



Happy Diwali Nirvani Mujumdar



From the Editors Desk.....

SPECIAL THANKS TO KARTHIK RANGANATHAN FOR DESIGNING AND PUBLISHING THIS MONTH'S BHARATI

Another attempt in presenting different ideas, introducing diverse subjects and showcasing emerging talent - this month's Bharati will also introduce two of the newest faculty members of TTU to join the ISA fold, Dr. Ratna Narayan and Dr. Venkat Eleswarapu.

November being the month of festivals, Bharati wishes to convey its wishes on the occasions of Id and Diwali. The crackers and the lights might not be around us, but the omnipresent goodwill is testament enough to the festive spirit around. With Thanksgiving round the corner too, this sure is going to be month of merriment and mirth, not to forget the early-morning vigils in front of Best Buy and Circuit City. Soak it all up and reap a bonanza!!!

I would also like to thank Sreeram Vaidyanathan and Muralidharan Raghavan for helping me and Karthik in putting together this month's Bharati.

Until we meet again.

Vrishali Subramanian

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Help Me Stutter... Better

Karthik Ranganathan

The joy of sitting behind the steering wheel was soon turning into a nightmare. Sweaty palms and a face creased with tension were the first indications of the anxiety that I was going through. Making an order at the Mac-D drive-in was among the most mundane tasks, but it was making me palpitate faster than ever. As dreaded, words refused to come out when I was expected to place the order and the few seconds that this nightmare lasted felt like a lifetime. But as always, I did complete the order eventually and the beads of sweat slowly receded and the circle of life continued to roll as the wheels of the car sped away.

This was just another instance of stuttering or stammering, and for someone who's been living it as long as he can recollect, this ought not to be a big deal. Or should it? It should and it did, because every stutter that crops up in my speech, leaves a nasty reminder and makes me feel all the more conscious about it.

Am I alone in this? Definitely not. According to a pamphlet by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, they are more than 15 million stutterers worldwide and close to 1 million in the United States alone. Surprisingly huge numbers indeed, and even though reassurance could be sought in such numbers, this has predominantly been a battle fought only by the stutterer, though this is not how it should be.

What is stuttering?

Stuttering is a speaking disorder wherein the person is unable to speak a string of words fluently. The person's speech might get punctuated by the repetition of certain syllable, or the prolongation of a certain word or even the inability to speak out a certain syllable. On the surface of things, this is just another physical problem. But that's where it stops being physical. Being a stutterer, I can vouchsafe without taking recourse to "official blah-blah" that the problem is a lot more mental than physical.

A stutterer normally chooses to live in a world of his own, seemingly normal, yet starkly different from the rest. A reluctance to speak himself out while in the midst of large groups, albeit even at the price of his academic or professional advancement, hesitation bordering on aversion towards answering telephones in public (not always, but significant) and a general lack of confidence towards anything involving speaking are among the most common traits found in a stutterer.

What causes stuttering?

A simple enough question but as mystifying as the common cold. Without the presence of a definite reason for stuttering, it is believed that a combination of constitutional, environmental and communication factors are the cause for the development and sustenance of stuttering. Evidence has pointed to the presence of genetic reasons, disorder in the timing of movements of speech muscles, a defect in auditory feedback, and a lack of cerebral dominance for language functions in stutterers. Research has also revealed that stutterers process language differently, with the right side of the brain being used by right handed individuals for language processing. This is in contrast to the normal usage of the left side of the brain by right handed individuals for language processing. As there is no known reason for stuttering, there is no real cure for the problem too. But that itself should not be a cause for despair, as stuttering is eminently curable if detected early in children and with the help of speech therapy. With the help of congenial environmental conditions, the mental pressure and the emotional baggage carried by a stutterer can be reduced immensely.

