

A Eulogy to Anannya Deb

Very few on campus knew his full name. To us, he was Anannya. To some, Annie. To those who knew him best, Dada.

Anannya was a man of many talents, a creative soul who wore his disdain for IIMB's math-heavy decision-making lightly. With his Piyush Pandey looks, the advertising world seemed written for him. He dipped his toes in ad-com, surfed the dot-com wave, but his spirit always hungered for something deeper.

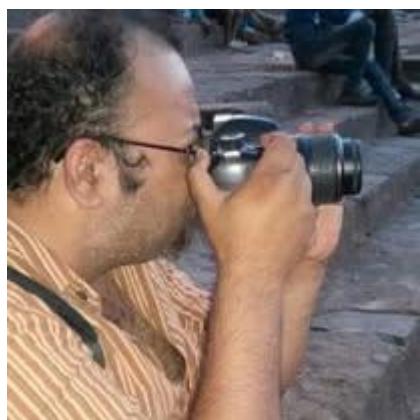
The campus revealed his rituals quickly. If he wasn't sleeping in his room, you'd find him in the front row of the Common Room, watching replays of cricket matches he'd already witnessed live. Not there? Head to the Computer Centre, where he'd be surfing AltaVista for random information. We called it aimless; he was feeding a curiosity that would become his passion for quizzing. He was instrumental in the multimedia project for our college's silver jubilee celebrations, injecting creativity and life into a sea of engineering minds.

College campuses are full of people trying to fit in and find their place. Anannya was a rare being who somehow had such a strong sense of self and clear inner voice even at a young age, that he always appeared content, effortlessly cool, someone who was in on the joke the universe was playing on the rest of us mortals. For the rest of us, he was perhaps unwittingly, a barometer. If you said something smart in class and a slow smirk appeared on Anannya's face, you sighed with relief and happiness. We felt calmer, cooler, more in tune with the universe when we were in his company."

In the heated GBMs and email wars, everyone waited for his tangential, profound comments that cooled tempers. He operated at a Zen level in a world that resembled neither calm nor peace.

Cricket and quizzing remained his lifelong passions. Teams across sections and batches accepted him as a 'Neutral Umpire.' At our 20th reunion, he seemed to have vanished from campus—until we learned he'd woven his visit around hosting a quiz competition.

He was that rare person who did what he loved, not just loved what he did. He liked photography but never fit into structured approaches. Once, a bus to Kanchipuram became a photography tour of



Tamil Nadu temples. He was footloose during campus days but transformed over the last decade. The work at Illumine ignited a different Annie—assignments with truck drivers, fishing communities,

artisans. This gave him his greatest joy. Three months ago in Bangalore, a small group of batchmates saw him happy, intending to continue this meaningful work.

For quite a few, the immersion into IIM life was sometimes characterized by the sinking feeling that it was a horrible mistake. Watching the determined young men (mostly) and women (a few) striding purposefully to and from very important places was intimidating enough without thinking about the fact that these people had already scaled heights of academic achievement like cracking JEE or DU or what not. Amongst the shell shocked there was one hero - Dada. Dada looked more like a journalist than a manager. While everyone else was preparing theses on financial markets or corporate strategy, Dada stayed true to the ancient and hallowed Bengali pursuits of Old Monk, fish, cricket and strident argument—the last one being dangerous to indulge with Dada because of his compendious knowledge, mostly knowledge for the sake of it, for the pleasure of it for the very joy of knowing every nook, cranny and detail of God's creation.

He was a bhadralok from Mumbai with that rare vibe that makes everyone wish they'd hung out with him more. Dada would have been handy for fresh grads heading to Mumbai, a born-and-bred Mumbaikar who worked for the papers, a source of recommendations for places to eat and drink—a real-life Hemingway relishing his movable feast. A hedonist, a seeker of pleasure, an unabashed lover of life.



Life was pleased with him and took him to the other side. Travel well, Dada. We will miss you.