping website. Srinivas Dangeti, a Bachelors degree holder from BITS Pilani is a co-founder of Viddu Inc. This website is different from other shopping websites as it builds in the aspect of sharing and networking into your shopping experience where friends can share their experiences and ask others for their experiences. In addition to doing that Viddu also provides a unique way to see related reviews and deals from popular review and deal websites. The consolidation provided by Viddu allows an online shopper to find what they are looking for at a central place instead of searching for the same item in a hundred different places.

Gone are the days of viral marketing. The blogging-era and social networking gave an entirely new perspective to the way people were lured towards a

AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML), or Ajax, is a web development technique used for creating interactive web applications.

Rich Internet

Applications (RIA) are web applications that have the features and functionality of traditional desktop applications.

new website or a Web 2.0 based service. In the initial days of the Internet, people termed the Web as the bastion of nerds and that which would lead to an entire generation becoming anti-social. Social-networking turned that theory on its head and gave birth to monsters like MySpace, Facebook and many more clones, which have enabled people to get closer and have also bolstered the way its users perceive the Web to be.

But where's the money?



Love it or hate it, one cannot ignore Web 2.0. The dynamics of the Internet have rapidly changed ever since. The stakes are too high and the enormous sums of money involved make it virtually impossible to overlook the buzz and the hype. At the very beginning, there were the del.icio.us's and the Flickr's which laid the trend for a completely new revenue model as far as Web 2.0 is concerned. The key-word is traffic. Lay down the infrastructure, get the traffic and then the users create the content for you, which ultimately spins money for you. It sounds pretty simple but getting traffic and sustaining the growth of traffic is a mammoth task in itself.

New economies of scale have emerged. This implies scaling in terms of people, the number of

Viral marketing refers to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks to produce increases in brand awareness, through self-replicating viral processes, analogous to the spread of pathological and computer viruses. Viral promotions may take the form of funny video clips, flash games, or even text messages.

unique page-views, in other words, traffic. But then hidden behind the scenes is the real financial driver of everything in this field - **online-advertising**.

As the tagline of Yodle Inc, another BITSian start-up by Kartik Hosanagar, Associate Professor, Wharton Business School, goes “Get Found” is really what businesses are fighting it out for. His new venture in his own words: “Yodle provides a platform for local businesses to advertise online. We tell local businesses that consumers are no longer using yellow pages to locate them. Instead consumers use the web to locate local businesses. So, they should transition their ad dollars online. However, online advertising is too complicated for local businesses requiring them to participate in auctions run by Google and Yahoo. We manage the complexity for them and provide a platform where they can get the desired reports and output without having to worry about the back-end complexity”.

Kartik differentiated his startup from other Web 2.0 companies, among other things, with having a solid revenue model based on detailed financial analysis. He is apparently convinced that online advertising is here to stay judging from the nature of his new venture. But just how important is online advertising?

Anand of Tolmolbol says “In India alone advertising spending is

does not define the product or the business or even the industry involved. People could have products (not websites but actual commodities, goods or services) which have websites dedicated

Wall - Application on Facebook used to write messages to your friends

Scrapbook - The equivalent of a Wall on Orkut

Twitter - A social networking and micro-blogging service that allows users to send "updates" to other users who have signed up to receive them.

for it
and to
these websites

are added the elements of the 2nd phase of the internet evolution to make the product and site more effective.

An example for this could be the website which TATA motors recently opened for its new car, the Indica Xeta.

(<http://thexetashootout.com/>) is not the usual website which showcases the cars features but it's a micro-site which encourages the public to take part in a competition. This concept would work and achieve its goals only if user participation is sufficient enough.

Another example in this genre could be the now famous Sunsilk gang of girls."



Venture-capitalists, angel investors and funding agencies are pumping in money to tap these advertising dollars that are very quickly moving to the Internet. The idea is to influence young blood, preferably college drop-outs or recent graduates to create new Web 2.0 ideas and then distribute the rewards in a seemingly fair fashion.

Ycombinator led by Paul Graham is an example of a new type of funding-system (www.ycombinator.com) that funds software and web services startups. According to their website they, "... care more about how smart you are than how old you are, and more about the quality of your ideas than whether you have a formal business plan". Reddit funded and later bought over by Conde-Nast (wired publications) is a benchmark for every new aspirant in this field. The mantra is to have an idea, develop it, get funded and pray to be acquired or swooped up by a bigger shark.

Google took the whole thing very seriously and revolutionized the already stagnated email market with the refreshingly new Gmail and of course, not to forget Google Maps. Making the browser work like a desktop application seemed to be the holy-grail for people who wanted to get their hands dirty in this game, which has led to the birth of applications over the Web like document, spreadsheets and even operating systems. We got a scoop straight from the horse's mouth (read an engineer at Google) on Google's ambitions in the Web 2.0 space

"Many people say Google is already Web 2.0. That may or may not be depending on how one



Web 2.0 Startups. If three is a crowd, then what is this?

looks at it. When it comes to Google's aggression on acquisitions of companies in this field, yes, Google is doing quite a bit with YouTube and Writely, a big startup in the field of browser based applications.

Tags are keywords. Analogous to sticking labels on physical objects, you can use tags to label digital 'things' such as blog posts, photos and web links.

Folksonomy is the practice and method of collaboratively creating and managing tags to annotate and categorize content.

Google Base (<http://base.google.com/>) is also something new on the block which is pivoted on user interaction. In Google's own words "Google Base is a place where you can easily submit all types of online and offline content, which we'll make searchable on Google (if your content isn't online yet, we'll put it there)."

That's the business side of things...making money and being on top being among the objectives of any competitive firm.

But there is another aspect to all this as well, the social side of things which truly benefit the public at times. For e.g. Google maps was used to mark areas affected by the hurricane Katrina using the "mymaps" feature where users can annotate locations on the map with interesting data. This is an example of user generated content being used during times of need. Also Google earth is being widely used for hurricane relief'

With the burst of optimism around and the number of start-ups that have cropped up it suddenly looks like we have hopped onto a time machine and are back to times of the dot-com boom and bust. So is there a similarity between the dot-com boom and the current revolution?

"Yes. There are several similarities. It presents a new opportunity like Web 1.0 did and few people fully understand which opportunities will be the billion dollar opportunities (like Amazon, eBay, Google from Web 1.0) and which ones will not be. Given this limited understanding, investors spray and pray, meaning that they fund a lot of businesses hoping some of them will be the next eBays and Googles of the world. So, one would expect that many of these Web 2.0 firms will fade away. Nonetheless, just like with Web 1.0, there will be some new winners in this Web 2.0 world and I am sure they will have as much impact as eBay or Google did. One notable difference though is that the dotcom boom required significant investment in physical infrastructure (fiber optics laid by the telecom companies). That was very expensive and also led to some of the largest bankruptcies. This time around, the infrastructure is available and web 2.0 can ride on the infrastructure built out during the dotcom boom. Also, Web 2.0 companies are easy to bootstrap and do not require the millions needed to build an Amazon. So, on the cost side, there are several positives." says Kartik objectively.

Nevertheless bean counters have played the game even more cautiously this time. But there are evidences to counter that as well. 2% of the new Web 2.0 start-ups provide something substantial to the system.

Kartik had the following to say regarding the way a Web 2.0 company can benefit and differentiate

Microsoft will acquire 20 companies a year for the next five years, ranging from \$50 million to \$1 billion.

- *Steve Ballmer, CEO Microsoft Corp @Web 2.0 conference, San Francisco, USA*

itself from the rest of the crowd. "What all Web 2.0 companies benefit from are significant user involvement and strong network effects. User involvement is important (e.g., YouTube does not need a large staff to identify and upload good videos; Wikipedia does not need a large staff to create new content). Network effects are where the value of the services increases with the number of participants on it (e.g., more people on YouTube imply greater volume and diversity of content). Thus, these networks will grow automatically once they clear a certain threshold size.

Opportunities for differentiation are limited. The cost of setting up a Web 2.0 firm is low. There is rarely significant IP (Intellectual Property) to prevent entry by competitors. So, lots of me-too startups will spring up and it makes it hard to separate the wheat from the chaff. So, the best hope for a firm is to grow really fast and use the network effect to compete against new rivals."

We are still generating a lot of garbage. How long will the people bear the barrage of advertisements that are being thrown at them? There is also a dearth of a killer-application a la email for Web 1.0. The services and applications available now take the concept of web-enabled a little

further by creating a fast and a more responsive interface.

A Silicon Valley geek however has a rather interesting view of the whole Web 2.0 hog.

“Web 2.0. The very mention of these words make my skin crawl, like when you saw that creepy older relative from your childhood, who was a little too fond of having you sit on his lap. Its funny how very few people actually define Web 2.0, but every two-bit scumbag company in the Silicon Valley is ready to jump on the bandwagon.

So, what exactly is Web 2.0? Whence did it come to haunt the "Internet"? Around 2004, a company called Google introduced two web-based applications called GMail and Google Maps. These applications felt richer and more responsive than most web applications before. Google resurrected a long-forgotten

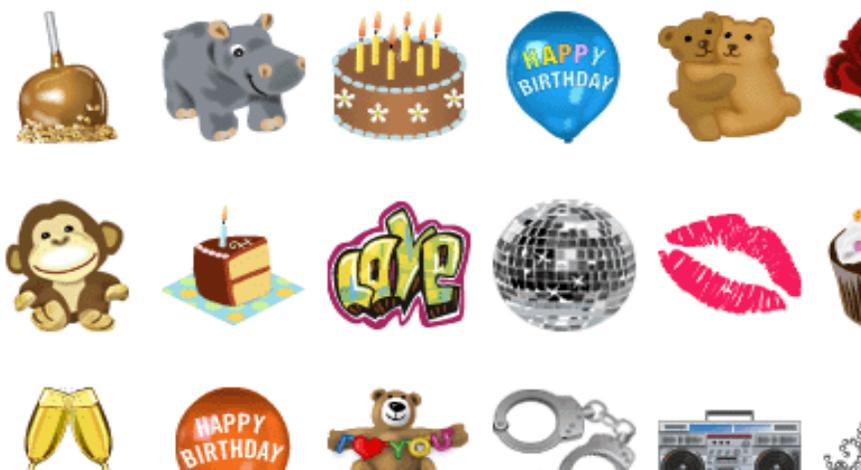
that allowed websites to fetch data asynchronously from a web server. GMail and Google Maps were truly novel and useful web applications. But we can't say the same for the efforts of the inevitable shitstream of me-too companies that followed.

Today, the Internet is littered with retarded-sounding Web 2.0 efforts like wishlstr, twitter, etc., which have no real revenue source, serve no real purpose and make no underlying engineering advancements. Instead they simply rely on what www.uncov.com appropriately calls "loser-generated content", tagging and "social networks". It reminds one of the business plans of the Underpants Gnomes in that South Park episode:

1. Build AJAX-y/Flash-y website
2. ???
3. Profit!!!

making the browser richer in functionality and more responsive ("pages load faster!"). The whole effort is akin to putting lipstick on a pig. But it hasn't stopped these Webtards from trying anyway.

Let's not forget the dime-a-dozen Web 2.0 attempts to create websites for managing to-do lists. I mean, come on! The ultimate solution for managing to-do lists has already been created - it's called a sticky note. I don't need to login to a freaking computer to remember to get milk from the grocery store. And then there are blogs. Blogs, per se, need not be Web 2.0, but the inevitable march of Web 2.0 progress is slowly taking over the "blogosphere". I went to a database conference recently where someone said "Our mission is to index every blog post ever written". Oh great. They want to index every badly written, narcissistic and ultimately meaningless outpouring of "feelings" on the internet. Someone didn't get the memo - It takes an *infinite* number of monkeys typing on an *infinite* number of typewriters to produce anything worth reading.



Facebook “Gifts”. These images actually cost a dollar to send to someone!

A discussion on Web 2.0 can't be complete without mention of the 800-pound gorilla of Web 2.0 efforts, the one site to rule them all - Facebook. Admit it, you have an account, and you have wasted at least an hour a day poking friends and stalking that girl from that party. There is now an ecosystem of parasitic companies whose raison d'etre is to build "Applications" for Facebook. Let's look at one of the more popular Applications- “Superpoke”. What, pray, does this application allow you to do? You can "throw a virtual sheep at", "grope", "spoon", or even "dry hump" that special someone. If that doesn't woo her, nothing will. Then, there is the Gifts application. Let me break this one down for you. You pay

browser/HTTP feature (the infamous "xmlHttpRequest")

Web 2.0 applications are supposed to share a few common properties-

Facebook a dollar to send someone a fricking image file of such things as cakes, monkeys, and champagne glasses.