Types of Stuttering and Stutterers

Despite the apparent similarity between different stutterers, there are actually different kinds of stuttering. Repetition (repeating a certain syllable or a certain word), prolongation (extending a certain syllable longer than necessary) and blocking (the refusal of certain words to just come out, to put it simply) are the various forms of stuttering, with repetition and prolongation being the most noticeable and commonly portrayed in movies and television shows. There are also different kinds of stutterers, in that there are overt stutterers and covert stutterers. Overt stutterers are the ones with a permanent stutter, the more relaxed ones, stuttering in public without any apparent discomfort and being totally at ease with their disability. Covert stutterers are those who seemingly speak normally at times, but put loads of pressure on themselves to conceal their occasional bouts of stuttering by using various techniques. These are people who appear to look normal and will also be able to pass off for a non-stutterer for a few times, but ultimately as they say, "One cannot fool everybody all the time". By trying to hide the disorder from public view, covert stutterers end up as people with a bigger emotional problem than physical. What most covert stutterers suffer from is actually the "iceberg" problem. Here the physical problem of visible stuttering forms the top of the iceberg, while the huge emotional baggage carried, becomes the more significant, yet concealed, lower part of the iceberg.

“Coming out” and Stuttering Better

Being a covert stutterer myself, the popular characteristics of covert stuttering are very much part of my psyche. Rapidly scanning for potentially “blocking” words and sentences and replacing them with more convenient synonyms and phrases, even if the meaning gets slightly distorted, have unconsciously become a part of my daily conversation. Becoming an overt stutterer is what every covert stutterer should ideally look to do and this is easier said than done. Learning to stutter easily and openly requires a lot of courage and confidence and most importantly perseverance. Most importantly, the non-stuttering world of a stutterer, the family and friends, form a crucial part of this “rehabilitation” process. Helping the person speak slower by slowing down one’s own speaking rate, putting lesser pressure on the stutterer by giving him ample time to finish speaking what he intends to and by not interrupting him or finishing his speech would help a stutterer go a long way in his quest to become more fluent. In short, focusing on what’s being said rather than how, is the best thing any non-stutterer could do to help out a stutterer.

Being a stutterer is often a lonely job, as is the case with most people with disabilities and herein lies the urge to appear normal. However, the presence of support groups consisting of other stutterers and speech language pathologist shave the ability to alleviate much of this distress. The National Stuttering Association in the United States is probably the most popular one, with local chapters being present in most cities. Lubbock is no exception to this and the Lubbock Chapter of the NSA meets the first Tuesday of every month in the TTU HSC. Taking part in these meeting has indeed been a revelation for me and anybody interested, stutterer or not, should jump right into this.

There are also tools such as Speech Easy and the Fluency Master, which work on the concept of delayed auditory feedback and are designed to help stutterers speak more fluently. This needs to be worn on one of the ears and the person wearing it would be able to listen to whatever he speaks, with a delay, thus forcing him to change his speech rate and speak without stuttering. I must say that I did try this out for a few minutes and the results were promising, but one thing that needs to be remembered is that these devices are still pretty expensive and are yet to be recommended by most speech therapists. But the options are out there for the interested to try out.

The iceberg that stuttering is, needs to be melted, though from the bottom. Working towards this is surely not easy, but the latest news off the stands is that the Titanic just got stronger and better..

ISA Graduate Research Day 2005

ISAGR 2005 is a one-day conference that will provide graduate student members of the ISA an opportunity to present results of their ongoing research to their peer and faculty members at large, and other interested parties. This first-time event will provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas. During this event, graduate student members of ISA will present their work in either the Masters or Doctoral categories and their presentations in various categories will be judged by faculty members and senior research associates from TTU. Each presentation will be evaluated on the following six criteria:

- * Identification and/or background of research topic.
- * Methodology
- * Interpretation of results
- * Presentation of material
- * Ability to answer questions
- * Overall presentation

The ISA will host a dinner event following the conference, for all the participants and the judges who participate in this event on November 18, 2005. During this dinner event, every presentation will be recognized and the top presentations that are deemed to be outstanding in each category in the various areas will receive a monetary award. More details about the conference will be sent upon registration.

