

THE XAVIER'S PRESS

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XAVIER'S: A HISTORY

Thought you knew everything about Xavier's? Impossible. Our 145 year old institution is a treasure trove of secrets, with stories from the past lurking in every nook and cranny. Even after completing almost five years of education at the place we love, members of the XPress Editorial Team realized that their knowledge of their second home was woefully inadequate, and decided to dig a little deeper. Read on to find out what we learnt.



Let's start with The XPress itself. Well, we weren't called that to begin with. **Dr. Radiya Pacha Gupta**, when she was in charge of the Student Council, first introduced the idea of it seven years ago, calling it 'Subject To Change.'

Clearly, it was (*somebody, please laugh*). Originally, the paper was black and white and featured a few pages of content and college notices.

Fr. Frazer was extremely busy putting together what was a brilliant lyrical-song routine for Teachers' Day which we all loved, while simultaneously running an entire college, so we decided to haunt **Fr. Roy's** footsteps for incredible stories. This is what he told us:

1. He recalls 'Court Martial', a tradition on Teacher's Day from when he was a student, where the Principal was taken to 'court', and every student and faculty member was permitted to ask him whatever questions they wished.
2. Original vinyl records exist in the college. From ABBA to classical music, all available for students to look at if they wish. Contact Fr Roy or Medha Taskar Ma'am for further information.
3. Also (no surprise that he knows this), the piano in the Hall is just the shell of the original that used to be kept where the speakers are now. Inside it is an electric keyboard, because the original piano was sadly destroyed when it was submerged during the time when the passages and basements below the hall (so like the dungeons of Harry Potter fame) were flooded.
4. Books dating back several centuries, and theology and philosophy books in their original Latin and Greek are available in the library. The Department of Philosophy closed down the year before Fr. Roy joined college.



(Continued on page 3)



EDITORS' BLOCK

THE XAVIER'S DEBSOC

The Xavier's Debating Society is up and running, once again, with 6 core committee members (two from each year) and the lofty goal of reinvigorating the intellectual culture in the college through the motto 'practice makes perfect'.

Recently, the Debsoc has organised two weeks of 'debate exposure' where it attempts to reign in potential debaters and also expose Xavierites to the two major formats of debating at the college level, namely Parliamentary Debates and Model UNs. They also had the temerity to pit the two largest branches of college against each other- the sciences and arts- in a student- faculty debate, featuring Professor Conrad as group leader for team

evolution and Professor Pranoti as the chief debater arguing for intelligent design.

Their taxonomy of dividing veteran and rookie debaters into alpha wolf and beta wolf seems to have caught on, as they try to tailor make programs for different levels of experience. While the core committee continues to joke about what essentially was a gimmick to make people loosen up during orientation, they secretly hope that both betas and alphas join the wolf pack in heavy numbers.

For practice sessions, organising your own debates, auditions or just being on their mailing list, contact them on xaviersdebatesociety@gmail.com

- Ashwin Chandrashekar, TYBA

THE DIARY OF A CONFUSED TY

Tests, fests and graduation blues. The life of a TY is complicated. Take a look.

11th June: College re-opens. It's my last year, I'm the senior-most. No more scrounging for foyer seats. It's going to be great.

28th June: I'm not doing Malhar because I need to study for entrance tests. Six papers in one subject are boring. My major seems all wrong. Should I have taken Socio instead of Eco?

29th July: CIA One results. A disaster. GPA is taking a nosedive. No college is going to accept me for post-grad studies.

14th August: Malhar Conclave is here. I want to watch Raghuram Rajan but need to study for my GRE.

8th September: How have my CIAs still not ended?

15th October: End sems are over. So is half my year at Xavier's. How.

10th November: I'm studying for the CAT. If watching Friends reruns and stress-eating Nutella counts as studying.

22nd November: Gave the CAT. Came home and cried.

27th November: My last Ithaka is here. I still remember my debut act in first year. Why is the year ending so quickly?

8th December: Everyone has got a job through the Placement Cell except me. I'm tired of sitting for interviews.

11th January: Janfest approaches and I have only three months left at Xavier's. I want to cry.

24th February: Our farewell is tomorrow. I'm not ready to say goodbye just yet!

