



THE NEWSLETTER

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EDITORS' NOTE

ADITI VAIDYANATHAN & NEHA PILLAI

Greetings from The Newsletter Team!

We hope you're settling back into the new academic year well. It's been a while since Issue 3, but *good things come to those who wait!* From the much-awaited Red Carpet to bidding farewell to the graduating Batch of 2023, this issue encompasses the plethora of events that brought colour to the Third Floor. In the last semester, the SSLA community also came together and hosted SSLA's first-ever Inter-Collegiate Event- ICE by SSLA. As we draw close to Volume VII of the Newsletter, we would also like to highlight a special feature under the 'Alumni Conversations' segment – an interview featuring our student mentors and former Co-Heads (Volume VI), Sarah Cherian and Ira Deshmukh of Batch 2022.



Volume VII would not have come to fruition without the continuous support of our faculty-in-charge, Professor Ananya Dutta and our director, Dr. Shweta Sinha Deshpande! To our lovely readers, your feedback and suggestions have pushed us to keep doing better, and we sincerely thank you for it all.

To our *hardworking writers*: **Abhinav, Aniriddhi, Anushri, Sanjana, Harshita, Sreeja, Chiranshie, Diptanshu, Anohita and Raghavi**, we truly appreciate you showcasing stories and highlighting memories that brought the Third Floor community together. To our *diligent editors*: **Bhavya, Shaun, Rhea, Mredul, Idika, Ananya, Smrithika, Neha and Shreya**, thank you for lending your voice and perspective to bring out the best of the Newsletter team.

Jai, Khushi and Sreeja, our *brilliant photographers*, you truly captured the spirit of SSLA over the past year with your remarkable talent! The social media team: **Idika, Khushi, Shivangi, Athira and Rugmini**, you helped The Newsletter expand its audience and always surprised us with your *wonderful captions*.

The newsletter wouldn't be complete without our talented designers: **Ashlesha, Amalya, and Sanjana**, who always came through with their *creative ideas*. **Angad and Madhu**, we cannot thank you enough for bringing our vision to life with the comic strip and the cover page. You helped us make Volume VII visually memorable!

Goodbyes are always difficult, but as we sit to write our final editors' note, we cannot help but reminisce over the past year with joy and pride. The Newsletter Team has and will always be dear to us and we cannot wait to see what's in store for Volume VIII!

One last time,

With Love,

Aditi Vaidyanathan & Neha Pillai

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RED CARPET 2023: A

Timeless Affair

Written by Raghavi Kaundal

Edited by Neha Pillai

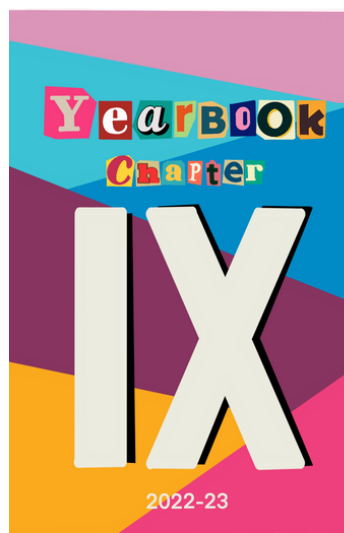
The Red Carpet, the most anticipated event of the year at SSLA, marks the culmination of the academic year 2022–2023. It was held on May 23rd at the Viman Nagar campus' Auditorium owing to the efforts of the Events Team who put their heart and soul into delivering a delightful evening.

Upon popular vote by the students of SSLA, the theme chosen for Red Carpet '23 was the timeless, sophisticated yet elegant, 'Classic Black'.

The event began with a spirited and lively introduction by the hosts of the evening, Pravit Maganti and Lavanya Joshi of Batch 2025, who set a jovial tone for the rest of the evening. Bandemonium, SSLA's music club then took over the stage with their melodious renditions of the songs "Penny Lane" and "Love Grows". This was followed by Dr Shweta Sinha Deshpande presenting the Director's Report 2023, which highlighted the noteworthy accomplishments of the faculty, students and staff, throughout the academic year. Dr Anita Patankar, the Founding Director and Chief Guest of the evening, warmed the hearts of the crowd as she addressed them with her kind words.



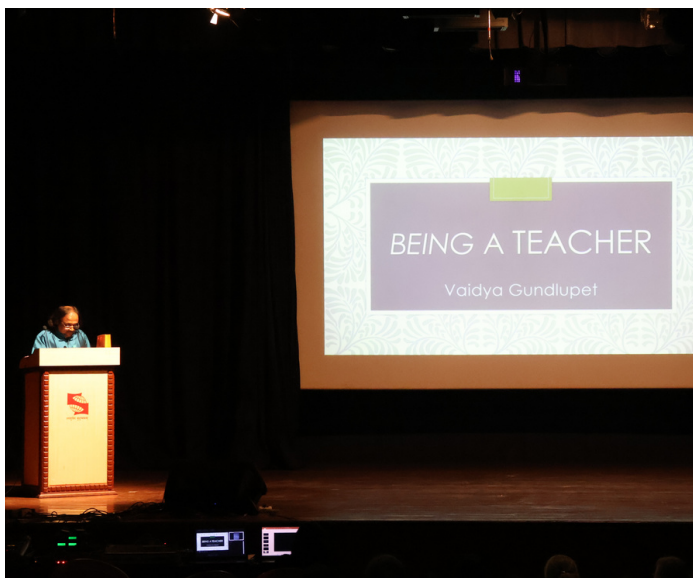
Further, the first-ever Ecology Newsletter was released which highlighted initiatives taken by the SSLA community to conserve the environment and advocate for sustainability. This was followed by the unveiling of SSLA's Yearbook Chapter IX. The yearbook team co-heads, Aparajita Lahiri and Idika Joshi (Batch 2024) revealed the latest Yearbook cover along with the special SSLA sticker pack launched with this edition. In the dance routine that followed, the SSLA Dance Crew lifted the spirits of the audience with their energetic and graceful performance. Thereafter, the following students were presented with the 'Academic awards' to acknowledge their excellence, bringing the first half of the ceremony to a close.



Illustrated by Amalya Moni

Following a short tea break, a skit on the theme 'Queer Love' performed by Natak Society, SSLA's Theatre Club, welcomed the audience back. Next, Shivani Vaidya (Batch 2023), Snehal Dasgupta (Batch 2024) and Ruchir Dandekar (Batch 2026) delivered a melodious rendition of the song "Daydream" by Lily Meola followed by a lively dance performance by Prarthana Dange and Aarya Kulkarni (Batch 2024). Subsequently, Anushka Sharma of the graduating batch of 2023 filled the room with nostalgia and laughter with her heartwarming poem as she reminisced about her last four years at SSLA. This was followed by a soulful yet spirited music performance by the fourth-year students. The ceremony then recognised the brilliance of students with the Non-Academic awards across all batches.

Next, the SSLA Dance Club performed an enthusiastic and lively bollywood dance number, displaying their incredible talent, and making the rest of the crowd groove along. The Last Lecturer, the most eagerly awaited SSLA tradition, then took place. This year, Dr Vaidyanatha Gundlupet was chosen by the popular vote of students to deliver the final lecture. He spoke about his journey of 'Being a Teacher' at SSLA and recognised the significant role the faculty and the student community have played over the years in shaping him as a teacher. He expressed his gratitude to the institution saying: "Having grown up fearing the future, I've learnt to live in the moment and SSLA has been a big part of that journey." A sense of warmth enveloped the auditorium as Dr Gundlupet shared his favourite experiences with the faculty members and the students, garnering a standing ovation from an elated audience.



The graduating Batch of 2023 then took over the stage with their much-awaited dance number, where each student danced their heart out to exhilarating bollywood beats for one last time together as a batch. The Events Team then delivered an exuberant surprise dance performance, with Dr Suchetana Banerjee, the faculty head of the event, making a brief cheerful appearance. The Events Team then took a bow, as the event neared a wholesome close. Lastly, the hosts Pravit and Lavanya offered a brief vote of thanks, thus wrapping up the most anticipated evening of the year.



Red Carpet 2023 served as a testament to the dynamic and diverse talent at SSLA and was indeed a memorable evening especially for the graduating batch of 2023, as well as for the ones who worked tirelessly to deliver the event. Undoubtedly, this year's Red Carpet too will go down in history as a spectacular evening of celebration filled with enthusiasm and vigour!

SO LONG, FAREWELL!

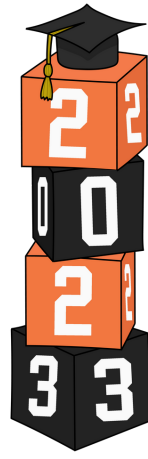
Written by Sanjana Rao

Edited by Shreya Iyer

The 21st of May was anything but ordinary for the Batch of 2023. Ushered in by the events team, the evening commemorated four years worth of achievements, memories, friendships and wisdom collected. The auditorium echoed with excited chatter and gleamed bright with everyone's colourful outfits.

