

Alumni Magazine

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, INDORE

The Road Less Taken

CODE AND CULTURE

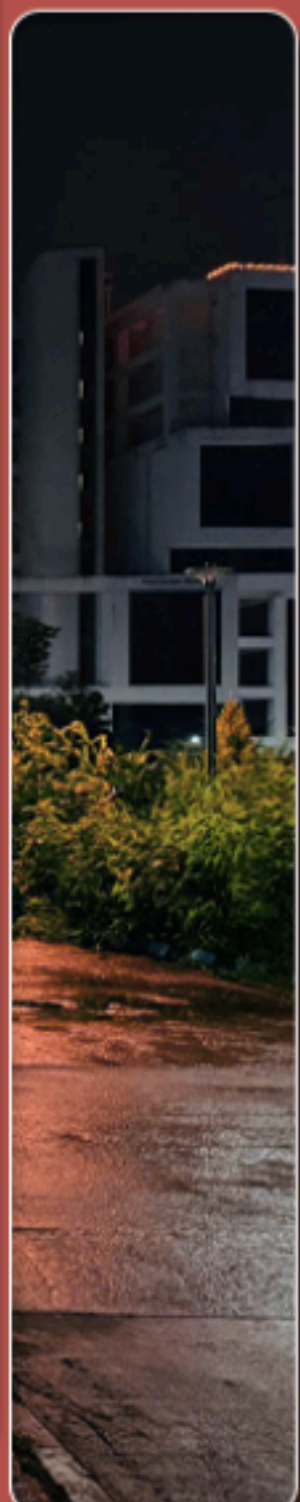
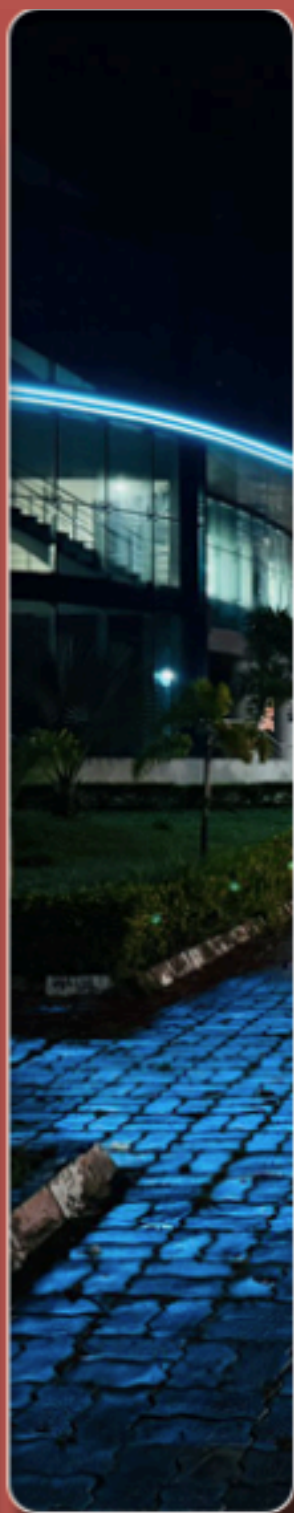
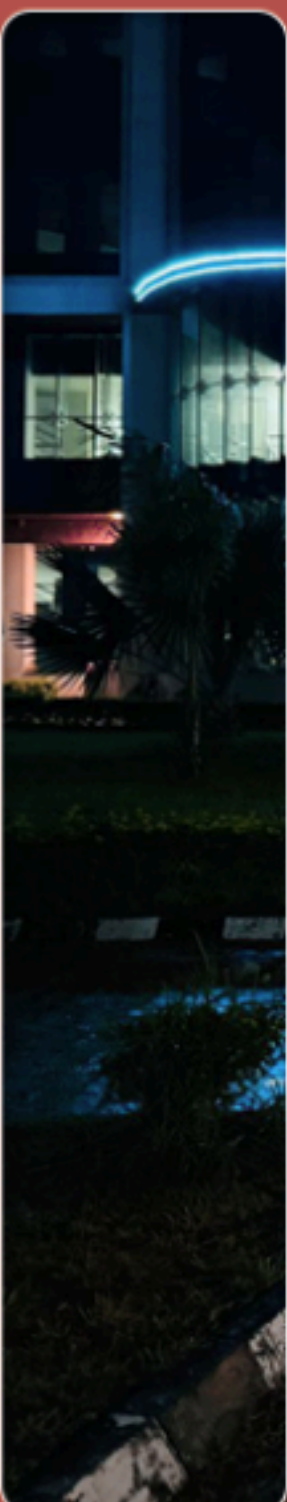
*Digital Humanities
and technology*

IDEAS AND IMPACT

*Entrepreneurship & global
ventures*

ROOTS AND ROUTES

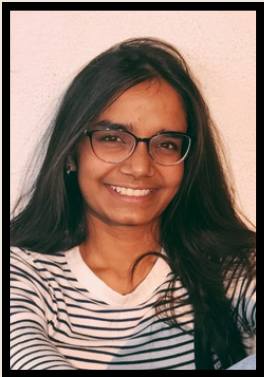
*Alumni journeys through
research, service, and beyond*



From the Editor's Desk

"I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."

— Robert Frost



This edition is for those who dare to wander. Our theme, "The Road Less Taken," nods to Robert Frost's beloved poem, but its heart belongs to everyone who came to an IIT and still chose to carve a life beyond the degree. In a country known for producing some of the brightest minds in the world, the route can feel almost scripted—JEE, IIT, job.

It is a path well-paved, and for many, it leads exactly where they want to go. But alongside that story runs another one, quieter yet no less important, and that is the story of those who look up from the

path, step off the track, and decide to follow a different compass. These are the poets who write in the margins of lecture notes, the designers who see beauty in code, the athletes who chase records instead of grades, the entrepreneurs who trade security for an idea they cannot ignore. They are proof that an IIT education is not a box to live inside but a platform to jump from.

To the ones who resist becoming just another cog in a perfect machine, this issue is for you. May these pages remind you that the road you choose matters less than the way you travel it, and that sometimes, the less taken path leads to the most remarkable destinations.

Anushka Krishan
Editor-in-chief

Here at IIT Indore, these words resonate deeply. As the Head of the Alumni Cell, I want to take a moment to dedicate this magazine to those who have made everything possible — you, our alumni.

This magazine is more than just a collection of updates; it's a patchwork quilt of your stories and achievements, woven from the thread that connects our past, present, and future.

At the Alumni Cell, we're working to strengthen these very connections, to create a space where students and alumni can collaborate, inspire, and grow together. Your journeys, your successes, and your spirit are constant reminders of what lies beyond.

Ansh Kyal
Head, Alumni Cell

What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

— Jane Goodall



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Farewell Under the Summer Skies

ARTICLE BY GOPESH SRINIVASAN | MAY 2025



The Valedictory Ceremony

On April 30, 2025, IIT Indore bid farewell to its graduating batch with a heartfelt valedictory ceremony. Director Prof. Suhas S. Joshi felicitated each student, reminding them of their enduring bond with the institute and sharing upcoming academic initiatives. Prof. Suman Mukhopadhyay, Dean of Alumni and Corporate Relations, highlighted the expanding alumni network and the role of the Alumni Cell in nurturing it. Each graduate received a memento before the evening closed with a gala dinner at Kshitij Mandapam.

The 13th Convocation

On July 12, 2025, IIT Indore held its 13th Convocation, graced by Dr. Ajai Chowdhry, co-founder of HCL, as Chief Guest. His keynote urged graduates to embrace innovation with resilience. Highlights included the President of India Gold Medal awarded to Mr. Kadam Madhav Mukund (CSE) and the Institute Gold Medal for Best All-Rounder to Mr. Aditya Guhagarkar (EE). Degrees, celebrations, and tossed caps marked not just achievement but the friendships and effort that define the IIT Indore journey.