Web 2.0 is indeed changing a few things around here in the Silicon Valley. But I wonder what effect it's actually having on the people. Time will tell because the kids who use those gazillion and one websites need to grow up first! Amen."

Though this dude would like to paint a bleak picture of Web 2.0 however, people like Anand are very optimistic. "I think the dot-com bust happened because the market was not ready. It would be wrong to draw a parallel. The market is much more mature. Web 2.0 is here to stay.

In fact, Web 3.0 is supposed to be the next revolution (or evolution) in the offing". Anand sees Web 3.0 ushering in the collaboration between applications, between technology and media. "I see it as a platform where content can be pushed from the web to any other format of media and vice versa ."

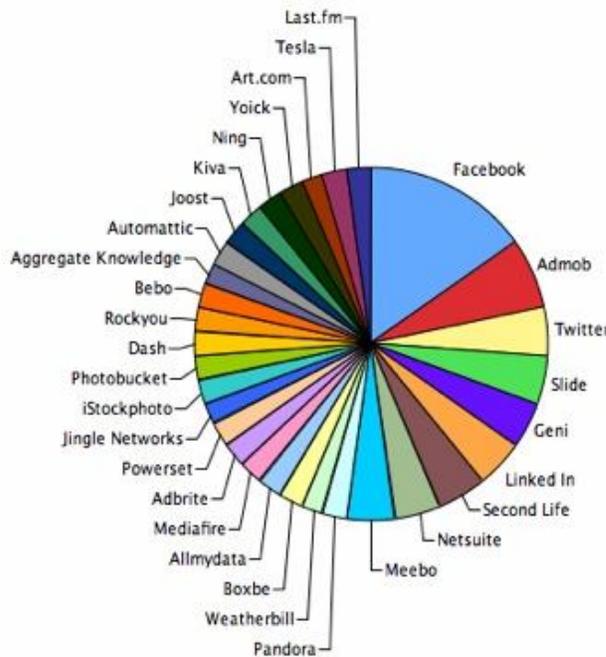
Google's recently launched OpenSocial, a set of common APIs that application developers can use to create applications that work on any social networks (called "hosts") that choose to participate seems to be paving the way.

Although Kartik in spite of his success so far has a measured view of the future, "In my mind, Web 2.0 will create a lot of clutter. The democratization and decentralization of the web is great. But, it is getting hard to separate the expert contributors from the wannabe experts. I think Web 3.0 will go to a hierarchical setup with participants getting rights and responsibilities based on their expertise and in a meritocratic way. It won't be the centralized world of Web 1.0 but it won't be the flat world of Web 2.0 either. I feel that the participants on the Web will get organized and people will take on specialized roles. Another aspect that I believe will emerge is the integration of search and recommender systems. I think there will be automated recommenders all around us."

Well, so there you have it folks. The future of Web 2.0, it's BIG. Collaboration and sharing that have been the spirit of Web 2.0 are here to stay. Anand who's a serial entrepreneur with

two start-ups Pennywise and tolmolbol in his kitty gives his two cents for BITSians aspiring to start-up, "User interaction and retention is the key in Web 2.0. A portal that can figure out what needs to be given back to the community and can create a system by going back to the user will emerge winners."

With Internet penetration on the rise, people are becoming more participatory in nature and to all the budding BITSian entrepreneurs, go out and grab your share of the Pie (shown below). Yodle, tolmolbol and Viddu have already done it. You got a cool idea, *scrap* one of us on Orkut.



Web 2.0 Market Share



CLASS OF '07 CONVOCATION CEREMONY

BY VISHAL HEMRAJANI ('04 EIE)

The years roll by as another batch of BITSians from Dubai graduates.

The convocation ceremony for the Class of 2007 was held on 29 August 2007 at the new campus located in Dubai International Academic City. His Excellency Ali Bin

The BPD Alumni have now started making their mark in both corporate and academic circles. This has allowed the graduating batch to secure better jobs as well as receive more admission offers from top US universities. The Campus Placement Program that had been conducted for the graduating batch was very successful.

Top recruiters for this year were Maersk, J Ray Mc Dermott, Emirates Group, Mott McDonald, Honeywell, Steinweg-Sharaf and Clipsal.

pursue higher studies found the BPD degree to be a significant asset in their admission profiles. About 31 students have received admission offers to Masters and PhD Program at several universities including Stanford University, California Institute of Technology, Cornell University, University of California at Berkley, University of Pennsylvania, Texas A&M University, University of Texas, Austin, Georgia Institute of Technology and University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.



Convocation Ceremony for Class of 2007 at Dubai

Abdullah Al Kaabi, Minister of Labour, UAE, was the Chief Guest for the event and presented certificates to 156 graduates. Degrees were awarded to 73 graduates in Electrical and Electronics Engineering, 43 in Computer Science and 40 in Electronics and Instrumentation Engineering. Awards were presented to the first and second rank holders in each discipline of specialization and to the best all-round achievers. Chancellor's medals were also awarded to the toppers.

Students who wished to



Graduating Class of 2007 BITS Pilani, Dubai

SARATH BABU VISITS BPD

BY VISHAL HEMRAJANI ('04)

Sarath Babu, the 'Food King' from BITS, Pilani, addressed the students of BITS Pilani – Dubai (BPD) on his life, universe and everything.

To a student of BITS, Pilani Sarath Babu needs no introduction. From the slums of Chennai to the hallowed portals of IIM, Ahmedabad, Sarath's journey has been nothing short of inspirational. Sarath Babu visited the Dubai campus on the 6th of May 2007 and addressed the students about his life story and how he got to where he is right now.

Sarath grew up in abject poverty, his mother used to earn a salary of Rs.30 from her government job with which she educated her children. When he was young his mother used to make *idlis* and he used to sell them on the streets. Though he had a difficult childhood, when he would often go hungry he did not compromise on his studies. He worked hard and always performed very well in class. When he finished his schooling he joined the Chemical Engineering Program at BITS Pilani, thinking that it would help get him a job – his priority at that time.

Impressed with his organizational skills at the college festival his friends suggested that he do an MBA. Sarath Babu then decided to get an MBA degree from the best institute offering it – the IIM. After graduating he took up a job in a software company and was finally able to earn some money for his mother. He also started preparing for the CAT.

The first time that he gave the exam he did not clear it. For his subsequent attempt he prepared really hard and although he was sick during the examination he gave the exam only to realize that the CAT paper had leaked. He gave the exam for the third time and was accepted at IIM Ahmedabad. When he graduated from there he turned down a job offer of 8.5 lakh rupees to setup his own catering business - Foodking Catering Service. He feels that he should employ as many people as possible so that they do not need to go through what he had to.

Aspiring entrepreneurs among the audience were especially eager to interact and learn more from him. In his interaction with the students Sarath Babu encouraged them to follow their dreams. He said that he was happy about the Dubai Campus and wished the students all the

best for their future endeavors.



Top: Sarath Babu addressing the students of BPD. Below: Sarath Babu with Dr. Ramachandran, Director, BPD and Mr. Riazuddin, Director, ETA-NET



TECHNOFEST AT DUBAI CAMPUS

BY SAKSHI VAGHELA ('05 CS)

When the keenest brains in town get together to innovate, it can't get better, can it!
Technofest 2007 at BITS Pilani, Dubai.

BITS, Pilani - Dubai is committed to providing excellence in science and technology and to celebrate this creativity and innovation of its students the Institute organizes Technofest an annual science and technology festival.

Technofest is a platform for the students to demonstrate their engineering skills either by developing something unique or by presenting a technical paper. The event classifies entries into three categories – Working model, Non-working Model and Technical Paper Presentation. Every category has its own judgment criteria and is judged independently. Paper Presentations are further classified based on the field to which they belong and Software Systems are regarded as a separate class of working models. The event attracts sponsors who award prizes to the winners in each category.

Technofest 2007 was held from 26th April to 2nd May 2007 at the campus.

The judging panel comprised of faculty members - experts in their own fields who judged the participants and their projects based on proper sequencing, effective presentation,

depth of knowledge, platform manner and response to questions.

About 23 technical papers, from four categories - Computer, Electrical, General Sciences and Mechanical Sciences were submitted which covered topics ranging from the latest technological discoveries like 'Quantum Cryptography' to the basic fundamentals of the sciences like 'Genome Mutation'. Participants were given about 12 minutes for their individual presentations and were then tested for their conceptual knowledge and originality by the questions put to them by the judges.

Exhibits like 'Water Level Monitoring system' - a working model, which as the name suggests could sense water level using probes and automatically fill a tank up to the desired level, and 'Moviz4rent' a software system that served as a portal to online transaction of media files after verifying the security code, were among the various innovative projects that showed the genius of BPD students.



A student describes his project to the judges.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. RAMACHANDRAN

BY SYED FAISAL ('06 EEE) AND PIYUSH SINGH ('06 EIE)

Syed and Piyush pick up some valuable sound bytes on various issues associated with BITS Pilani, Dubai in an elaborate tête-à-tête with Dr. Ramachandran, its Director.

Sandpaper Dubai Team reporters Syed Faizal and Piyush Singh spoke to Dr. M. Ramachandran, Director, BPD about the growth of the Campus since its inception in 2000, the current goals of the institute and his views about the future of the campus and how the young alumni should be a part of it.

***Faisal:** Sir, you have seen this institute grow over its initial years, you have seen the students growing with this institute. How does it feel to be the nurturer of this prestigious institute?*

Dr. Ramachandran: It was undoubtedly a matter of honour for me when I was asked to start this campus by the BITS parent campus in August 2000. This institute started with two mainstream courses which were EEE and CSE with a mere 150 students but over the years this institute has populated to around 1500 students which is 10 times as it was when it started. I've had a very nice staff and of course remarkable students. Indeed, my journey from 2000 till here has been one with many challenges.

***Faisal:** Talking about challenges, what kind of challenges did you face over these years?*

Dr. Ramachandran: Well, being the Director of this institution I was responsible to

three sets of people - the sponsor of this college, the parent institute BITS, Pilani and most importantly the parents of my students. Maintaining a proper balance here was one of my major challenges which I have successfully managed so far and will try to in the future as well.

Also this being a newly setup institute at that time, I faced the challenge of making this college at par with the Pilani Campus. I just did not want to give away degrees to my students; I wanted to make them deserving BITSians of the prestigious BITS degree over a course of 4 years.

One of the toughest challenges was the introduction of Practice School stations, where it was very important to maintain our reputation, which was solely dependent on my students as they were the ones who represent the college in the stations. Even if one of the students makes a folly the entire institute would have to bear the consequences. However in this matter I was very lucky as all my students proved their mettle. Now the PS 1 stations are inviting students of our college for the PS2 session with a



stipend and are also providing placements for our students

***Piyush:** What were your goals you set when taking over as the Director of BPD? What is it that you are thinking about the future?*

Dr. Ramachandran: The most important goal set was to convince the locals in the UAE that this institute is an absolute replica of the Parent campus. It gives me immense happiness to share the fact that now not only do we have students coming from around the Middle East into our college but we also have students who have secured 95% and more coming from India.

Another goal of mine is to get BITS Dubai accredited by ABET which is the most powerful organisation which accredits institutes. We have already had talks with them and

hopefully BITS Dubai will be one of their accredited universities.

Faisal: *What do you have to say about the international collaboration BPD has? Do you plan to increase the number of collaborations as well?*

Dr. Ramachandran: Again this was also a goal of mine: to have international collaborations with various institutes. We already have collaborations with universities like the Purdue University of Indiana, SUNY, Buffalo and many more. Hopefully we will have a further increase in the list. Once our university is accredited we too will commence PG courses and have many more ties with foreign universities.

Piyush: *The institute was known as 'BITS, Pilani - Dubai Campus', and has now been renamed 'BITS, Pilani - Dubai'. Can we expect any further changes?*

Dr. Ramachandran: It was necessary for us to rename the college from BPDC to BPD as it was one of the criteria for our university's accreditation. We will be an independent accredited college with support from our Parent Campus. As far as the other changes are concerned; Yes, if there is a need for a change we will introduce it. I would bring in any change as long as it favours the betterment of my Institute.

Faisal: *Last year a set of students represented BPD at the APOGEE festival held at Pilani. Do you intend to host such an event where you would invite BITSians from the other campuses?*

Dr. Ramachandran: Indeed, as a matter of fact I want to prove that BITSians of the Dubai campus aren't any lesser than the BITSians of the parent campus or any other campus for that matter. APOGEE gave me and my students a way to prove ourselves and I am really proud of my students for they proved to be triumphant in most events held there.

