



IITians engaged in social work

Graduating from an IIT is a foolproof way to settle into a plush job with a high-paying salary and a number of other such exciting probabilities. Some IITians have veered away from white-collared jobs and air-conditioned offices to help their cities see a better tomorrow, say **Nishit Chandan** and **Arundhati Kelkar**

Ranjit Gadgil: IIT-Kanpur, MSc in Physics (1988-1993). Presently, programme director of Janwani



Arvind Gupta: IIT-Kanpur, BTech (Electronic) in 1975, Presently heading Muktangan Children's Science Centre

Ashok Sreenivas: IIT-Bombay, BTech (Computer Science) in 1987, PhD in Computer Science in 1988, Working in two sectors: urban transport (with Parisar Urban Transport Group) and energy (with Prayas Energy Group)



Satish Khot: IIT-Bombay, BTech (chemical engineering) in 1971, IIM-Kolkata MBA in 1974, Presently, president of the National Society for Clean Cities (NSCC), Pune division



Girish Sant: IIT-Bombay, BTech (Chemical Engineering) in 1986, IIT-Bombay, MTech in 1988, Presently, trustee of Prayas and coordinator for energy issues



Uday Bhawalkar: IIT-Bombay, BTech (Chemical Engineering) in 1973, IIT-Bombay, PhD in 1996, Bhawalkar Ecological Research Institute deals with bio-conversion to make pollution into reusable resources



"I want a clean city. Clean in every aspect, not just environmentally," says Satish Khot, president of the National Society for Clean Cities (NSCC), Pune division. The NSCC deals with problems at the micro level by motivating people to form neighbourhood groups and organisations, and helping them with issues such as slum development, vermiculture, healthcare, literacy, encroachments, unauthorised structures and so on.

Ranjit Gadgil, an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Kanpur graduate and presently the programme director of Janwani says, "Janwani works on issues related to better governance, slum rehabilitation, traffic and transportation and the general sustainable development of the city." The problems that we face today are because of the poor administrative set-up, he says.

Arvind Gupta is involved with the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) to popularise science by making scientific toys out of waste materials and teaching science through these to deprived children. These ex-IITians are driven by the thought that they need to give something back to the society that made them what they are today.

THEIR INSPIRATION

Something major must have inspired these men to choose to serve people rather than get comfortable and secure jobs. Here are some of the reasons:

Ashok Sreenivas, who works with Parisar Urban Transfer Group and Prayas Energy Group, was inspired to make a difference by using his area of expertise, which are the transport and energy sectors. He was stimulated to join the transport sector on seeing the deteriorating conditions of the transport system.

On the other hand, Ranjit Gadgil says, "Living abroad for several years, I was shocked to see the basic difference between American and Indian society. The question 'Why can't we have all the facilities that they have? Why can't we have clean roads, slum-free cities, good public transport systems?' kept nagging me. This eventually led me back to India and into this field. While Satish Khot says that he had been inspired since his college days to do something for the society that he prospered in. "It was a part of my growing up," he says.

SUPPORT FROM DEAR ONES

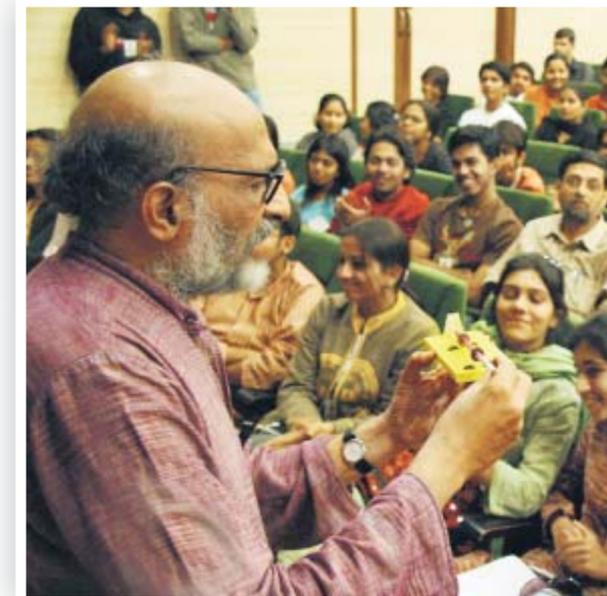
IITians opting for a career change from a cushy job to working for a cause close to their hearts needed the right support and encouragement from their near and dear ones. Their decisions puzzled many around them, but later they got a lot of support.