There's a cycle to life at IIT Indore. You arrive as a wide-eyed fresher, find your roommates, sit through first lectures, join every club in sight. It rains sideways. You leave for winter and return to find the campus no longer strange. Summer, monsoon, winter. You graduate, carrying your time here into new frontiers. Yet no one truly leaves. And this January, sixteen batches returned. Magnum Opus'25 was their milestone.

Day 1

Alumni Panel, Tech Expo, Gala Night

Measured words from the Director opened the weekend's first event, an interactive panel discussion between alumni and students. Six alumni, each with vastly different journeys, returned not just to speak, but to listen. Paulson Vincent spoke of relationships over résumés. Vikram Patel laid bare the volatility of startups, and the clarity that comes from listening to users. Archit Karandikar urged students to chase real-world problems, not hype cycles. Rahul Pawar gave a quiet reminder that consistency beats genius. Ishan Gupta echoed what many needed to hear, that doing what you love isn't naïve, it's sustainable. And Pranav Nair, bridging science and soul, spoke about leaping into academia not with certainty, but with conviction.



It wasn't a discussion, it was a passing of the torch. In the eyes of second-years watching the panelists, they talk not about accolades but about process. About building from scratch, making mistakes, pivoting, persisting. About long nights and longer feedback cycles. About passion. Purpose.

There was something electric in the air that night. Perhaps it was the tech expo, where current students proudly presented what they had built: machines, models, prototypes, visions. Perhaps it was the dance recital, or the mushaira, or the cathartic skit by Aaina. Or perhaps it was something quieter, a collective recognition, almost unspoken, that the institute had grown. Not just in infrastructure or course offerings (though the new pods and design programs made for excellent conversation), but in character.

You could see it in the way the alumni paused by the makerspace lab, quietly impressed. In the stories swapped at the rooftop gala dinner under the night sky. And growth, as always, is circular. The students who performed that evening, wide-eyed and intense, will in a few years be those alumni returning. Sitting in the same rooftop chairs, giving the same advice, playing cricket with the same new juniors. Surprised to see how much has changed and how much hasn't.



OPUS

Day 2

Cricket, Lunch, Chokhi Dhani

The next morning, the cycle continued in a different form. Alumni and students gathered for a friendly cricket match: half competition, half conversation, with more cheering than scoring.

There was the laughter of old batchmates seeing each other play again, the teasing of juniors who now had the chance to bowl out their seniors, and the casual banter on the sidelines that mattered far more than the runs. Some batted as though nothing had changed since their hostel days, others were content just to stand in the sun and cheer. The match ended without anyone quite remembering the score, but that was never the point—it was the easy camaraderie, the rediscovered rhythm of belonging, that carried the morning.

Lunch followed at the Executive Dining Hall, where the long tables brought everyone close enough for conversations to overlap. The Director joined the alumni and student organisers, and the atmosphere, though formal in setting, soon softened into something warmer.

Between bites and banter, he spoke of the institute's new initiatives: the B.Des. program that opened fresh avenues of creativity, the PM Ajay hostel rising steadily to welcome more students, the evolving academic roadmap that promised to keep IIT Indore at the forefront of change. And then, in a gesture both symbolic and deeply personal, he presented silver coins as mementos to alumni marking their ten-year milestone since graduation. The clink of the metal in their hands carried a weight that was not just ceremonial—it was a reminder of time passed, of friendships kept, of journeys that had begun on this very campus. It was a quiet moment, but one that seemed to crystallise the weekend's purpose: not merely to look back, but to honour the distance each had travelled.

As the day wore on, the mood shifted again, gently, almost imperceptibly. By evening, as people began to leave, the walkways grew quieter, the energy of the weekend softening into memory. The posters from the tech expo still fluttered in the wind, the gala dinner lights were now just faint outlines against the night sky, and the lawns bore the slight trample of too many footsteps. Yet the campus felt fuller somehow, as if the echoes of conversations and laughter had settled into its walls. Every batch leaves something behind, a story, a standard, a spark. And when they return, it is not to relive the past, but to fold their chapter back into the larger book of this place.



Monsoon, winter, summer.

What's New: Alumni Cell Edition

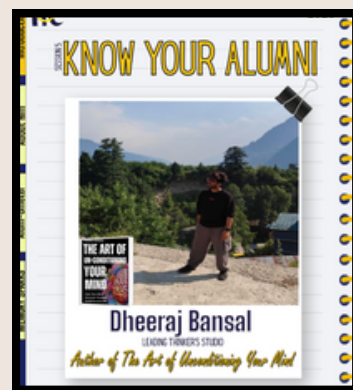
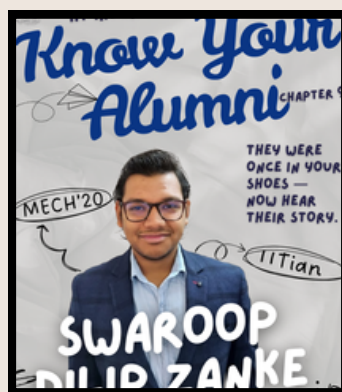
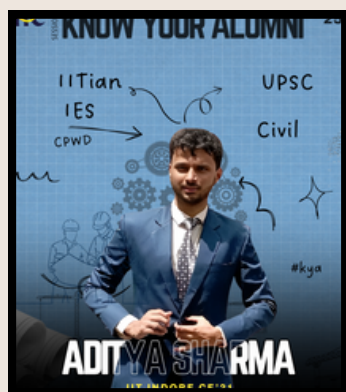
Know Your Alumni, Mentorship, and More

ARTICLE BY ARYAMA SINGH | AUGUST 2025

The Alumni Cell of IIT Indore works to build lasting bridges between the institute's vibrant student community and its accomplished alumni network. Through curated programs, we create avenues for guidance, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing that extend far beyond campus life.

Know Your Alumni (KYA)

KYA, a flagship initiative of Alumni Cell, bridges aspiration and experience by showcasing IIT Indore alumni journeys. Through storytelling and mentorship, students discover diverse careers, challenges, and turning points, finding inspiration, guidance, and connection beyond résumés and achievements.

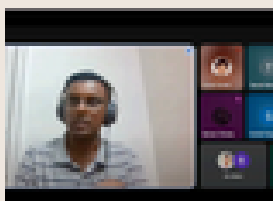


Student Mentorship (SAATHI)

The SAATHI Mentorship Program, one of Alumni Cell's latest initiatives, connects students with alumni through sessions on academics, careers, and personal development. This year, SAATHI launched with two CV-building workshops.

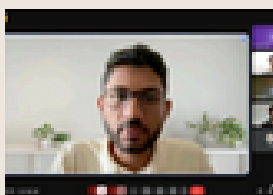
August 18, 2025

Dr. Addepalli Hari Narayana (EE '18, AMD), in a session with EESA, shared insights on higher studies and career paths.



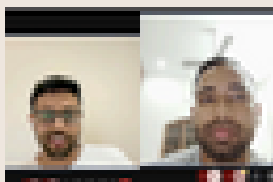
July 5, 2025

Arunaditya Dash ('25, Nation& NAMO) focused on non-tech careers, live CV reviews, and optimizing LinkedIn.



July 6, 2025

Mohit Mohta (CSE'19) spoke on tech, while Mr. Arunaditya Dash (EE'25) covered non-tech CVs with recruiter insights



SAATHI : BY THE ALUMNI CELL, IIT INDORE
Alumni Mentorship Program

Alumni, join SAATHI — Mentor and Guide the next generation of IITians!

Here's how you can contribute:

- Mentor**
- Interview**
- Share**
- Inspire**

Scan the QR to Register

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○○○○

Founders Connect

Entrepreneurship, Energy and More

The Alumni Cell, IIT Indore, recently hosted Founders' Connect, an engaging session with three of our distinguished alumni entrepreneurs—Nidish Krishnan (CEO, UniqLabs.AI | B.Tech ME '17), Kalpesh Wadekar (CEO, Hexanovate | B.Tech EE '22), and Ravi Kumar (CEO, CirkiTEx | PhD EE '22).