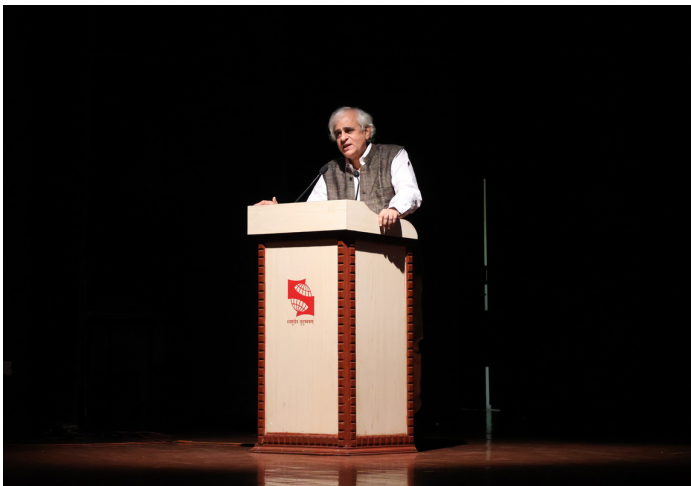
As the lights faded, host Sheuli Bannerjee (Batch 2025) took the stage as the host for the evening. Director Dr Shweta Sinha Deshpande and founding director and current advisor, Dr Anita Patankar took to the stage to bid the graduating batch farewell with words of endearment of their own, and congratulate them on their perseverance, growth and will power. They motivated the students to explore, to take risks to gain perspective and use failure as an opportunity to learn.

The heartfelt address was followed by incredible performances by SSLA's very own poetry club, It Could Be Verse.



Illustrated by Angad Malhi

The music club, Bandemonium then kept up the momentum of the evening, as spectators clapped along. The Batch of 2023 voted for Professor Nikhil Narkar to deliver the final lecture. He spoke about the joys of teaching and the many ways Batch 2023 inspired him everyday as an educator. His pun-filled speech was met with giggles across the auditorium.



Mr P. Sainath, the former rural affairs editor of The Hindu took the stage next. Equipped with quick wit and insight, he spoke about the extraordinary contributions made by ordinary people in the course of the Indian independence movement. His research for writing his latest book *The Last Heroes: Foot Soldiers of Indian Freedom* included conversations with these silent heroes, scattered across the country. He addressed the youth of tomorrow in the audience and advised them on the importance of preservation of India's rich history, to always stand up for what's right, while wishing them luck in all their future endeavours. This moving speech was followed by a final surprise to the graduating batch from the events team.

Lights across the auditorium dimmed, as the screen lit up with pictures carrying the sweetest memories of the batch, that only fuelled the sense of nostalgia in the air.

When asked about the farewell ceremony, Batch 2023's Shaun Paul said, "The farewell ceremony was full of ups and downs. Up with pearls of wisdom from Dr. Anita and Chief Guest P. Sainath, down with the emotions and sadness of leaving Pune, SSLA and most importantly, the people."

“ECHOES FROM THE THIRD FLOOR”: IN CONVERSATION WITH HARSHINI NAG, BATCH 2023 VALEDICTORIAN

Written by Bhavya Jha

Edited by Neha Pillai & Aditi Vaidyanathan

Around 5 p.m. on 29th May, the third floor was oddly quiet. Summer break had begun, but the faculty, administration, and support staff were still at work. The relentless efforts of the cleaning staff could be heard from the MPH, staff members walked down the corridors, disappearing into their offices or the conference room, and the low tones of professors conversing drifted through the slightly ajar door of the faculty office. As I stepped out of the elevator, I instantly spotted the interviewee embracing and thanking one of the cleaning ladies. Right from the start, it is clear that this is an interview with not only the valedictorian but also the Student Council Campus Officer, and a freshly-minted SSLA graduate spending an emotional last day on campus.

Although a sudden summer shower pelted the roof and nearly deafened both students, the interview lasted over an hour.

From the empty common area on the third floor, here is our conversation with Harshini Nag, Batch 2023 Valedictorian.



Can you discuss a project or paper you worked on that made you rethink or has challenged your assumptions and beliefs?

To be very honest, there have been a few. I wrote one of my favourite papers in IR at the beginning of this semester. India's current foreign policy strategy is something called 'strategic autonomy' and my whole paper was how 'strategic autonomy' was a very nonsensical foreign policy, and I detailed why. It was a little bit of a controversial take because I couldn't even find sources to back up my arguments, not a lot of people were saying that. That was a very interesting paper because it made me realise that foreign policy is not just about what sounds good and what sounds right, it's also about what it means in implementation, in practicality.

This is more of an instance wherein I challenged something. As for something that challenged my beliefs, it's a class rather than an assignment: Issues in World Politics. However, it's not just one class. Over the course of four years, I have started to view India very differently I never realised how much of an achievement it is that we

had a peaceful transition of power, and that we are one of the most prominent surviving democracies after colonisation. It's so admirable, and I don't think we acknowledge it enough. Most countries after colonisation struggled with transitioning to democracy and India has done it so beautifully. I think another course I can credit in this regard is the core 'Introduction to Multicultural Worldviews' and the assignment on "The Great Experiment" of India.

Can you tell us about a time when you took a risk that paid off?

Going for a semester exchange was a risk, for sure. I left in the middle of the pandemic so we weren't sure how many offline or online classes we'd have there. Still, that really did pay off; studying in Leiden was an amazing experience. It was insightful and made me look at myself in a completely different light. I returned a much stronger person with more diverse opinions and views, somebody who can be a lot more accepting than I was before.

SSLA itself was a risk, to be very honest. We question ourselves a lot. It's crazy how diverse it is in SSLA in terms of what subjects you can take, so when you come here it's quite overwhelming. I come from a very conservative family where not a lot of women in my family have gone outside of the city to study. For my parents, it was quite difficult to send me to Pune, that itself was a very big risk.

If you could give one piece of advice to your freshman year self, what would it be?

Don't be intimidated by people. SSLA is a very intimidating place and a lot of people act like they know what they're doing even when they don't. If you don't know what you're doing, that is completely okay — that is the norm. I would urge my freshman year self to take a lot of chances.

Another thing you've got to take care of is your mental health. SSLA is extremely draining, and I

know 4th year students have often asked their juniors: “Why are you complaining? You haven't even reached this part of it yet.” Honestly though, at that time, that was the hardest thing you'd ever done up till that point, right? Being happy is important, if you're not happy it's not going to show in your work either. So just don't be intimidated by people. I'm a short, tiny girl (laughs) which makes the whole world look much bigger than me sometimes and can be quite intimidating in a space like this considering where I come from. If I could meet my freshman year self, I'd just give her a hug and tell her it's okay, none of us know what we're doing.

You've accomplished a lot in your SSLA career while maintaining academic excellence. How easy or difficult was it for you to maintain a balance between your academic commitments and extracurriculars as well as your work-life balance?

Last semester (Sem 7) was the one semester I didn't really do much except academics due to health reasons and having to give backlog exams for my deferred courses post the semester exchange programme. I understand why I cut back at the time but honestly, you have to participate in extracurriculars at SSLA. If the only work you are doing is academics, it will drive you crazy.

So I think rather than more work that I needed to balance, all of these things I did such as being Yearbook Chapter VII Co-Editor and Orators' Club Secretary were things that were really impactful to me in terms of personal growth. This semester I had work to do as Campus Officer and genuinely, to have something for you that is not academics is very important in SSLA, especially if you're competitive because then you get caught up in the academics and research of it. If you're researching 15 to 20 days in a month, that takes a toll on you.

In terms of balance, I will also say this: not doing too many things is also vital. In my second year, I did a lot of things, and that's generally a good year to invest time in a range of extracurriculars. Still, try to find the two or three things that you really, really love, where you have the right people in positions of power who make you feel valued, and that will really change your SSLA experience – to take off stress and pressure from your academic burden rather than adding to it.



What is one lesson you learnt here that you will carry forward with you for the rest of your life?

Everything I know today I know because of the last four years. I honestly don't remember how I was before SSLA, I think I have changed very massively as a person in terms of views and beliefs. In a way, my whole personality right now is a product of SSLA.

One lesson that I will take away from SSLA hopefully is that things can change at any time. I think the biggest thing I've had to go through at SSLA is such unpredictable changes – and not just the undeniably big ones like the pandemic but the little things. I've learnt that humans are very resilient through change. We don't realise that but we are. So I think one lesson I learnt at SSLA is that honestly you can overcome and get through a lot in life, because you've seen so much change, but also things can change at any point.

You might be having the worst week of your life and something amazing can happen to you (and vice versa, of course) but the fact that things can change any time is so important to remember when you're having those bad weeks (and bad months sometimes) in SSLA. Without that awareness and hope, it would become a very tedious, exhausting affair. Things can change any time, all the time as long as you're willing to keep trying to let new things into your life.

Sometimes you have to be okay with saying goodbye to some things so that new things can come into your life, but things can change at any point, and it's important to remember that. Four years ago, I wouldn't have predicted 90% of what happened, notwithstanding the pandemic. Even if I had known there was going to be a pandemic, I wouldn't have predicted the majority of what happened in these four years, so you don't know what's going to come your way, and that's a nice, exciting thing in my opinion.

If you could distil your entire college experience into a single metaphor, what would it be and why?

Dancing in the storm — that's what we've learnt to do here. SSLA is like a storm that never ends (*laughs*). It really is! You're constantly in it and don't get out of it even during holiday break. You can get the graduate out of SSLA but you can't get SSLA out of the graduate. I'm always going to talk like this, some part of me will always have that SSLA way of speaking.

As a collective, we all sometimes feel like we should be doing something because everyone else is doing it. SSLA is very, very hard. It's incredibly demanding. I know people from other courses which are not as intense. It's like a cycle of storms just to get five minutes of sunshine when something fun happens, such as happy events like Traditional Day.