It was not difficult for Ranjit Gadgil to take this decision. "My family has a long history of people working for a social cause, so my decision was nothing unusual. At the



ple are slowly realising that if they want to make a change in their city, they are going to have to come together as a group and work towards it," says Satish Khot. When asked about how IITians should be encouraged to get into social work, Arvind Gupta highlights that IITians know which side of the fence is greener, some acutely feel the contradictions in their society and 'drop out' of the rat race voluntarily to do something closer to their hearts.

"One way to encourage more



■ A file picture of Arvind Gupta giving a demonstration of his scientific toys

same time, having worked as an IT consultant in the US for seven years has allowed me to ensure a modest, but adequate financial safety. I often realise that many others who want to make the same choice as me face resistance and discouragement from family and friends. I must consider myself lucky that this is not the case with me," he says. Arvind Gupta takes his inspiration from his mother's deep and abiding trust in him. When he left Telco, his uncles did not like it, but his moth-

er's words to him "doing something meaningful" carried him forward. "Her words still inspire and propel me to do something worthwhile. All my life I have lived my passions and got paid for them. Few people are as fortunate," he says. And in working towards his beliefs, Satish Khot has always valued his wife's support in every endeavour he has made.

FUTURE BEHOLDS

"It is heartening to know that peo-



IITians to take up social causes is to send first and second year students to live in a city slum or a tribal area for just two-three days. This will directly expose them to conditions of depravity and dehumanisations. This can come only through direct personal experience and not through lectures on poverty. As they are thinking and analytical people used to linking cause to effect, they will soon find the reasons for poverty. Most of them will still opt to take up cushy jobs with multinational companies, but some of them will certainly take up more meaningful vocations."

Sreenivas is of the belief that the education system is oriented only towards 'getting a good job and climbing the ladder' and should focus on exposing the opportunities (not just in terms of money, but in terms of work) in other sectors. "More people would become aware about this. Then, of course, it is the individual's choice that will determine what line he pursues," he says. Ranjit Gadgil is also of a similar belief that any education that is holistic and encourages free thinking is bound to create people that would naturally be attracted to this field.

CEE to educate teachers on environment

Course can be taken up by educators of any faculty

Ankita Maru

Today, environmental issues are the most talked of topics around the globe. The Indian government is taking steps to sensitise the new generations towards these issues. One of the steps is supporting institutions like the Centre for Environment Education (CEE).

Among other things, the CEE is engaged in developing programmes and materials to increase awareness about the environment and sustainable development.

Established in 1984 as a Centre of Excellence in Environmental Education supported by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), CEE has come up with a course for educationists.

While the government has made environmental issues a compulsory part of school curriculum, it is important to ensure that to be able to impart this knowledge, teachers must also have the complete knowledge about the subject and be sensitive towards environmental issues.

CEE, in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, is offering the Green Teacher Distance Learning Diploma Course to educators and teachers of any subject who wish to enhance their knowledge and skills in the teaching-learning of environment and development. The centre offers this course to sensitise and educate teachers so that the new world is more aware and environment friendly.

The course has been running successfully for the last four years, creating more and more well-informed teachers.

The one-year long course includes two compulsory contact sessions of about four-five days each, and a five-month project. The self-study hours are approximately 240 (60 hours/module). The project requires another 40-50 hours. A set of study material containing modules and CDs will be provided to the participants. The primary language of the course is English and admissions are open till June 30, for the 2008-09 batch. Application forms and the prospectus can be downloaded from www.cceindia.org and www.greenteacher.org free of cost.