Now we have our own campus with a sports hall, a big auditorium and many more facilities and of course with my very talented students. In my college my students take the responsibility of all the events, and I am happy that my students make every single event a success, be it the Art Exhibition, Dance Competitions, various clubs or just anything. Having so many factors to our credit we might surely organise an event where we shall invite all BITSians to participate.

Piyush: *Four batches of students have passed out. What do you feel about these alumni? Is there something you expect of them and is there something you want to do for them?*

Dr. Ramachandran: I share a relation of love and affection with all my students. I do not want my students to do something great for me. For me, the greatest pleasure is felt when I hear people talking good about my students, their achievements and when I see them holding high positions.

What more could one want from students but to keep the college's flag high? But yes if there is something the alumni would want to do I would be glad. For me the Alumni are like ambassadors to this college, the greatest thing they could do is to recommend the name of college which they had studied to others. It is like a goal which I've met because it gives me satisfaction that my students are so satisfied with my college that they recommend the college to others as well.

As far as the question goes as to what I wish to do for them; there is already an alumni association in which all my passed out students are lifetime members. We give them open invitations to visit their college whenever they come by. We keep them abreast with the happenings in the college; we are in constant touch with them. After all they are our alumni.



BITS Dubai Campus, 2007

PILANI BPO PVT. LTD.

BY SANDPAPER PILANI TEAM

Born out of teatime table talk, BITS Pilani BPO Pvt. Ltd. is a noble endeavour committed to providing employment to those sections of the rural population who are educated but unemployed due to lack of opportunities.

The latest addition to the township of Pilani is a Rural BPO, the Pilani BPO Private Ltd. We spoke to the CEO of the company, Manoj Vasudevan, a 2002 batch BITSian.



Snapshot of Pilani BPO

How it all began...

The Goenkas are one of the prominent business families in India, who are presently based in Mumbai but have their roots in Pilani. Over tea with Dr. L. K. Maheshwari, the Vice Chancellor of BITS Pilani, they discussed about providing employment opportunities in the rural sector. Thus the idea of rural BPO model was born. With complete funding from the Goenkas and BITS providing brand support and a five member technical advisory board, the idea was conceptualized and launched on the 15th of September 2007 in the form of a small but well

equipped office housed presently inside Goenka Vidya Mandir – a school in Pilani.

What infrastructure exists presently?

The office is currently designed to provide employment to 54 employees in 2 shifts of 7-8 hours each. A computer lab with all the necessary equipment and internet connectivity (BSNL 512Mbps) has already been put in place. A 20 KV UPS has also been bought to combat the frequent power outages in Pilani. The company offers its employees, twenty of them women, a flexible time schedule for their convenience. Five managers supervise operations and report to the CEO. They are also on the lookout for a CTO to handle the technical supervision.

The aim of the project:

This BPO is aimed at providing employment to those sections of the rural population who are educated but unemployed due to lack of opportunities. Graduates from local colleges hence are an adequate choice for employment. Since these employees need to be molded

according to work requirements before starting full-blown operations, presently, training forms the most important part of work. Computer skills, typing lessons to increase efficiency to 35-40 words per minute, soft skills and a basic knowledge of English are the main focus areas.

So what are the services offered?

The company is on the lookout for Business Development Projects focusing mainly in the area of Image Based Data Capture. To cut a long story short, its application is in banks, telecom, etc. where loads of applications are filed each day and conversion of data from these hard copies to soft copies can be a tedious job, which would be done for a much lower cost for these organizations if out-sourced. Digitization of this technology is the focal point of this operation and data entry into existing databases based on the captured images of the written applications would be the primary area of work this company is hired for. Apart from banking and insurance, educational, government and health institutions are the other industries being considered as target sectors.

What are the challenges?

Pilani is synonymous with distance and connectivity issues especially in terms of internet connectivity and power supply; and this time too the situation is no different. Customer trust and market skepticism regarding quality of manpower is also another issue which they are trying to overcome. Also technology set up should be at par with other BPOs in the cities lest they fall back on business opportunities due to lack of adequate infrastructure.

Future Plans

Maintaining this setup even for a day is quite an expensive endeavor. Currently the funding is adequate but the main aim is to develop a self-sustaining body as soon as possible. Getting a chance to prove their value with a good project is also something they are waiting for. Apart from leveraging the



talents buried in the rural population the long term vision would be to see this model of a rural BPO being replicated and what originally started as "Source Pilani" (what they wanted to call the company) can be a widespread phenomenon tapping the unchartered potentials of rural India.

FLASH!!! FLASH!!! FLASH!!! FLASH!!!!



TN Prabhu chosen as COO, UTV New Digital Venture

BITS Batch: 1984

Earlier: Director, Walt Disney Internet Group. Prabhu was in charge of country specific revenue targets across WDIG's businesses, including premium broadband services, mobile applications, interactive television gaming, and other potential emerging digital services.

Prior to his association with Disney, Prabhu held the position of Vice President Strategy & Planning at Rediff.com India Ltd.

OASIS ' 07

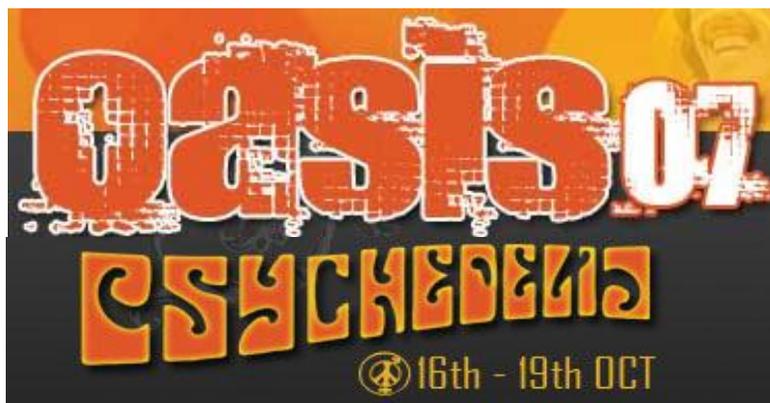
BY SANDPAPER PILANI TEAM

Four days of tumult in the BITSian heartland couldn't have been summed up better than by this one word: psychedelia!

Oasis - in the middle of this desert we call home. Oasis - a reprieve from the scorching heat of academic rigour that is a semester. Oasis - the culmination of every BITSian emotion. Four days of insomnia, activity, music, madness; all easily defined by that one word: Psychedelia.

The Inauguration ceremony began a day early, on the night of the 15th of September, in what may be looked upon as a significant step in getting back to the five day Oasis of yester-year. And what a start to Oasis it was! This was touted to be the biggest Oasis yet, with a total sponsorship of 11.5 lakh INR and State Bank of India (SBI) as the title sponsor. Much was to be new this time: Three professional music shows instead of the usual two, Paintball (a hugely popular and upcoming adventure sport, that allows people to do in real life as they would in counter-strike!), Rolling Stone magazine to judge and cover Rocktaves in their first ever India edition, and yes, those few precious extra hours, to make it the biggest Oasis in more than one way...

The chief guest, Sunit Rikhi, VP-Techology Manufacturing group, Intel, was a huge hit with the audience, refusing to be called guest as he was a 'Thoroughbred BITSian' in his own words. He, instead, settled on being called just Chief. Bathed in nostalgia, he



entertained us with some reminiscences of his time here, working as head of one of the many organisations that make Oasis. Then came the coup de grace: a poem composed 'between Loharu and Chirawa', which took us all back to a time when things were not so different after all... *Har Mandir ke andar ghaas dhoondta hoon... har chai ke dukaan me Nutan dhoondta hoon... har deewar ke peeche Meera Bhavan dhoondta hoon!*

The fireworks, the music, the drama, the quizzes, the dances, the food, the action, they were all there, to blend the perfect mix. The skies exploded shortly after the Inauguration,

hyphenating the celebration that had just begun. Them Clones, Thermal and a quarter (Three Mallus and a quarter Mallu!) and the much awaited Lucky Ali were the professional bands brought to Pilani by Arbits and Jhankar to completely dazzle audiences. The street plays were sheer energy, and the stage was brought alive by colleges all over. Quizzes that perplexed the quickest minds, while still keeping the audiences enthralled. Choreo, the dance event quickened pulses and Razzmatazz brought the roof down on the audience. Vishal Kanoi, eminent dance choreographer had hordes of two-left-feet swaying gracefully, and the outdoor dance floor kept the hips swaying and feet tapping. And finally, that which turned every BITSian into a gourmet par excellence - Caffeine Partner CafÈ Coffee Day ended the search for the perfect cuppa, and Dominoes filled all the gaps of the limited menu we are used to, appetites skyrocketing, regardless of the many holes in the wallet...

How can such a celebration of colour, noise and absolute lack of sleep be pictured in naught but pictures? So here it is, Oasis 2007, Psychedelia!

MOBILE MEDICS

BY SANDPAPER PILANI TEAM

An idea born out of Pilani that was embraced at B-plan competitions, Mobile Medics Healthcare has weaved through tough times and, on the brink of a merger with a corporate giant, it is now here to stay.

MOBILE MEDICS HEALTHCARE

Last year, a small idea born in Pilani took the world by storm. Weathering all odds, the team known simply as "Mobile Medics" romped home to victory at B-plan competitions from New York to Bangkok, thus emerging among the top social ventures in the world. Headquartered at BITS Pilani, this healthcare startup has faced umpteen challenges and hardships to get to their current position. However, as with any activity, sustainable success is rare and most exciting startups fizzle out after the initial brouhaha. The motive force behind Mobile Medics, Kavikrut, MSc. (Tech.) Finance '02, took the BITS Pilani Sandpaper 2.0 Team through the developments in the past year, most notable being their association with Piramal Enterprises Limited, whose flagship company Nicholas Piramal India Limited (NPIL) is the country's second largest pharmaceutical healthcare company.

"We officially launched on 28 February 2007 and began operations on 8 March. So, it's now 'Mobile Medics Healthcare, Pvt. Ltd.' quips an enthusiastic, but weary Kavi. Among the hurdles they faced, finding

qualified doctors, clearing legal issues involved in the drug supply chain and gaining the trust of villagers were the prominent ones. Currently serving 12 villages in Rajasthan with a total population of 40000, Mobile Medics has treated 1500 people since their launch. The pricing model revolves around a consultation fee of 30 rupees for a first visit and 20 rupees for

subsequent visits and the cost of medicines at MRP (Maximum Retail Price). Speaking about the healthcare scenario in India, Kavikrut says, "Rural healthcare is a massive and profitable market waiting to be tapped. However, it is also among the most difficult to break into. We want to be the pioneers."

Until now, Mobile Medics has been operating on the prize money won at various competitions, most notably the Global Social Venture Competition (GSVC), New York (USD 25000). They recently won the Indian leg of BiD Network's prestigious Business in Development (BiD) International Challenge B-plan competition and will pack their bags for Amsterdam later this year for the finals as India's official entry, competing with

Starting your own company right out of college is not only rare, it's also supremely difficult. Support and mentoring is vital as is self-motivation and patience – Mobile Medics Team



teams from 7 other developing countries for prize money of over USD 100,000. This year, he managed to set up Mobile Medics as a PS-1 station. Mobile Medics is also an industry collaborator for the new 'MPhil, Public Health' program offered by BITS, Pilani starting this year.

While everything appears rosy on the surface, Kavikrut lets us in on the real issues plaguing the future of Mobile Medics. "The current business model is not profitable due to low patient volume and is therefore unsustainable. This prompted us to waive the consultation charges altogether and expand our customer base over the past two months. Of course, our profits are nil from consultation, but we are working around making higher margins from drugs and exploring secondary sources of revenue. Until now, we were operating solely on our prize money, but as the funds dried up, times became difficult. At one point, we were even advised to become an NGO so that we could tap into donations and government funding" he says.

The situation was grave when the Piramal deal came to their rescue. "Piramal Enterprises (PEL) was also working on a



Mobile Medics Team Member with Dr. L. K. Maheshwari

rural healthcare project on the lines of Mobile Medics. They had the resources, capital and network to implement such an idea and the infrastructure to scale the business rapidly." The missing link was a person with on-field experience, something which Kavikrut had in abundance. An offer was made and he is now Manager of Business Development at PEL. He will spearhead their efforts to get the idea up and running.

So, does that bring down the curtains for Mobile Medics? "Certainly not, we are discussing a possible synergy with PEL by absorbing Mobile Medics through a merger, and still work on the mission of building a business model to deliver primary healthcare to rural India. Although there was lot of criticism from many

quarters when I accepted the position, I saw it as a clean way out of the cash crunch we were facing. In the end, the idea wins and that is important." While he is tight-lipped when it comes to discussing the details of PEL's healthcare initiative, we surmise it is very much on the lines of the Mobile Medics

model, at least at the conceptual level.