This is coming from a quote I read somewhere, but at the end of the day, you only realise when

the storm is over that you're not the same person you came into the storm as when you're leaving. So for everyone at SSLA, whoever you were in your first year, you're not leaving as the same person in your fourth and that's what matters. SSLA is the storm of change.

There are a multitude of things that are always going on at SSLA. Someone's starting a new publication, some club is planning an activity, someone else is working in the Student Council. Is it difficult to deal with feelings of —

Harshini: f-o-m-o (fear of missing out)?

I: Well, not fomo, but dissatisfaction, feeling like you're not doing enough when there's so much you can do?

100%. Almost all the time, to be honest (*laughs*). Last week, I was just sitting around and thinking, "Oh, I haven't done much this weekend," and had to pause and remind myself that I'm graduating, just calm down for five minutes (*laughs*).

To be fair, I also have a lot of anxiety about doing a lot of things and getting to have those experiences and that is very easy to feel at SSLA. If you're doing one thing, you see others doing ten other things that are so cool, and that's very, very normal.

What I would tell our juniors is that if you're picking one thing, choose it very carefully. If you're picking a certain club, make sure it's a place where you're very valued. Make significant contributions in that space rather than worrying about participating in a host of activities and stretching yourself too thin. I do believe it's a good thing we feel that f-o-m-o because it pushes us to keep trying new things. However, it's also important to not let the rat race in SSLA get to you.

It really comes down to a balance but this is a process we all go through. Have I felt it? Absolutely. It's often been consuming to a point

where I have sat down and made a list of everything I've done in a semester wondering if I've done enough.

It's alright to have those thoughts. We're all 19, 20, 20-somethings at SSLA and this is the age we should be questioning everything. It's okay to evaluate or question how much you're doing as long as you don't let it consume you. Even if you're doing nothing extra, even if all you're doing is coming to college everyday that's completely okay, but if you're doing five things at a time that's also okay — don't let anybody tell you that you can't. There will be people who will start making decisions for you. They will see your name in too many places and say, “You already have too much work.” That's YOUR call to make.

So, while in SSLA, how much of what you do has been driven by your personal ambition and how much of your ambitions have changed because of SSLA?

I wanted to do Economics in my first year, and I shifted to IR after I represented SSLA at a conference organised by Pune International Centre. I had an epiphany that day: I wanted to do IR for the rest of my life. I had an out-of-body experience just sitting there in that conference, and since then I have had no regrets. That was a big change in terms of the direction of my career.

And yes, my ambitions have changed. I have become way more ambitious after coming to SSLA. And yes, my ambitions have changed. I have become way more ambitious after coming to SSLA.

I always believed that I was destined for a very normal life, but SSLA really does teach you to aim high, and my dreams have only gotten bigger. I have become increasingly protective of my dreams. I was always ambitious, I always wanted to do well, but that ambition translated into practicality at SSLA. Now I am sure I want to practise IR instead of only studying it.

There are a lot of people here with really unusual career plans and they're all so cool. At SSLA you get the practice you need to defend these unusual choices. It's a very dismissive world for people who don't want to do engineering or become a doctor or a lawyer. People will question you again and again. So it's important to be very outrageously protective of who you are and what your dreams are. Be fiercely confident about what you're doing, even if you're not really that confident in your head, because you have to exude confidence to the world. The strength to do that, is something SSLA gave me.

Applause and Admiration: A Guard of Honour Celebrating the Batch of 2023

Written by S Sreeja

Edited by Shreya Iyer

Cheers, hoots, applause and a sense of elation echoed across the common area at SSLA on April 25th, 2023. As the Batch of 2023 left to experience one of their final events at SSLA, they were greeted by a heartwarming sight - familiar faces lined up in the long college corridors. Friends and colleagues aside, the juniors from all three batches were waiting with bated breath to show their admiration, respect and adoration for the passing batch. Their tangible excitement filled the air with a sense of exhilaration and anticipation.



The Guard of Honour is a momentous tradition in SSLA, wherein faculty, staff, and friends come together and honour the soon-to-be graduates, to mark the culmination of their journey. After three long years, this was the first in-person celebration Guard of Honour after the pandemic. The festivities commenced with a heartwarming informal interaction between the students and the faculty.

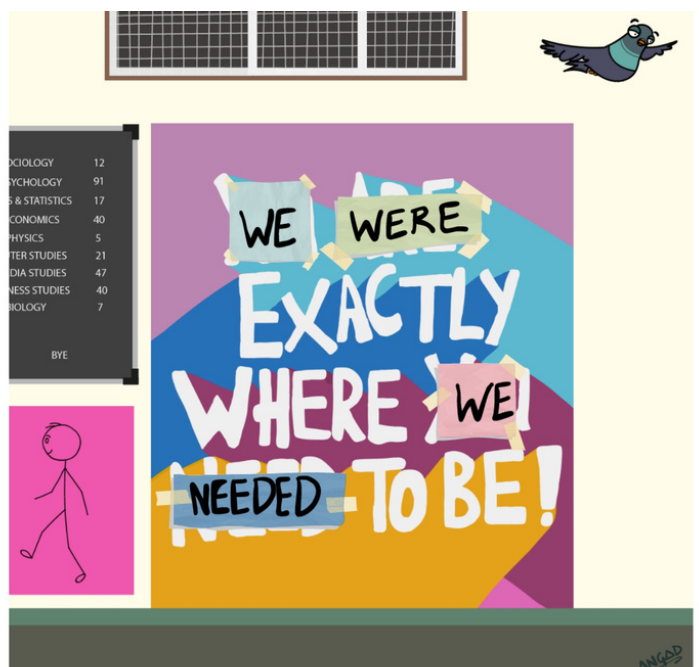


Conversations unfolded as students and faculty took turns to share treasured memories and reflections. The students began chanting the names of the faculty members, greeting them with smiles and urging them to step forward. Faculty members rightly took their place in the spotlight to share personal anecdotes and what the batch meant to them. A video compilation showcasing the batch of 2023 served as a trip down the memory lane, leading to interesting conversations about individuals' journeys at SSLA. This segment saw important revelations,



including attempts to determine the best meal at SymbiEats. However, it was the collective sentiment about the things that they would miss about SSLA that struck a chord. Enveloped in bittersweet emotions, the graduating batch exited the room, only to be met with thunderous applause from the entire college. A sight of pure delight arose as handshakes, fist bumps and heartfelt hugs were exchanged between the graduating batch and their junior counterparts.

People will question you again and again. So it's important to be very outrageously protective of who you are and what your dreams are. Be fiercely confident about what you're doing, even if you're not really that confident in your head, because you have to exude confidence to the world. The strength to do that, is something SSLA gave me. Akash Sankar of Batch 2023 eloquently describes his experience of being a part of the limelight during the walk of the Guard of Honour. He said: "Walking through the hallways with everybody applauding us felt like validation for all our efforts throughout these four years. I really felt appreciated and valued". The cake-cutting ceremony emerged as the pinnacle of the event, with four well-crafted cakes representing the graduating year '2-0-2-3'. Laughter and chants filled the air, gradually transitioning into tears of joy as the students savoured the cakes.



Comic strip illustrated by Angad Malhi

I.C.E.

by SSLA

A Trip to 0 Degrees: Counting Down to ICE by SSLA, 2023

Written by Ananya Chaure and Rugmini Kalithodi

To anyone who knows the SSLA space, the Third Floor is a close-knit community, with every nook and corner bursting with laughter and conversations. SSLA is a haven for dreamers, for those who are brave enough to venture into the unknown, to experiment and explore. In that vein, the students of SSLA decided it was time to up the stakes and attempt to launch our very first fest. We did it, and how! ICE by SSLA was borne out of long hours of labour, endless conversations and negotiations, imperfectly perfect teamwork, and most of all - the enthusiasm of the team. It all began on the 31st of March!

The official announcement of ICE by SSLA was done in an entertaining manner, true to SSLA spirit - with a multitude of fierce competitions for free ice cream, followed by the name reveal ceremony conducted by the conveners Atiriya Narayan and Dhruv Banka (Batch 2024), along with faculty-in-charge, Mr. Ranjeet Chavan..

What followed next was a series of hype events that set the stage for the big day, beginning with themed decorations put up all over the Third Floor.. Alongside this, an Ice Cube countdown structure kept the event at the forefront of everyone's minds.

Soon after, all eyes were on the Common Area which was teeming with energy as glitter face-painting stalls were set up. Next, the team spread word about the fest in a most unique manner - venturing across town with an intriguing ICE-themed Spin The Wheel activity. The students' vigour and enthusiasm was unmatched as the clock was ticking, with just a week to go for the fest! Shukti Rajesh (Batch 2026), expressed, "Coming post the COVID era and being able to interact with seniors, faculty and staff over fun games and events like these really made me feel like I was part of a community here at SSLA, the feeling of which was lost on me during the pandemic."



In the blink of an eye, it was T-minus 24 hours! The day before ICE by SSLA, the whole college was filled with the most vibrant, electric energy, with all hands on deck preparing for SSLA's first-ever fest. And the rest is history...

Frozen Frames: The Best of ICE 2023

Compiled by Athira Narayan, Anushri Shah, Anohita Dutta, Chiranshie Vyas, Diptanshu Mitra, Smrithika Rongali, Raghavi Kaundal and Sreeja S



The opening ceremony was a momentous occasion, snipping the ribbon on SSLA's very first Inter-Collegiate Event. The fest was officially kicked off by speeches from the Conveners, addressing how they along with their team, had each put their hearts and souls into ICE '23, followed by the traditional lighting of the lamp.



