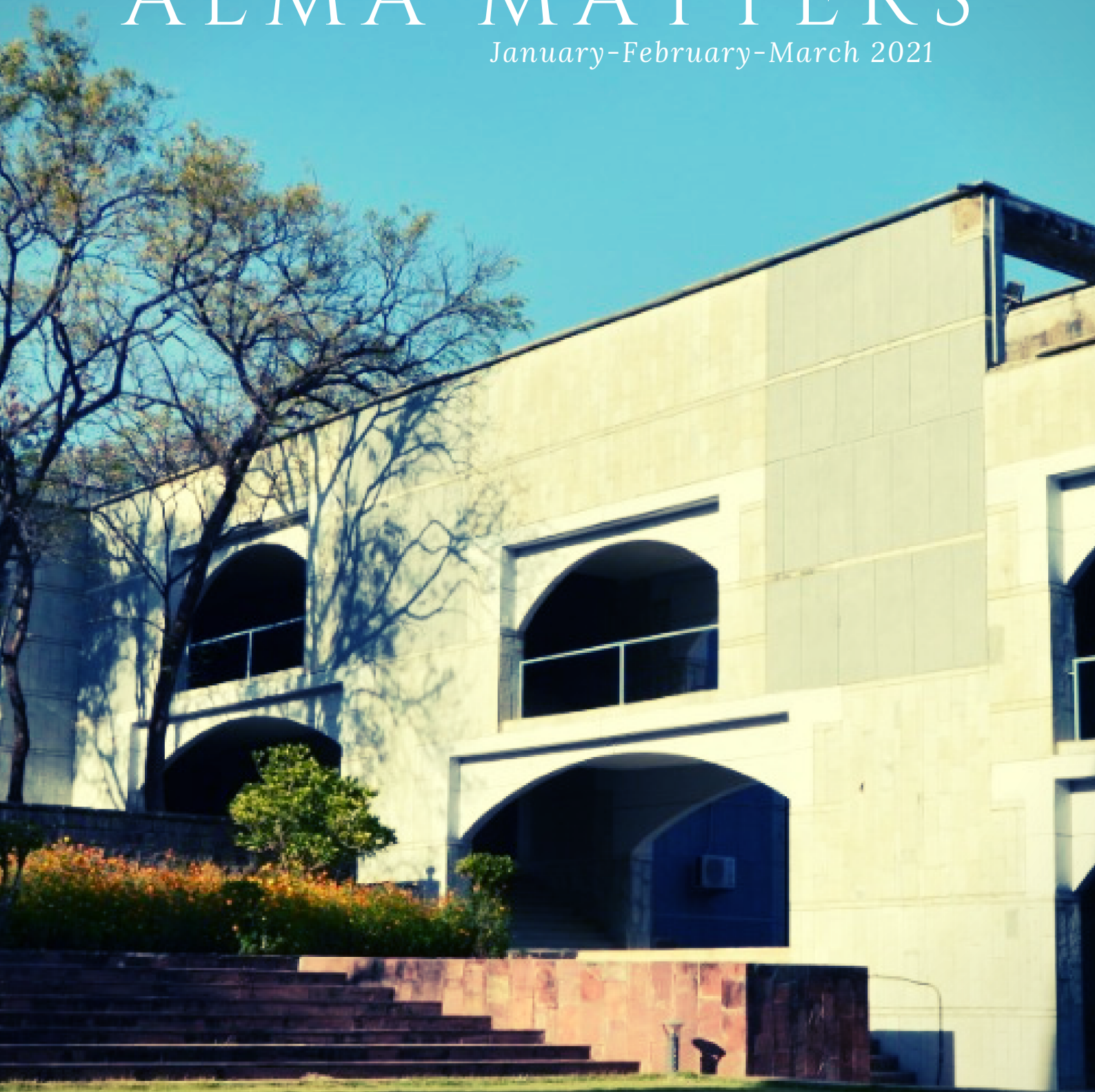


**iifm**  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF FOREST MANAGEMENT

# ALMA MATTERS

*January-February-March 2021*



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF IIFM

# ALMA MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF IIFM

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Friends, here is the third edition of AA newsletter "Alma Matters". As promised, this edition of Newsletter again brings the reminiscences and keeps you abreast with the activities of the campus. January 2021 Dr Suprava Patnaik (Professor, Faculty of Ecosystem and Environmental Management) superannuated after a wonderful tenure at IIFM and contributing significantly in the research arena of the institute. The Alumni Association (AA) extends our heartfelt good wishes to Suprava mam.

In this edition, Dipak Jha (PFM 1998-2000) narrates an interesting story of a trip with his batchmates to the jungles of Delawadi. It is interesting to listen from Swati Minz (PFM 2013- 15) about her passion towards nature and wildlife which she acquired through her Summer Internship at Bandhavgarh National Park. Every alumnus and alumna cherishes their memory about the campus life and Abhisuchi Srivastava (PFM 2012- 14) has penned her wonderful reminiscence of campus life.

The "Batch of the Month" for this edition features FPM 2011-15. While the batch is small but the alumni stand tall in their respective fields.