11th March: End sems, again. Haven't I spent half my college life giving these? Yep, not going to miss them.

15th April: The grown up life is overrated. Xavier's, take me back?

- Raadhika Vishwesh, TYBA



(Continued)

After this, we moved on to **Fr. Terry**, who has been here long enough to have been Fr. Roy's counsellor, and taught at St. Xavier's School when Fr. Frazer was a student there. Father Terry's fact file disclosed:

1. The garden outside the Physics Laboratory (beside the Volleyball court, if you recognize that better) was planted and initially maintained by students of the college, back when we had two tennis courts and it was just a mound of earth.
2. Inside this garden is a tall, beautiful white pillar. It is a Peace Pillar, constructed by the Japanese Consulate to commemorate the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb blasts. Do go and read what is on it, we won't tell you everything!
3. The XIC building used to be the old hostel. What's more, the floor in the current hostel building that is occupied by the Knowledge Center now, was formerly the Hostel Mess; the Counseling Center was the Hostel Chapel, the inner rooms doubling as a go-down- all further confirming this writer's strong suspicion that hostel boys have always had the best of everything.

We interacted with Dean of the Xavier's Institute of Communication, and former Head of the Department of Physics, **Prof. J. B Mistry**, who gave us the following stories:

1. The present Inter-Religious Studies Center was formerly a carpenter's workstation, workshop and most famously, a garage for the BMW bike that belonged to Fr. Filella (what a change this is, indeed).
2. The tower adjacent to the XIC is known as Jacob's Tower, after Brother Jacob who was responsible for its maintenance, and used to have a staircase with a flap that opened onto the roof. Astronomy experiments were conducted from there, on a seven foot telescope donated by a German Jesuit priest.
3. Xavier's had one of the first Atomic Absorption Spectroscopy machines in the country, and students from the likes of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre would come here to conduct experiments.
4. Some of the original stone gargoyles have been replaced by moulds, and can be told apart by their ears. Look carefully. These silent observers have seen more of Xavier's than you ever will.

We caught our favourite staff correspondent, **Prof. Agnelo Menezes**, and he told us the following:

1. The canteen, when he was a student, was an 'open foyer' with a full self service counter extending the entire breadth of the present one, and a lot more tables. He laments the inevitable loss of space.
2. His favourite part of the college is the library. He speaks fondly of what used to be the last cubicle in the Reference Library (which is now occupied by an official), where he and all his classmates would rush to occupy around 4 pm, because it got the best breeze during the high tide.
3. The journal Economic and Political Weekly has been available from its very first published issue in the journal section of the library.
4. His second and more surprising favourite is the gymnasium. He has been a patron of it since his student days, when he says it was more spacious.

Editor's Pick (from various sources)

1. The Heras Institute, founded in 1922, has Gandhara structures collected by Fr. Heras himself, a stupa from Nalanda dating back to the 9th century, Pala art, and an illustrated manuscript of Madhumalati, an exquisite piece of the Kotah art of 1771 A.D. It is perhaps the only institution in India to possess Mesopotamian cylindrical seals of various periods, and also has artefacts from the time of the Portuguese in India.

2. If you haven't seen the art on the entrance to the chapel and the gorgeous stained glass windows, you simply must. The second spire from the right on the chapel building, when viewed from the 20s, is broken, and kept preserved (cannot be unseen).

Our favourite: Our college first admitted women in 1912, much before even the University of Oxford, which only allowed women to enter in 1920. We're extremely proud of our institution!

Got more stories to share about college? Write to thexavierspress@gmail.com to share your favourite facts, stories and anecdotes.

- Rashi Pant, TYBSC



GOOOOOOOD MORNING!

Mohite Uncle found his way into the hearts of thousands of Xavierites through two simple words. Two words we often pin no importance to – “Good morning”. For most kids on campus, that brief morning greeting was the extent of their interaction with Guard Uncle. Yet, when the tragic news of his departure hit us all, we were left shattered. Why?

He always smiled at us. Even when we were made to stand outside for those crucial five minutes before our 8 am lecture, whenever we forgot our ID cards. Or when he would ask to see every possible document of identity to make sure we were Xavierites. He always smiled. There was a hint of light-heartedness behind those dutiful eyes that made him so incredibly loveable.