It is hoped that the ISAGR 2005 will be a valuable experience for all the graduate student members of the ISA. All ISA members who are interested in presenting at the ISAGR 2005 must register by November 7(5 p.m), with the ISA planning to release a book of abstracts for the event. Registration for the event can be done at <http://www.ttu.edu/isa/isagr.html>

RANGOLI

Rangoli is a Hindu folk art, generally created on a floor on special festive occasions. 'Rangoli' is a sanskrit word which means a creative expression of art through the use of color.

In ancient times, rangolis were actually decorations made on the entrances and walls of houses to brighten up and add color to occasions being celebrated, like weddings, births and significant religious days. They also signified a warm welcome for visitors.

Politically Correct

Ajay Ramachandran

The other day I was on the phone with a friend of mine. He had come to the US on an H-1 visa and is working as a software engineer. We began talking old times (not 20 or 30 years, but between 5 and 10) and after exhausting all the college hogwash, we moved on to "ambitious talk". I spoke to him about how he was finding the work culture here and other related issues. At one point, I asked, "How much are they paying you?" I didn't get an answer promptly. As happens usually when I talk, I thought he had not heard me and restated the lines. He replied, "Oh..not much!!" I was tempted to demand an explanation but restrained myself. Through the rest of the conversation I did not mention the subject again and nor did he. Political Correctness had arrived....well it has been around for some time now, but had not crossed my life. I was a little annoyed but I am not trying to tell you I was right in being so. It had been 5 years, and a lot of changes can happen in that span and I say lot because it came from a chirpy and unassuming guy (at least he was then).

I don't quite like political correctness. In my view, it distorts language and has a negative component associated with it. PC, I guess it is called, is similar to what Orwell said about the form of language, Newspeak in his 1984. Newspeak attempted to get rid of words that were against the state and also aimed at reducing the number of words in usage (ex: 'ungood' for all things antonyms to good). One difference, though, with PC the words and terms have increased. A handicapped person is called "physically challenged" and a black is "African-American" and so on. "African-American" may work well in the US, though it's not hard and fast that all Africans are blacks. Also what about someone of that race from say, England? Anglo-African???

I followed the recently concluded Women's World Cup Cricket which Australia won (Aussies are making the sport boring!), mainly through the internet. It would have been interesting to see what the TV graphic showed when a left-arm unorthodox bowler, more commonly known as Chinaman, came on to roll her arm. I don't know whether political correctness has penetrated cricket but I'm sure cricket lovers would not welcome it.

Forget PC, says Nemeldi, if you ask a girl her age or weight she does not answer anyway. What do you classify that as, he teases me. I know he is giggling now that he caught me on this one.

Though there might be an element of truth in what he says—a rare event that—I know he jumps on a girl's age before he even knows her name. Who's bound to open her mouth in such a situation?

Anyhow, coming back to PC, the progression of the phenomena may lead to a situation where in fifty years we might be hearing pieces like these:

"The chair is sitting on his chair"

"Has the postperson arrived? I am expecting a package today."

"It did not rain today. Parent Nature is always unpredictable"

"See the follicularly challenged guy over there? He's my Professor."

"Have you seen 'Cool Hand Luke'? Paul New is terrific in the movie."

Meet The Professor -

Dr. Ratna Narayan

(in her own words)

My name is Ratna Narayan. I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the College of Education. I was awarded a doctorate in Science Education from the University of Georgia, Athens in August 2005. I have a Master's degree in Inorganic Chemistry as well two bachelor's degrees in chemistry and education from Bombay University. Prior to embarking on my doctorate, I taught chemistry at a junior college, 11th and 12th grades in Bombay for eight years.

My research interests center around science teaching and learning. The former deals with the preparation of pre service science teachers at the elementary, middle and high school levels. The latter focuses on the use of effective means of instruction that enhance student learning of science. I am also interested in the training of teaching assistants who handle large undergraduate science laboratories.