2020 was tough for everyone and affected the students in many ways. The students (especially the students of passing out batch) had almost lost the hope of coming back to the institute till they received a welcome message in January 2021 that the institute is reopening. As the students are coming back to the institute, it is heartening to listen to their experiences. Three students from the passing out batch have expressed the wonderful feeling of coming back to the institute.

This edition continues to present important activities at the campus by the students and admires their zeal to organize variety of interesting events even when away from campus. Even online, the fun and interest element remained high.

The AA, to express its views and solidarity with the institute on the matter of IIFM's disengagement from Government of India (GoI), wrote to the honorable Prime Minister requesting for a meeting to be able to express the viewpoints of the 2,500 plus alumni of IIFM. The AA also organized an online interaction with the IIFM faculty to hear and understand the viewpoints of the faculty members. The interaction was attended by good number of faculty where it was informed by the faculty that IIFM has submitted a blueprint regarding the matter of disengagement. As the blueprint is already submitted, the matter of disengagement is to be taken up based on the response from the GoI.

As we look forward to the next edition of our Newsletter, we encourage your contribution to the Newsletter by sending the write up from your days at the campus. You are also welcome to join the editorial team. Please write to a1\_ak@rediffmail.com.

au revoir

Avinash Kumar- Editor

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## HYPNOTIZED IN DELAWADI

DIPAK JHA, PFM 1998 - 2000

Dipak Jha works as a senior software Integration Architect (Cloud Technologies).  
He lives with his family in London, United Kingdom



In the din of the night a motorcade roared south. Two pilot outriders, comprising a scooter and a motorbike, both reeling under the combined enthusiasm of their rider-pillion duos and doubling up as much as our reconnaissance vehicles as our outward probes into the ethereal freedom that we thought lay ahead, followed closely by a rather noisy, diesel powered Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) that carried as many as ten of us packed in at least a five-is-to-three ratio of actual vs recommended carrying capacity. Adrenalin running super high in every vein, a hot, muggy day gradually giving way to a breezy, invigorating night, the usual traffic mess of sub-urban Bhopal gingerly receding to open up to the clear highway roads we so looked forward to, this dark, beckoning night was already living up to its promise of exotic thrill. But what was perhaps most intriguing about this group of youngsters zooming off into oblivion was a cumulative ignorance about exactly where they were headed to. It didn't really matter to any one of them that the mad dash into the jungles of the south was in reality, a journey largely devoid of an exact destination. What did matter to one and all was that they had collaboratively flocked to run away from a situation and that running away had brought them all so very close together - almost under overpowering compulsions of subconscious forces not many of them had experienced or handled so far. My own exhilaration riding a crest, of course, I was in control of the lead motorbike and had not eased the throttle back from its max position for quite some time now.

We were roughly into the 4th week of our PFM program. The initial euphoria of having joined a glossy looking course in a dream of an institute, installed so lavishly atop a green hill had been mercilessly eroded by a series of vapid lectures, delivered through long, dreary afternoons and ruthlessly elementary food served day in and out in our humdrum students' mess. However, the most toxic of all elements that affected our psyches, as freshly inducted students, was the imposition of unwarranted hostel discipline that often took the form of elaborately drafted, obnoxiously legal-sounding notices hung up randomly on our notice boards. Those lists of do's and don't s, mostly based on recent incidents of our indulgence into fun and frolic that got reported verbatim to the faculty, hit us exactly where it hurt the most. Our batch has gone down the history of IIFM as one of the most rebellious ones that the institute may have handled and as someone who habitually contributed most to the storm, I can trace much of our pugnacious behaviour back to some of these notices that had incited us so intensely in those initial days. So this particularly tasteless week ending on a Friday afternoon, vexed, deflated students walking back to the hostel from another tedious lecture and a fresh notice on the wall with a new set of do's and don't s constituted precisely the ingredients needed for triggering off a psychological explosion. One of the don't s in that list explicitly barred us from venturing out of the campus in groups. This diktat had probably just been stuck in there as a "general cover" but what the author of the notice hadn't realized was that entry, solely by itself, would convert into a recipe for an organized, categorical coup against this farcical concept of hostel discipline for "fully responsible, self-respecting" post-graduate students. In the most spontaneous planning session I have ever been party to, a meticulous criminal scheme was cunningly hatched. We would all dig into our allowances, if need be beg, borrow or steal, would hire a SUV, fill up the guts of the scooter and the motorbike we had with fuel and simply drive off to the south where we knew were some of the most enchanting forests of the area. That very evening! For the whole weekend and, of course, without informing anyone who represented any form of authority, whatsoever.



To this day I remain awed by the brilliance, dexterity and sheer speed at which the plan was executed. Backpacks, essential groceries, cameras, bedrolls, essential first-aid kits (including crepe bandages), flashlights, some self-defence equipment like sticks and kitchen knives etc all started rolling out from those hostel rooms into our common open areas where we, partners in crime, stood and planned as a collaborative group. A sub-committee was quickly dispatched to the IIFM foothills to secure a hired SUV and another to good-old madhuram to fetch critical expedition essentials like flasks of tea, samosas etc. As many as fourteen of us, yawning and frowning till a few hours back with no definite plans for the weekend and yet at about nine in the evening we were all yelling in a sonorous chorus as the SUV sputtered into life and whizzed off on that narrow road leading away from the foothill.