Mohite Uncle was an integral part of our college life. We started our groggy days with him daily, and the gate seems lonely without his loud instructions- “ID card gale main dalo!” Or his slowly and carefully pronounced, “Put-you-ar-ID-card-around-you-ar-neck.” He was a habit, a warm and comforting gaze as we rushed to our morning lectures.

A guardian of this college, he looked upon us as his children. He cared for us all and made it a point to acknowledge everyone who walked through those gates. He was humorous, dutiful and full of life.

It will be a long while before we grow accustomed to the silence at the gate. He will be in our hearts. Always.

- *Ishika Ramakrishna, TYBSC*

A CONFLUENCE OF FAITH

The Inter-Religious Studies Department, tucked away in a small corner of the first quad, is one of the college’s most intriguing places. Its various activities aim at promoting inter-faith interaction and it is currently headed by Fr. Prashant Olalekar, who has assumed the position long overseen by Fr. Lancy Prabhu.

DIRS was started 15 years ago by then-principal, Fr. John Misquitta, in a vision to generate inter-faith dialogue in the academia. Seminars, courses and activities crossing faith-barriers have been facilitated by the department, but there has been recent movement towards promoting social outreach- to encourage pro-active co-operation across faiths.

Most of the DIRS’s activities are now collaborative, prominently in the multi-disciplinary Honours courses it now offers. For example, the Ujali program, which highlights issues of Women’s Empowerment, is in association with AICUF. Other courses, all starting this month, include “Double Belonging”, a series on inter-faith marriages, the ecological “Be the Dream: Awakening to Cosmic Compassion” course, as well as a course on Comparative Religion.

The department is one of the few within St. Xavier’s which receives students both across and outside college-age, background no bar. Drop in for an enlightening experience.

- *Rishi Thomas, TYBA*

MARATHI VANGMAYA MANDAL

The MVM is a fledgling organization in Xavier’s that aims at preserving the rich cultural heritage and literature of Maharashtra, and further promoting expression in the Marathi language. And if you don’t speak Marathi, that’s perfectly okay, the MVM is open to all those interested in being a part of a platform for regional art.



Their event “Muktachanda”, that took place on September 16th, based on the theme “Aathvan”, meaning memories, was replete with dance competitions, poetry performances, acoustic “jugalbandis”, elocution, mono acts, and much more. Get in touch with the MVM for details regarding further events and come embrace your cultural roots.

- *Malvika Patil, SYBA*

THE ADVENTURES OF ANTIBODY MAN

The Ebola virus has been wreaking havoc across the African continent, spreading from country to country with alarming rapidity. Our writers examine the affair from the perspective of the virus itself and describe its dramatic showdown with human antibodies. We extend our sincerest sympathies to our African friends and hope that this disease is soon cured.

It had been years since their last face-off. He had mistakenly thought it was over. As he sat up, eating a breakfast of healthy whatnots (a granola mixture of his own creation), he realized that his job was only half-done.

EBOLA KILLS TWENTY

Antibody Man put on his sterile boots. "I will find Ebola Man again, and vanquish him. This time, for good," he said aloud. He walked out the door, forgetting, in the humdrum, his trench coat. (What kind of superhero forgets his trench coat?)

"I will find him with the animals. Those helpless beings he spreads his viral nuisance with. I shall save them - and all of mankind!"

Ebola Man saw this coming. He put on his cloak and mask. (What kind of villain doesn't have a cloak and mask?)

Walking to the terrace of his Mumbai apartment (all fight scenes happen on terraces), he waited patiently; looking at his watch every now and again, hoping someone was filming. (Nobody was, though two XPress reporters were watching from behind a water tank.)

Antibody Man finally made a dramatic entry. "So, we meet again," he said, in a voice so deep, the Indian Ocean was jealous. "So, we do," said Ebola Man, trying to match Antibody Man and failing miserably- his voice was shallow enough for Bombay Duck to swim in.

"I have in my pocket, a device, which will kill you and your microscopic counterparts. I dare you to step forward," said Antibody Man, imagining a rousing theme song playing. Ebola Man, overestimating his own strength, took TWO steps forward.