Starting up your own company right out of college is not only rare, it's also supremely difficult. Support and mentoring is vital as is self-motivation and patience. "BITS was the pillar of strength throughout the journey. Right from the incubation at TBI to small issues, the administration was very supportive. As a mentor, Anupendra Sharma was invaluable. His inputs and guidance helped Mobile Medics sail through many rough times," says Kavikrut. While Mobile Medics may not get the same recognition now that they are on the brink of a merger with a corporate giant, they have certainly avoided being obliterated by forces that threaten the survival of many startups.

Mobile Medics after its inception in Pilani



RIDING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL WAVE

BY SANDPAPER PILANI TEAM

BITS, Pilani is experiencing the surge of an exciting new trend as more BITSians are beginning to dabble with the idea of a new start-up. Are we truly going the Stanford way?

BITS Pilani has always asked more of us than just being technically sound – focusing on developing well-rounded individuals. It is this culture that is giving rise to a very intriguing and exciting new phenomenon – the campus is flooded with new concepts, start-up ideas, and people raring to put these ideas into action. We are used to juggling around many things at the same time; until now the students who were managing clubs or departments with academics now work on business plans with the dream to start their own venture by the time they graduate.

What is quite impressive about these ideas is that they are strikingly creative solutions to everyday problems. Take for example, **Shiksha**, a business-plan (b-plan) that won Epsilon (the intra-BITS Business Challenge) and was a finalist in Conquest 2007 (International Business Challenge of BITS Pilani). It was also a semi-finalist in Megabucks challenge of IIT K. It attempted to solve problems of rural students who are taught by untrained and under qualified teachers. Falling in the same league is **Infohub**, which aims to bring a host of day-to-day services required by a typical household. It would be a one-stop portal which would act as an interface between the city dwellers and the largely unorganized sector of small

service providers such as maids, drivers, milk vendors etc. Their team was a Finalist in VENTURA 2007 at IT-BHU and Epsilon 2007. Another promising start-up is **Dhanax Pvt. Ltd** (<http://www.dhanax.com>) based in Bangalore started by Abhishek Nayak, a third year student, Siva Cotipalli, BITSian

Startup ideas from the BITS Pilani campus

- Shiksha
- Info Hub
- CDS
- Vita Peracta
- Jal Purification Tech
- Sparks
- TechBazaar

Alumni and IIM-L graduate. Dhanax allows retails investors to invest in micro-finance online. The start-up has three employees and the b-plan has won several laurels which includes being a semi-finalist at Stanford's E-Challenge. The B-plan also came fourth in IIT M's Genesis and second in Intelcap's Srijan. Times NOW also covered this start-up on November 3rd.

A budding start-up in the education sector is **CDS** (Consultancy Development Scholars) by Lohit Sahu, this

B2B commercial enterprise has already started operations in Raipur. CDS envisions itself as the one-stop destination for all academic and social needs of students with the use of e-education services. It also aims to act as an interface between youth and industry through radical strategies such as Core Data service (CoDaS). Having successfully implemented three projects for National as well as regional level institutions in a short period of seven months, the start-up is set to soar high.

Vita Peracta, (<http://www.vitaperacta.com>) a venture by Amruth B R, Sindhu Anand and Nakul Jamadagni generates curiosity by what it attempts to do; mathematically model the personality of an individual to simulate human behavior. With some renowned psychologists and scientists in its panel of advisors the team hopes to come out with the beta version of its product soon. Their b-plan has been selected for the second stage of IIT B



Business Challenge Eureka 2007.

In the sector of technology based start-ups is **Jal Purification Technologies**, by Pritwiraj Moulik and others that will provide water purification products based on indigenous, patented technology. Neer-Amrit, their main product would be a cost-effective, portable, manually driven, modular, and membrane based purification system. An Ex-technologist from a renowned organization for membrane technologies in USA, a pioneer in the area having many patents to his credit in ultra-filtration technology has expressed interest as the technology mentor for the start-up. They are developing a prototype with field tests scheduled in Jan 2008.

Fueling this entrepreneurial explosion is The Centre of Entrepreneurial Leadership (CEL). Whether it is Sparks, Epsilon, Conquest, Techbazaar or the Mantra Awards, CEL has been a constant presence on the BITSian scene.

Sparks is an initiative funded by BITS alum **Anurag Jain**, which aims to provide a platform for students to validate the potential of their ideas and work on developing them into products which can be of value to the industry and society. It provides an opportunity for students to put their technical skills to practical use while providing monetary assistance and incentive to take the idea to the next level. CEL collects project ideas from Alumni & Entrepreneurs through an idea submission form, and the mode followed was **ideate – get it validated – build the product – showcase the prototype – sell/**

launch the product. The participants would get personal guidance and funding from Anurag Jain, technical mentorship and a certificate from CEL on completion of the project.

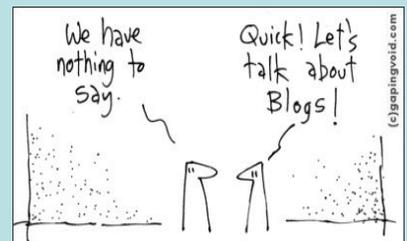
Epsilon, the intra-BITS business plan competition has been designed for students to work on their raw ideas and convert in into a full fledged B-Plan. As a testimony to the buoyant entrepreneurial scene on campus, the competition has grown by leaps and bounds with number of entries bouncing from 67 last year to 150 this year. Even the Goa campus, where the event was being held for the first time got a whopping 65 entries. The number of non participants attending the Business Plan Workshop (a component of Epsilon) has surged recently, contributing to the entrepreneurial buzz.

The latest activity by CEL was **Techbazaar**, held in November 2007. Basically a Business Plan Competition, Techbazaar included a two-day convention where people delivered lectures on energizing entrepreneurship through innovation.

CEL's latest venture is the **'Mantra Awards'** for excellence in the fields of Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Social leadership. The awards shall be given by **Mantra Capital LLC** headed by BITS alum **Anupendra Sharma**. Two awards, (male and female) shall be awarded for the Leadership category and one each for other categories in recognition of achievements during education at BITS. The winner of a Mantra Award shall receive a cash award of 5000 INR along with certificates. All students in undergraduate and

postgraduate on-campus programs at BITS Pilani are eligible to apply. Thus the BITSian scene is full of promise as far as the entrepreneurs of tomorrow are concerned. With so much happening and so many students making waves, BITSians are all set to be a force to reckon with in the corporate world.

Cartoon Time – Blog Fever!!!



GIVING BACK TO SOCIETY

BY SHERIN KURIAN ('04 C6)

Budding denizens of tomorrow find ways of giving back to the society and surroundings.

Abhigyan-“Knowledge for all”

15 August 2005- a memorable day for BITSians of Goa. Dr.T.C.Goel (Director, BITS, Pilani - Goa Campus) proposed the idea of starting a Literacy Drive on campus while delivering the Independence day message. This was an opportunity to serve the society and the faculty and students of BITS Goa put in their best efforts to get the program up and running. The program aimed at teaching construction workers and their children, the mess staff, and the housekeeping staff. With an initial fund of Rs. 5000/- donated by the Director himself, the program commenced.

Once the funding was in place, the next task involved acquiring books and stationery for the students. These included story books, text books, exercise books, pens and pencils. A course handout was designed to outline the topics to be covered. Since most of them were new to learning, we started with alphabets in English, Hindi and Kannada according to their preference. Math and spoken English were also included in the syllabus. In a week, everything was ready and the small school at BITS marked its beginning. The venue of the program was decided to be the

same classroom where the students of BITS attended their classes and it continues to be so even today. A group of sixty five showed up for the first class, which included adults as well as children in the age group of 3 to 12. The classes commenced with mixed feelings among the new students - some were scared, some were embarrassed, and yet another section was restless showing their discomfort. To start learning at the age of 45 is indeed a difficult task!

The teachers to these knowledge aspirants are a set of enthusiastic students of the campus who feel the necessity for imparting knowledge to the underprivileged. I, too, am one among the teaching volunteers at Abhigyan and extremely proud to be so. It was a new

experience to most of us since we have never seen people who don't even know to hold a pen! Also an eye opener to understand the amount of patience each of our teachers has with us. Kudos to teachers all around the world!

The last two years have seen Abhigyan growing and at times breathing hard to hold the spirits of learners high. New plans are being made to take it to a higher level so that BITSians will continue to have an opportunity to give back to the society.

AASRA: a platform for social service

Since its inception, AASRA, a platform for social service in BITS Pilani, Goa Campus has organized many programs for

Blood Donation Camp at BITS Pilani – Goa Campus



community welfare.

Blood Donation Camp

Every year, AASRA, along with Goa Medical College Blood Bank (in association with Blood Transfusion Council in Goa) holds a blood donation camp at the Institute. The camp is being held at the campus for the past three years and BITS Goa has had the rare achievement of being the highest blood donor among educational institutions in Goa on October 2006 and the highest blood donor in Goa as a whole in October 2007.

Cleanliness Drive

“Cleanliness leads to Godliness” is a famous quote. Keeping this in mind, AASRA has taken the

initiative of a campus cleaning drive at the Institute. Once every semester, the program is conducted to create awareness among the students to keep the surroundings clean.

“Save electricity & water, reduce wastage of food”: is the new motto set by AASRA. The word is spread among the students with posters and presentations. Recently, AASRA expanded the cleanliness drive to outside the campus. Old clothes were collected from students and faculty members and were given to “Little Heavens”- an orphanage located near the campus. Another activity taken up by AASRA involved the collection of old newspapers from the library and the hostel

common rooms and giving it to “People for Animals”.

On 2 October 2007, AASRA was brought under NIRMAAN, an NGO based in Hyderabad. Discussions are being held to adopt two schools (one primary and one high school).

Ultimately, the worth of a human being is determined not by what he gets from the rest of the world, but what he gives back to them. The tag of being a BITSian is not just about what we can get out of it in terms of powerful posts and heavy paychecks, but also about how we can show our real worth, by helping the not so fortunate ones among us.

Literacy drive at the BITS Pilani – Goa campus. Faculty and students collaborate to teach construction workers, the mess and the housekeeping staff and their children.



CENTRE FOR SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

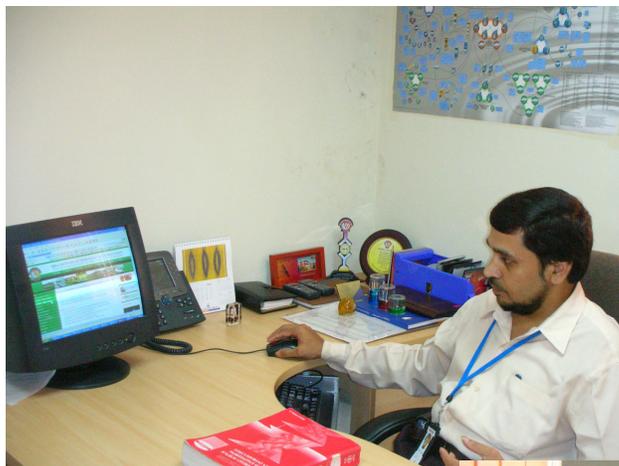
BY ROSHAN SUMBALY ('04 CS), AALAP TRIPATHY ('04 EEE), AKRITI TIBREWALA ('05 C6)

With the addition of more batches and students, the CSD slowly spreads its wings in Goa.

The Centre for Software Development (CSD) was formed by a group of students of the first batch who joined the new campus of BITS at Goa. Since the college was in its inception, it required a group of enthusiasts who could group

together to help in its growth. The idea to form a team of such "like minded" people struck two students from the 2004 batch, Roshan Sumbaly and Aalap Tripathy, while returning from a movie trip from Panjim. Under the guidance of Dr. D.M. Kulkarni, the first task of setting up of the BITS Goa Website was delegated to students resulting in the formation of CSD.

With the admission of the second batch at BITS Goa, the CSD sprung into action to invite some of the best brains to join in. This resulted in the formation of the 'CSD Nucleus Members' – a team of dedicated students striving for software solution requirements of the new campus. Over the next year, the team worked on various projects like the BITS Goa website, BITS Studentnet (Intranet Site), Course Management Tools, etc. Some of the work was even



**Dr D M Kulkarni –
Coordinator, CSD (top).
Mr. Mangesh Bedekar,
Faculty Incharge CSD
(right).**

appreciated in media, especially when the elections of the Student's Body, called the CSA, was done using an online software – making our campus one of the first campuses to hold an online election in India.