The very first cultural event to take place was 'Crisis Management', which continually spanned across both days. The event was conducted across 3 rounds – a report submission round, a PR statement, followed by a final presentation on the next day.



The volleyball tournaments amped up the energy among the spectators for the matches were neck-to-neck. The tournament saw multiple strategy changes, phenomenal coordination and a display of sheer determination to win!



The 2-day extravaganza saw the sports area brimming with energy, as athletes came together to celebrate their shared passion for sports. Despite the rains during the first match of the SSLA's women's basketball team, the inclement weather did not dampen their spirits!



The 'Elevator Pitch' event was designed alike to the reality show: Shark Tank. Dr. Sumithra Surendralal and Prof. Uday Sinha from SSLA served as judges. The various teams delivered concise and compelling summaries of their product ideas, thoroughly impressing the judges.



The vibrant pulse of the fest intensified with the 'Sports Auction' event. Having adapted the rules of auction from the Indian Premier League (IPL), the auction saw three teams compete through a variety of twists, challenges and a bidding frenzy!

Among the cultural events, SSLA's all-time favourite event, Trivia was conducted across 8 rounds, with each round becoming more exciting and challenging. The event also saw avid audience participation, making it an instant hit.



The air of competitiveness on the field was exhilarating as the teams displayed unwavering determination to come out on top. The football matches witnessed the maximum number of twists within the league and kept the audience on-edge. Upon their emergent victory against the SSLA women's football team, the members of the Pune Soccer Club A-team expressed: "It was really fun and unexpected. We're speechless and the celebrations are gold!"



The 'Mono-acting' event was theatre-inspired and invoked participants to showcase their range of emotions. Megha Ghosh of Batch 2023 emerged as the winner and emphasised: "It's important to keep these different kinds of performing arts alive."



The much awaited 'Solo-singing' event was categorised into two: Western and Indian. Each performance undoubtedly left a lasting impression on the judges and audience. Seeing as to how the audience grooved and tapped their feet to every song, it is safe to say that this event was a success!



The second day of the Fest, April 29th, commenced with 'Slam Poetry'. The event was organised by the in-house poetry club, It Could be Verse (ICBV), and the creative writing publication, Tapestry. The event evoked participants to address and convey their feelings, emotions and highlight social issues close to their heart.



ICE's flagship event, 'Group Dance' brought 6 of Pune's biggest dance groups under one roof for a final showdown of the cultural fest season. This event saw SSLA's Multi-Purpose Hall filled with unparalleled applause. This also marked the final performance for the SSLA Dance Crew for the year.



The felicitation of the winning teams by the our sponsors, and the reveal of the "#1 ICE by SSLA 2023" Organising Committee t-shirt marked the end of the fest. The closing ceremony was full of happiness and tears of joy as ICE 2023 came to a close.



"I think it was really satisfying especially because we had two years online. . In the first year, we played Table Tennis on campus a lot, but we didn't really get to interact with that again for a while. So it's nice to go back to familiar places."

- Anirved Deshpande (Batch 2023)



The winners were crowned champions with trophies and hampers at the sport's closing ceremony. The SSLA Dance Club also surprised the crowd with a 'flash mob'.

'Dreams Turn Into Reality': An Interview with the Conveners of ICE

Written by Athira Narayanan, Edited by Shreya Iyer

When we get to witness something as monumental as the SSLA's first-ever fest, one can only wonder- How did they pull this off? What went on behind the scenes?

I sat down with Student Heads of ICE 2023- Dhruv Banka and Atiriya Narayan of Batch 2024, along with Event Faculty-in-charge Ranjeet Chavan, in the MPH still adorned with the ICE decor, taking us right back to the two-day spectacle. In this insightful conversation, the conveners delved into their experiences and shared anecdotes from their time as heads of the fest.

I was a part of the Organizing Committee and I remember the humble stage at which the event was introduced. Now that ICE is over, we know that it was a full-blown fest. How did it go from Stage 1 to what we witnessed?

Dhruv: To be very honest, stage 1 was stage 1. I know it turned out very well and we're really happy about that. But stage 1 was what stage 1 was supposed to be. Our entire idea was to not repeat mistakes we had made in the past and in other events. Our idea was to start small, and in case it only materialised into something small, we'd still be okay with it. All we wanted was to make something happen and give the college something that would remain with them.

Then how did it become so big?

Atiriya: For the most part, everyone thought of it as "just another event". But there was a turning point somewhere in the middle where everyone sort of made it their own. They made it their baby, and everyone worked so hard towards it.



Ranjeet Chavan
Event Faculty-in-charge, ICE 2023



Atiriya Narayan
Student Head, ICE 2023



Dhruv Banka
Student Head, ICE 2023

They put in their everything! It was so big cause everyone wanted to make it special.

Do you feel a pressure to ensure a legacy to this fest that you have established in SSLA, or does it act as more of a motivation?

Dhruv: No, it doesn't put pressure on us really. Just so you know, ICE is officially on the academic calendar for the next year. It's already scheduled to be on the 22nd & 23rd of March 2024. The pressure on the three of us now is only to make sure that the batches below us go ahead and do this. What we started shouldn't stop within one year.

Ranjeet sir: Since it was such a huge success, everyone expects it to be a bigger success with every passing year.

Atiriya: I feel no pressure, to be honest. I think only Ranjeet sir should feel the pressure. You're the only one who's going to be there every year. But sir also had a lot of fun doing this. I'm sure you're looking forward to it (to Ranjeet sir)



Illustrated by Angad Malhi

Ranjeet sir, you wouldn't know this, but Dhruv introduced you to the OC saying "He is our best friend." How was your experience as the faculty in charge? How did it feel to let the students take complete charge?

Ranjeet sir: When I used to work at SIU in the sports department, we used to have 4-5 inter-institute competitions every month. So, we had the same setup. I used to head the events and there were students from different colleges working towards the fest. Here it is just SSLA. I know everyone very well. It was so much easier with a student body I was familiar with. My way of working with students has remained the same: It's to believe in them. Of course, tell them what to do and then believe in them. And also let them take ownership and they'll perform well.

Can we get a little bit of insight into the selection process for the OC? How were the heads chosen?

Atiriya: This was a student council initiative. So the student council sat together and they decided to conduct interviews together. We also decided to send out applications for heads and team members and interviews were conducted in the presence of the Student Council. Our choices were based on past experiences. So a lot of people who were a part of Symmelan were included. People who had been a part of clubs and cells were also added. We also wanted to give people the opportunity to do well. There were certain heads who hadn't gotten such an opportunity yet. But if you look in retrospect they really outdid themselves as heads. I know our decisions were questioned, but I don't think there was anyone who underperformed or didn't do well.

All 3 of you were heavily involved in many aspects of the fest. Did it ever get overwhelming? How did you manage to keep your calm whilst having to manage so many aspects of the fest?

Ranjeet sir: At SIU, we had done events that were of a much bigger scale. So to be honest, it did not get overwhelming for me. With that being said, since this was a first-time fest, we had a certain amount of pressure to make it happen. We had lesser registrations than expected till the last few weeks. So my concern was mostly surrounding that aspect.

Atiriya: I had to play football, but that's fun for me. Playing is not stressful for me. I don't think the last 2 days were as stressful as the build-up to the event. Like sir said, there was some amount of pressure on us. We also put a certain amount of pressure on ourselves, because it was so dear to us. But I think being able to rely on the teaching staff and OC really helped.

Ranjeet sir to Dhruv: You were stressed!
(everyone laughs)

Dhruv: Of course I was. All of us were. At least Atiriya and I were. As she had mentioned, the OC did really help relieve the stress. I also knew that the day I couldn't do something, I had someone to fall back on, and that was Atiriya and Ranjeet Sir. On the days I couldn't work, she would come through for me and the same goes for her. So the trust that we had in each other was the biggest factor that helped make all this smoother. In fact, the only thing that helped.

Atiriya: Also the fact that we knew each other pretty well before going into this. There was a certain level of comfort working with each other.

(everyone agrees)

Ranjeet sir: The three of us had done a few events before this together. So it wasn't new to us. We knew how to work with each other.

During the event, A stressed team head told me and I quote- "You have no idea how much is happening behind the scenes" Give us a little insight into how chaotic running SSLAs' first fest can be.

Ranjeet sir: For me, the biggest challenge was to make sure all events run on time because that's how other participants remember us.

Atiriya: Oh god, the rain!

Everyone in unison: THE RAIN!

Atiriya: I remember just standing there while sir and I just kept looking at each other like - 'Is it going to rain?'. Basketball and Volleyball cannot be played in the rain and the basketball schedule was packed.

Dhruv: I think the rain was a blessing in disguise. It removed all the dust from the courts and the weather became better. For me personally, the biggest challenge was how throughout the past 1-2 months, every single thing we needed to do, required a certain level of approval from higher authorities in college. As much as it is very important because we're creating an identity for the college, it was something we had to go through every single day. We were running around, going to different places, having different meetings, and this can be a tiring process! But again, it's important and we took it upon ourselves.

Ranjeet sir: The MOU! *(laughs)* Oh my god. That was the most difficult thing to get approved.

Atiriya: Despite all this, I don't think there was a day where I was like "Oh gosh, I 'have' to do this". It was more like I 'wanted' to do this.