(To be continued in next month's issue.)

- Sroojana Iyer, SYBMM

A CHAT AT THE CHAAT COUNTER

A young Shiva came to Mumbai around ten years ago. As a boy, he worked in several kitchens; he would be made to wake early every morning and wash a high pile of soiled utensils. He despises thinking of those days when he had to put up with despicable bosses and their several orders. He eventually moved on to opening his own pani puri stall down the college road where the subway now stands. As Malhar neared, our college needed more hands around the kitchen and thus, Shiva became part of the college canteen. He started selling more than just pani puri.

At the time, he also drove a taxi at night to increase his income. He would spend his days making and selling chaat and his nights driving a taxi around Nariman Point. One night, as he was driving, he fell asleep at the wheel for, what he thought was, a whole minute. That incident affected him

and he realized he must choose between the two professions. We all know which job he ultimately kept.



Shiva is an accommodating young chap who's awfully fond of all the students who buy chaat from him. Today, over ten years since he first came to Mumbai, he stands proudly behind the chaat counter, making food with unmatched flair and speed. When asked about the most popular item he sells, he smiles and says "Sev puri aur Delhi chaat. Aaj kal dahi bhel bhi students pasand kartein hain."

A Bollywood fan, he likes any actor that does a good job on screen. He's a hardworking man who uses his free time working at chaat thelas outside college to supplement his income. After all, as he said (blushing slightly), he only just got married.

- Ishika Ramakrishna, TYBSC



LEARNING TO TEACH

Most of us have interesting anecdotes to share about our first few days of college, when the crowded foyer or the gazillion stair cases seemed alien to us. On the occasion of Teachers' Day, we asked some of the teachers about their early days as professors in St Xavier's College.

Dr. Nandita Mangalore

Head of the Department of Life Sciences and Biochemistry

Being an ex-student of this college, Nandita Ma'am was already familiar with all things Xavier's even before she began teaching. Recounting the kind of students she taught when she began, she says, "Students were academically more adventurous then. They were not bound by credits or marks. Their interest depended on no other factor but their desire to learn." Referring to the atmosphere of the college in her initial days as a teacher she says, "There was more ease then, today, we literally have no time to stop and stare. Teachers are in a rush to finish the portion." She traces the change in students from being audio learners to visual and now finally, experiential learners.

Dr. Pearl Pastakia

Head of the Department of English

Professor Pearl Pastakia joined the faculty of the Department of English Literature in St. Xavier's College back in 1994. Twenty years later, she is at the helm of the very same department. She has a vague memory of having an introductory meeting with the then Principal on her first day. The syllabus back then was of course very different. Pearl Ma'am was comfortable enough with the old system but she believes that autonomy has brought in a sense of accountability, which was missing earlier. The structure that is now in place has helped her

function more systematically. She says, "The current crop of students are quite outspoken and do not have any qualms about expressing themselves openly, which is a positive trend."

**Dr. Agnelo Menezes**

Associate Professor, the Department of Economics

Fresh out of graduation at St. Xavier's, Aggie Sir stayed back and joined the Economics faculty. He admits that a system that thrived on rote learning proved inadequate to communicating his knowledge of Economics. "What I can recall of my early days as a professor was that I realized that I did not know Economics," he said. In spite of having topped the subject as a student, he found himself unable to answer the questions posed by his class. Recollecting his nervousness at that point, he said, "I then started questioning my own knowledge of Economics and methodologies and that's why I have become a free teacher today." A stronger supporter of autonomy, Aggie Sir believes that he has become a better teacher and that the prior system did not have much scope for studying current and relevant topics.

**Dr. Vivien Amolkar**

Head of the Department of Microbiology & PG Dept. of Biotechnology

"I joined the teaching faculty of St. Xavier's College as a demonstrator (a post that was discontinued in Maharashtra a few years later) in 1976 and as a senior college lecturer in 1979. My teaching experience in the very first days was extremely satisfying; the student interactions were very warm, although challenging and this encouraged me to choose teaching as my life's vocation." She refers to those times as the days of 'chalk and talk', no 'Xerox' and no computers. "All reference work involved long hours in the library interspersed with cups of tea in the canteen. Students worked hard but were also involved in several extracurricular activities, in keeping with the eternal Xavier's tradition", she elaborates.