We didn't want to stop. It was not as if stopping would kill the adventure or, for that matter bring that horrible hostel discipline back into our lives. Somehow we felt we would lose each other if we did stop. The coup seemed to have wielded a magic wand, spinning off forces of amazing cohesion that had amalgamated us into an inseparable group of like-minded Tintins. It was this new-found sense of bonding that had engulfed us all to the extent that in our conscious minds even the thrill of the unfolding adventure felt secondary. That we belonged to this amazing team of heroes and the realization that starkly similar factors had been troubling us all for the past few weeks became our prime mental assets. The promises that our upcoming adventure held for us was perhaps more of an icing on the cake at that point in time. However I am sure each one of us, to this date, will acknowledge that contours of whatever memory we still retain of the trip have more to do with the unadulterated team spirit all of us so perceptibly felt than with what we managed or did not manage to do in the forests over that weekend.

The rest, as they say, is history. We took a few breaks on our way to nowhere, more to pass around and share those bottles of holy water we had managed to pick up on the way or to release stuff, when we could hold it no further, back to mother nature. Very late in the evening and just before we deliberately lost contact with civilization, we took a rather elongated break at a desolate village on the outskirts of Delawadi forests where, through a show of some of the entrepreneurship that we thought we had been picking up of late, we got a butcher to collaborate with a restaurant owner and got them to prepare loads of deliciously fried chicken for us. That being the last worldly item we could buy from non-forest economies, with a SUV-full of super-excited men and women and four innovative conquerors on a couple of two-wheelers, we drove right into the heart of the forest. A huge man-made "machaan" that we spotted in one of the densest stretches of the forest, spread alongside a rather deeply cut river, seemed like the perfect place to spend the night. It was here that we soaked in the rest of the liquor we had been saving and devoured those tons of mouth-watering fried chicken. We laughed, we cried, we sang, we fought, we made up and we danced. We danced like there would be no tomorrow. The two guitarists in our team rose gracefully to the occasion and played some popular songs on demand. Yes, fourteen of us, in the middle of nowhere, boisterously ripping our way through the darkness and silence of a deadly jungle night till a scorching, late-morning sun mercilessly gnawed through the group's hangover-induced stupor, triggering a generic retreat back into our SUV and a unanimous desire to roll down the hill, beginning the long journey back home. Though we had resolved to stay away from the hostel for the whole of the weekend, I guess each one of us found it rather convenient to lay the blame on sheer exhaustion and vote for returning. But we did have loads of fun on our way back - taking much more than a reasonable number of breaks at highway dhabas, pulling each others' legs, singing, dancing, stalling and laughing as we gradually reduced the number of kilometers back to IIFM.

Quite predictably, within the next week, all fourteen of us were showered with show-cause letters from the IIFM faculty, demanding explanations for the recent display of freak behaviour, so unbecoming of management students. But what none of the faculty had realized was that by then, a self-healing, resilient team with shameless "herd immunity" had already been built. It was utterly amusing that all of us responded to those letters with exactly matching lines of superfluous explanation but the matter was not pursued further. However, the sentiments that Delawadi had aroused, lingered in my psyche for the rest of my life. I can't explain how I had ended up missing such an experience during my engineering college days or during the few years of professional life I had spent before I joined IIFM. Maybe some experiences are destined to influence you at times pre-determined by destiny and quite possibly, destiny even chooses to simply ignore a number of less fortunate people. But for those who do get touched, the effects are compelling. If you are lucky enough to be a chosen one, in this very world and in this very lifetime you will bump into circumstances and teams that will completely engulf you, leaving no option but to voluntarily get hypnotized and dance to their magical tunes, in sheer enchantment. Delawadi and that awesome group of fourteen was one such combination.

## FOND ADIEU TO A BELOVED TEACHER....



After 26 years at IIFM, **Dr. Suprava Patnaik** superannuated on 29th January 2021. All of us from PFM 96 to PFM 21 [except perhaps for those who were in campus during 2009-2011, when she was at UNESCO] have very fond memories of her.

For those of you who graduated before 1994, Dr. Patnaik was in the faculty of Ecosystem and Environmental Management. She earned her Ph.D. from North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong. She was perhaps the first faculty at IIFM who brought with her a strong experience of working in an NGO, having worked as an Ecologist at Development Alternatives, Delhi for five years (1989-1994). She brought her expertise in interdisciplinary research working in the inter-phase of natural and social sciences. She often took up innovative research at IIFM and steered pioneering consultancy and training program. She played an important role in upping research standards at IIFM. Her research papers, book chapters, co-edited books and project/technical reports are of very high standard. She has steered and completed several research/consultancy projects and training programmes with the support of national and international agencies including UNESCO, FAO, IUCN, CIDA/ICEF and MoEF & CC etc. on various contemporary issues related to Biodiversity Conservation and livelihood, Climate Change, Sustainability and Natural Resource Management.