CSD Initiatives

The CSD team has worked hard to deliver many successful projects. The CSD abides by the motto - 'we develop and stay ahead.' Hence, since its inception, it has continuously added features to the BITS Goa website, thereby giving the

website a different look over time. Currently in its third version, the most attractive feature of the website is the BITS-Zone Network Services – a number of network services provided by the CSD like CANVAS@BITS-GOA, BITS StudentNet, BITS e-mail, and BITS-Buzz.

BITS-Buzz, the online campus SHOUTBOX is an online forum for students and faculty which



hosts interesting talks and discussions.

CSD is also working on reducing paper usage by the Institute automating several paper-based procedures into software as per the business requirements of the Institute. These include Insurance forms, Railway concession forms, Faculty attendance form and scholarship & vacation details.

The 'ID Card Generation Software' which generates identification cards for each student with a bar code is another one of CSD's brainchild. This base of this software has also been deployed as a security card-reader to allow automatic check-in and check-out at the campus entrance.

The CSD has been helping the academic division of the campus

by working on the Campus Management Tool which assists Professors in day-to-day running of course work at the institute. This tool also calculates the CGPA of each student.

The CSD has started research projects with Roshan Sumbaly's work on 'Parallel and Distributed Systems.'

In the three years of operation, the CSD has received

unflinching support of Dr. D. M. Kulkarni (Chief, CSD) along with Mr. Mangesh Bedekar (Faculty Incharge, CSD). It is amazing to see a small idea from two undergraduate students transform itself into a team of dedicated students striving for the development of their campus while honing their skills. Like they say, all big things have small beginnings.

Bygone days

A BITSian Homemaker's honest dialogue with her ex-colleague, friend and husband

Dear Pankaj,

Today, you talked of Sarbanes Oxley And private equity
As I struggled with our daughter's interpretation of the frog's lifecycle
I can expound upon various theories too,
But I must explain to her why the sky appears blue...

You wear an urbane suit to work,
Not a hair out of place
I can barely get rid of the lip hair on my face Anymore...

Grab my five minute luxury bath while the baby sleeps
But I do not, as yet, rest my case...

We started out together
The sky was the limit, we were both dedicated to our careers,
Granted I made a choice - or eased into one,
Despite your initial fears

Now, we both read the Wall Street Journal everyday
(Though you read it first, unlike the Economic Times that I monopolized years back)

I guess, for me, brain-dead is a state that is here to stay,
And I fight not, for I may never apply anything I read.

I hold one baby and the other holds my other hand and a grocery bag is tucked under my arm
Like the 10 odd years of past (working) glory I bask in,
I hold onto both for dear life...

For you lose some, and some you decidedly win...
I recall a paper about why the Gross National Product should include us
(I mean housewives but it is hard to say the word without a fuss-
And use words like VP at home to soften the blow)

I recall a book called valuing motherhood
As I confront my existentialist dilemma
I do everything to make myself feel good,
I always wanted to make a difference all said and done,
One day at a time, one simple step at a time,
I tell you, Pankaj, I have managed to comb my hair today, thank god
changed the world through that one contribution.

SNIPPETS FROM GOA

BY GOWRI THAMPI 05-ECO+EEE, TANAYA SRIVASTAVA 05-EEE, SHOUNAK SEN 06-CHEM, AKRITI TIBREWALA 05 INFOSYS, SHERIN KURIAN 04 INFOSYS

Wall Street in Goa

The Wall Street Club was initiated in Goa Campus on 23rd August, 2007. The aims of the club are educating the campus student community about stock, sponsorship and publicity, software development, stock watching, and organizing lectures. Wall Street Raider is one of the most awaited event lined up for Quark '08 (9th-11th Feb).

BITSians Go GREEN

Environment Protection and Awareness Club (EPAC) was set up in October 2007 to make people aware of the present condition of the environment. The club aims to organize talks and field trips, and show documentaries with a goal to spread awareness among the students on environmental issues.

DOSM & DOPPR

The Department Of Sponsorship and Marketing (DOSM) and Department of Publicity & Public Relations (DOPPR) have been set up to handle sponsorship, finance and publicity for Waves and Quark, the cultural and technical festivals of BITS, Pilani – Goa campus.

BITS GETS SUN'NY

Sun Microsystems associated BITS, Pilani – Goa Campus with the campus ambassador programme, as part of its Open Source innovation in college campuses. Abhishek Kumar (2005T6PS438), the campus ambassador, will be provided free training, which in turn will help the student developers to take advantage of Sun's high value and no-cost resources web based training, free developer tools and Open Source technology.

FoodKing @Goa

FoodKing - the food catering service launched by Sarath Babu, BITSian (97'Chemical) and IIM-A alumni, came to Goa campus in August 2007. The response from the students has been stupendous with almost 70% of the students opting in favour of FoodKings mess. FoodKings has outlets at Gandhinagar Secretariat, IIM-A and Pilani campus also.

la connexion européenne

May be it's the exciting PS station in France and the host of technical literature in Germany. Whatever be the reason, language classes are now a rage in BITS. Courses are run on the lines of those in Allianz Francais, and Max Mueller Bhawan, and therefore, lay equal emphasis on listening, speaking, writing and reading abilities.

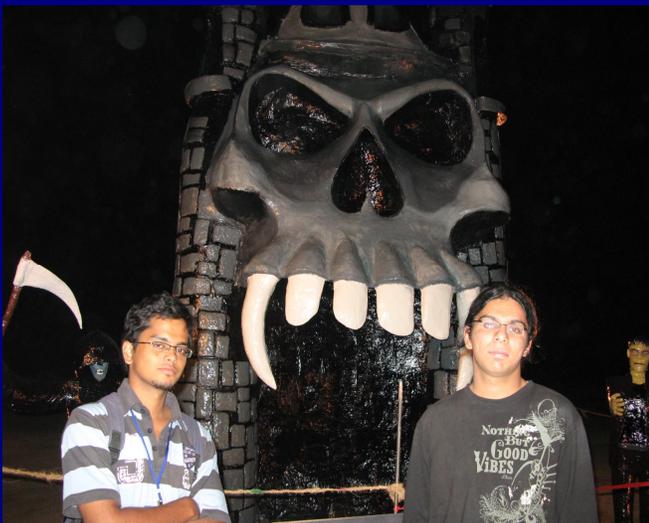
The 8th Workshop on Biosensors and Bioanalytical μ -Techniques in Environmental and Clinical Analysis(October 3-6,2007)

The workshop was hosted by BITS under the auspices of **International Association of Environmental Analytical Chemistry (IAEAC)** Switzerland. The specific theme of this workshop is extended to multidisciplinary fields connecting μ -systems, nano-biosensors, biochip, nanotechnology, MEMS, genomics and proteomics. The aim of the workshop was to provide a forum for discussion and exchange of knowledge about the recent advances in biosensor s applications in real life pollution problems, bio-analytical micro and nano techniques and clinical diagnostics.

OASIS 2007



A 36-member team from BITS – Goa comprising of dancers, musicians, artists etc made a long journey across the Thar desert to be a part of Oasis 2K7. Podium finishes in a multitude of events as well as the thrill of experiencing life on the mother campus, made the journey worthwhile. The team representing BITS - Goa finished second in the race.



BATTLE OF THE BANDS



Aggression overload is probably the best way to describe the aura during the Battle of the Bands, Goa 2007. 15 semi-pro bands took over the stage in the distant district of Alva Mar in Goa. Two rounds and 12 hours later, a group of BITSians who call themselves ‘The Last Trace’ emerged winners. The event was sponsored by Furtado’s, a national music shop with outlets in Goa and Mumbai.

The music ranged from the angelic rock of Evanescence to the in-your-face riffs of Rage Against the Machine.

This competition not only made ‘The Last Trace’ the rock pride of BITS Pilani Goa Campus but was yet another stepping stone in the growing rock culture in Goa.

LESSON ONE

BY ANJUM PENWALA

An elderly figure went directly to the blackboard and wrote down a serpentine formula. He turned every once in a while and explained, and all the Greek became Ad-Cal!

As soon as setting foot in Pilani, everyone knows about priority numbers, time-tables and getting to register for the best professors. The first semester is the toughest for all. The pressure to perform and prove is high. The advice of seniors is sprinkled generously all around, “You need to attend this Professor for this subject else you will not make a good grade”, “Guss the registered Professor and go for P Singh!” is among a few what made it to my eager and willing ears. I still vividly remember the feeling that enveloped me, when I attended my first AdCal Class. Some students had reserved their seats in the classroom on the very first day of the class on

the prudent advice of their seniors. Unfortunately, this piece of advice had missed this beaver.

I arrived ten minutes early only to see in vain, a sixty capacity class-room packed with 200. Benches supposed to be seating two, had three. The not so fortunate had already made full use of the wall, and the truly unfortunate were simply standing over any foot of ground space available to them. My thirsty eyes looked everywhere, for the proverbial drop to drink. The gap between every bench also had a student sitting in between on the floor. I stood at the door staring at the sight when someone behind me urged me to get in. I managed to enter

in and squeezed in between two girls and squatted on the floor somewhere in the middle of the classroom. The panic kept me rooted despite the overwhelming urge to run away.

Now I waited for an exceptional teacher and an exceptional lecture that would be a stepping stone to realizing my future, my dreams and my aspirations. Back to reality, and the professor trudged into the classroom hardly casting a glance to the crowd. He started teaching, and it seemed that the only objects of his affection and attention were the chalk-piece, duster and black-board!

I was overwhelmed and mortified. The thought struck me and I wondered if I was really studying in one of the best Institutions in India. But people grow on you, and so do Professors and their teaching ways. First impressions are striking but not always correct. Someone told me that P Singh was the best, and the crowd would get lesser and people lazier. And as events would unfold, and the story be told, I maxed my first test and immensely loved every class of ADCAL thereafter. And it wasn't just the result of the first test



BONDED BY THE TRAIN

BY ANJUM PENWALA

Friendships formed during train journeys compartmentalize themselves in treasured pockets in your heart.

During every holiday break when we went home, the tickets for the trains were booked by the student union in batches of six. Students going to a particular city made a group of six or less and gave their names for ticket booking. The first time my name was given randomly in a group as I knew no one else from my city. For every vacation the same group had to be formed no matter how many other friends we made or no matter what differences came up in this group.

A friendship was formed on this train journey which was very different from all the other friendships I've made in life. For a period of 24 hours this train would be our microcosm, where all the events of the semester as well as our lives at home, about our childhood, relatives, good and bad times would be channeled into this model for discussion and analysis .

The unique part of the relationship was that while I was so close to them on the journeys, yet I would forget them once I set foot on Pilani soil. I would get involved in academics and my other friend circles and so would they and we would just pass and give a casual smile. In spite of this no one had any regrets or never having to say sorry. The next time I met them on the journey it would be as if we met just yesterday, the microcosm, recreated and updated to the latest events.



DR RAJ SISODIA

BY ANJUM ('98 A8)

Anjum talks to Quarterly BITSian Dr. Raj Sisodia about his latest book, the Gita and a host of other topics.

Sandpaper 2.0: *Your fourth book; "Firms of Endearment" came out this year and has become one of the top 10 Business Books on Amazon.com. How does that make you feel?*

Dr RS: It is very satisfying specially given that I am the first author of this book and this book is about a subject which is very near and dear to my heart.

Sandpaper 2.0: *For the benefit of our readers, tell us what this book is about?*

Dr RS: It is really about companies that somehow figure out a way where they can not only balance but also align the interests of a lot of their stake holders. There's one school of thought that why do companies exist. Companies exist to make money for their share holders and anything else that they do is normally treated as a misuse of the capital of the share holders.

There's a broader view that's emerging that companies are not just beholders to their share holders but there are multiple stake holders. All the folks have a legitimate claim or interest in the company. Second thing is that the purpose of the company needs to be broadened and other than just making money they need to be working to achieve

something that is really worthwhile – typically from a societal perspective. What we



Dr Raj Sisodia. A 1979 graduate from BITS Pilani and author of critically-acclaimed "Firms of Endearment". Raj is a Professor is a teacher-scholar at Bentley College, Boston

use in the book is an acronym called SPICE which refers to Society, Partners, Investors, Customers and Employees and we say that the best companies out there are those that manage to align all these stake holders together so that what is good for one is also good for the others.

And there's no reason why you need to harm one to benefit others. For example employees and suppliers are often seen as costs that have to be minimized. That ways of business used to work earlier but we think that this model is not going to work in the future. This is because the

world is changing at a very rapid pace.

