FARE FORWARD
FR. FRAZER: A PUPIL’S TRIBUTE

I was fortunate to be a part of the Anthropology of Development Course taught by Fr. Frazer to the final year students. It gave me the privilege to interact with him—the person who has been the Principal for more than a decade at St. Xavier’s College Mumbai Autonomous—Dr. Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas!

As a student of St. Xavier’s College, one of the most cherished experiences I with my fellow classmates hold close to our hearts is the manner in which he inculcated in us the habit of critical thought. The discussions he conducted kept us engaged with information on recent socio-political issues thereby arousing our deep concern for marginalized classes in society. His teaching created a sense of curiosity, conscientious thinking and a level of activism that is crucial for students of Development Studies. His phenomenal spectrum of knowledge along with his ability to spark off interesting debates and push students further into thinking made his classes a unique learning experience.

The confidence he instilled drove us to be change-makers and innovators.

The dedication and love that he taught the class with was exemplary. He made his students comfortable enough to interact with him on various platforms, forming a close knit teacher-student bond.

His ready smile with which he greeted his students in class and the slight nod permitting them to enter his office will be missed greatly, as he retires. I’d say all the students of St. Xavier’s College were extremely fortunate to have had a thriving learning experience under the education system that Fr. Frazer so greatly practiced and preached.

Kala Bada
TYBA

MAUREEN ALMEIDA

When you have spent more than forty years of your life in a college such as St. Xavier's, it is only then that you truly understand what it means to say that Xavier’s is not a college; it’s a way of life.

Though I graduated from Xavier’s in 1975, I will always fondly recall my days as a college student.

At that time, our undergraduate degree spanned four years and I came from an even more sheltered background than many of our students do today. As a student, I participated actively in the AICUF and enjoyed the choir the most. Our student conductor Andre de Quadros was very passionate about music and along with a professional German conductor, Mr. Beulher, who together trained us for public concerts at Max Mueller. I remember singing Handel's Hallelujah at one such concert. In time, I became the Secretary of the AICUF and I got to attend a National Level Conference of all units of the AICUF at Loyola College, Madras. My college days as a Xavierite remain some of the best learning experiences that I can recount.

I have to admit, though, my favorite memory as a college student is also related to Psychology. In one of my Developmental Psychology lectures, Fr. Fuster, the then Head of the Psychology Department and also my course teacher, had conducted a class test in which I had scored the highest. I was rewarded with a hair band and Fr. Fuster himself came and placed it on my head and crowned me the ‘Queen of Development at Psychology’! It was rather embarrassing at that time, but I still recall the incident and Fr. Fuster very fondly.

As a professor though, I can undoubtedly say that my own wedding which took on campus remains another deeply cherished memory. I got married to Felix who was at that time a professor with the Math Department. We used to often meet for carom sessions in the staff room and gradually love developed across the carom board too.

Our nuptials were at St. Francis Xavier’s Church, Dahul. My husband and I, both being lecturers of the college, the then Principal, Fr. John Correa-Affonso, welcomed us to have our wedding reception here, in the second quadrangle and the woods. The canteen area was transformed into a dance floor. I believe I am one of those rare people to be able to boast of having such a connection with the college!

There will always be a sad nostalgia associated with retiring as a professor from this college; though I draw a sense of fulfillment from knowing that if I were ever given the chance to change any detail of the time I spent at St. Xavier’s, I would change nothing.

(With excerpts from The Uncommon Sense)

As knowledge grows, light flows up from within

– Sri Aurobindo

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The jolting burn of that first cup of coffee before an 8 a.m. class. Life at St. Xavier's is measured out in coffee cups, Mr. Eliot. And in a long unspooling roll of images…

Hiking up for a lecture on the fourth floor, I view the euphoria-inducing vistas and contemplate my Ode to the Terrace, each stanza a celebration -- the first glimpse of a pale sun struggling to break through the winter haze, the breathtaking surge of clouds rolling in, the exhilaration of lashing rain. Down in the Woods, bird-calls pierce through the rustle of leaves. Time for the department seminar at Khandala; the sojourn in that green world might spark a Wordsworthian effusion. For real action, there's the library. Losing track of time in the library stacks, discovering new friends and re-engaging with old ones. Like Dylan Thomas, “I could never have dreamt that there were such goings-on in the world between the covers of books”. With Neruda, “When I close a book I open life”.