Dhruv: Yeah you get so tired by 8 pm! But I'm here again by 9 am.

Atiriya: Yeah! Exactly. There's never a time I regretted taking this up.

Ranjeet sir: By the end of the event, I didn't want to go home only. *(laughs)*

Atiriya: By the end of the first day sir had already said - "I'm already missing ICE"

Talking about challenges, we know our first attempt with Symmelan didn't really take off. How much of that experience helped you with ICE?

Dhruv: More than an experience, Symmelan was a reality check. If your goal is realistic, and you have certain plans in mind to achieve that realistic goal, then nothing tough. In any event, in any sport, you know what you have to do next to get to your goal. It depends on your skill set and I think we trusted our skill set. In our case – I knew Atiriya could handle everything in the sports department, and I could handle everything cultural. We divided teams and departments: she handled logistics and outreach, while I did sponsorship, marketing, and design. That way we knew we were playing to our strengths and were keeping an achievable goal in mind.

Was there a moment during the entire event that really stood out to you? Maybe your core memory moment from the event?

Atiriya: Mine was at the end for sure. Maybe when we took the picture.

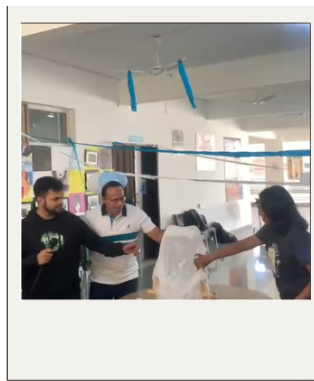
Dhruv: My best memory from ICE was actually one day before the fest. I had texted Atiriya saying “We’ve done something”.. and she said “We’re doing this”.

Ranjeet sir: For me, I think when SIU approved our budget (*everyone laughs*). That’s when SIU said we could go ahead and do the fest. For me, that was the main thing. Once you get the approval then it's all in our hands.

Now that the fest is over, as conveners, if you could go back in time and change any aspect of this fest, what would it be?

Atiriya: I can only think of extremely small things and nothing major as such.

Ranjeet sir: When you head a fest, you do realise what went wrong, but it's not visible to people on the outside.



Dhruv: People had demands: Some wanted a stage, some wanted an artist. These things are great but even if I had the option, I wouldn't change a thing (*everyone agrees*)

Atiriya: It would've also been a lot for us to handle, especially the first time.

Dhruv: Maybe next year, let's see.

So tell us, what can we expect from ICE 2024?

Dhruv: Why don't you tell us that? Our answer is, anyone reading this should be thinking about what the answer to this question is! It's up to you guys now.

And finally, what is your advice to juniors who might take up future editions of ICE?

Dhruv: Take ownership.

Atiriya: Exactly, take ownership of it and act like you have to get it done. It's your job. There's no slacking. There are no two ways around it.. For those two months, everything else is secondary. It is very doable, you just have to be very passionate about it.

Ranjeet sir: I'm gonna be there. This question should be only for them.

Dhruv: My one advice would be to trust Ranjeet sir. Put your trust in the people you work with.. It goes a long way. A very long way.



COP Fair 2023 - Setting the Stage for Meaningful Projects

Written by Chiranshie Vyas,

Edited by Smrithika Rongali

The COP Fair is an annual event hosted by the Community Outreach Cell for first-year students. This event aims to familiarise the students with the numerous domains and organisations they can work with for their mandatory Community Outreach Project (COP). This year, Batch 2026 had the opportunity to interact face-to-face with the representatives of various organisations and students at SSLA who had already completed their COP. The fair was conducted in a hybrid mode.

The first session was a compulsory Induction programme. On 25th March, Professors Ananya Dutta and Gayatri Mendanha conducted a lecture explaining the requirements and prerequisites of the COP. The students were informed about the various domains they could volunteer in. Following a small break, Mr. Girish Agarwal from the Buddha Institute conducted a lecture on the importance of working for and being in touch with the community. He helped orient students with working in social spaces and choosing a domain suitable to their interests. Mr. Agarwal also elucidated on etiquette for working in social spaces. He aided students in understanding a mission statement and guided them in developing personal ideologies. The following week, students had the opportunity to attend lectures from various organisations working in different domains.



The COP Fair offered seven different domains this year. These included Urban Development, Minority Issues, Animal Welfare, Social Work for the Disabled, Women's Issues, Education, and Environment & Rural Development. The students were required to attend four mandatory sessions of interest out of seven. All the sessions had allotted 10 minutes for student queries towards the end.

Professor Barry Rodrigue kicked off the first week by bringing forth volunteer opportunities in the field of Urban Development. He also highlighted the collaborations that SSLA has previously taken up with NGOs. The next day, Ms. Joyce Connolly and Mr. Shashikant Satbai from Snehalaya guided students through the domain of Minority Issues. Ms. Jessica Roberts from RESQ Organisation lectured on working for Animal Welfare the following day. Ms. Anita Iyer Narayan of Ekansh Trust, who specialises in social work for people with disabilities, concluded Week 1 of the COP Fair.



Week 2 started with a lecture about the Education domain by Mr. Abhijeet Bedekar. It was followed up by a session with Batch 2024 students. Aditi Vaidyanathan, Saanvi Singh, Abhinav Vishwaroop, and Yamini Sunder interacted with their juniors and shared helpful insights about their own experience of completing their COPs. The next day, Professor Ipshita Gauri guided the 2026 batch through the domain of Women's Issues. Week 2 was brought to an end by a follow-up session with Mr. Girish Agarwal.

In the 3rd and final week, Professor Richa Minocha told the students about working for Environment and Rural Development. In the last session, Professor Ananya Dutta and Professor Gayatri Mendanha addressed the students' queries. A student from Batch 2026 said, "The course's dedication to conveying intricate details was commendable. This fair was a result of commitment to thoroughness, ensuring a comprehensive understanding for students." With this, the annual COP Fair concluded successfully.



SSLA Superbowl: A Confluence of Excellence, Unity, and Jubilation

*Written by Aniriddhi Mistry,
Edited by Aditi Vaidyanathan*

The metamorphosis that took place on our third floor was nothing short of remarkable. The SSLA community was captivated with a series of novel and remarkable events, and this year's SSLA Superbowl was no exception.

Conducted between the 4th to 6th of April, The SSLA Superbowl was an extraordinary fusion of sports, arts, quizzes, and a myriad of other engaging activities. Their aspiration was to offer a comprehensive and unforgettable experience, and without a doubt, they surpassed all expectations.

As the famous adage states, "In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity", and it was with resounding fervour that they seized this opportunity, breathing life into our third floor, transforming it into a mesmerising wonderland for everyone who participated.

The appellation 'SSLA Superbowl' perfectly encapsulated the essence of this grand occasion. It served as a testament to excellence, a platform to showcase the talents and skills of our students across various sports and other activities. When the Superbowl rolled around, the excitement was palpable in the air. Every match was filled with adrenaline-pumping moments, nail-biting finishes, and the unbreakable spirit of sportsmanship.

What set the SSLA Superbowl apart was the sense of unity it brought. While students actively competed against each other on the field, off the field, they were joined by the teaching and non-teaching staff as well. Whether one was a player, a supporter, or a spectator, one could not help but be swept up in the contagious energy and feel a part of something exceptional. Events such as Treasure Hunt, Food-eating competition, Trivia and Dumb charades were conducted resulting in a few "Oscar-worthy performances" to teachable moments that "winning is great, but laughter and friendships are the ultimate trophies."



Illustrated by Amalya Moni

The sports competitions took place during the same period with students, teaching and non-teaching staff competing for the ultimate title of 'Best Batch'. The games included basketball, volleyball, table tennis, football, kho-kho and a triathlon. The winners of the SSLA Superbowl were as follows:

Sporting Events –

Basketball:

- 1st place: Batch 2024
- Runners-up: Batch 2026

Volleyball:

- 1st place: Batch 2023
- Runners-up: Batch 2023

Table tennis (Individual):

- 1st place: Batch 2023
- Runners-up: Batch 2023

Football:

- 1st place: Batch 2026
- Runners-up: Batch 2023

Kho-kho:

- 1st place: Batch 2023
- Runners-up: Batch 2025

Triathlon:

- 1st place: Batch 2025
- Runners-up: Batch 2024

Cultural Events –

- Charades: Batch 2023
- Trivia: Batch 2023
- Food eating: Batch 2025
- Treasure Hunt: Batch 2025



Illustrated by Amalya Moni

The SSLA Superbowl exemplified the true spirit of SSLA: a culmination of excellence, community, and the unadulterated joy of coming together through sports and cultural activities. It was an event that transcended mere competition, fostering a sense of togetherness and camaraderie among all participants.

Learning by the Sea - A Trip to Maritime History Society

Written by Abhinav Viswaroop,

Edited by Idika Joshi

Coming on the heels of the final CA week, students across batches sought to rejuvenate themselves before commencing the SEE examinations. For students having International Relations (IR) as either a major or a minor, The Transcontinental came to their rescue by announcing a trip to the Maritime History Society (MHS) in Mumbai. Established in 1978, the MHS considers itself an academic initiative that seeks to increase the awareness of India's maritime history and activities. The trip had been organised with the intention of directing students' attention towards the maritime domain, its importance in areas of security, trade, and exchange of information.