*- Jheel Gada and
Aathira Konikkara, SYBA*

XPRESS RECOMMENDS: QUICK BREAK IDEAS FOR THE END SEMS

Who hasn't taken a break while studying for the End Sems - and wound up spending three hours watching TV, crying over the death of a beloved fictional character or scrolling through their Facebook newsfeed? We provide some quick break ideas to relieve pre-exam boredom.

- 1) **Learn a simple skill.** Something that doesn't require a lot of effort, but will still impress your friends during particularly boring lectures. Juggling, doodling, or folding origami birds.
- 2) **Make yourself a snack.** And eat it. Eat frequently and make your own food. It will refresh your mood, improve your culinary skills, and most importantly-impress your mother (keep on her good side during these stressful times).
- 3) **Make fun lists.** If doodling isn't your thing, fun list-making ('Things to do after the Exams', 'Five Worst Chapters in my Textbook')- is easier and better than any list you'd see on BuzzFeed. Write down your thoughts and vent your frustration on paper.
- 4) **Sleep.** If all else fails, construct a makeshift pillow from your thickest textbooks, and take forty winks. Just forty, mind you, or you might find yourself having wasted three hours dreaming about said beloved character, and that just won't do.

- Nikita Mujumdar, SYBA

FLASH FICTION CONTEST ENTRY

We present to you the winning entry of our flash fiction contest.

Congratulations,
Leeba Thomas (TYBA)!

When you are happy, you blush red, but when I'm happy, I blush yellow. You write on cards 'Roses are red, violets are blue, my dear friend, is that you?' And you know what I write on cards? 'Arteries are red, veins are blue, my next donor, will that be you?'

Yours,

A thalassemic fellow human

WATCH OUT FOR:

1. **Ithaka: A Winter's Tale**, start applying and practising your drama/song-dance routines! Definitely one of the highlights of the year.
2. **Paradigm: We hear the much loved science festival from two years ago is scheduled for a comeback.** Speculation is on about whether the equally beloved Paradigm Shots will do so as well.
3. **Placement Cell: They have been doing a brilliant job, and all the recruitments are early this year, so keep your ears open!**

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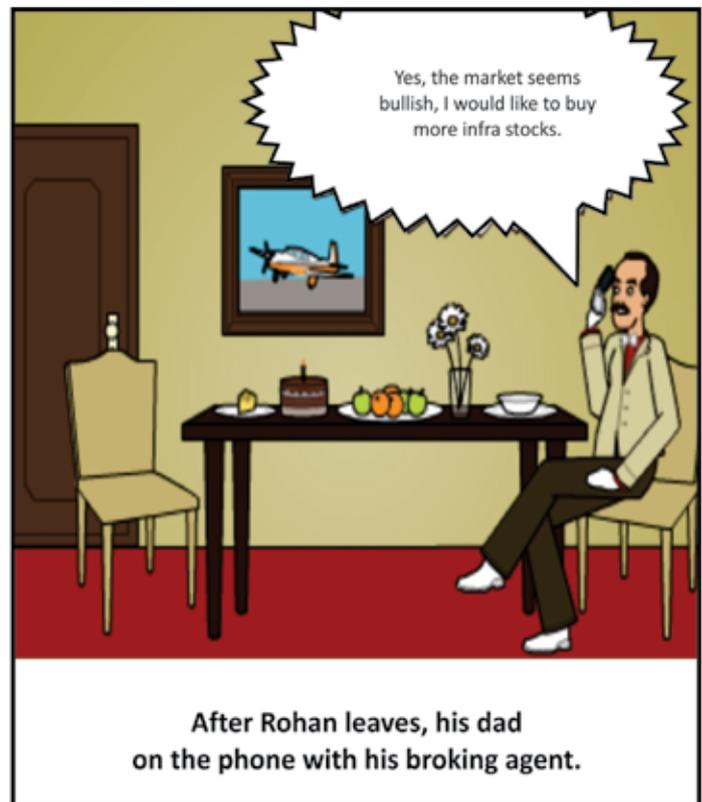
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