Each founder shared the story behind their startup—how ideas took shape, the challenges faced along the way, and the lessons learned while building ventures from the ground up. They also shed light on opportunities for students, ranging from internships to possible career paths within their companies, offering valuable insight into bridging academics with real-world impact.

The session featured a lively Q&A, where students asked about navigating risks, scaling ventures, and balancing innovation with execution. The conversation was marked by candor and relatability, as the founders reflected on both their struggles and breakthroughs.

The event concluded with an informal interaction where students engaged one-on-one with the founders. This created a more personal space for exchanging ideas, clarifying doubts, and discussing potential collaborations.



Alumni Talks

As part of our Alumni Talks series, we host focused sessions featuring alumni working in unique global contexts.

The Japan Edition offered students insights into Japanese work culture, job opportunities, and industry practices, helping them prepare for international careers.

Similarly, the IRS Edition highlighted the experiences of alumni in the Indian Revenue Service, giving attendees an insider's view of the civil services journey—from preparation strategies to life in the field. These talks provide rare perspectives that broaden students' horizons beyond traditional career paths.

Neural Nexus

Alumna Parul Gupta [CSE '17] took part in Neural Nexus, the flagship AI/ML event of the Cynaptics Club at IIT Indore, delivering an insightful talk.

Alumni Meet-Ups

Chennai and Calcutta Edition

This year saw our alumni reunions light up two cities.

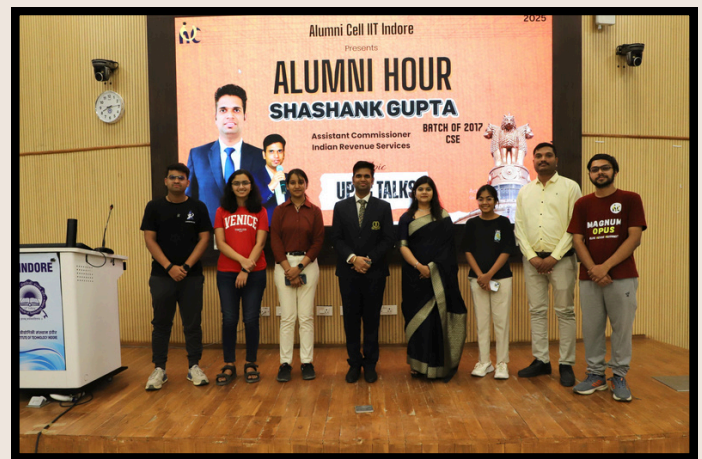
On July 20, 2025, Chennai hosted a warm, laughter-filled evening where stories flowed as easily as the food. Old friends reconnected over shared memories, turning the night into a true celebration of the IIT Indore bond.

Then, on August 30, 2025, the City of Joy; Calcutta welcomed our alumni with open arms. Conversations danced between campus nostalgia and future ambitions, proving that the IIT Indore spirit thrives far beyond the campus walls.

Both meetups, captured on our Instagram and LinkedIn, were a reminder that distance and years can't dim the connections we share, they only make the reunions sweeter.

Alumni Chapters

IIT Indore signed its first MoU with the IITI Alumni Chapter, Bangalore, on April 13, 2025. The ceremony was attended by Director Prof. Suhas S. Joshi, Prof. Suman Mukhopadhyay (Dean, ACR), and Mr. Rajeev Pandey (Assistant Registrar, ACR), along with alumni from the 2018–2021 batches of Computer Science, Mechanical, and Civil Engineering. The collaboration will strengthen alumni–institute connections and drive initiatives in mentorship, startups, and institutional growth.



Upcoming Events

Month	Event
September	Mock Interviews
October	Alumni Talk
January	Magnum Opus
March	Alumni Talk

Innovation & Enterprise Initiatives @ IIT Indore

ARTICLE BY VEDIKA BUTLE | MAY 2025



The journey to Startup Mahakumbh began with a selection quiz, followed by a buzzing travel route—bus to Bhopal, then a train to Delhi. Card games, conversations, and shared excitement filled the air as participants geared up for a week immersed in India's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Diving into the Startup World

The event showcased startups from diverse sectors: tech, fashion, gaming, agriculture, and ed-tech. Founders of brands like boAt and Paytm shared their stories, while a keynote by the Railway Minister stood out as a major highlight. From VR-powered learning platforms to smart farming tools, the range of innovation was inspiring.

Seminars and panels featured entrepreneurs and industry veterans who spoke candidly about their journeys. Surprise appearances by creators like CarryMinati and Bhuvan Bam added energy and excitement.

Learning from Leaders

More Than Just Startups

Between events, students explored Delhi's rich culture and iconic street food. These informal moments became the backdrop for deep conversations, laughter, and lasting connections.

Ideas in Action: CEED at IIT Indore

The Centre for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development (CEED), headed by Prof. Mobin Sheikh, is central to nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial spirit at IIT Indore. With the vision of instilling confidence, self-reliance, and startup readiness, CEED provides an ecosystem where ideas grow into ventures.

Its flagship elective, Foundations of Entrepreneurship (IE 301/401/601), guides students from ideation to pitching, covering problem-solving, business models, and startup fundamentals. Enrollment has steadily risen—from 28 students in AY 2023–24 to 46 in AY 2025–26—reflecting its growing impact. Beyond academics, CEED conducts workshops, guest lectures, and mentoring sessions, offering students opportunities to refine ideas, connect with investors, and tackle real-world challenges. Supported by the ACE Foundation, promising ideas receive incubation to evolve into scalable startups. Alumni mentor, faculty guide, and students innovate—together forming a vibrant entrepreneurial network. CEED thus stands as a catalyst, empowering the IIT Indore community to turn innovation into enterprise.

A Message From Dr. Kedarmal Verma

प्रिय छात्रो,

अपनी शैक्षिक यात्रा में इस महत्वपूर्ण मील के पत्थर तक पहुँचने पर बधाई। आज न केवल आपकी कड़ी मेहनत, दृढ़ता और बौद्धिक विकास की परिणति है, बल्कि आपके जीवन में एक नए और रोमांचक अध्याय की शुरुआत भी है।

संज्ञानात्मक मनोविज्ञान और तंत्रिका विज्ञान के प्रोफेसर के रूप में, मैं अक्सर इस बात पर विचार करता हूँ कि हम मनुष्य के रूप में अनुभवों के माध्यम से कैसे सीखते हैं, याद रखते हैं और बढ़ते हैं। अपने IIT परिसर में आपका समय चुनौतियों से भरा रहा है, जिसके लिए मानसिक चपलता, रचनात्मकता और लचीलेपन की आवश्यकता थी – ये ऐसे गुण हैं जो संज्ञानात्मक शक्ति का आधार हैं। प्रत्येक परियोजना, प्रत्येक चर्चा और प्रत्येक असफलता ने आपको आज के व्यक्ति के रूप में आकार देने में योगदान दिया है। स्नातक होना, एक समारोह से कहीं अधिक खूबसूरत है – यह परिवर्तन का उत्सव है। आप सवालियों से भरी इस नई दुनिया में प्रवेश करेंगे, और आप सभी उत्तरों के साथ नहीं, बल्कि उन्हें आगे बढ़ाने की जिज्ञासा और आत्मविश्वास के साथ निकलेंगे। अब आप अपने साथ न केवल पुस्तकों और व्याख्यानो के माध्यम से प्राप्त ज्ञान, बल्कि मित्रता, असफलताओं और आत्म-खोज से प्राप्त ज्ञान भी लेकर जाएँगे।

जैसे-जैसे आप आगे बढ़ेंगे, मैं आपको बौद्धिक रूप से विनम्र, नैतिक रूप से दृढ़ और आजीवन सीखने की ललक रखने के लिए प्रेरित करता हूँ। संस्थान से परे की दुनिया जटिल और गतिशील है, लेकिन मेरा मानना है कि आपने यहाँ जो आलोचनात्मक सोच और समस्या-समाधान कौशल विकसित किए हैं, वे आपके लिए बेहद उपयोगी होंगे।

याद रखें, सफलता हमेशा प्रसिद्धि या प्रशंसा के बारे में नहीं होती है; यह उद्देश्य, दृढ़ता और अनुकूलन की क्षमता के बारे में भी होती है। अपनी पसंद को केवल महत्वाकांक्षा से ही नहीं, बल्कि सहानुभूति और ईमानदारी से भी निर्देशित होने दें। तकनीकी प्रगति द्वारा तेजी से संचालित दुनिया में, यह आपकी मानवीय अंतर्दृष्टि, करुणा और रचनात्मकता है जो सबसे बड़ा प्रभाव डालेगी।

मैं, मेरे विभाग (मानविकी और सामाजिक विज्ञान) की ओर से, आप सभी को शुभकामनाएँ देता हूँ। चाहे आप उन्नत शोध, उद्यमिता, उद्योग की भूमिकाएँ या कोई अन्य मार्ग अपनाएँ, जान लें कि IIT में आपके समय ने आपको आत्मविश्वास और विवेक के साथ नेतृत्व करने के लिए तैयार किया है।

जुड़े रहें, सीखते रहें और सवाल करना कभी बंद न करें।

एक बार फिर हार्दिक बधाई!