Ramzan (Id-Ul-Fitr)

It is believed that the holy book of Muslims, the Quran, came into existence during this month. The last ten days are specially significant as the faithful watch for Lailathul Qadr (the Night of Power) during which the revelation of the book to the Prophet was completed. Apart from bringing the Muslims face to face with the hard realities of life like the pangs of hunger, thirst and deprivation, Ramzaan is an annual training period inculcating discipline and declaration of subservience to the laws of God, enumerated in the holy Quran.

The RestRoom Chronicles

Karthik Ranganathan

Disclaimer: THIS POST CAN BE CONSTRUED AS GROSS (THOUGH STRICTLY NON-SEXUAL) BY CERTAIN SENSITIVE SOULS. SO READER DISCRETION IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)

Not often do I find myself in a position either waxing lyrical or trash-talking my rest room here at Taurus apartments. Probably the best thing to have happened is the rest room being available when it's way past down-load time and the bandwidth's on the verge of being exceeded. But a cpl of weeks back, the rest room became such an intergral part of my consciousness, such that never ever will I take it for granted!!!! NEVER!!!

Day1:

Get up in the morning, race ahead of everybody to the rest room, settle down for a nice long haul and get out satisfied, only to find whatever u had eaten the day before plus a few undescrivable things floating around for the whole world to admire even after flushing. The next 30 mins was easily the longest and the most disgusting 30 ever in my life. With a small bucket of water being my only source of succour, pail by pail, chunk by chunk. I manage to break down the most determined yet disgusting piece of s*** ever encountered in my life. All hell was finally broken down and taken care of, but not for nothing do we add flavour and fragrance to our food. The room freshener's glorious fightback notwithstanding, I came out of a place that could have turned away a million noses.

Day 2 :

Routine slightly changes, for it was one of the unfortunate roomies to suffer the same fate.

Day n - x :

Miraculous recovery for the restroom. All evil forces exorcised. Life's limping back to normalcy.

Day n-x +1:

Lightning most definitely strikes the same place twice and Sree bears the brunt of it. Complaint to manager brings temporary relief with something clogged up outisde Taurus. Taken care of by the manager and rays of relief .

Day n-x+2 :

My turn to be the first riser. Teeth-brushing taken care of and a sliver of common sense tells me to finish off the most important thing first and then lie low till the coast clears. I choose to take a leak and soon enough the flush chooses to play truant again. Desperate measures required. Roaming around the house like a caged lion and hoping for a "download dump" to sprout up from somewhere.

Possible relief measures :

1. Univ. Departmental rest room: Quite few problems present with the key to the department being lost. SO GROUNDED.
2. Univ. Library rest room: Problems present: Opens only at 12 noon on Sundays. BUT AVAILABLE.

Unforseen problem: Cycle left in dept. Only mode of transport : Good ol' walking. With downloadable material up to the brim, Situation potentially unsafe.

Superman comes to the rescue in the form of Sreeram and his car. By choosing to get up early on this fateful day, this was defly Providence at work. Destination library and a short while later, Empty is Happy!!!

Day n: Repeated complaints to the manager finally results in some drastic action. Plumber (or whatever he's called) found messing around in the kitchen.

Result: Whole house left smelling a million unkempt rest rooms, but as they say the worst had passed over and the only way was forward. A couple of hours later, Taurus #105 back to it's pristine best, dirty, messy, unkempt, but definitely NOT STINKING.

Meet The Professor -

Dr. Venkat Eleswarapu

Venkat Eleswarapu is an Associate Professor and Jerry Rawls Professor of Finance. Dr. Eleswarapu joined the the faculty at Texas Tech University in 2005. He has taught previously at S.M.U., University of Auckland, New Zealand, and the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.

Eleswarapu received an M.S. in finance from the University of Utah and a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. His research focuses on stock market structures; the effect of trading rules and regulations on equity trading costs; the impact of liquidity on stock-prices; empirical asset pricing and informational efficiency of markets. In his spare time, he enjoys traveling and pursuing hobbies such as camping, photography, hiking and other outdoor activities.

Bharati Math Puzzle

Congratulations to the winner of the Oct Bharati Math Puzzle Sreeram Vaidhyanath. We regret to inform you that we do not have a Math puzzle this month.