In the early hours of April 24th, 2023, 24 students and three faculty members headed towards Mumbai on a bus. Upon reaching the MHS building, the institute's director Commodore Aasheesh Khanna welcomed the group and addressed the students on the institute's history and activities, and also explained the need for maritime consciousness in current-day civic society. The students watched a documentary film about Mumbai's rich maritime heritage and subsequently had a guided tour of the institute's varied exhibits which cannot be showcased here as photography was not permitted within the premises of the building. The students learned

about the naval history of India, with some focus on the historical significance of Mumbai as well. The galleries allowed the students to have a look at various scale models of different classes of ships from different centuries, original letters from sailors and documents from higher authorities, replicas and treasured artefacts from decommissioned ships, and naval instruments from across time periods. Thus, the students could visually trace the evolution of the Indian Navy. After lunch, the students explored the nearby Kala Ghoda area on foot for memorabilia to buy from the street vendors and satiate their hunger. Upon making a mental note to visit again, the students were prepared to leave, with the

returning bus weighing heavier with new-found knowledge, fancy trinkets, delicious street food, photographed memories, and energy to tackle the SEEs. Speaking about the trip, Anushka Sanjay (Batch 2024) said, "The trip for me, on a personal note, added a whole new dimension of meaning to the way I perceive the relevance of Mumbai, a place I call home." Rekha Shreshtha Tumane (Batch 2023) said the trip "... was an incredibly insightful experience. Covering both the history of maritime activities in India and the current security-related activities, the tour of the MHS exhibition allowed us to understand and interact with the various aspects of maritime activity in India."

CLUB ENGAGEMENTS

Written by Anohita Dutta | Edited by Aditi Vaidyanathan



Illustrated by Angad Malhi

Dance Club- SSLA's dance crew is one that has been exceptionally busy this quarter, participating in numerous inter-collegiate events and competitions. On March 29th, the crew participated in Symbiosis Law School's (Pune) fest, Symbhav 2023. Despite the stiff competition, the dance crew gave it their all and won second place.

On 5th and 6th April, the crew represented SSLA at Gandhaar, a fest hosted by Cummins College of Engineering, Karve Nagar. The immaculate

performance was full of energy and stamina, which ultimately earned the team another runners' up position!

Apart from these awe-inspiring performances, they also brought their vitality to the Red Carpet. Mihika Bansal, one of the co-heads, talked about how, despite the preparation being tough due to SEEs, the final performance was one for the books, as they got a chance to showcase their versatility as a club.

It Could Be Verse- Anyone who attended the Red Carpet this year will remember the poetry club, ICBV's contribution - The wall of Famous Last Words. This consisted of the Batch of 2023 writing down their advice, or 'famous last words' for all current batches. Faculty and other batches were also free to leave their message upon the wall, leading to a large number of emotional, heartfelt and humorous words either for or by Batch 2023.

Furthermore, the club also put together a performance to bid the graduating batch a profound and passionate goodbye as heads, Yashit Jain and Kaleido of Batch 2025, along with members Sakshi Ramesh (Batch 2024) and Lavanya Joshi (Batch 2025) performed the poem "Waving Goodbye" by Elizabeth Spire as a last hurrah.

Natak Society- One of the most notable events at Red Carpet '23 was the SSLA's theatre club, Natak Society's production, exploring the tale of a queer love story. They stuck to the event's theme of Classic Black, by incorporating songs from the monochrome era of Indian cinema, such as Yeh Raatein Yeh Mausam and Jaane Woh Kaise Log into crucial parts of the play. The drama spread the message of how love is love, always timeless and pure. The play transcended all boundaries and evoked emotions of nostalgia and tenderness in the audience. Speaking of the audience response, Sanika Joshi (Batch 2025), the Naatak Club head commented that "There were people coming up and telling us that the songs put them right in the feels and that they were rooting for our lead couple!"

Ultimately, the Natak Society succeeded in making a night already full of drama and glamour that much more phenomenal.

Evergreen Club- SSLA's environment club, the Evergreen club made SSLA an ever greener place throughout the past few months by bringing their sustainable message to various events such as the Sahara fundraiser, where they sold custom tote bags designed by their extremely talented members.

The club also recently started a new and exciting initiative- The Sustainable Synergies talk series, for which the first talk was held on 28th March with guest speaker, our very own faculty of biology, Prof Kedar C. The talk lasted for an hour and explored the impact of citizen science and how the common man can contribute to it.

A waste collection drive was also hosted by the club in March, which successfully concluded with all collected waste being forwarded to the various organisations that Evergreen collaborated with.

On the occasion of Earth Day, the club created and sent out a delightful environment-themed crossword, the winner of which was awarded one of the aforementioned tote bags. Finally, they even brought their delicate touch to the Red Carpet by presenting each student of the Batch 2023 with a handmade flower badge made of scraps of fabric sourced from local tailors and boutiques.

Photography Club- Within the months of March to May, our Photography Club, "Shutterup", like so many other clubs, participated in the Community Outreach Cell's Sahara Fundraiser to raise money for the social sector. The Club's participatory endeavors involved an online event in which contributors sent in their photos and paid for them, ultimately raising a total of about Rs. 3700.

Comedy Club- Right before SEE season took hold of the SSLA student body, the Comedy Club decided to provide for stress-busting by organising a screening of the classic 2001 Ben Stiller comedy, "Zoolander". The head of the comedy club, Kavisha Suna (Batch 2025) believed that this was the perfect opportunity for students to ease up and relax, and how the screening was a great success leading to an evening full of ridicule and merrymaking.



CELL ENGAGEMENTS

Written by Anohita Dutta

Edited by Aditi Vaidyanathan

International Cell- The International Cell arranged a Faculty Development Program hosted by SSLA in association with Symbiosis Teaching and Learning Centre. The program featured two speakers: Dr Kathryn Ibata-Arens of DePaul University and Dr Jeremy Rinker of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. On the 1st of April, Dr Ibata-Arens spoke on the topic, 'Proposal Writing for International Grants in the Social Sciences', conveying important advice on proposal-writing. The session on the 22nd of April had Dr Jeremy Rinker speaking on the topic, 'Pedagogy and Praxis of Conflict,' expanding on his experience in teaching Peace and Conflict Studies.

Career Cell- In the month of April, The Career Cell organised the fourth lecture in the very first edition of the Navigating Your Career series, designed to give students a deeper perspective into life after SSLA.

NAVIGATING YOUR CAREER

A panel of Guest Lectures Organised by The Career Cell of SSLA



Mr. Ashutosh Parasnisi
Business and Management



Sana Vaidya
Peace and Conflict Studies



Roshni Raheja
Climate Finance and
Sustainability



Mr. Yogesh Brahmkankar
Business and Entrepreneurship
Educator

On the 19th of April, the cell invited SSLA alumni Roshni Raheja (Batch 2020) and Sana Vaidya (Batch 2017) along with industry experts, Mr. Ashutosh Parasnisi and Mr. Yogesh Brahmkankar as guest speakers, to guide current students about possible future career paths. The session was

moderated by Ruthu G (Batch 2023), Co-Head of the Career Cell along with the cell's intern, Shreya Iyer (Batch 2025). The event was extremely successful, as students asked various questions to increase their knowledge on entering the workforce as well as decrease any anxiety, and as such, it was the perfect end to the series.

Admissions Cell- The admissions cell conducted a series of webinars and in-person seminars throughout the months of April and May. The first session was a webinar that dealt with a basic introduction to life at SSLA for high school students considering our institution as an option for their undergraduate degree. It provided current SSLA students with an opportunity to showcase their life and experiences within the university. The session involved interactions with student speakers, alumni as well as the founding director and advisor, Dr Anita Patankar. Following this was a number of in-person public seminars across various cities such as Kolkata, Bangalore, New Delhi, and Mumbai, elaborating on details about SSLA such as curriculum, fee structure, to name a few.

The final seminar was held in Pune, and was the most successful, even going as far as to include a campus tour. The interaction with parents and potential students was vibrant and stimulating as questions were asked and answered. The events were a perfect representation of the synergy within SSLA between students and staff, as they seamlessly worked together to make this admissions cycle a critical success.

FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

Written by Harshita Jindal | Edited by Shaun Paul

Dr. Sumithra Surendralal

Dr Sumithra Surendralal was invited as a visiting researcher to the Complex Systems group at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences (IMSc), Chennai, in May 2023. Established by Alladi Ramakrishnan, an Indian physicist, IMSc is an independent national organisation conducting fundamental theoretical physics, mathematics, computer science, and computational biology studies. There is a Board and an Academic Council that oversees the Institute. V. Ravindran is the Institute's current director. The Department of Atomic Energy of the Indian Government and the Tamil Nadu Government fund the research at IMSc. While at IMSc, Dr Sumithra Surendralal also gave a talk on “Inference of Syntax from Songbird Songs and Implications for Neural Mechanisms’.



Dr. Sumithra Surendralal

Dr. Atiya Fatima

Dr Atiya Fatima presented a paper at the 32nd Annual Convention of the National Academy of Psychology (NAOP) at Ahmedabad University in early March 2023. The topic was ‘Liberal Arts Education - A Review of the Path Traversed’. The Annual Conventions of the National Academy of Psychology (NAOP) are designed to give people a forum to present, discuss, and debate problems that affect people individually, in groups and in communities in this rapidly changing world. They invited individuals from the psychology fraternity and those from adjacent disciplines to the 32nd Annual Convention of NAOP to present their work, debate, discuss, and engage in a conversation that would help create a more resilient and sustainable world. The Annual Conventions typically host 200+ delegates. They feature keynote talks by top psychologists from across the world as well as guest speakers from other countries.