During 2009-2011, she worked as a National Coordinator, UNESCO at New Delhi where she coordinated the program on Building Partnerships to support UNESCO's World Heritage Biodiversity Program: India in four World Natural Heritage Sites of India. The alumni wish her the best for her next innings.....

### **Gayatri Pandey PFM 2017-19, Assistant Manager at MicroSave - Financial Inclusion**

Suprava mam taught us a section in the course of Corporate Environment Management. An absolute subject expert, her relevant examples were always very helpful. The assignment on Triple Bottom Line was one of the best that I worked on during the two year course. Her constructive criticism always helped me to improve for better. She is very supportive even outside classroom and has been a motherly figure for a lot of us!

### **Nikhil Mathur PFM 1998-00, Interest and experience in rural livelihood and school education**

I have very warm memories of Suprava ma'am. There was a lot of respect for her in all the three PFM batches and the two MRM batches that I interacted with during my time at IIFM. We used to look forward to her classes and other interactions, perhaps because she was perceived as someone who spends a lot of time in the field. Here's wishing her the very best for her next innings.

### **Batch of PFM 1996-98**

Our batch remembers Suprava ma'am as one of those very hardworking teachers and mentors, one whom we could reach out to for guidance or help on any matter whatsoever. We very fondly recall the excitement in her voice whenever she spoke with her, in class and outside, both during our stay at IIFM and later. Her cheerful nature, childlike excitement and overall enthusiasm are a reflection of the simple-hearted person that she is. And for those who missed it, she makes wonderful mustard fish and is a great host.

### **Alark Saxena PFM2001-03, Assistant Professor, School of Forestry at Northern Arizona University**

One of the memories from IIFM that always stays with me is trying to brush up on all that was taught by Dr. Suprava Patnaik in the previous class. We knew that every class, her first task was to randomly select a few of us to talk about what we learnt - I know that that the entire class would take notes in her class because of her style. This exercise made us probably remember and understand most of what she had to teach long after we left IIFM. I still remember some of her lessons and thank her for that.

### **Alice Lakra PFM 1997-99, Chief Operating Officer at Chhattisgarh State Rural Livelihood Mission**

Life has special flashbacks we all cherish throughout our lives. Few memories remain with us forever. Few people come in our lives and remain as special part of those wonderful memories. Moments spent at IIFM were, what I can call on record as, the 'golden era' of our lives. Madam Suprava Patnaik, as our faculty and mentor holds a special place in those wonderful memories.

"Where is water storage located at IIFM campus?" This was perhaps one of the first quiz questions we came across after joining IIFM in 1997. As fresh students, full of enthusiasm and curiosity, we were just getting to know the campus and the huge water tank was a major landmark standing tall between the mess and hostel buildings. I wrote my reply on answer sheet - 'India Gate', as we knew it. I thought I nailed the quiz question. Later, my response was read out aloud by madam Suprava Patnaik as she went on laughing. She probably found my answer amusing and I was probably clueless if that was the right or wrong answer! But I quite liked her laughter.

Few classes later, she became special. Special not only because she was teaching subjects I loved or enjoyed but also because she became more than just a faculty. Even after graduating from IIFM, our interactions continued as I got to work in Bhopal. Years later, it was meeting only during reunions or visits to campus but the bond always felt strong. There were occasions you could find a friend in her; sometimes a guide and sometimes even family. As she moves on to a new dimension in life, I wish her the best. IIFM memories are never complete without your thoughts, Ma'am. Thank you for being there for us and with us.

### **Prabhat Labh PFM 1994-96, Chief Executive Officer Grameen Foundation, India**

It was the decade of nineties in the twentieth century, and I was about to proceed on my first Organizational Training segment. Being among the bottom quartile in the class, of course I got to pick my OT project in the end, after all the interesting sought after projects were taken by my friends in the top three quartiles of the class. Hence I got to work on a project that nobody else wanted. The project was, to work with Gujarat Ecology Commission, and to prepare an Ecological Profile of Bharuch district. Now, for those of you who remember that time, may remember that one of the hottest and most controversial topic in the world of ecology and environment at that time was the Sardar Sarovar Dam, which was being constructed near Kevadia in Bharuch district at that time. Since it was a project related to Ecology and Ecosystem, my natural choice was to go to Suprava Mam and seek her guidance and to ask her, if she could be my faculty guide.

I still remember two things she had told me. She said, this topic on which you are going to work, is perhaps the single most important topic today, and also most controversial. You will learn in the most real life scenario the conflict between the ecological perspective and development perspective, when the development is seen from an anthropocentric lens. Suprava Mam really got me interested in ecosystem, and was always highly encouraging even though I know that the quality of my work was not that great. She had an amazing ability to help you improve your work without ever being critical of what you have done, and also, to deal with the subject in a manner that would make you more deeply interested in the subject. I also remember some of the tips she had shared with me just before I was proceeding to Bharuch, about balancing between what an organization might want to see in the report versus, what you may want to explore and write. For those of you who remember the controversy around raising the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam and its ecological impact in the early nineties in the twentieth century, would know how complex this topic was.