The staffroom echoes with the voices of intellectual stalwarts locked perennially in impassioned arguments. Foremost among them my mentor, Dr. Eunice de Souza, regally ensconced in her chair, enveloped in a fug of smoke, her every utterance a fugue of intellect, wit and sarcasm. A different facet of the faculty, the palpable camaraderie in our meetings, seminars, and even during centralized corrections. Pooling insights ranging from the finer points of Late Capitalism to the latest exploits of That Student, and simultaneously (we're human) exchanging tips on investments, childcare and quick meals.

Each lecture-room calls out. Epic conventions in Paradise Lost and Gilgamesh vie with Rumi’s verses and Sufi music only to be drowned by a fierce debate on the Theseus paradox, while Ravi Varma paintings and Leni Riefenstahl photographs jostle with Charulata and Metropolis to project themselves onto every blank wall. And in LR 32 my two little daughters, frozen in time, gleefully draw dolphins on the blackboard.

Ghosts of Ithakas past haunt their eclectic settings -- the Woods, First Quad, GCR, and the College Hall, where the resonances of the actors add a rich patina to the already lustrous timbers and panels. From that first tentative proposal to the final performance, each Ithaka renews the vision of Cavafy’s “marvelous journey”.

High drama in the foyer – a kaleidoscope of volatile relationships; Shakespearean romance, scandalous Restoration comedy, and occasionally even the dark intrigues of Jacobean tragedy. These eaglets too must be provoked to fly, along with the shining-eyed front-benchers.

Under darkening evening skies, the cadence of murmured discussions, peals of laughter, or a softly-picked guitar, as little groups linger around the campus, survivors of another day of rehearsals or group projects, like Masefield's sea-rovers sharing merry yarns.

A myriad images indelibly etched on my inner eye.

Above all, my twenty-five years at St. Xavier's are measured out by the faces in the classroom and the staffroom, the administrative offices and the canteen. All these faces that I have met, and taught, and loved, are my treasure-trove.

Dr. Shefali Balsari-Shah
(Former) Head, Department of English

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We’ve all got both light and dark inside us.
What matters is the part we choose to act on.
That’s who we really are

— J.K. Rowling
NON-TEACHING STAFF

At the end of the last academic year, we bade farewell to three members of the non-teaching staff. They will always be remembered for their hard work and unwavering sense of loyalty to their jobs and the college.

Dominic Fernandes, Registrar

Hailing from Goa, Mr. Fernandes has worked in the St. Xavier's office for 38 years and saw 7 principals at work. He served as a junior clerk, senior clerk, head clerk, superintendent, and finally the registrar. He calls this long career a constant learning process which helped him become a better person. He had to give up his college education after the demise of his father so that he could get a job and support the family. Not only did St. Xavier's provide him with a livelihood but it also gave him a place to stay – Mr. Fernandes lived in the Hostel before he got married and it remains his favorite spot to this day.

He talks about how much the college has changed with respect to the technology that is now used in the office. Learning to operate this new technology was challenging at first, but with time he felt that it was certainly more convenient than slogging away at a typewriter. He took on the new and exciting duty of the Web Administrator; updating admission lists and replying to queries from students till late in the night. While he welcomed all the promotions he was given, he missed the interaction he used to have with Junior College students when he was a Junior Clerk. When asked what he will miss the most, Mr. Fernandes promptly replied that it was the company of his co-workers, who were especially supportive when he had to have a bypass surgery.

Shantaram Parpate, Peon

Mr. Parpate was a peon in the Hostel building for 38 years. Originally from Ratnagiri, he was asked to fill in after his uncle's demise. His most cherished memories of college are of the times he spent with his co-workers.

A lesser known fact about Mr. Parpate is that he is also a poet and performs at community gatherings too!

Gulab Sharma, Carpenter

Mr. Sharma is best remembered for crafting furniture for departments and offices in the college. He worked at St. Xavier's High School in Chakala, where his talent was identified by Br. Jacob who asked him to shift to St. Xavier's College. In his 37 year long career, he not only helped build staircases and chairs, but also set up projectors in classrooms and fulfilled other maintenance related duties. While he says he will miss the faculty, students and warm atmosphere in college, he also admits that he will miss Malhar and the odd jobs he was asked to do by its student organizers. He thinks that the college has changed considerably over the three decades that he was here, and attributes a lot of the improvement to Fr. Frazer. He does not remember a single unpleasant day at college, and the farewell party he was given remains his favorite memory.