Dr. Atiya Fatima

Dr. Sulakshana Sen

Dr Sulakshana Sen has signed a contract with Routledge, the book publication wing of Taylor and Francis Group, London, for the global publication of her book *Creativity in Indian Dance: Uday Shankar's Autumn Years, 1960 – 1977*. This book thoroughly analyses Shankar's works from his later years (1960–1977), which have remained primarily unrecorded. It addresses the basic tenets of Shankar's style, its form and substance, which has never been explored before. Additionally, it examines Rabindranath Tagore and Uday Shankar as pioneers in the dualistic traditions of Indian performing arts. 'Samanya Kshati' (1961), Shankar's 1962 tour of the United States, Canada, and Europe, India's cultural diplomacy, 'Prakriti Ananda' (1966), Shankar's 1968 final trip to the United States, 'shankarscope' (1970, 1971, and 1972), as well as Shankar's legacy are among the productions that are extensively discussed.



Dr. Sulakshana Sen

Further, Dr Sen has also submitted a chapter exploring Uday Shankar's film, *Kalpna* as an archive for the forthcoming book, *Appraising Archives and Archiving in the 21st Century*, again to be published by Routledge.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Written by Harshita Jindal | Edited by Shaun Paul

Symbhav College Fest

The Symbiosis Law School in Viman Nagar held the four-day intercollegiate cultural and sports festival, Symbhav from 23rd March to 26th March. It was organised at SLS, Viman Nagar and included a variety of sports and cultural activities. SSLA competed in Basketball, football, volleyball, badminton, tennis, and table tennis. The SSLA Women's Football team emerged as champions after defeating SLS Pune, following an impressive showing in the Rush event. Zoya Parwani (Batch 2026) scored a comeback goal to draw the game after SSLA had fallen behind 1-0 in the first half. After the match went to penalties, SSLA prevailed by an 8-7 score in the shootouts thanks to the valiant efforts of Amalya Moni (Batch 2026).

The SSLA Women's Volleyball team played every game with excellent sportsmanship.



SSLA Women's Football Team

The team earned a spot in the finals held on March 26th. SSLA won the first set 25-15 in a thrilling contest with SIT that kept everyone on their toes. SLS won the second set 25-17. Eventually, SSLA defeated SLS with a score of 15-10 in the tiebreaker set to win the competition!



SSLA Women's Volleyball Team

Sanika Joshi (Batch 2025), Nandita Vaidyanathan (Batch 2023), and Anahita Deshpande (Batch 2025) also participated in the tennis tournament at Symbhav with Sanika winning the women's Tennis Tournament! Nandita and Anahita secured second and third place respectively.



SSLA Women's Tennis Team

Apart from the sporting events, Shivani Vaidya (Batch 2023) bagged the first place in the solo singing, while the SSLA Dance Crew placed second in the group dance event.



Shivani Vaidya
Batch 2023



SSLA Dance Crew

GANDHAAR'23

MKSSS Cummins' College of Engineering for Women, Pune held their annual intercollegiate cultural and sports festival, Gandhaar from 5th April to 8th April. After competing against over 10 teams, the SSLA Dance Crew secured second place.

SPREE'23

Spree, BITS Goa's annual sports fest, was held from April 11th to April 16th, 2023. The SSLA Women's Football Team participated in SPREE'23 and came in second. Following a narrow loss against MIT Manipal, the team defeated BITS Goa in the following round, 1-0. In the semifinals against Ashoka, the team won by a score of 1-0. Finally, they played OP Jindal in the championship match but lost 1-0. This consistency in their teamwork and efforts placed our girls of SSLA second in the tournament held in Goa.

PACE 2K23

Pace 2K23 was a four-day sports fest organised by Army Institute of Technology, Dighi, from 20th to 23rd March 2023 at their campus in Dighi, Pune. SSLA's women's Basketball team took part in the competition and displayed excellent sportsmanship. They won two games – the first



SSLA Women's Basketball Team

against Cummins (36-24) and then against, Army Law College before moving on to the semifinals. However, SSLA was defeated 51-29 by MIT WPU in the semifinals. On the other hand, the SSLA's Women's Football team emerged winners of the tournament. They played their final match against VIIT and won by a 1-0 scoreline.

ICE by SSLA

On the 28th and 29th of April, 2023, SSLA opened its gates for the first time to host its first fest at the Symbiosis New Viman Nagar Campus. A plethora of events across the spectrum of sports and cultural programs were organised and student's from SSLA also participated in the same.

The Women's futsal A team triumphed and earned the runners-up spot in their division. In addition to these, SSLA had 10 table tennis players, a Men's futsal team, a Men's and Women's basketball team, and a Women's volleyball team.

ICE by SSLA- Winners & Runners Up

Event	Name of Winners	Batch
Slam Poetry	Letminlun Haokip	2026
Theatre	Megha Ghosh	2023
Solo Singing (Western)	Nihaal Krishnakumar	2025
Trivia	Shaun Paul, Disha Sarna, Ruthu GJ	2023
Futsal (Women)	SSLA (A) Runners-up	Across all batches

ALUMNI CONVERSATIONS

A FULL CIRCLE:

IN CONVERSATION WITH SARAH CHERIAN AND IRA DESHMUKH (BATCH 2022)

By Aditi Vaidyanathan and Neha Pillai

On the mellow summer evening of 4th June, we sat down by our laptops, reminiscing over the year that had been. The last time the four of us had hopped on a G-meet was exactly a year ago for the TNT handover meeting, making this a “full-circle” moment. We found ourselves standing in the very place the journey had begun, embracing all the change around us and appreciating the bygone moments. This conversation reminded us to cherish our time at SSLA, all while arming us with valuable guidance for the future.



Sarah Cherian and Ira Deshmukh of Batch 2022 were the former Co-Heads of The Newsletter Team in their fourth year. Sarah majored in Media Studies and pursued a double minor in Computer Studies and English. While at SSLA, she found her passion for writing and channeled it to pursue relevant extracurricular activities, including being a part of the Communications Cell and the various

editions of the annual International Gender Conference. She is currently an Artist Manager at Only Much Louder. Ira also majored in Media Studies with her minors in Film Studies and Psychology. She is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Public Relations and Advertising at DePaul University, Chicago. This interview is rather close to us as Co-Heads, as we draw an end to another successful academic year and to Volume VII of The SSLA Newsletter. To our student readers (especially), we hope this conversation answers some of your questions and helps you all revive your SSLA spirit as we approach and prepare for the next academic year!

Starting off on a slightly reminiscent note, what urged you both to pick SSLA as your choice for undergraduate education back in 2018?

Sarah: I had known about the course in 11th grade. I was having a hard time choosing what I wanted to do after school because I enjoyed all the subjects I was learning. I couldn't make that decision, and liberal arts gave me more time to figure out what I wanted to do.

I had actually come to Pune to visit FLAME. We landed at the airport, and the first thing that we saw was “Symbiosis” and my mom said, “It would be fun if you went to Symbiosis. It's so well reputed!” Just to humour her, I took the SET, and I got in! After I consulted a bunch of people, I realised the four-year course was beneficial if I wanted to study abroad. I was convinced that liberal arts was a great course, but my parents were still a bit sceptical. Anita Ma'am did a session with all the parents, and that convinced my dad that Liberal Arts is the future. He then convinced my mom - and the rest is history. That's how I ended up at SSLA.

Ira: I also had an offer from another university, but SSLA's four-year programme made it stand out, and I wanted to eventually do a Master's. Usually in India, you do a three-year course and then work for one year, but I did not want to do that. The other university also did not have a programme structure like we did. We did a lot of science and math, which I hated! But in the end, I am really glad we studied those subjects.

Having delved into how your liberal arts journey has begun, how has it helped you get to where you are today?

Sarah: There were a lot of things on the job description of my current role as an Artist Manager and it required one to have many different skills. SSLA had completely prepared me to handle the pressure which comes with the job. During my interview as well, my boss mentioned that I would have to handle various tasks involving maths, law etc., and SSLA had equipped me with the ability to do that. If I had gone for a standard BA degree, I doubt I would have had the skill set required for my current job.

Ira: That's actually a perfect leeway for me. One thing I would stress on is research. I know this is going to sound straight out of SSLA's Instagram page, but they know what they're talking about, and I realised this after graduating. I know it's a rigorous degree, and it does burn you out, but when you do your Master's, you're well-prepared to handle any sort of research that is thrown at you.

My peers are now having a tough time with things like content analysis, but I've done it before, and it's right up my alley! As Sarah said, having that holistic exposure also gives you quite the edge at grad school because you know a little bit of everything. It's easy to build off of that knowledge and learn more.

You guys have mentioned a bunch of classes that have helped you, but have there been any specific professors or extracurriculars that you have done that may have impacted your personal and professional growth?

Ira: I think you all know where this is going. All of Prof. Ananya Parikh's classes helped increase my confidence so much. In my first year, I was this socially anxious kid who had newly entered the research space. She created such a safe environment for people to make mistakes and to learn from them. All the professors created an atmosphere that I really appreciated. By my fourth year, I was on top of my game! A lot of our media classes also tore us down and made me question my choice of majoring in media, but now, I am really glad I did those courses.