सादर,

डॉ. केदारमल वर्मा

प्रोफेसर, संज्ञानात्मक मनोविज्ञान

मानविकी और सामाजिक विज्ञान स्कूल

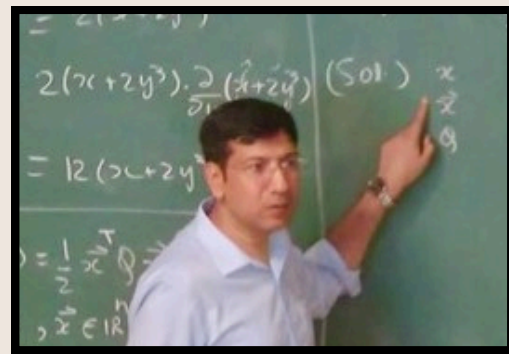
भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान इंदौर,

मध्य प्रदेश, भारत

Of Algorithms and Impact

A Conversation with Professor Kapil Ahuja

INTERVIEWED BY ANUSHKA KRISHAN & ARYAMA SINGH | JULY 2025



Anushka K: Do you think working across so many disciplines helps you see solutions others might miss?

Prof. Ahuja: Absolutely. That's the power of being interdisciplinary. I'm not intimidated by math-heavy papers or large codebases. I've taken 10–12 graduate-level math courses. If I need to understand a paper, I can. If I need to learn a new programming language, I'll pick it up in two weeks. Languages don't matter—C, Java, MATLAB, Python—they've all come and gone. I can even write a new one. I try to teach my students this as well. Learn to break down complexity. Don't be afraid of difficult papers or applications in fields you don't yet understand. That adaptability makes all the difference.

Aryama S: Coming to your teaching—you've taught 14 different courses and received many teaching awards. What makes a class memorable to you?

Prof. Ahuja: The best classes are interactive ones. I follow a seven-point philosophy in teaching. One of the core beliefs is that if students aren't responding, I'm not teaching well. I always encourage questions. When one person asks, there are usually ten more who had the same doubt but were too shy to ask. So, interaction is key.

I upload all course material—code, slides, quizzes, and recordings—in advance. But I also push them beyond the structured parts. Every course comes with a minor project, where students read research papers and apply what they learn. It makes the learning experience much more complete.

Over the years, I've developed a seven-point philosophy of teaching. A few key ideas are to break down complex concepts into digestible modules, provide structured, pre-uploaded material so students can focus on understanding, not note-taking. I also focus on encouraging student-led projects to foster curiosity beyond the lecture, and use regular feedback loops to fine-tune pace and clarity.

The idea is to create a classroom that's rigorous and joyful. I've also made many of my recorded lectures publicly available. Originally, they were for my students, but I realized they could help a broader audience. I want learning to feel more human, less transactional.

Aryama S: You've worked with global institutions—Virginia Tech, Max Planck Institute, TU Dresden, UT Austin, and several national labs. What's something IIT Indore does better than most international research institutes?

Prof. Ahuja: I'd say two things stand out. First, the undergraduates. IIT Indore has some of the smartest students, and we've really worked on involving them in research from as early as second year. That's rare—even at many global institutes.

At IIT Indore, students can be involved during the semester itself—not just in summer internships. So by the time you reach your final year, you already have a substantial research portfolio. That's not common. In fact, our faculty's publication record is also very strong.

Among new IITs, we're at the top. Even when compared to older IITs, we do well in terms of per-faculty metrics.

What we lack is reputation. In global rankings, we score poorly on that because not enough people know about us. For example, in one US ranking system, we got 8 out of 100 in reputation, while IIT Bombay got 70. So we need to work on branding.

Anushka K: You've handled research, teaching, and major administrative roles. How do you avoid burnout?

Prof. Ahuja: I think the short answer is: I've always followed what genuinely excites me.

My path wasn't linear—I started with mechanical engineering at IIT BHU, then moved to Infosys. I could have climbed the managerial ladder there, but I wasn't fulfilled. So I pivoted—did a second master's in computer science in the US, then shifted again to math because I was drawn to it. That led to a PhD, and then a postdoc in Germany.

Because I've always aligned my career with my interests—math, computing, research—it's never really felt like a grind. The only time I felt stretched thin was during my administrative years. I was Head of Department, and founding Dean of International Affairs. That phase came with its share of exhaustion. But now, with more time for research and teaching, I feel energized again.

Systems and Society

A Conversation with Dr. Akshaya Kumar

INTERVIEWED BY ANUSHKA KRISHAN & PAAWNI GULATI | JULY 2025



Paawni G: You have spoken previously about institutes being sites of power rather than pure knowledge creation. So, how does that shape how you teach at IIT Indore?

Dr. Kumar: Yes, so, having been associated with various institutions of very different locations within the power spectrum of this country, I do have some experience of how administrators, teachers and students negotiate power and knowledge. Also, what their expectations are versus what they end up getting in return for those expectations.

So, I think one uses all of that experience and knowledge to be somewhat disruptive, and disruptive hopefully in favour of the expectations from the institution among the students. This is, perhaps a little against the oppressive mandates that the institution may have, but not explicitly demand. So, that allows you a certain space, and the classroom is truly a sacred space in which dialogues can take place in a different spirit as opposed to official communication. Classes are a space for deliberation—for genuine thinking, even if it goes to some extent against the institutional demands, which work through more obvious power dynamics.

So, this is not to disrupt the atmosphere in the institution but to make students think along axes that sometimes run against institutional power, but also power in general.

So, it's basically a way to prepare students to think more formidably than, you know, just immediate action—because not everything can be turned into activism. However, a lot of good ideas, important ideas begin in the mind and that is the place where you practice disruption in the classroom, and that's how it works.

Anushka K: You transitioned from engineering to film studies, and that can be seen as lateral or non-productive by STEM standards. Did you face pushback for this? Also, do you think Indian academia is genuinely ready to accommodate such shifts, or is this just an advertised ideal?

Dr. Kumar: That's a lot of important questions rolled together, so I'll try and answer it gradually. To begin with, studying films seems a lot easier and fun than it actually is. In fact, I distinctly remember a conversation in a bus from Glasgow to Edinburgh with an older woman who asked why I was in the UK. When I mentioned my PhD in film studies, she said, "I didn't know you could do that!"—as if she'd missed out on something fun.

That's often how people see it: a shift from something serious to something easy and enjoyable. The skepticism is rarely voiced outright, but it lingers. Of course, if you asked them to write 2000 words on a film they enjoyed—let alone a 70,000-word thesis—they'd grasp how difficult it is to turn pleasure or disgust into analysis.

Yes, I shifted along the axis of my interests. But interdisciplinarity, though celebrated in vision documents, is rarely welcomed in practice. Institutions close doors on interdisciplinary CVs, preferring disciplinary gatekeeping to "wonderful trajectories." I've been fortunate to escape much of that resistance personally, but I've seen how students remain confused, disappointed, and in search of meaning. Many settle for safer, better-paying alternatives outside engineering rather than risk pursuing fulfillment elsewhere.