When I look back, I realize that it's not about what cards you have been dealt in your hand rather It's all about how you play with whatever you have been dealt with. Some deals stay with you forever. Doing my Organizational Training under Suprava Mam's guidance was one such deal, which she encouraged me to play and something that has stuck with me forever as one of my most cherished learning opportunities.



**Mamta Verdhan PFM 1994-96, Researcher, Govt. of Alberta**

Ms Suprava Patnaik taught us Ecology. With a background in Biological science I had a fair idea of Ecology but had no clue of the systems perspective that she taught the class through. I also remember all the real world examples she brought in the class through her work in development. I was quite fascinated with her stories about appropriate technology for rural folks and indigenous knowhow. Her stories were my very first foray into the world of rural development and its linkage with Forest Ecology. Outside of class she was super friendly and approachable and one could talk to mam on almost about anything and she would listen like a friend without judgment. I wish mam all the very best in her life post retirement.

**Archana Sharma PFM 1994-96, Coordinator Programs, ARANYA, Bhopal**

Back in 1994-96, PFM had very few students. Hardly any batches crossed 25 in strength, a perfect scenario for increased communication between instructor and students. It also made space for very friendly relations with willing faculty but among all our teachers Dr. Suprava Patnaik held a very special place.

In class, I found that her teaching engaged students and encouraged reflections. It was obvious that she had made large investment of time in preparing for her classes. Her examples were contemporary and one could see the implications for the circumstances we live in and with which one must deal.

Outside the class she was informal, easy to approach and tolerant. One enjoyed conversations with her over many issues; and so many students sought her advice on personal issues as well. Post IIFM, I enjoyed the great combination of interesting conversations and excellent food at her place.

As a researcher, her contribution to IIFM was very significant; bringing in contemporary and innovative approaches and methods and effective analysis, imperative for good research. Her skills and expertise were incredibly beneficial to IIFM's reputation in research. As a woman, I always admired her sense of autonomy, free of double standards, driven towards equality, respectful of individuals, informed and non judgmental. She fitted perfectly my vision of being empowered.

Shall miss not having you in Bhopal, Mam. Wishing the best for your next innings.....

**Sarika Sinha, PFM 1999-01, Regional Manager at Action Aid, central part of India**

Suprava ma'am- morning sunshine, independent, radiant autonomous. In many ways, she justifies more than her name. Morning sunshine, yes, that's what you have always been for us...

Suprava ma'am looked radiant, independent, happy and embodied the light of the dawn the day I saw her last month. The day she was superannuating and leaving the IIFM campus. Resplendent in her beauty and confidence, ma'am welcomed everyone to her chamber, as she had always done. As Avinav, Sameer, Archana and I walked in, with some of us meeting her after an aeon, it seemed to us that she had chosen to reject ageing and not only that, mock it with her clear nonchalance. Ma'am looked exactly the way we had seen her two decades ago...

With her razor-sharp memory, she narrated stories from each batch. It filled our hearts with exhilaration as we heard her recount, with immaculate detail, the very minute mischiefs, the cursory guise of a budding romance, the games, the interests, the personalities and the friends she had made in every batch. She remembers each one of us, and loves us unconditionally, with all our flaws and values, just the way we are!

As she narrated her unconventional ways of teaching and how she would ride threesome on bikes with her students, Suprava ma'am reminded us about how she challenged hegemonic power at every level. How she treaded the delicate tight rope of being a guide and a mate, at the same time. She taught us a lot and I must say that a lot of it was outside the classroom. With her sense of autonomy, equality and accountability, Suprava ma'am held a very close space in all our hearts. She always will...

Apart from being a mentor and a friend, she was a passionate conservationist and ecologist. Her thoughts around conservation were exceptionally inclusive as she challenged the notion of discursive development by breaking the binary of people versus nature and by being a practitioner of sustainable ecology, conservation and livelihood resurrection. She walked the tenuous path of academia and activism by striking a nuanced balance between co-production of knowledge and policy-praxis implementation.

Apart from being a great academic, teacher, friend, practitioner, she is an amazing human being! One who leaves her values as imprints on hearts of people, young and old alike.

'I still remember that day, when I failed and cried  
 But you reassured me calmly, because I had tried  
 You taught me not to get disappointed  
 At life's minor bumps and bounces  
 I will never forget that  
 Because YOU  
 Made me believe in second chances'

# AN ENCHANTING CAMPUS BECKONS



For most of us, the IIFM campus has been the most beautiful "home" we have ever lived in, in more than one sense. Green surroundings, chirping of birds, lovely hilltop views and that soothing feeling of being far from the maddening crowd gel so well with a unique atmosphere created by a combination of academics, friends, hostel life, fun and frolic that most of us, at the end of those two years, leave the campus with pleasant memories that stay with us for the rest of our lives. To be robbed of such pleasures because of a pandemic, on any scale, is surely a massive loss for the current batches but fortunately life seems to be limping back to normal, making this return to "sweet home" a rather blissful experience. Here is how some of them have expressed their exhilaration:

Had you imagined us walking along these trails again? Had you imagined us witnessing these splendiferous scenic sunsets again? Had you imagined us gagging together over silly jokes again? These were the questions we asked each other when we got back together after an unfortunate and heartrending separation of almost a year.



