

**FROM THE DOORSTEP TO THE TERRACE OF D16
REMEMBERING: FORTY YEARS LATER**



Dorm 16 and 17 (Image shared by IIMA Archives)

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D 16 was a uniquely situated dorm. It was the first one as you enter from the gate - actually, when we joined, there was no gate or fence. Well-groomed shrubs acted as the divider between the road and the campus. The tall majestic brick structure with a gigantic circle as its face had a rather small entrance, considering the size of the building. Upon entering, one can see spiraling steps leading all the way to the terrace. There were three floors with high ceilings. The basement had cycle/motorcycle parking by the stairwell. The two wings in the basement accommodated the bank and the dispensary.

Two of our batch mates Ravi and Rajen had their motorcycles parked there. I am not sure of the brand, perhaps Royal Enfield Bullets. Ravi used to meticulously clean it for his outing. I always wondered if some psychologists might have profiled people based on their choice of vehicles - cycle, Lambretta, Vespa, motorbike (Rajdoot, Enfield) and the like. Somehow, I could not fit Rajen in the motorbike cluster. In later years when Premchandrar came with a bike, it looked befitting. Among Faculty members, from cycle rider KRS with Nirmala on the carrier seat to pipe-smoking Subash Mehta with his left-hand drive car would cover a total spectrum of personalities. Let me not digress.

Once you move up to the first floor, you could actually understand the feel of being inside a circle. Only on the first floor, the bottom part of the circle was nicely cemented, which provided a good place to sit and watch the vast ground in front. In later years, the first floor corridor served as the pavilion for cricket matches. Sitting on that part of the ledge, with legs dangling out, will make you feel as if you were riding the crescent part of the moon.

I have seen in the circus, a motorcycle expert driving up and down in a globe-like dome. I think the circles that encase the dorms may be an excellent place for an action packed movie to show a motorcycle fight. Rumor had it that when the new campus had been commissioned, an administrator floated that idea. Unfortunately, computer graphics technology killed that opportunity. Let me not lose focus again. But then how I could keep focus when I had decided to wander in the memory lane!

In a typical day when you walk up to the terrace, you might encounter these scenes. As you stopped on the first floor to take a breath, you might see Avinash humming “Ramayya Othavayya”, a group of bridge players in Bala’s room debating the merit of Blackwood convention or AP Arora discussing with anyone he could get hold of, the concept of marketing God. Moving up a floor, you might find a serious-looking Sekhar from the first floor, adjusting his spectacles and drawing imaginary lines before executing his marvelous opening shot on the carom board that could clear eight or nine coins in a shot. On the third floor, you might see enthusiastic Mahendra from the first floor looking for a company to go to a movie, asking Ramu chacha “Movie chalega?” Ramesh, who used to be continuously processing the shipping corporation scheduling problem in his mind, would say “Jaana hai tho chalo, kal jayenge.” One could observe Mahindra’s dilemma as to whether he should get disappointed or excited with the response.

Once past the wayside distractions, you get to the terrace. The terrace was part and parcel of our life in D16. The view of PRL, ATIRA campus and Gujarat University from the terrace was magnificent. One could see vast undeveloped land and in the far distance the drive-in theatre that we used to visit. (We used to cut across the field and walk to the theatre. Walking to a drive-in may seem to be an oxymoron though!)

The terrace was our place where we congregated for birthday parties. We had a good custom that the birthday person bought the cake and/or ice cream and invited all. There were farewell parties on the terrace. The memorable one was for Otto Brutto Sunario from Indonesia, who was with us for two years. Otto was a senior professor in an agricultural university and was sent by his government. CMA had some projects in Indonesia and that was the connection. Otto moving with his pocket dictionary would communicate simply by his laughter. He was fascinated by Madhubala, the actress of yesteryears. Whether he understood or not, he used to frequent movie theatres. One day I saw him coming back from the city in an auto. He told me he was coming back after seeing the movie ‘Khaandaan’. I did not know the meaning of the word at that time. I asked him what the meaning was. With his useful laughter and hand gestures in his accent, he told ‘Noothan’ For a while, I thought ‘Khaandaan’ meant new. Later, I learned that he was mentioning just the name of the actress ‘Nutan’. Otto was well-loved by all of us and he reciprocated. Some of the faculty members - Gaikwad, Srinivas Rao and others attended the farewell at the terrace. They had a first-hand understanding of D16 comradery.

Another important aspect of the terrace was that it provided great relief during summer nights. During the peak summer days, the rooms would be so hot that it was impossible to sleep even with the fan on. The good thing about the summer days was the late evening breeze. That meant the terrace was an attractive place to sleep. We used to lug our mattresses and sheets out to sleep on the open terrace gazing at the stars and the moon. However, we would be woken up very early by the sun at which point the rooms might have become a little cooler. We would lug our mattresses back to continue our sleep in our rooms. That was the time I was the envy of the crowd because I was on the third floor, quite closest to the terrace.

Of course, the terrace served as our Yoga Mandap. A few of us attended the yoga class of some Swamiji who visited the campus. It was in Room 320, the Table Tennis room. I had visited that room once before when I had watched Rajen play TT. He used to surprise the opponent with a

beautiful slice and smashing the return with a big stomp of one foot. It sounded like the beat of a bharatanatyam dancer. Anyway, back to yoga. After the week-long program, some of us thought we could continue doing it ourselves and the terrace was the best place for it. But we did not have a leader and motivator. Then came Mr Bashyam, FDC participant. He was a Senior Manager at BHEL, Delhi. He was in his fifties. He used to wake us up one by one at 5.30 in the morning, gather us all up to conduct the routines. On the nights that we had wild parties, we would put a note on the door for Mr Bashyam to not wake us up.

Another fabulous memory of the terrace was on the arrival of monsoon. On the first day of monsoon, one could see Avinash, Suresh and Mahendra get excited to get drenched in the first monsoon shower. It must be Bombay or Marathi culture, I guess. I used to join them. Well, I was closer to the terrace anyway. Probably, the first shower might have had medicinal effects those days. When I came to Canada, they were talking about acid rain. The Sulphur dioxide emission by industries made the rain acidic and they advised not to get exposed. I am not sure whether the current D16rs go up the terrace to get the first monsoon drench. If they happen to, they will perhaps read this because I am saving this in the cloud!

P.S. It pains to know that there will not be new D16ers.