Sarah: There were a lot of courses that I now realise have impacted me so much. If I had to go back and give a shout-out to everyone, you'd have a huge list! As Ira said, in my second year, when we started with our majors, I was very unsure if I made the right decision choosing media. The first few classes were heavily theory-based, but later on, we got to dip our feet in different domains of media, which really helped me. The media class was a safe space to ask stupid questions, and even after graduation, my media professors, Ms. Kavitha Iyer and Ms. Smruti Koppikar guided me a lot.

I've done courses in both English and Media with Professor Ananya Dutta, and she taught me never to be afraid of asking questions. In my first year, I was hesitant to ask questions in class, but that really changed when I took classes with Prof. Dutta, and that really boosted my confidence. Now, in my workplace as well, when I have to ask questions and give my opinions, I know my perspective matters.

Through an elective, I realised that I really enjoyed coding- to the extent that I went ahead

and fought the admin to get Computer Studies as a double minor! That course really taught me that even if something looks difficult and out of your comfort zone, nothing is impossible with the right amount of research and dedication.

In terms of extracurriculars, my tip is to try out everything! If you don't like it, you can always drop it later - just try. You should really try out for The Newsletter Team (TNT) if you haven't!

Thank you for the marketing (laughs)! To follow up on that, How has your involvement with TNT impacted your career trajectory after graduation? Could you tell us of any skills you have gained from this particular role that help you in your professional life?

Sarah: I joined TNT towards the end of my first year, and at that time, most of the team were seniors. The quality of work was brilliant, and I remember looking down on my articles and saying, "Why have they chosen me? They must have made a mistake". However, later, I drew inspiration from it and figured if they can do it, I could too. I worked on my writing skills and bettered them to a point the co-heads could trust me to work independently. You also learn networking through TNT. I've had to talk to so many people in college who probably did not know of my existence until I reached out to them for an article.

As a Co-Head, I learned people skills and time management. You are leading a big team, and you'd have to make sure everyone was comfortable and doing their best. I was Co-Head in my fourth year, and fourth year was hectic, but knowing I had committed to TNT made me develop time management skills that I was severely lacking before.

Ira: Sarah covered most of it, but I picked up a lot of skills as a Co-Head. As Co-Heads, we did so much editing, which definitely strengthened my writing and editing skills. I was so comfortable editing my dissertation and seminar paper.

It really helps you develop these crucial skills, and if you've got your academic writing sorted, you can do anything! Moreover, project management was key being in this leadership role and managing a large team. It definitely gives you a good idea of multitasking, and these skills come in handy now as well.

Sarah: Even problem-solving. Our timelines would usually go for a toss, and it was often because of factors that were out of our control. We slowly learned that things in life are never going to go according to plan, so we quickly developed problem-solving skills to overcome the hurdles.

Ira: We were always in a crisis, and I would be so nervous, but once you figure out how to go about it, you develop this "we can figure this out" attitude, and that has helped me a lot since.

Could you share a lighthearted or funny memory from your time working together that still brings a smile to your face?

Sarah: Ira and I were really good friends before we headed TNT...

Ira: Are. Correction.

Sarah. Yes, we are, and we always will be. Because of that, even the most stressful parts of the job became fun. Working alongside Ira were some of my fondest memories!

Ira: Editing with Sarah was a lot of fun. I can't pick one distinct memory because we had so much fun doing it together. The last issue was a bittersweet moment, and writing that editors' note was a struggle. I have to say, Sarah was such a trooper. She did a good chunk of it! I remember working really hard on the last issue the most. Even this section: Alumni Conversation! We remember being so nervous when we started it, making this a very full-circle moment for us. Seems surreal!

Taking a quick look at where you are today, was that a planned decision and what helped you both decide to pursue your respective paths?

Ira: I would say, yes, totally! Nothing makes you work like the last two years of SSLA's programme. I did not want to work straight out of undergrad, and moreover, I did not know where I wanted to work; I knew Media and Marketing were the fields in which I wanted to work; I was still figuring out my niche area. So, in that sense, it helped me figure out what I wanted to do - in terms of the *big, bad industry!* The research foundation that we build at SSLA definitely helps at grad school. So, to anyone reading this, if you are thinking about applying to grad school, don't worry, SSLA has prepared you well!

Sarah: On the flip side, I wasn't sure what I wanted to pursue my Master's degree, and it is a costly affair. I also felt very burnt out after the fourth year, and I realised I didn't want to jump into research right after. My thought process is that I can try out multiple roles and, through an elimination process, decide what field I would like to pursue my Masters degree in.

And to follow up on this (at the risk of sounding like a job interview question..), do you both stand as decided on where you are headed in life?

Ira: I would say I have a good idea about what I want to do and where I want to go. However, having completed an undergraduate degree from SSLA also allows me to make certain switches within the industry, which I'm honestly very grateful for. I don't know/think if other students can say the same, but the fact that we did such a holistic programme and that Media, in general, was a specialisation that made us explore various papers/aspects of the subject across the semesters. And to have the skill sets from those papers feels like having weapons in my arsenal!

Sarah: I am a big believer in taking things one day at a time, so I'm not even sure what I'm going to be doing tomorrow. Now that I have stepped out

of SSLA, I know and can tell you now that you don't need to have your whole life planned out. And life is not going to go exactly as planned, so I don't think I ever had a vision of what I would be doing in the future, and I'm still figuring it out. There's always going to be time to figure things.

Ira: Just to add on to that, despite both Sarah and I giving such contrasting responses, we both still have one thing in common: the fact that the Honours programme provides students with the option to explore whatever they want to study. I know it might not sit with a lot of boomers or millennials, but it does help to know that you can make certain career or academic transitions - almost like the world is your oyster.



Ira Deshmukh



Sarah Cherian

Looking back at your time at SSLA, is there anything you both wish you had done differently?

Ira: I would say I wish I was a little more outspoken because I was always nervous about what my peers were thinking of me. I tell my sister, who is currently studying at SSLA - "Ask questions!" If you want to do something, do it. It is pretty much guaranteed that everyone else is also as nervous and intimidated as you are, and I learnt that much later. I wish I had known that while I was still studying. We're all here to learn, nobody knows everything from Day 1. Other than that, I wouldn't change anything for the world.

Sarah: While I said enrol and try out new things, I would also say: Just take care of yourself. I had a big FOMO (fear of missing out) throughout my time at college, so I would just go and take up

anything and everything that was coming my way. Everyone at some point is going to feel burnt out at college; if you don't, great... Good job! I wish I was you. But if you don't pace yourself, the burnout hits you, and it will hit you hard. So, take some days off.. use the weekends to treat yourself, hang out with your friends and enjoy the people you have with you right now. It is never going to be the same again. Just- do things that make you happy!

Ira: The four years, I know it seems like it's a lot, and you're doing so many things, but it's a very safe space, so let yourself feel safe for those 4 years because it's not going to feel like that after and you're going to wish you could relive it all again. So, I agree with Sarah on that.

Sarah: Yeah, when I said spend time with your friends – I genuinely mean it, because once you step out of college, everyone is going to have different schedules. So, even to get on a call with your friends takes Google Calendars to figure out. There are time zone differences, and everyone's doing their own thing. So, when you have the opportunity to do so, do it. Cherish these moments you have with them.

As we prepare for a new academic year, is there any advice you would like to give to our student readers – reflecting on how much you have learnt from SSLA and how fondly you speak of your 4 years at college?

Ira: To the students of Batch 2024 – with regards to dissertation, something that helped me was having a clear-cut timeline for both the seminar paper and dissertation. So, if that's something that helps you, I would say just sit down and chalk out a monthly timeline for your chapters. A piece of advice that knocked me off my feet and got me on track was something my first chair, Prof. Kavitha Iyer had told me: "You need to relax. You are focusing a lot on the execution of it all and not what you want your topic to be." And it goes back to what they say: "Don't focus on the destination. Focus on the journey." This would be a good time to take it one day at a time. Also,

pace yourself. Don't take more than you can handle. One thing I did was that I dropped all my extracurriculars because I was also part of the Communications Cell throughout the first 3 years. The only other extracurricular I pursued was The Newsletter.

Sarah: To the students of Batch 2024 – Unfortunately, for us, most of our final year was online. It felt isolating while we were writing our seminar and dissertation; so that way, you guys are lucky to have your batchmates alongside you on campus. Oftentimes, when I was writing my submissions, I felt like I was struggling, but your friends are going through the same struggle too. It helps to talk to people. As for general advice – Try making friends across batches. SSLA is set up in a way wherein it provides you with enough opportunities to have inter-batch friends. Make complete use of these friendships – not just to ask them for academic advice or their assignments.

To wrap things up on a fun note, what would you do if you got to come back to SSLA for a day?

Ira: [laughs] This is one question I came prepared for! First things first, I would go sit in an Ananya Parikh lecture, I would die to sit in one right now. I'm such a fan, I'm sorry! I think another would be to go to the cafeteria and get Nimbu Paani, I miss it – that was such a wake-up drink. And obviously, spend the 11:45-12:30 p.m. lunch break with everyone in the common area. And rangoli... I could go on.

Sarah: I hope I don't have to attend classes! I'm going to be very liberal with the term *campus* because I consider the whole of Viman Nagar as the campus. I miss walking to 'Juice' after a 7 p.m. lecture and randomly running into people there. That's when we relax; that's when we rant about what went down during the day over some good juice. Another thing I would do is to run into my friends in the common area and just sit and talk. I miss having random conversations- debating about the pros and cons of something bizarre or arguing if aliens really exist.



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