For me, acknowledging my dissatisfaction with engineering opened a kind of solidarity—I knew others felt it too, even if they wouldn't admit it. I simply took my own path. Within a year of leaving IIT Kanpur, none of my friends were from the IITs. Instead, I found companions in trekking, travel, theatre, literature, and cinema—the most exciting people I've ever met.

So did I face pushback? Not really. Leaving IIT gave me my richest experiences, eventually leading me into academia. I found allies and mentors everywhere outside the IIT system. Only later did I come to see academia's larger unease with interdisciplinarity.

Paawni G: Many see humanities in IITs as just a service department for soft skills. What are your thoughts?

Dr. Kumar: I don't think IITs ever treated humanities as mere add-ons. From the very beginning, B.Tech programs included philosophy, sociology, psychology, literature, and linguistics. At IIT Kanpur, I never felt HSS was just a service department—if anything, the relevance of many engineering courses was equally questionable. Steel was already being made; IT jobs didn't really need advanced metallurgy. So humanities were part of the larger mix of disciplines whose immediate value wasn't always clear.

Over the years, engineering has kept chasing short-term fads, seeking validation through publications rather than real-world relevance. In that sense, humanities were never uniquely marginal. The deeper issue is whether students themselves find meaning in what they study—and that's a question institutions rarely ask, perhaps because the answers might not be pleasant.

Manuscript to Machine

An interview with Shanmuga Priya

INTERVIEWED BY ARHAM ANEEQ & GOPESH SRINIVASAN | JULY 2025



We had a conversation with Dr. Shanmuga Priya, an IIT Indore alumnus, with a Ph.D. in Indian English Literature and Digital Humanities, about interdisciplinary research, and the intersection of technology with the humanities

Arham A: Your background is in literature, with an MA, but during your PhD at IITI you transitioned toward a data-driven exploration of literature. What prompted that change? How did you decide to go in this direction?

Dr. Shanmuga Priya: When I started my master's, I was introduced to how digital tools influence literary curation, which led me to work on digital poetry. As I got more exposure to data-driven technologies, I became interested in project-driven literature. I already had some technical skills, and I was lucky to be in an environment that offered both exposure and opportunity. Back then, the humanities were still quite traditional—many scholars were hesitant to use software for literary study. But I was encouraged to explore interdisciplinary approaches, and that helped me break boundaries. It was a rewarding shift, blending literature with data-driven methods.

Gopesh S: I've seen that most of your work is based on digital environmental humanities. So, I'm curious to know, how is it different from conventional engineering-based environmentalism?

Dr. Shanmuga Priya: That's a great question. Conventional engineering tends to focus on practical, technical solutions—like measuring air or water pollution and developing technologies to improve environmental quality. But digital environmental humanities go beyond that. We study the human and societal impact of these environmental issues and technologies. It's not just about the environment itself, but how it affects people, communities, and values. We also explore how technology intersects with culture, religion, and

equity. So, our approach is more holistic, looking at both the causes and consequences of environmental change in human terms.

Arham A: Could you elaborate a bit on the kind of humanities research you've worked on in relation to environmental humanities? Specifically, from your experience working with Dr. Nirmala Menon?

Dr. Shanmuga Priya: Yes, of course. Dr. Nirmala Menon is one of the pioneers of digital humanities in India, and I was fortunate to have her as my supervisor. When we began, digital humanities was still in its early stages here. She played a key role—not just in scholarship and teaching—but also in institutional and organizational development. For example, she was one of the founding members of a student initiative, and I was part of it as a student.

Working with her gave me a broader perspective on what it means to be a researcher in the humanities. She brought innovation to both methodology and outreach, and her work showed me how impactful humanities research can be—not only through academic contributions but also by expanding the field and supporting others in it.

Gopesh S: Your PhD thesis focused on technological aspects. What kind of ideas were you trying to explore through it?

Dr. Shanmuga Priya: My PhD focused on how technological devices and digital technologies influence both literary narratives and practices. I examined how characters interact with technology in novels and found significant gender disparities—men were more often linked to technology and public spaces, while women were tied to domestic content like cookery shows or soap operas. I also noticed a lack of female characters associated with computers. Using programming, I conducted quantitative analysis across multiple novels. I further explored how digital fiction differs from traditional and online forms, particularly in how software shapes storytelling.

Arham A: Post-colonial studies are particularly relevant in the Indian subcontinent. How is this subject viewed outside India, such as in the UK or Canada, where you've worked?

Dr. Shanmuga Priya: Post-colonialism in India is rooted in our lived experience as a former colony, where issues like caste and gender intersect with it. In Canada or the UK, the focus differs. Abroad, I worked mainly in history departments as a digital humanities researcher, handling technologies like coding and mapping, so I had limited interaction with post-colonial scholars.

I feel that calling someone "sir" or "ma'am" carries colonial and casteist baggage—it started during British rule and continues to reinforce hierarchies today.

-Dr. Priya on honorifics

Activv Thinking

An interview with Piyush Lahoti

INTERVIEWED BY ANUSHKA KRISHAN | JUNE 2025



IIT Indore's Anushka Krishan spoke with alumnus Piyush Lahoti, an IITI(CSE'14) and IIM Ahmedabad graduate whose journey from coder to fintech founder highlights a sharp blend of clarity, ambition, and purpose.

Anushka K: Hi Piyush! It's a pleasure speaking with you today. From what I've heard, your journey from a computer science grad to a fintech founder has been anything but conventional. Where did it all begin?

Piyush Lahoti: Hi Anushka! It's great to be here. I'm originally from Ajmer and graduated in Computer Science back in 2014. I started off as a developer for about a year before realizing I wanted to build something bigger. That's when I decided to prepare for CAT and pursue an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad. It's been nearly more than eight years now since graduating from IIM Ahmedabad. Worked mostly on the product side of things in different companies. Last, I was heading the investment and personal finance vertical in a digital banking startup called Fi Money. After that, I started my own venture called Activv Money, which is into the wealth management space. Essentially, one thing we realized was, I don't know if that's true for you as well, a big gap in terms of personal finance knowledge in people. And we've talked to people from different esteemed colleges in India, people who you would think would be completely savvy about finance, and they have no clue. And that's one thing we felt very passionately about. There are a lot of initiatives already in the market. There is free and paid content available online, but still somewhere, it's not working. That's what we are trying to change.

Anushka K: That's a big leap. As someone who has given the exam twice, how did you juggle CAT prep with your final year and then a full-time job?

Piyush Lahoti: Honestly, the biggest factors were regularity and clarity. Quant was manageable, thanks to my engineering background, but English and logical reasoning took real effort. I wasn't very clear in my first attempt but by the second, I had a

and that made all the difference.

Anushka K: And after IIM-A?

Piyush Lahoti: Post-MBA, I worked in product roles at Media.net and Epifi Technologies. At Epifi, I led a 25-member team in the wealth management vertical. That experience of combining strategy, tech, and user needs shaped how I think about solving real-world problems.

Anushka K: Is that what led to founding Activv Money?

Piyush Lahoti: That is actually an interesting story. As I mentioned, I was in the wealth and personal finance vertical. And one day, I was just in a room and was writing something on the whiteboard.

Then I started thinking, how do I really contribute on a national level? What impact, what legacy do I leave when we are coming up with a new product or whatever comes out of the conveyor belt in the company? And I started thinking that it's very hard in India to change the per capita income. That depends on a lot of factors, how many jobs are coming up, what kind of jobs are coming up, etc. But if I help people being disciplined about their finances, I can definitely change the per capita net worth, how much savings they have, how much wealth they have. And you'll be surprised the US figure per capita net worth is actually not a crazy big figure. It's \$200,000, even less than that. And a lot of us can very easily achieve that number if we are disciplined about their finances.