In the book we talk about how we have evolved over time. If we look at the 200 years history of market capitalism which started with the age of empowerment where people really had the freedom to go out and become entrepreneurs. And this was different than it used to be earlier. Then we succeeded that with the age of knowledge when we saw massive breakthroughs in science and technology which started in the 19th century and continued till 20th century and we had tremendous material advantage.

Around 1990 there was a collapse of communism and so we had the end of ideology as the world knows it and so there was only one market ideology which was the economic ideology. There were other changes that took place like the Internet which opened up communication which was like never before. It gave people access to information with an ease never imaginable and for free. Most of this applies to the western society. Then from 1989 the ageing population started to increase. What happened then is that people were driven by different things. How they think

about legacy and meaning of life. They looked for deeper things. So that impacted the value system.

If we combine all these factors then we find that for companies now the old model doesn't work as employees are not satisfied and customers are not satisfied. Another thing is that there's a lot of transparency so anything that's done bad or anything negative is easily found out. So people want to be associated with good companies. For example if a company is dumping chemicals in Indonesia the customers are going to come to know about it, the employees in America are going to know about it.

The world is changing dramatically, imposing new requirements for success. To thrive in the future, companies will have to embrace the social transformation of capitalism.

Sandpaper 2.0: We read an article "Karma Capitalism" in Business Week where the author talks about how business thinkers are using Bhagwat Gita to teach how corporations should look at value creation beyond stock price. Did Hindu philosophy have any influence on your book?

Dr RS: The interesting thing about this book is writing about companies that were focused on the purity of means or purity of actions.

The CEO of one such company says that if I pay my employees and suppliers better my business will do better and bring my shareholders more money but he said that he would do that even if that was not true because it's the right thing to do. It's a tremendous value creation. The

companies we analyzed do not say they are doing all these things because its going to yield them good results but they are saying that they are doing these things as they are the right things to do and not worried about the outcome and that's what karma is. That's why a company like Costco can afford to pay their employees a living wage, have low turnover, and *still* turn a substantial profit. They have captured the hearts of their customer base, and that base will go out of their way to shop at Costco whenever possible.

I gave this book to my professor in Bajaj and he said he really loved the book but it's all there in the Bhagwat Gita. So after that I've been on a mission to educate myself about the Indian culture.

Sandpaper 2.0: Can a startup company, with an uncertain future and survival on the line be a Firm of Endearment (FoE)? Or is FOE a clique of big corporations with predictable revenues, fat wallets and massive marketing budgets?

Dr RS: Yes. I have seen companies that start out with that mindset. They have the value system of the founder who looks at the world in that way. But what do they do if they still don't have the resources for the same. Then they might postpone some of the implementation of values till they are self-sufficient.

Sandpaper 2.0: If a company like Wholefoods wants to outsource part of their IT

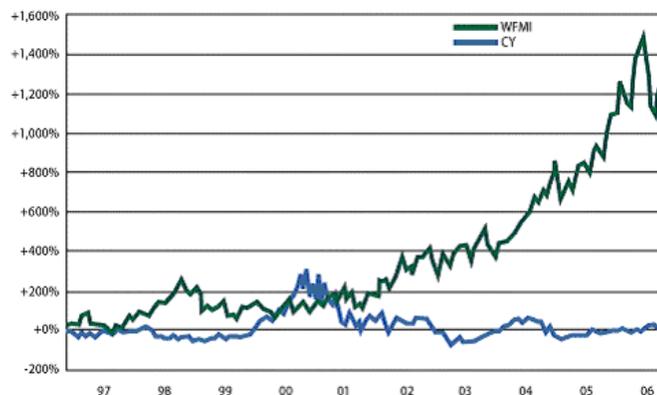
infrastructure to some place like India and it has some employees who lose their jobs. Does Wholefoods end up not being a firm of endearment or is there some way to say its doing the right thing for itself and its share-holders?

Dr RS: That's a good question! I think companies like that who can do it by finding other opportunities for the employees within the company and displacing them would be better off.

Sandpaper 2.0: Tell us more about your life. For starters, what did you do/study at BITS and which batch did you belong to? And here's something to tickle your memory cells! Do you remember your ID Number?

Dr RS: My ID is 1974A3203 (No guarantees!). In Pilani I stayed in Budh Bhavan and then Rana Pratap. I worked in quality control of L&T Mumbai for around a month and meanwhile I had applied to Bajaj Institute and so I did my MBA in marketing there and passed out in 1981. I didn't plan to do my PhD but funny how these things happen. Some friends of mine were going to pick up some GMAT forms from the US embassy. I asked them why do you need GMAT forms, you are already doing your MBA; they

Whole Foods Delivering "Healthy" 10-Year Returns



said they would probably go for a PhD. I didn't know we could do that, so I went along with them. I casually picked up the forms and applied and forgot about it.

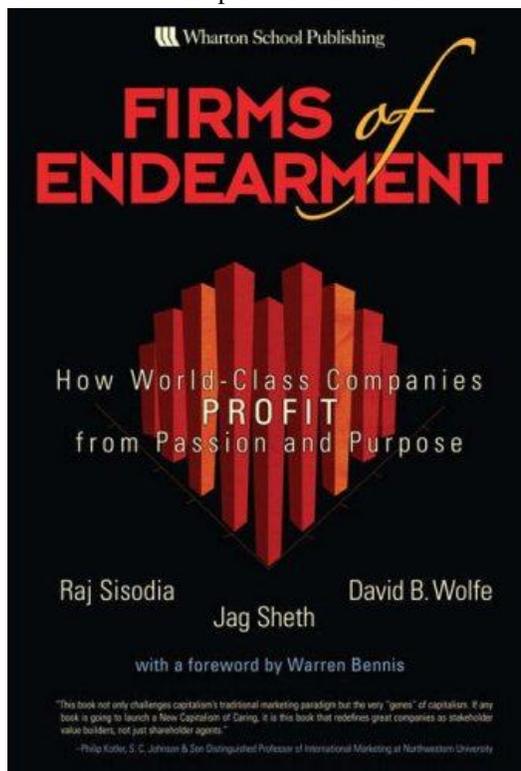
A few weeks later we got the results and it so happened that out of the six people only I had applied and I got admission to Columbia University and did my PhD in Marketing from Columbia. I was there for around three years and after that I got my first job at Boston University. I taught at BU for three and a half years and then we moved to Washington where I taught at George Mason University for ten years. It was during that time I met Jag Sheth, who is a well known Indian academic in the marketing area.

Jag and I met at a conference in Delhi and I started working with Jag quite a lot. Most of the work that I've done subsequently is with Jag. In 1998 when I was well settled in DC, by coincidence I came across an ad in a magazine in my colleague's office for this position in Bentley College which at that time was trying to become a Business School. The position was for Business in IT which was my work. The deadline had already passed but I still called and they said they hadn't found anyone till then and so I was interviewed and then got the offer.

Sandpaper 2.0: *What are the best memories of your time at Pilani?*

Dr RS: I remember the Saturday lunches, the parathas, Sunday feasts, night canteens, going to C'not and the occasional sand storms. When we are younger five years seem so long. I remember my PS experiences too, one in Delhi and one in Mumbai.

One particular incident I



remember - there was a strike in my first year and all of us were sent home. The students were striking for the cost of the salaries of mess employees. The Birlas wanted the students to cover this cost in addition to the food cost and so all the students were sent home for a month and the loss of time was made up during summer.

The highlight of the year used to be Oasis though, considering the fact that we were quite deprived out there!

Sandpaper 2.0: *One of the biggest challenges facing BITS today is lack of good faculty.*

Academia is way down in the list of career choices for the brightest Indians. What can BITS do to change that?

Dr RS: It's a huge challenge. Even the IIMs are facing the same thing. I think you have to offer better pay and better benefits. At some point it has to enter the global market for talent. The problem a lot of institutes have is that they can't charge very high fees. I don't know how they can solve this problem easily. Salary might not be the only thing and consulting opportunities would probably attract better faculty but quality of life is surely something they would have to provide.

The highlight of the year used to be Oasis though, considering the fact that we were quite deprived out there!

Sandpaper 2.0: *Has the BITSAA network been helpful to you in your career after Pilani? If yes, then how can others get benefit from the network? If no, then how can BITSians build an effective network?*

Dr RS: I have maintained friendships and I meet some of my friends but I've not been too active in the BITS alumni. I have gone to some of the events organized here and what I have noticed is that there are people from 1957 too. There is such variety in the kind of people we meet there.

Sandpaper 2.0: *What would your advice be to all the aspiring writers who are*

planning to write a book? Vivek Paul said in an interview that the Rol for writing a book just isn't there. What do you say?

Dr RS: He's in a different line of work. For a Professor it is definitely worth it but not for an engineer or executive. In terms of the ROI as you mentioned, from the executive perspective it doesn't make a lot of sense but from an academic perspective, I find that books have much more life long impact than articles. Books get translated in other languages and have influence on more people.

Sandpaper 2.0: Was it tough writing your first book?

Dr RS: It was definitely tough but writing a book for the first time is more of a mental block. Jag encouraged me as he had already written 15 books and said write it as chapters and don't think of it as a whole book and that helped.

Sandpaper 2.0: Tell us something about your family.

Dr RS: I have three children, one boy and two girls. One is 18 one is 15 and the last one is 13 and they all go to school.

Sandpaper 2.0: Every time we travel to India we feel that wireless telephony in US lags with respect to services offered

by carriers, phone models and tariffs. Why is the world's richest country a laggard in embracing wireless technology?

Dr RS: I think it's an interesting question. They are a number of factors behind it. One is the update of wireless here was slow perhaps because the wireline infrastructure was so well placed that the urgency for wireless wasn't felt. The second factor could also be that we had multiple standards like CDMA, GSM etc so I think that also slowed down the evolution because different people were promoting different things.

Firms That Made the Final Cut

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Amazon | Honda | Southwest |
| BMW | IDEO | Starbucks |
| CarMax | IKEA | Timberland |
| Caterpillar | JetBlue | Toyota |
| Commerce Bank | Johnson & Johnson | Trader Joe's |
| Container Store | Jordan's Furniture | UPS |
| Costco | LL Bean | Wegmans |
| eBay | New Balance | Whole Foods |
| Google | Patagonia | |
| Harley-Davidson | REI | |

Dr. Sisodia is one of the first of three teacher-scholars at Bentley College. Dr. Sisodia joined Bentley College from George Mason University, where he served as associate professor of marketing and director of executive programs at the School of Management. His teaching, curriculum development and scholarly activities focus on digital commerce; technology management; technology as a change agent; the telecommunications and information industries; services; marketing productivity; and the impact of information technology on marketing strategy. His work has been featured in professional journals such as the Harvard Business Review, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post and American Public Radio's Marketplace. He co-hosted a monthly talk show on business and management issues broadcast on National Public Radio. Dr. Sisodia received a BE (Hons) EEE degree from BITS Pilani (1979), MBA from Bajaj Institute of Management (1981) and MPhil PhD in Marketing from Columbia University (1988).

KESAR KOTHARI'S ELFIT ARABIA WINS AJMAN INDUSTRIAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Elfit Arabia was awarded the coveted Ajman industrial excellence award this year and Kesar Kothari, Managing Director of Elfit Arabia and BITSian, received the same from His Excellency Sheikh Ammar Bin Humaid Al Nuaimi the Crown Prince of Ajman. Elfit Arabia is one of the leading manufacturers and suppliers of Telecom and Electrical products in Ajman, UAE.

MORAL POLICING

BY NAINA BHATTACHARYA

Sachin was everything Shyamali was not. They complimented each other beautifully. Could they co-exist?

Shyamali sat on the bench and smiled to herself. She liked coming to the sea side. Watching the surf always made her happy. Her eyes went to the roof of her chawl and she sighed. She wished college could be residential. In just her first year of college she was in love with the place. It wasn't just the place. She met Sachin there.

Sachin, her senior by two years was vivacious, talkative, and popular, quite unlike herself. She had been brought up as a quiet and demure girl. She loved his spontaneity. They complimented each other beautifully. But she realized it was never to be. Sachin was fine with the situation, but her parents were not. In fact her mother started crying each time the talk veered to her marriage. A scramble nearby grabbed her attention. She noticed a bunch of kids and an ice cream push cart. She wanted to buy one; she looked at the ice cream longingly before turning away. Ice creams were not for her. She saw Sachin approaching. He had got

bhel puri for her. He was always so thoughtful.

Today they met for the last time. For the first time since she had known Sachin- they were alone. Amidst a crowd, yet alone. They could not meet in college; her professors would detain her for being out with a guy. They could not meet at his chawl or hers, the neighbors would gossip themselves to death. Finally they decided to meet at the seaside.