**Rishabh Chaturvedi**  
PFM 2019-21

On 16th March, 2020 when the notice was circulated that the institute is closing up for an indefinite period, we thought it will be for few weeks. Ignorant of what was to come we were in fact happy that the third term exam, scheduled from 17th March, had been postponed. The happiness was not to last as the situation forced us to remain away from the campus, our second home, for such a long time. Then we were informed that the institute will reopen from January 2021. Second year students were asked to report back to the campus in two slots on a voluntary basis. I arranged my travel in the second slot and reached on 7th February. When I reached the campus, in the morning, a wave of nostalgia hit me and all the memories began sprouting. Tiwari Ji was the first person I met on reaching the campus. I was thrilled meeting him. I was astonished to see the meticulous arrangements by the institute. A 14-day quarantine was arranged for all the reporting students in the Vindhyanchal Boys Hostel and Aravali Girls Hostel. The mess arranged three meals and two snacks on the hostel's ground floor each day. We attended online classes during quarantine. We could meet each other, share our laughter, roast each other, discuss issues and play together with sufficient social distance.

It's a wonderful feeling being back on the campus and waking up to the beautiful and picturesque ambience. My quarantine is over now and soon everybody will shift to their original rooms. The enthusiasm of returning made the quarantine days fly past. This is our last term. Thankfully we are back in the campus before we graduate. The near one year away from the campus will make this last term memories even more cherished.



**Shaon Roy**  
PFM 2019-21

It was March 2020, when all of us were asked to vacate the hostels due to Covid-19. The initial thought was that we will come back within few weeks. But it turned out to be 11 long months. Leaving of campus was so abrupt that we could not properly bid adieu to our friends. What started as a break from the daily routine soon made us disoriented and disenchanted. We were connected virtually but the essence of togetherness was completely lost. WhatsApp meeting never had enough room to get connected with all our friends at a time.

Time at home was full of restlessness and uncertainty. We kept contacting the institute with more than usual follow up, hoping that soon we will get the good news of returning back to the campus. It took time before we got the news from the authorities to come back to the campus from January 2021 in a phased manner. I smiled ear to ear for days. The excitement, the enthusiasm was back and things were looking hopeful.

We were told that we would have to adhere to the rules strictly and religiously. No mischief or insubordination would be tolerated. We would be checked for temperatures three times a day. We would have to wear masks, follow social distancing norms, food will be served to us in packages. We very happily accepted the all the conditions. Soon we will be able to stroll under the India Gate, roam in Library Lawn, have bonfires in the grasslands, see peafowls, and much more.

Today is the last day of my quarantine. I will break bread with my friends today, in our Swaruchi mess. I know today there won't be any bustling noises that we were accustomed to. Nor will I get to see all the students. Some are still in quarantine while others have chosen to study from home. A few will be there and for now, I am happy with it.



**Aseem**  
PFM 2019-21

I have always been appreciative of my experiences with life. They have made me who I am today and IIFM holds a special place in the jigsaw puzzle of my life. I am in love with this place from the day I landed here because of its ambience and especially because of the people around. The wonderful ongoing association with this dream place had to be put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We were sent back home before the nationwide lockdown started. The initial speculation was that we will come back to the campus in few weeks. It turned out to be just that - a speculation. Soon the days of waiting started looking unending. The thought that we may not be able to meet each other in the campus during the short time remaining of our course duration started looking like a harrowing certainty.

As distressful 2020 ended, we were informed about the possibility of getting back to the campus. The news was bright enough for all of us to immediately forget the distress we suffered during the time away from the campus.

Coming back to the campus is such a great feeling that complying with the conditions of coming back looked very doable. After being quarantined for two weeks and temperatures being monitored thrice a day, we are now resuming the usual routine. The joy of coming back in the campus is great, but it comes with a caution from authorities to strictly follow the prescribed norms which include social distancing and not leaving the campus.

Now, I can see my friends and talk to them in person as we used to before March 2020. I am thankful, elated and hopeful that things will be ok. I am thankful to everyone for making this possible. This juncture in education may be the last stop for many and I am glad we are not at home watching this pass by.



## EXPLORING NATURE: MY IIFM INDUCED OBSESSION

Swati Minz is currently working as Manager in Transform Rural India Foundation (TRIF), an initiative of Tata Trusts. She is based at Ramgarh (Jharkhand)

SWATI MINZ, PFM 2013-2015

My family has roots in a remote tribal village in Odisha. Our culture is rooted in forests. Early life however kept revolving around school and college at Sambalpur and I did not get to do long stints in my ancestral village. After each visit I would wonder for months about the life of my grandparents and their grandparents amidst those lush beautiful forests.