So that struck something inside me. And one thing which I started feeling was that the platforms work for a certain segment. There are a lot of platforms like Zerodha, Groww, etc. that work really well. But in case you don't have that drive, that motivation that you want to participate, it's not going to work. So something which I felt really passionate about was how can we make that impact on a large scale for a lot of people? Can they improve their net worth? The answer wasn't income, it was wealth. So many people, even from top institutes like IITs, struggle with personal finance. That became my mission.

I started thinking, how do I really contribute on a national level? What impact, what legacy do I leave when we are coming up with a new product?

Anushka K: And that's how Activv Money began?

Piyush Lahoti: Exactly. We started with 400–500 families, offering personal financial advice. The goal is to scale responsibly, using tech to bring clarity and discipline to people's financial lives.

Anushka K: That's very inspiring. What's the bigger message you'd want students like me to take away?

Piyush Lahoti: Keep asking yourself: What truly matters? What legacy do I want to leave? The answers evolve, but those questions will always guide you.

Beyond Conditioning

An interview with Dheeraj Bansal

INTERVIEWED BY ANUSHKA KRISHAN & ARYAMA SINGH | JUNE 2025



We sat down with IIT Indore alumnus Dheeraj Bansal, an alumnus of Civil Engg'22 and founder of Thinker's Studio, to talk about meditation, ambition, and navigating the tech-heavy culture of IIT while choosing a different path.

Anushka K: You mentioned doing Vipassana meditation. What was that experience like?

Dheeraj: I did it in January this year at the Mysore Vipassana centre. It's a 10-day course with no phones, no talking, no writing. You meditate for 10 hours a day. The idea is to observe your thoughts without reacting. It really helped me deal with emotional loops, like when something affects you and the mood stays for days. Vipassana helps break that.

Aryama S: Let's talk about Thinker's Studio. How did it begin?

Dheeraj: Thinker's Studio began as a creative writing studio during my 3-month career break in the Himalayas, when I decided to turn two years of my journal entries into a book—which later on became a Kindle India bestseller. That journey taught me how AI could amplify creativity and productivity. Today, it has evolved into an AI powered studio having 5+ non-human employees, building intelligent tools for modern minds—helping founders, creators, and businesses integrate AI agents into their operations to boost productivity and work in smarter ways.

Anushka K: Did you always want to start something of your own?

Dheeraj: Yes. Since childhood, I've had this natural drive to change things around me to fit my own vision, rather than settling for how things are typically done. I realized I had just been flowing within the system of JEE prep, IIT, placement, promotion. At some point, I had to pause and figure out what I actually wanted to do.

Aryama S: How did your definition of success evolve?

Dheeraj: At the beginning, it was about money like most of us. But once you start earning and have disposable income, you realize it's not as successful as it's made out to be. With time, my definition of success shifted. Now, it's about working on something meaningful, at your own pace, in your own mood, without any rush or pressure.

Anushka K: Did you ever feel out of place in IIT's tech-focused culture?

Dheeraj: Yes, especially in the first year. I applied to all the clubs from music to photography to dance, but I didn't get into any. I didn't know where I fit. Eventually, I found my space in gaming and marketing, and founded the Gaming Club. I wasn't drawn to coding, and that's okay. The environment pushes you towards certain paths, but it's important to step back and choose your own.

Aryama S: What advice would you give to students who want to explore writing, content, or entrepreneurship but are scared to skip placements?

Dheeraj: If your work can earn around what your survival requires, you can take that risk. But what you need to know is how to sell your skills, your values, your story. Learn how to communicate what you do and why it matters. Two books I'd recommend are *The Laws of Human Nature* and *The Art of Decision Making*. Also, figure out what you want, not what everyone around you wants. That clarity makes all the difference.

"Figure out what you want, not what everyone around you wants. That clarity makes all the difference."

Swipe Right on Vision

An interview with Saurabh Agarwal

INTERVIEWED BY GOPESH SRINIVASAN | JUNE 2025



Gopesh Srinivasan, a member of the Content Team at Alumni Cell, sat down with alumnus Saurabh Agarwal, alumnus of EE'17, and the founder of deNADA, a social dating app that's redefining the very concept of online dating.

Gopesh S: Hi Saurabh, it's great speaking with you. So you had an excellent academic record — I'm guessing you were the branch topper. What made you not pursue a career in your core field, which was electrical?

Saurabh Agarwal: Thanks, Gopesh. Honestly, there weren't many core companies coming to campus — mostly just BPCL and maybe one or two more, and they didn't pay well. Also, I wasn't that interested in electrical. Most of us were into competitive coding on Codeforces and CodeChef. Tech jobs were what everyone around me was preparing for, so it felt like the natural direction to go in.

Gopesh S: Now moving on to your dating app — with giants like Tinder, Bumble, and Hinge already in the market, and many Indian-founded apps too, did their presence ever discourage you from entering this space?

Saurabh Agarwal: Not at all — I would've been discouraged only if any existing app actually worked for Indian users. Most apps follow Western dating culture, which doesn't align with how we're raised here.

In India, boys and girls aren't taught how to interact socially, so those models don't work well. We wanted to build something culturally grounded, where guys especially could feel more confident and have meaningful conversations.

Gopesh S: What inspired you to start this venture? Was it based on personal experience, friends' struggles, or something else?

Saurabh Agarwal: It was a mix of personal reflection and real-life gaps. After a breakup and some travel time, I noticed how poorly dating apps serve Indian users. My flat mate, a great guy by all standards, still struggled in finding a good match on matrimonial apps, showing how the system's broken for most people here. Matrimonial sites are too transactional, and dating apps too Western — missing our cultural reality. We saw dating as both a social and tech challenge, and I spent months perfecting even basic systems like chat, because expectations are super high.

"Matrimonial sites are too transactional, and dating apps too Western — missing our cultural reality."

—Saurabh Agarwal on reimagining dating for India

Gopesh S: So you've described deNADA as a social dating platform. How is it different from traditional dating apps?

Saurabh Agarwal: Traditional apps follow a simple swipe-match-talk model, but in India, most people don't even know how to start meaningful conversations. Only 1–2% of men who match actually reach the stage of dating — the drop-off is massive due to poor context and copy-paste profiles.

We wanted to change that by encouraging users to share authentic, everyday moments — to spark natural conversations. It's more social and expressive, like Twitter, where familiarity and personality drive interaction, not just looks. That's why deNADA is built around real content and community — not just matching.

GRE vs UPSC

Mapping Two Journeys

COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY ANUSHKA KRISHAN & KHYATI GARHWAL | MAY 2025

Between the call of global academia and the pull of national service lies a choice that shapes both career and conscience. This feature examines the contrasting worlds of GRE and UPSC preparation, drawing on the experiences of alumni who have navigated each path. From the quiet rigour of research libraries to the demanding pace of policy corridors, we explore what it takes to succeed, and what each journey ultimately offers.

GRE

Piyush Lahoti (CSE' 14)

- **Join a Peer Group:** “We played vocab games on our bus rides as it made learning fun and regular.”
- **Focus on Verbal:** Quant is easier, so work daily on reading comprehension and essays.
- **Practice Like a Sport:** Regular mock tests and timed drills are key.
- **Get Feedback:** Peer reviews help improve your writing more than self-evaluation.
- **Be Honest About Your Goals:** Don't do it for the resume. Do it if it aligns with your vision.

UPSC

Shashank Gupta (CSE '17)

- **Understand the Exam:** Prelims test elimination, Mains test articulation. The odds are tough: 1 in 1000.
- **Start with NCERTs:** Build a strong base.
- **Revisit Often:** Revision is more important than covering more.
- **Take Mocks:** Helps manage time and anxiety.
- **Stay Purpose-Driven:** “Don't chase status —serve with integrity.”

Both alumni pose strong arguments for either side, but in the end, whether you choose the GRE or the UPSC, the truest measure of success lies not in the exam you clear, but in the direction you choose to shape your life.