After three months of



exchanging letters and love notes and making phone calls from PCOs, their relationship had to be abandoned. They had discussed this. Sachin had a job and would not be coming to college anymore. And Shyamali would have to go to college to keep her busy. They would be alright. They wanted to meet once to bid goodbye.

Sachin looked at her and his heart melted. She was so pretty and nice. To him, she looked like an angel in her pink polka dotted salwar and ribbons in her pigtails. He wished and wished the best for her. He extended his hand and held hers. Shyamali put her head on his shoulder. Suddenly, Sachin felt a sharp pain in his thigh. He looked up. A couple of policemen were standing there.

"This is not a place for spreading obscenity...," said one hefty fellow, hitting Sachin again.

Shyamali was very scared. Sachin was speechless. "But, but... we... umm... er," he stammered.

"C'mon, let's go to the police station," said the other policeman. They were shoved into jeeps. In the meantime, television crews appeared on the scene and suddenly the press was there in full force. Pictures were being clicked at random and there was bedlam.

Shyamali and Sachin were so scared; they forgot to cover their faces. They were shocked beyond words. They sat far away from each other. They were both feeling guilty. Their parents told them this

"Love, Shove" was not for them. If only they had listened, they would not be in this trouble.

The jeep rolled away from the curb.

* * *

...And rolled into the police station, five minutes later.

Shyamali was weeping. Sachin looked like he was going to sob any moment. For all his bravado, he was just twenty years old. The inspector summoned them. They stood in front of him, eyes downcast.

The inspector asked Sachin, "What is your relationship?"

"We,...we are friends sir," he stammered turning red.

"Friends, what nonsense! What were you doing at the sea side alone?" Sachin had no reply. "You have to pay a fine for Rs. 1200," the inspector continued.

Sachin and Shyamali did not have the money. The inspector ordered them to be locked up in adjacent cells. Sachin, with the men and Shyamali with the women.

Sachin was dismayed. This would never do. Shyamali needed her medicine. For the first time he noticed the heat and the humidity. He spoke up.

"Please sir, keep me here. But let her go. She has diabetes. She needs her medicine."

"Diabetes indeed!" snorted the inspector. "An 18 year-old and diabetes! These kinds of excuses won't let you go away. Lock them both up."

* * *

Radha Prasad was worried. His daughter had not come home. He wondered where Shyamali was. It was 8 in the evening and she was not home. He absently switched on the TV. The news was on and he saw her with a group of miscreants. They were at the Navy Nagar police station.

As he rushed out, he could hear the sounds of his wife wailing.

* * *

At the police station, Prasadji was denied entry. He was denied permission to see his daughter. The inspector had gone home for the day; the others could not do anything. Prasadji could pay 1200 rupees fine the next day and take her home.

Prasad's anguish and anger intermingled into rage. But there was nothing he could do. His eighteen year old had diabetes. She could not survive the night without insulin, but no one listened to his pleas!

* * *

Even the next morning, the inspector did not make an appearance. He had gone to inaugurate some function. Prasadji waited at the doorstep of the police station, looking into the horizon, waiting for the inspector.

At 2pm, the inspector arrived and ordered tea. Other parents and relatives were all at the police station by now, all clamouring for attention. Finally at 5pm, RP was able to pay the fine and get his daughter out.

Shyamali came out of the cell and collapsed into her fathers arms. She had fainted.

* * *

At the hospital, the doctors declared that Shyamali had



entered Diabetic Coma. She needed to be at the hospital for a week.

* * *

At the college, Shyamali was expelled for the disgrace she had gotten herself into. Her parents were sent a letter, explaining that the college could no longer enroll her.

* * *

At the chawl, there were all sorts of rumors. "She is a", whispered everyone. At the end of the week, Shyamali returned home. She was weaker; she had nothing to look forward to. Her mother's tears had turned into wails.

THAT NIGHT

BY RAHUL SINGH

“At that moment, I felt a very strong attraction for him. I wanted to touch him, to hold him, but he was just my best friend...”

Sameer was my best friend. It was uncanny to have a guy as my best friend, but there it was. Thanks to power failures and lonely nights, I had pondered long about this to conclude that "Yes, Sameer is my best friend." "Malini Mukherjee's best friend is Sameer Agarwal." I said aloud to myself.

I called up Sameer immediately, and as usual he was busy watching re-runs of Full House at 1am.

"Sameer, don't you have to sleep? Friday night, actually its Saturday now and you have nothing better than Full House to watch!!"

"Mallu, you know I can't sleep unless I've watched Full House. I just can't get enough of this serial. I find it really cute. Maybe someday I'll find my own Rebecca Donaldson, like Jesse does!! Sigh"

"Ok stop yapping, there's no power here and my roommate is staying with her relatives tonight. Entertain me please!"

"Oh shut up, let me watch this serial. You go sleep."

"Pretty please, with sugar on it Sam. Can't you do this for your friends?"

"Okay, you hang up; I'll call you back in a few minutes."

Damn. How the hell could I ever think of this guy to be my best friend? He has all his priorities messed up.

God it is so boring and hot - "Stupid electricity department." I guess I vented my frustration a little too loudly. Geethika aunty,



my landlady, heard me above. She is very sweet, except when it comes to issues about the building. Then she becomes demonness.

But thanks to her I finally learnt how to cook. My mom will be proud to see me cooking on my own. I don't even burn my fingers anymore. She called out from above, "Malini, don't you have to sleep? It is already after 1am!"

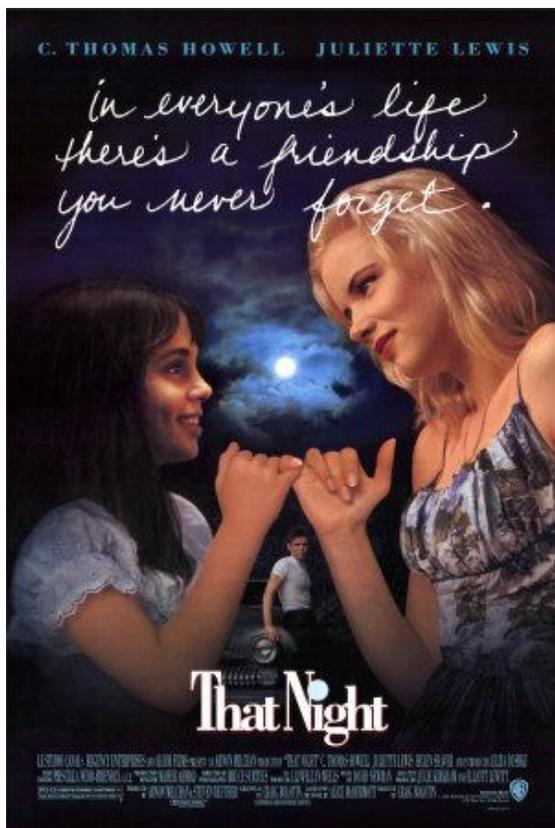
"No aunty, there's no power so I am not feeling sleepy at all. It's too hot inside. That's why I came out here." "How about you, how come you are awake?"

"Arrey nothing beta, Ramesh had called from US and his phone got disconnected. So I was waiting for him to call back. Finally when he didn't call, I called him back. The power failure started to make me feel hot. So I came out. Your uncle is sleeping like a log despite all this!"

"Heh heh. So how is Ramesh doing aunty?"

"He is fine beta, what about your company? Are they not sending you onsite anytime soon?" Geethika aunty's son was working for a top notch IT company based in the US, and she never realized how difficult it is for a fresher to get an 'onsite' opportunity in companies like ours. So I just always brushed off the topic instead of delving into explanations. "Come up maa. Let's banter for sometime till the power come back.

"Aiiyo I have to get up soon in the morning. Akshita has some function at her college tomorrow. Some convocation ceremony", she told me. "She bought a new dress for it. You kids nowadays spend a lot of money. I am happy to see at least you and Sushmita [my



roommate] are earning on your own. I don't know what to do about Akshita. I think she just wants to get married."

"Ok aunty I am coming up, just a second." As soon as I reached upstairs, my phone began to buzz. It was that pigheaded Sameer calling. The nerve of that guy, he thinks a serial is more important than me. I was in no mood to talk to him, so I just ignored his call. He kept trying but I kept ignoring the call.

"Who is calling you so late Malini, your boyfriend? That boy you go with on weekends?"

"No aunty, he is not my boyfriend. He is just a colleague from my company."

"Oh you don't tell me, I know all about youngsters nowadays. I have Akshita, she also has a boyfriend. She argues with me saying that if Ramesh bhaiya can have love

marriage why can't she? Even your uncle is not bothered, so what can I say. I also have to become liberal."

At that moment I got an SMS from Sameer. It read, "Look down your balcony" As I skeptically looked out of the balcony, I could not believe my eyes. Sameer was standing there with his bike. He called me up and I answered now. "What are you doing here? I thought you were watching Full House at your flat."

"Well lady, you asked me to entertain you and here I am. You are going to have the best night ever in this city."

"And what do you mean by that mister?"

"Well put on some clothes and come down, I'll show you the night life of this city. Oh and please carry your ID card in your purse. Just in case a patrol van asks for ID. Come soon."

I could not stop feeling thrilled. Nobody had ever done that before. Sameer was so sweet; he came all the way just because I told him I wasn't sleepy. I wish everybody had a friend like him. Actually no- he's too precious to be shared.

"Wait I'm coming. Aunty I have to go now."

"Hey Malini, you be careful, Are you sure you can trust your friend here?"

"Yes aunty, he's a very nice friend. Don't worry. I'll be back. Any case I have your number, I will call if I need any help."

"No problem, whenever you need help, just call."

"Thank you aunty, good night!" I got into my room and put on whatever I could find in the light of my Nokia phone, and rushed down.

Sameer was standing there with his bike; he was close to six feet tall, well built with chiseled features. He never looked his age, you'd still think he was in college, but it was two years since he had finished his engineering. I walked up to him and gave him my best smile.

"So where are you taking me chauffeur?"

"So Malini style! I miss my favorite serial and come to take you out and you treat me like I'm your driver. Ruthless Malini!!"

"Uh oh don't feel offended. Since you are being so nice to me, I promise I'll be good to you all night. I'll listen to everything you say."

On hearing this he gave that typical Sameer smile with his head a little bent repeating my word "Everything?"

"Oh shut up cheapo, don't push your luck too much. C'mon lets go, where are we going?"

"Just wait and watch madam, just wait and watch."

He started his bike and we went driving around for a long time. He showed me all the places that he visited when he in college. Somehow the city looked more beautiful at night and the roads embraced you with all their love. It was perhaps the most thrilling ride I had ever had. Sameer and I went to a place

called the Secret Lake. I had been there before but never at this hour, and surprisingly there were other people too. Sameer and I sat there with a cold drink bottle, the whole city seemed to be asleep and the breeze was cool. The moon's reflection in the water made it look surreal. "This is so cool Sameer, you must've come here often?"

"Yeah, I have been here a lot of times. But this time seems to be the best."

I looked at him; he had that devilish look that comes up on his face which he calls his flirting look.

"Sameer, if you have to flirt with me, you'll have to change that look of yours. You look like a villain when you make that face."

"Malini, I'm seriously giving up on you. I thought you were supposed to be nice to me... But you just can't change even for one night. Get lost, next time I'll come with some other girl and flirt endlessly with her."

"As if someone else will come with you! Heh heh. Ok, sorry, I was just kidding. Don't feel bad, if it is any consolation what you said is true. This has been so far the best night I've had in this city. But I'm hungry now."

"Eeeeks! Eggs and bread...that too at the railway station? Will it be hygienic?"

"It'll be awesome, c'mon."

With that he got up and dusted his pants. I don't know why but I felt a very strong attraction to him at that moment. I wanted to touch him, to hold him, but he was just my best friend. I don't know why but I extended my hand and he helped me get up. That touch felt so different. It wasn't like he had never held my hand, but the way he held it now sent a tingling down my spine. It felt like he held me as though I belonged to him. As something he had ownership of. As I sat behind him not able to comprehend what I was feeling at that moment I lost track of what he was telling me. "Sameer, I'm feeling cold, do you mind if I hold you?"

"Sure go ahead." He went on with his yapping about his project leader. I put my arms around him and pulled myself closer to him and pressed the side of my face on his back. I could faintly hear his heart beat and his voice sounded funny. It felt like coming out of his back now.

We reached the station and had bread with omelette, perhaps the earliest breakfast I ever had in my life. It was also the tastiest. Maybe it was the feeling of eating at 3am gave it that flavor, or was it because I was with Sameer, someone I have known only for six months? Even the tea tasted great.

"Mini, you feeling alright?"

"Yeah I am fine. Why?"