And then at IIFM I did my Summer Internship (SI) with Indian Grameen Services (IGS-BASIX). They sent me to a small village abutting the Bandhavgarh National Park in Manpur block of Umaria. My task was to scope for livelihood opportunities for people in that village. Lakhumar was a village of approximately 120 Baharia households right at the Tala gate of the park. This was summers of 2014. I stayed there for about five weeks. I lived in an idyllic house with mud walls and hand struck roof tiles. For the entire duration that I stayed there, there was no electricity supply in the village. I made many friends in the village. Few of them were drivers and guides for tourists visiting the National Park and they took me for tiger safaris and elephant rides in the forests.

All that I had studied about human-wildlife conflict, I got to see there. Often at night, tigers came into the agricultural fields and raided village cattle. If people came to know, they rushed to save their livestock and sometimes they too would be attacked. During my stay time the fields were empty, but villagers told of how deer and boars frequently graze and trample their standing crops. It's here living with the Baharias that I saw up and close also how communities in remote places have their own unique understanding, skills and philosophy, developed over their long interaction with their natural surroundings and how this indigenous knowledge impacts decision-making in their day-to-day life. Most importantly that tribal life is not a just a curatable cultural diversity. Appreciation and inclusion of their knowledge and lifeways is very important for sustainable development.

The SI was adventure-packed and all too often I went to bed hearing stories of tigers in the area that had turned man-eater. It was this stint at Lakhumar village that made me opt for specialisation in conservation and livelihood. In the second year all of us who opted for specialisation in conservation and livelihood went to Jim Corbett National Park. At Corbett, we were not just treated to tiger safaris but also got to stay inside the National Park that night.

These two experiences got me hooked to exploring nature and wildlife. So much so that soon after graduating from IIFM, I trekked up 15 kms in Chamoli to the Valley of Flowers National Park. Quite often on the trek, I recollected Kala Sir's lectures about the park and its beauty.

My forays into wilderness continues and has become an insatiable obsession and it all started one summer in 2014 when I went to Lakhumar for an internship.



## KAL HO NA HO.....

ABHISUCHI SRIVASTAVA  
PFM 2012-14

Abhisuchi Srivastava is currently working with Skillsonics India Private Limited as Senior Program Manager (pre-sales and consulting) and is based at Bangaluru

When I first came to the IIFM campus, the beauty and serene environment just took my breath away. Formalities complete, I went into my room and right there was a crab..... Dead..... But a crab..... Inside my room..... And immediately my heart said, Welcome to the forests..... Kal ho na ho became my favorite tagline from the day I entered the IIFM campus. The two years at IIFM is the most cherished journey of my life. This was the first time I was living in a hostel. To me each day on the campus was full of fun. Right from waking up late in the morning, dashing to the mess for breakfast, being late for the first class almost every day, the afternoon power nap and the late night walks. Each day on the campus I felt 'ai waqt ruk ja thum ja thahar ja'. When asked of the most cherished memory from IIFM, I cannot think of one. It's the journey of two years. I cherish it even after six years of leaving the campus. I have frequent dreams of me sitting with by batch mates atop the admin block, the hustle at the mess, the late night andheri gali walk, the booze sessions and talking shit. I just miss it all. If I could travel back in time, I would just want to be at IIFM with the PFM 12-14 batch. Looking back, I am proud that I became first female General Secretary of my batch at IIFM and I used my training in law to put up a case for selection of electives on basis of choice and not grades. I was able to convince the decision makers, at least for my batch. I owe a lot to my professors at IIFM Amitabh sir, Rekha mam, Dharni sir, CVRS sir, Bandopadhyay sir, Yogesh sir to name a few, who gave me a different perspective to think and work in the social sector. My suggestion to all those on the campus: Guys just enjoy your two years at the awesome place. Be carefree. 'Har pal yaha jee bhar jiyo, jo hai sama kal ho na ho'



# CAMPUS EVENTS OF THE MONTH

## ALUMNI INTERACTION



As part of ANC's Alumni Talk on 3rd January 2021, Sreyamsa Bairiganjan, working in renewable energy and climate finance programs at The World Bank, had an interactive session with the current batch. He spoke about his journey from IIFM to The World Bank. The talks centered on different ways of developing a career in the renewable energy sector and on how switching between sectors can help one achieve one's passion and the right way and right moment to switch. The students especially enjoyed his experiences of working in the Maldives where he worked on 152 Million USD Hybrid Solar (PV and BESS).