In Full Swing Campus Life at its Best

ARTICLE BY KHYATI GARHWAL | JUNE 2025

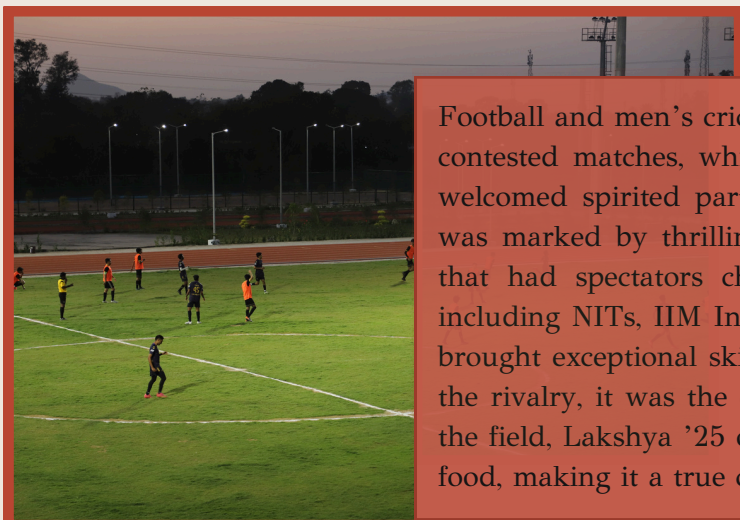


Fluxus '25

Fluxus 2025 at IIT Indore was a vibrant fusion of creativity, innovation, and community spirit. Day 1 began with captivating Mono-Acts, thrilling technical competitions such as Robosoccer and Robowars, and an impressive Tech Expo. Intellectual engagement was at its peak during the Asian Parliamentary Debate, followed by Kavyanjali, a literary fest featuring talented poets, and concluding with the Battle of Bands. Day 2 featured solo singers, dynamic beatboxing, and an insightful “Words of Wisdom” session. The festival concluded with a spectacular Main Pronite by Sonu Nigam, leaving the audience spellbound. Fluxus was ultimately a celebration of friendship, ambition, and creative excellence.

Research & Industrial Conclave

IIT Indore is making strides on multiple fronts, from eco-friendly innovations to major research initiatives and new academic programs. A team led by Prof. Kiran Bala has developed a cost-effective, biodegradable PHA-based plastic from microalgae, bacteria, CO₂, sunlight, and industrial waste, offering scalable sustainability. The institute secured a ₹100 crore ANRF-PAIR grant to lead the SAKSHAM network for advancing materials, sustainability, energy, and healthcare research. Its Drishti CPS Foundation, named a Technology Translation Research Park with ₹150 crore funding, will turn cyber-physical systems research into real-world applications.

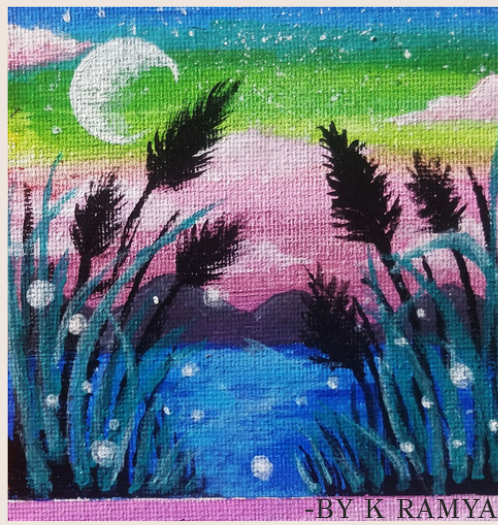
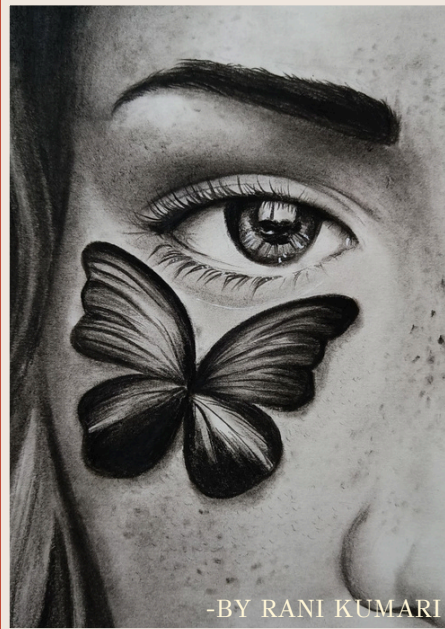


Lakshya '25

Football and men's cricket drew large crowds with their intense and closely contested matches, while basketball, badminton, table tennis, and athletics welcomed spirited participation from both men and women. Every event was marked by thrilling finishes, remarkable performances, and moments that had spectators cheering in unison. Teams from across the nation, including NITs, IIM Indore, BITS Pilani, Masters' Union, and many others, brought exceptional skill and elevated the level of competition. Yet, beyond the rivalry, it was the enduring spirit of sportsmanship that stood out. Off the field, Lakshya '25 offered lively stalls, engaging activities, and delightful food, making it a true celebration of teamwork, resilience, and sports.

Brushstrokes & Beyond

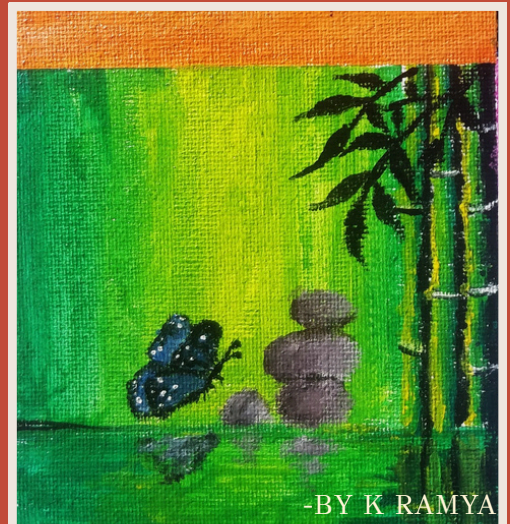
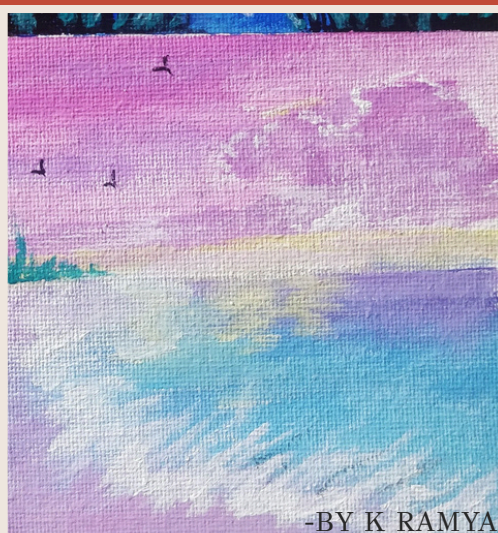
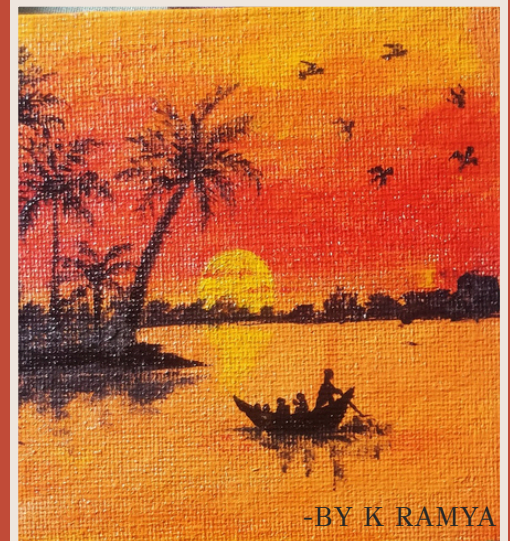
Artwork by the alumni



*"Art is not a thing;
it is a way."*

— Elbert Hubbard

For our alumni, art has been a way to explore, to question, and to redefine. This gallery is a glimpse into that journey, with some recent pieces of theirs.