"You haven't spoken for a long time. So I was wondering if you

"What odd times you pick to feel hungry! Where do you expect to find food at 3am?"

"Won't some 5-star eat-out be open? We can go have a dosa there at least. I have money."

"Yeah, they know that Mini madam is going to come today at 3am and they'll have dosa ready for you? You really are stupid!"

"Sam, just because I am being nice to you doesn't mean you can pull my leg. I just thought it might be open. I'm really hungry."

"Ok fine, we'll go and have egg and bread at the station."



were feeling awkward.
Everything's ok?"

"Yes. Why'll I feel awkward?
It's just you!"

"Let's get back, it is almost
4am. Your aunty will be
worrying about you."

"Yeah right, as if she has no
other concern. I'm sure she must
be snoring right now."

We reached the apartment and I
got off the bike, Sameer
switched off his ignition.

"So?"

"So, what? Now you go back
up, unless of course you want to
give me a good night kiss!"
"What? Why'll I kiss you? There
are so many guys better than
you."

"Well the night is not over yet,
and you have started being
impolite again. Women I tell
you.... They're all the same."

"Shut up! How many women
have u been with Mister? You
guys are all the same."

"I have had enough friends
among girls for me to say this.
How many guys have you been
with fatty?"

"What's the point, they are all
jerks... like you are being one
now..."

"What? Whatever...so you are
not giving me a good night
kiss?"

"Well, you should give me a
reason to give you one...it's
almost morning and if it has to
be..."

All of a sudden Sameer got off
his bike and bent forward.

Before I realized, he had kissed
me on the cheek! I was
surprised, bewildered and
dumbstruck! My mouth was
open and I couldn't believe Sam
had actually given me a peck.
To be honest, I was disappointed
that it was merely a peck. I
inwardly hoped that he would
look at me and kiss me. But he
didn't. He just stood there.

"Click click, hello madam?
Offended? I didn't mean to
startle you so badly."

"Huh, no. I wasn't expecting a
peck from you. Never thought
you would gather so much
courage. What if I slapped you
or raised a ruckus?"

"I know you enough to assume
that you wouldn't do any such
thing. So how do you feel?"

"What do you mean? Was I
even supposed to feel anything?
It was just a slimy peck!"

"Mini! I am going. Bye!"

"Ok fine, sorry dear. It felt nice,
felt like we've finally entered the
comfort zone."

"Fine, I am sleepy... I am going.
Bye....good night!"

"No Sameer, not good
night...Great night and good
morning!! Thanks."

He smiled; he had started his
bike already. He turned back
and shook his head mumbling
something under his breath.
Oh how I wished that he would
just stay with me some more and
not go. How I wished that the
peck could become more than
just a peck. But I knew it wasn't
going to be that way. This was
Sameer, a guy who hadn't
touched a girl in an
inappropriate manner all his life.

How could he do it now,
especially with me? He sped
away on his bike.

*And then what happens....I wish
I could write more, make this the
perfect love story...but it seems
so nice to leave it at this
juncture...when the seed is sown
and the feeling is growing...
whether the plant grows or not,
whether they fall in love or not...
whether they end up together or
not... it's all irrelevant... because
the best phase of love, is when
it's just born in your heart.
Truly it feels great, but most of
the times the freshness is lost,
and what remains is just
curdled milk.*



Rahul Singh, the author of
this story, in a suit. Rahul
needs help in writing the
perfect end of this story.
If you are willing to
collaborate with Rahul
then email him at
buntwo@gmail.com.

MANTRA-CEL LEADERSHIP AWARDS 2007

BY AMRUTH B. R. ('04 B5)

Mantra-CEL Leaderships Awards 2007 handpick budding entrepreneurs and leaders of tomorrow.

It was early last year that Anupendra first discussed the idea of instituting a Leadership award for BITSians. It instantly struck a chord- as at the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership; our goal has always been to create leaders through entrepreneurial thinking.

The diversity and quality of the applicants for the first Mantra Awards was impressive: from people who'd set up their own companies, successfully run rural initiatives, to others who had set up their own rock band, the applicants seemed to have done it all.

The winners of the 2007 Mantra Awards were:

Entrepreneurship: Abhishek Nayak ('05B1A5)



Abhishek was a key member of the Dhanax www.dhanax.com team that introduced retail investment in the microfinance industry and will soon make microfinance more accessible to

rural India. Dhanax's business plan came in second at Intellect's microfinance business plan competition "Srijan", was a finalist at Genesis, IIT Madras B-plan competition, a semi-finalist at Stanford University's e-challenge and at Conquest 2007, BITS-Pilani's international business plan competition.

Dhanax launches in early 2009. Abhishek was also a speaker at the Fortune Global Forum 2007, a premier summit for the world's leading chief executives. As the only undergrad at the forum, he talked about the aspirations of India's new generation. At BITS, Abhishek serves as Vice President at Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership (CEL). He is also active in the quizzing circle of BITS and was the runner up at the Brain of BITS (BOB) quiz competition, held in APOGEE 2007.

Social Impact: Krishna Hasa ('04B2A8)



Hasa started as a volunteer of "Rural Development Unit" of MyINDIA (a student movement

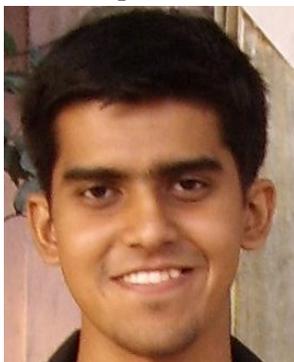
at BITS Pilani) since its inception in March 2005. Her frequent visits to nearby villages have exposed to the bare and ugly realities of rural India. With a small group of ten students, she played a major role in nurturing NIRMAAN as a vibrant platform for social service in BITS-Pilani and elsewhere. She established "Rural Employment Incubator" which designs business models for livelihood generation. During the summer of 2006 & 2007, she spread the concept of NIRMAAN (registered as NPO – non profit organization in July 2007) in Andhra Pradesh. She also established a collaboration with "Byrraju foundation" with a workshop on "Sharing of best practices" to reinforce the work efficiency. As Vice President, she has been successful in initiating new ideas like School Adoption Program, Spoken English classes, and a major project on Solar Lamps. Hasa will shortly assume the position of President of NIRMAAN from Jan'08.

Innovation: Ankit Mittal ('05A4)

Ankit has filed two sole inventor patents; one of which relates to making taps more accessible to the differently-abled. This innovation also won him the first place in Techbazaar 2006 (organized by CEL). His innovations have also been recognized as the most promising in the "Industrial

Process and Applications” and “Material Sciences” and “Communication and Networking” categories in APOGEE 2008. A firm believer that successful innovation drives commercial success, Ankit has also won second position in ‘Epsilon2k7’, BITS Pilani and been the finalist of B-plan competitions at IIM-L and IIM-A. He is also the Coordinator of Mechanical Engineering Association. Ankit will graduate in 2009.

Leadership: Sriram V ('04 A3)



Sriram believes his mission, as Steve Jobs would say, is to create dents in the universe around him. Sriram has caused a 180-degree shift in the way BITSians think about Oasis: from deep resignation to the fact that Pilani was disconnected

from the metros and getting sponsors was a mere game of chance. As StuCCAn for Sponz - Sriram and his team made Oasis 2007 the biggest ever. Projecting the previously considered constraints into strengths turned the remote location of Pilani into a psychedelic, road-trip experience, and the limited audience made Oasis elite entry-by-invite fest. He also served as the Vice President (Technology Domain) at the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, where he led teams that worked on initiatives to encourage *technopreneurship* on campus by helping setup the Technology Business Incubator and events like Tech Bazaar and Stimulus. Sriram is also the co-founder of Yofa (for Youth Factor), a web initiative to enable the Indian youth, NGOs and community welfare groups to network, float, build and publicize activities.

Many thanks to Anupendra Sharma for putting in all his time and effort into helping institute these awards. This experience has shown us how fruitful a direct involvement of alumni in our activities can be. I must also thank the panel that

selected the winners: Prof. Raghurama (Deputy Director, Academic), Prof. Sajeev Chandran, and Prof. Arya Kumar (Head of the Entrepreneurship Development and IPR Unit. Above all, I would like to thank Prof L K Maheshwari, the Vice-Chancellor of BITS Pilani, for his generous and whole-hearted support. Having the inaugural Mantra Awards being given away by him is an honor for us all.

We hope to grow with more of similar initiatives touching BITSian lives with the support of faculty and alumni which we have shared since the beginning. Here's to the Mantra team and all the winners of Mantra Awards – Stand Tall!

(Amruth B.R. is an ex-President of the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership at BITS Pilani. He served as the student member on the Mantra Awards Panel. He is shortly starting up on his own venture at www.vitaperacta.com)

First-ever Mantra Leadership Awards ceremony at BITS Pilani. Four leadership awards, one each for Entrepreneurship, Social Impact, Innovation and Leadership, were given away by Prof L K Maheshwari.



BITSAA NEWS

BY RAJESH ANANTHARAMAN('00 EEE)

BITSIAN IAS OFFICER GETS GOLD MEDAL FOR INTEGRITY

Khurshid Ahmad Ganai, Principal Secretary, General Administration Department J&K, was presented the Gold Medal for honesty, integrity, and meritorious service by the Governor of the State Lt.Gen (Retd) S K Sinha. Khurshid Ganai ('74-'79 B.E Mechanical), who was the second rank holder in the IAS examination in 1982, has held various key positions in Jammu and Kashmir during his illustrious 25 year tenure.

ATUL BHATNAGAR IS PRESIDENT & COO OF IXIA

Atul Bhatnagar has been appointed President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of IXIA, a leading global provider of IP Performance Test Systems. Mr. Bhatnagar has over two decades of experience in the communications and computing industry, recently having served as Vice President and General Manager of the Enterprise Data Networks Division of Nortel, and worked close to 15 years at Hewlett-Packard. He holds an MSEE from the University of New Mexico and a BSEE from BITS Pilani.



EXPEDIA APPOINTS BITSIAN AS HEAD OF INDIA OPERATIONS

Sharat Dhall has been appointed by Expedia as head of its yet to be launched India operations. Prior to joining Expedia, Sharat Dhall, BITS alum, was vice president, eCommerce at Indiatimes.com. Expedia.com is a US-based online travel portal which offers online booking services for vacation packages, flights, hotels, car rentals, cruises and in-destination activities.



ADITYA BIRLA GROUP SCHOLARSHIP WINNER FOR 2007

Namrata Raman, from BITS Pilani, is the proud winner of the Aditya Birla Group Scholarship for 2007. Namrata joined BITS Pilani in July 2007 after taking the online BITSAT examination, to pursue her first choice B.E. (Hons) Chemical Engineering. She wishes to excel in the field of Environmental Chemistry in the years to come.

BITS ALUM CONFERRED RAJIV GANDHI SHIROMANI AWARD 2007

Sadachandram Kolandaivel G, also known as **GSK Velu**, founder and MD of Trivitron, has been conferred the Rajiv Gandhi Shiromani Award 2007. Trivitron, one of the top ten medical technology brands in India, is a familiar healthcare name in the Indian market focused on providing healthcare technology solutions. GSK Velu is BITS alum who obtained his BPharm degree in 1988. He was also the recipient of the Entrepreneur of the Year 2006 award.



BITSIAN WINS BEST FILM CRITIC AWARD AT 53RD NATIONAL FILM AWARDS

Baradwaj Rangan won the Best Film Critic award at the 53rd National Film Awards this year. Bharadwaj Rangan, a Chemical Engineer from BITS, is a freelance writer and critic whose work includes film reviews and other articles published in The New Sunday Express, The Economic Times – Madras Plus, Man's World, Simplifly and Seminar.

TECHNOVISIONARY AWARD FOR DR. KRISHNA C. SARASWAT

Professor Krishna C. Saraswat of Stanford University has been awarded the Techno Visionary Lifetime Award by the Indian Semiconductor Association (ISA) and VLSI society of India (VSI). Dr. Saraswat obtained both his MS and PhD in Electrical Engineering at Stanford after a Bachelor's degree in Electronics from BITS, and is currently a Rickey / Nielsen Professor in the School of Engineering at Stanford. His work includes outstanding research in nano-technology, 3D ICs technology, single wafer manufacturing for a micro-factory and thin film technology for VLSI inter-connects.



YOGESH AGARWAL TAKES OVER AS IDBI CHAIRMAN

Yogesh Agarwal, BE Civil Engineering from BITS, has been appointed as chairman of IDBI. Mr. Agarwal, previously managing director of State Bank of India, replaces V.P Shetty for this coveted job which has the rank of Secretary in the Central Government.