## A QUIZ (THAT DOES NOT ADD TO YOUR CGPA)



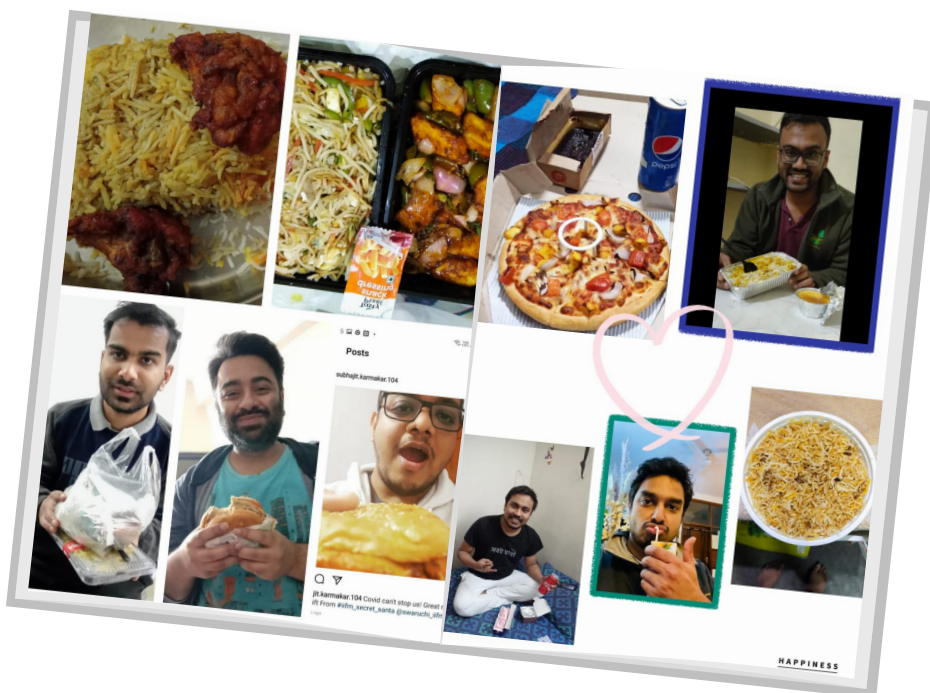
Sounds amazing, isn't it? This quiz is free from the pressures of CGPA. On 26th and 27th December 2020, 'Meraki' the literary club of IIFM, conducted 'QUIBBLE', an online quiz. Eight teams qualified and competed in the four elimination rounds before reaching the finals. Delving into the different genres of literature, from Color Purple to Geetanjali, from famous lyricists to well-known authors, from shayaris to poems, Quibble spanned sci-fi, Hindi sahitya, historical romance, politics, mystery, and many more. The lists go on and on. Harry, Ron and Hermione won the competition.

## SUDOKU CHAMPIONSHIP

A 9x9 grid Sudoku championship was organized by The Sports Club on 11th January, 2021. 32 people participated and Utkarsh Yadav (PGP 20-22) emerged as the champion. Animesh Singh (PGP 20-22) bagged second position and Vaibhav Bansal (PGP 20-22) the third. The Sports Club is thankful for the enthusiasm shown for the event and appreciated the participants for making this event a success.

# SIGNING OFF 2020 ON A FOOD EXCHANGE

To bid adieu to this housebound year, Swaruchi- the Mess Committee hosted the Biggest of all Events (BAE) on 31st December 2020. Food was exchanged with the batchmates and seniors. Participants were asked to order foods through food delivery apps like Zomato/Swiggy for either their own batchmates or senior/junior. The senders' were anonymous and the recipients were selected randomly by the mess organizing committee. This was Swaruchi's first online event and was a great success! The foodies finally had an event centered around them.



# BATCH OF THE MONTH

## (FPM 2011 - 15)



NAME: MANISHA  
CURRENT LOCATION: DELHI  
CURRENT PLACE OF WORK: VISIONSPRING  
BIRTHDAY: 9 SEPTEMBER  
PAST DEGREE: BACHELOR OF ENGINEERING (RITS BHOPAL)  
PLACEMENT FROM CAMPUS: NA



NAME: NISTHA TRIPATHI  
LOCATION: BHOPAL, MADHYA-PRADESH  
CURRENT PLACE OF WORK: SARTHAK EDUCATIONAL TRUST  
DESIGNATION: PROGRAM LEADER INDIA  
BIRTHDAY: JULY 24



NAME: POOJA SINGH  
CURRENT LOCATION: BHOPAL , MP  
CURRENT PLACE OF WORK: UN WOMEN , MULTI COUNTRY OFFICE , NEW DELHI  
BIRTHDAY: 13TH SEPTEMBER  
PAST DEGREE: MBA IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING  
PLACEMENT FROM CAMPUS: NOT APPLICABLE



NAME: POORNIMA MISHRA  
CURRENT LOCATION: BHOPAL , MP  
CURRENT PLACE OF WORK: JAGRAN LAKECITY UNIVERSITY BHOPAL  
BIRTHDAY: 15TH DECEMBER  
PAST DEGREE: MBA  
PLACEMENT FROM CAMPUS: NOT APPLICABLE



NAME: RUCHIKA  
CURRENT LOCATION: MUMBAI  
CURRENT PLACE OF WORK: AVP, RBL FINSERVE LTD.  
BIRTHDAY: 11 JAN  
PAST DEGREE: PGDM  
PLACEMENT FROM CAMPUS: NA



NAME: SUSHANT  
CURRENT LOCATION: TORONTO  
CURRENT PLACE OF WORK: RESEARCH ASSOCIATE SMART PROSPERITY INSTITUTE  
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PAST DEGREE: PGDFM, IIFM (2007-09)



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**AFTER ALL, WE ALL TAKE PRIDE IN  
PROCLAIMING – “IIFM के लिए कुछ भी”**