The Creative Continuum

First Letter: A Letter to IIT, by an IITian

-Amrita Pandey (MSDSM, 2025)

There are letters to people, to places, to moments, but this one is for the place that gave me all three.

Dear IIT,

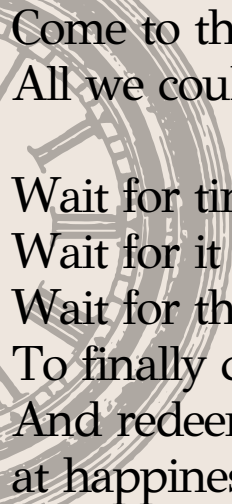
You, being the dream of millions, chose to fall in love with me. Through the seats, the classrooms, the library, the hostel, the playground, the musical strings, the stage, the auditorium, the chit-chat points, and the late-night Nescafé Maggi and coffee — in all these forms, you showed your love for me. In the PODs and the labs, the sky views from telescopes, the treasure hunts, the vibrant sports days, and every all-day yummy mess meal that took away all my stress — you showed your love for me. I just studied hard — to see you, to touch you, to be with you. And in return, you gave me a life full of memories and glory. The New Year's Eve celebrations, the Valedictory Day, the gym, the balconies, the cycles, the breathtaking views, the quiet forests, and the cheetah I always hoped not to meet — in all these ways, you embraced me. The musical strings, the gloomy weather, the sporty treks, the casual trips, the silent authors of love stories within hostels, the gossips, the friendships, the heartbreaks, the cries, and the laughter — in all these forms, you showered your affection on me. Even in the exams, the surprise tests, the never-ending assignments, the projects, the midnight preps, the scribbled notes, the heavy books — you still showed me love. You taught me leadership. You gave me fame. You let me wear the badge. You made me walk proudly — past the warden, through the corridors, on night walks, day strolls, and in the company of unlimited conversations. Through it all, you weren't just an alma mater — You were a lover.

- Yours Sincerely
Amrita Pandey

*Yeh pal humein yaad aayenge
These moments will be remembered forever*

Time is all we ever had

-Shibani



Come to think of it,
All we could do was wait-

Wait for time to turn ripe,
Wait for it to feel right,
Wait for the moment
To finally confess,
And redeem our chance
at happiness.

Come to think of it,
The moment never arrived.

Tired of pretending,
Tired of waiting,
Tired of hiding
The truth of what we feel,
We made a deal.

Come to think of it,
It was never meant to be.

As we stood there starry-eyed,
As we both made up our minds,
As we recalled the time gone by,


When we fell but were saved
Just in the nick of time.
Come to think of it,
We were damned from the start.

The highs of what we shared,
The words uttered in haste.
Everything we stood for,
The good bits and the bad,
Never were meant to last.

Come to think of it,
We ran out of promise.

The moments slipped away,
Into depths of decay;
It's time they were returned
To the heavens
Where, as stars, they burned.

Come to think of it,
Time is all we never had.



IIT Indore: The Ultimate Word Search

SPOT THE WORDS THAT DESCRIBE YOUR JOURNEY ON THE INDORE CAMPUS.

E L D P E R A R L T R I G A P A R M
N E L E N T R E P R E N E U R H L L
P N Y E E H V N N U A U T N H E L E
I T L L T H E I G N N R S N T A L C
H R U U T L A L A I A O T E T E A T
S E U N C O N V E N T I O N A L A U
N P H A N C C I A E I E N C E R N R
R R E I M T A H D L I L Y A E E D E
E E L P A U Y S E A L O D U N E E H
T N C N L R L N E P E N E E P R T A
N E N A D E A R A S A L I T T E M L
I U U D U H E E A L U N N G E O A L
I R R O N A A T A U A M L R H R P E
N E S S S L A N G L R N M T E T H N
R A I T E L E I E N E R D I I E E H
U H T L N U A E I E S T A R T U P R
S N D A I L Y N E E D S U T I E A R
E A U N C O N V E N T I O N A L N T

INTERNSHIP
ENTREPRENEUR
ALL NIGHTER

ESUMMIT
UNCONVENTIONAL
STARTUP

LECTURE HALL
NALANDA
DAILY NEEDS

SOLUTION

ANAPGHMPRTDNDNASNM
URELRVALARPLNUELE
INDRNLDYEEENNTRCNE
FITMLSCUESSRLUDC
HRENLRCEENINAAIDOT
SEUNCONVENTIONA
NPGSTTTONETYPUEUH
RRYMDANNLNENMENE
REMUENAESLLGUDRH
TNDNLIPGKXEDRA
NEPPNAIUUEHSL
UEHSCLAUEAL
SUHNNAHKAMKDHME
GETTILH@KIRANNNH
NNCNRRLSSESAAVLEH
AAUNNOCODLCTAKUDD
VAGALLYNNEEDNEPPGF
CVAAPPFCNERIEVUUYT

Cryptogram

Every letter has been swapped with another in this cryptic college quote. Can you decode the wisdom (or the warning)?

Yhffvut lx dro lokd dywo dy gkzu dro gybcd
nockscdzy.

Answer College is the best time to make the worst decisions

ANSWERS TO THE LAST EDITION

 — Srijan — Rationale: Where words ignite minds

 — Avana — Rationale: Spreading smile through social work

 — Central Workshop

 — Carbon Projector Floor

 — Lab

 — Abhinandan Bhawan

 — Amrit Sarovar

 — LRC

With gratitude

As we draw this edition to a close, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to those whose support made these pages possible.

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A special note of appreciation goes to the entire student team of the Alumni Cell, as their commitment made this magazine not just a document, but a reflection of the college spirit.

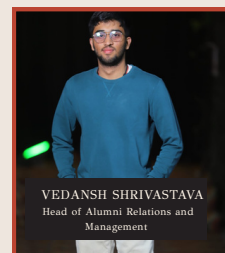
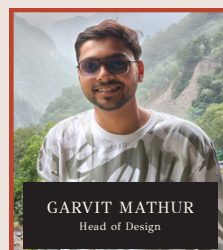
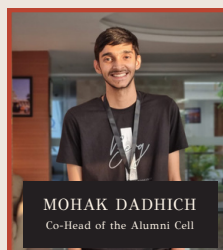
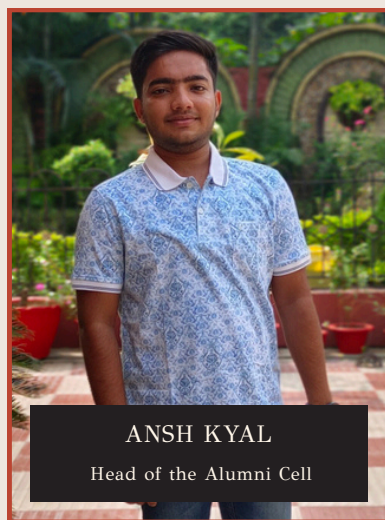
As we close this chapter, we're proud to share this edition with the IIT Indore Alumnus community.

Until next time.

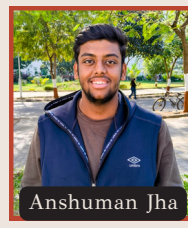
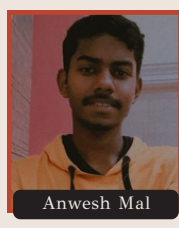
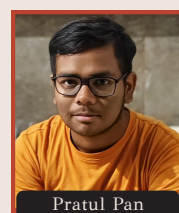
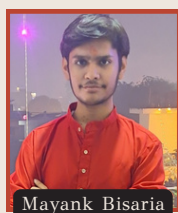
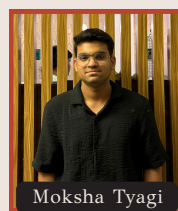
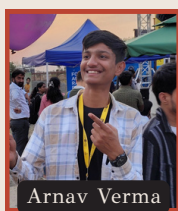
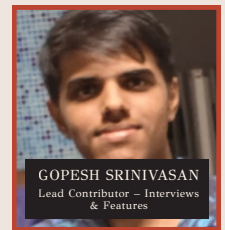


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