

Honour's Programme

The Annual Honour's Programme Convocation was held on 18th July 2009 as a finale of the College Exhibition in which the academic achievements of the various departments were celebrated. Students who had successfully completed a minimum of eight credits including one for the Social Involvement Program proudly received their Honour's Program certificates.

I am proud to describe myself as a Jesuit product, having spent eleven years in St. Mary's School (Cambridge Section) and three years in St. Xavier's College. In school, Fr. Molinet and Fr. Lepour played an important part in my mental development, but it was Fr. Edward D'Cruz in St. Xavier's College who moulded my mind.

In those days the Eleventh Standard Senior Cambridge Exam got over in December but admission to college took place only in June. The period between December 1965 and June 1966 was an enforced holiday. I had friends in Xavier's College and therefore was a frequent visitor to the college (or more aptly a "faltu" hanging around) By the time I got admission in Inter Arts directly, I was already familiar with the college. I opted for Political Thought, Political Science, Modern European History. Most of the subjects were taught by Fr. D'Cruz. He was the most respected Principal and held in awe. When Fr. D'Cruz took his usual round in the college, there was hushed silence. Fr. D'Cruz spoke with a clipped accent, softly but precisely. He never had to raise his voice.

An incident in Junior B.A. is still fresh in my mind. Two months before the final exam, for Far East Political History, Fr. D'Cruz came to the class (he used to teach combined classes of Junior and Senior B.A. students) and announced that he was going to do something new. He said that he would disclose the entire paper to the students well before the examination. It would contain eight questions and in the examination hall he would tell us which four questions had to be

answered. Initially the students were overjoyed, but when they got down to preparing the answers for all the eight questions, they realized that they would have to study the entire syllabus to go prepared on the choice system. This was a tremendous challenge and I reveled in it. When he announced the results in class, Fr. D'Cruz said that he had given one student marks which he had never done before in his teaching career. As against the usual 60% which was first class he gave me 80 marks out of 100.

He used to call me to his room and give me rare books to read on Political History and Modern European History, books which were not in the Library but part of his personal collection. Later, after I graduated, he decided to go to Japan and asked me to take his lectures even though I was studying law by that time. So I studied and also taught in Xavier's.

Those were heady days full of idealism, of intellectualism, the Beatles, the Doors and Led Zeppelin, of beatniks, of Woodstock, the Vietnam War and protest politics. The Canteen was the most vibrant place where on Saturdays, students from all other colleges descended, filling the courtyard giving it a colourful carnival like atmosphere. One table was occupied by the local toughies who we "respectfully" avoided.

Life at Xavier's in the sixties was enthusiastic fun coupled with hard work. There was the Sangeet Mandal, Dramatics Society and a wide range of extracurricular activities. There were debates both within the college and inter colleges. Dress codes and norms of acceptable behaviour were disappearing. We started wearing Khadi Kurtas and Kolhapuri Chappals, which Fr. D'Cruz frowned upon, but did not prohibit. Long hair, outlandish sideburns and almost comical moustaches. Life was simply complex. There were no responsibilities. No real worries. After all, we were students.



Goolam E Vahanvati,
Attorney General for India

"The Attorney General for India, Mr. Goolam Vahanvati was the chief guest at the convocation and was felicitated as a distinguished alumnus of the college."