

So Long, Farewell...



After a 9 year stint at XLRI, **Prof Venkat R Krishnan** has moved to Chennai to join **Great Lakes Institute of Management (GLIM)** as **Director of Yale-GLIM Center for Management Research** and as a **Professor of Organizational Behavior**.

While the anonymous tribute to him by one of his students read: *"We can't love him, we can't hate him! All of us are the same soul, all the differences we perceive are unreal and just projection of our imagination!! Neither Venkat nor we, it's just one and only one, eternal and endless...!"*

..here is a non-anonymous one by the erstwhile editor Surya S (IR '06)...

"See, you have to understand that the mud, the pot and the potter are the same".

If we caught you grinning and nodding on that one, you were in all probability one of those select few lucky enough to go through Professor Venkat Krishnan's Indian Philosophy course. Or at least, one of your close friends did! (All of us IPLE people couldn't stop raving about it even outside the class you know ☺)

XLRI gives you a host of things in 2 years - friends for life, fun like nowhere else, opportunities galore and of course, who can miss the amazing professors, most of them veritable titans in their own right. Professor Venkat Krishnan (Venky to all XLers) is definitely way up there for a lot of XLers.

With his hallmark courses – Leadership, Influence and Power (LIP); Indian Philosophy for Leadership Excellence (IPLE) and Impression Management (IM), Venky forced us to question our beliefs, challenged our assumptions and of course, made us spend many a sleepless night (and afternoon) going through those highly interesting but frighteningly ☹ voluminous readings! Venky was unconventional, to say the least. His stated objective for every course was to leave us with more questions than answers by the end of 20 sessions! And thanks to him, XL witnessed a truly amazing phenomenon – classes at 7.15 AM in the middle of winter. And that's not it – these classes usually had full attendance. Now that sure is something, isn't it?

It is simply a treat to attend Professor Krishnan's classes. You could safely air the most mundane or politically incorrect of questions in his classes. His answers, if you were lucky enough to get some, would range from the profound to the dryly funny or a simple - "Does anyone in the class want to answer that question?" Usually, after a few moments of contemplative silence, the class would erupt in fiery attacks and counterattacks, while our dear professor would simply watch us with a satisfied smile and a twinkle in his eye.

Quite a few of us weren't sure how to react when he told us during our first LIP session – "If one of your professors likes chocolates, then what is wrong in giving him that? As for me, I like breakfast at MadSam and snacks at Bhola Maharaj". Well, a few of us did take him on his word, and 'accidentally' bumped into him having Pongal on Thursday mornings at MadSam☺! Like he loved to remind us every so often, Venky 'educated' us, and did not simply provide us 'cookbook recipes' on leadership, power, philosophy, impression management or whatever topic he chose to speak about. He had a few other effects on his students as well – some tried copying his bearded look, others started talking like him, and for most of us 'jalebis' and 'Yagnavalkya's cows' started having special significance. (Ask an IP student near you if you want to figure that one out)

And then there were the quizzes! Ah, those quizzes! With amazing consistency, we found ourselves flabbergasted and slightly dizzy after writing every one of his quizzes. But then, the grades were never bad. Many perceive Venky as a slave-driver, but he actually has a kind heart, you see.

I often wonder what people mean when they write "I am honoured to pen a few lines about Mr. So-and-So." But today, as I sit in front of my computer screen typing these few lines about my favorite professor at XL, I think I kinda understand what all those people mean. It's an honour to know you Sir. Thank you for everything...and XL will miss you!