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MS DOUBTFIRE

TECHNO TALK
I am an IT engineer with one year experience in software. Last year, I appeared for GRE and TOEFL as I want to pursue MS (Computer Science) in the US. What factors are considered when applying for financial aid? Will the recession in the US affect my chances of getting it? If I don't get it from the university that I am applying for, how can I get it from some other source? What are the job prospects after MS? What is the average salary of a person who has completed MS in Computer Science with a US degree in India or in the US?

record, very good GRE scores, and keen interest in the programme one wishes to pursue; preferably established through projects or publications or work experience. If you do not get financial aid, you should target getting teaching aid or research aid from the college after starting your programme. This means that you have to pay for the first term and hope to subsidise the second term without any assurances. Recession in the US would hopefully not trickle down to cutting off financial aid to international students which is hard to come by even without recession. Most banks offer education loans with more or less same terms. If you choose to get one, please read and understand fine print clearly. Average entry level salary of an average engineer is in

the range of \$50,000 to \$70,000 per year. It greatly varies from person to person and specialisation. India treats entry level engineers from any country at par with the one who has got BE/BTech from equivalent Indian universities.

CAPITAL MARKET
I am a final year mechanical engineering student from Mumbai University with a first class. I wish to pursue MBA in finance. I have secured placement in an engineering consultancy firm through campus placements and I intend to work there for two to three years. Will this experience count? Also, I have keen interest in capital markets. Do any universities offer courses in this discipline?

Your experience in engineering consultancy firm will be very valuable when you apply for MBA. Sometimes work experience is not merely how long you worked, it is also about projects undertaken, contribution to growth of the company, problem solving skills, teamwork etc. I think it is a great idea to work for a few years. Take GMAT and TOEFL, and identify the colleges you wish to go to and then apply. Most MBA programmes cover capital markets studies. Colleges would recognise your interest in capital market if you do basic programs that NSE offers.

LITERATURE HUNK
I am currently pursuing TYBA in English Literature and would like to do MA in the same in the US. Would it be advisable for me to do an MA in India be-

fore applying abroad? Also, which are the best universities for English Literature in the US? I have scored 87% in ICSE, 81% in Class 12, 78% in FYBA and 70% in SYBA. Are these marks adequate to get me into a good university?

-Masha Sha
You must complete MA in India as a three-year degree is not adequate for any graduate admission in the US. After completing MA, you may try to get in a PhD programme. You'll need to take GRE and TOEFL before applying. Your admission will depend more on your interest in literature, writing capability, publications. Your ICSE and standard XII marks at this stage are almost irrelevant. Great references can help in getting admissions to good universities too.

'Sadhana Amte's autobiography *Samidha* gave me a better insight,' says Pawar

Prof translates Amte's memoirs

Anuradha Mane
The word *Samidha*, in Marathi means offering for a sacred fire. True to its meaning, Sadhana Amte's autobiography by the same name has been fuelling the inspirations of several readers for many years now. So when Pune-based professor Shobha Pawar, got an offer to translate the book in English, she knew it was a rare honour. And this honour came from none other than the late Baba Amte himself, whom Pawar had known for more than two decades. The book had already been translated into Hindi, so during a visit, Pawar casually asked Baba Amte if someone was working on an English translation. He said no, but immediately asked her if she would do it. "Secretly I always wished to translate this book. But I was too scared to ask as I didn't know if Baba would find me fit for the job," says Pawar, who is the head of the English department at the SP



College. The autobiography talks about the life and times of Sadhana and Baba Amte, noted social workers who devoted their lives for leprosy patients. "Their work is an extension of their love and their life is an eternal romance," says Pawar who took almost two years to translate the book. While Pawar had always heard from the Amtes about the various trials and tribulations of their life, translating the autobiography gave her a better insight into their lives. "I was a changed person the first time I met the Amtes. But after

translating the book, I learnt a lot more about the Amtes' struggle and their children," she says. The book has been published by Orient Longman (Rs295) in March. "But I haven't had an opportunity to launch the book officially yet," said Pawar. Luckily for her, she got the first copy of the book in February and immediately flew down to Nagpur to show it to Baba, who was bedridden because of his illness. "He passed away a week later. If he hadn't seen the book, I would have felt guilty all my life," she said. With no financial expectations from this work of translation, Pawar will be donating all the proceeds from the book sale to Anandvan, an ashram started by Baba Amte to treat and rehabilitate leprosy patients. She only has one expectation, as she puts it, "I just wish that every youngster would read the book in these times where moral deterioration, violence and corruption are so rampant."

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