



Praba Subramaniam

in Wipro Infotech and SCM Microsystems, she volunteered at AID-India. She eventually became a full-time social work volunteer at AID Saathi in 2003 after giving up her job.

**Anita Balasubramanian** has had a thoroughly wholesome career in the social sector. After graduating from BITS in 1999, she has visited more than 80 groups in India involved in a variety of issues such as education, healthcare, tribal rights, conflict resolution and human rights and has learnt that all these issues are ultimately interconnected. She has also volunteered for several *Asha* chapters and has imbibed the spirit of the participative and democratic model that has made *Asha* so successful. Perhaps her crowning achievements have been the two organizations she has co-founded: *The Learning Network* that explores the various issues associated with education in a holistic manner, and *Sangati*, an organization that explores social and developmental issues through learning and related grassroots action. Anita has also conceptualized and managed Goodbooks Teachers Center, a resource center for teachers in and around Chennai. Given her affinity for learning and her irrepressible spirit, there's no limit to what Anita can achieve in the future.

**Praba Subramaniam** (1993) has had a career in public

service/nonprofit with a few gaps and breaks. She worked for sometime at Vidya Sagar (previously known as The Spastic Society of India in Chennai). She came to the US in 1999 and volunteered in several nonprofit organizations - mainly serving the technological needs of the disabled population. At Tulsa, OK Praba prepared a needs assessment report for implementing County's Headstart programs. Since last year, she's been mostly at home looking after her 3 yr old daughter and has started a small business on eBay that specializes in selling handmade accessories from India - products made by marginalized producer groups comprising women and the handicapped.

This section would be incomplete without a mention of **Minakshi Krishnan**, who has made a mark in the field of community service and is a recent *BITSAA 30Under30* awardee in the category of Community Leadership. Minakshi completed the Mardi Gras Marathon in February 2005 and raised funds for the Whitman Walker clinic that works with HIV/AIDS patients in the U.S. She is the coordinator of *Asha* for the DC chapter. She has also worked with a number of organizations in India including AID, and Kalpavriksh on issues as diverse as integrated rural development and health to women and child development. Committed all the way, Minakshi has also been a Service Corps volunteer and an American Red Cross volunteer for blood drives.

## Creative Arts

India has always been well renowned for its culture, art and

architecture. Recently the West has also seen the success of the "Indian Engineer". A union of these two phenomena has led to the emergence of a new breed of individual - the creative intellect. To explain this new breed of individual, we must explore the nature and definition of creativity a little further. Creativity is defined as the ability to produce new things or new knowledge. One of the principal ways to be creative is to look for alternative ways to view phenomena or for alternative ways to ask a question. *Robert Sternberg's* theory attributes several factors that influence creativity - Intelligence, Knowledge, Thinking Styles, Personality, Motivation and other Environmental factors. Maybe creativity also requires a touch of eccentricity and stubbornness.

Voila! Is this not the environment in BITS, Pilani in a nutshell? Be it OASIS, APOGEE, plays by drama clubs, *music nites* or any other cultural event in BITS, we have had the opportunity to explore and nurture our creative side. Let me illustrate with some highlights from our own BITSian women who are prime examples of success in creative arts.

**Anuradha Gupta** (nee Sharma) who has a MMS degree from BITS ('86-'90) and an MBA from Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi is the author of three books. Her first book was a book of philosophical short stories and poems for limited circulation, called, "The Quest for Life" that dealt with primarily social themes. The second book, "Memoirs of Army Days" was about her experiences as an Army Brat, reliving the nostalgia and joy of Army Life.

The third book, *The Green Dragon* is a book that marries the mythology of dragons with children in India in an attempt to sensitize children to all possible environmental issues. It has received good reviews from *The Hindu* and the *Free Press Journal*. It is listed on Amazon.com.



Rashmi Datt

Her fourth book (nearing completion) is a semi-fiction book dealing with bipolar disorder, with the objective of getting rid of the myths and stigma surrounding mental disorders. She is also co-authoring her fifth book with a BITSian writer; this will be her first novel.

Anuradha is on the Editorial board of *Sandpaper* and on the Executive Committee of a New York based non-profit organization, Lend-A-Hand India.

**Rashmi Datt** is the author of the well-known book “*Managing Your Boss*”. This book, published in 2005, is a practical guide to constructively managing the relationship with your boss. The book provides insights and practical tips with

the help of case studies and examples based on real life experiences of middle and senior managers. Rashmi graduated from BITS in 1984 with a MMS degree. At BITS, she was the Cultural Secretary of Meera Bhavan in 1982. She worked for 8 years with Pfizer, Mumbai in Training before starting *Dialog*. Dialog, is a learning services delivery consultancy, which offers workshops towards personal and organizational development. Rashmi tells us “We are owners of talent and potential. Using it is up to us.”

**Anuradha Haasan** ('88 Physics MMS) has featured in many movies and TV series in Tamil and Telugu. She is also part of the Malayalam mega-serial “*Vivahita*”. In 2001, Anu won the Best Supporting Actress award for her TV role in “*Anbulla Snehgidhiye*” based on Chitra Banerjee's award winning novel “*Sister of my heart*”. Her movies include *Priyanka* (1994), *Indira* (1996), *Alavandhan* (2001), *Run* (2002) and *Nala Damayanthi* (2003). She won the Tamil Nadu Government's Best Character Artiste (Female) award for 2002 for her role in the movie “*Run*”. Anu Haasan also shares production credits in the film “*Mumbai Xpress*” starring Kamal Haasan.



Divya

**Divya** graduated from BITS with a Mechanical Engineering degree and took up a career as an actress. Although she had featured in the movie “*Five star*”, she waited until her graduation to take on more projects. She was Miss Madurai in 1999 and the runner-up in 2001 at the Ms. Chennai pageant. Her accomplishments include receiving the TN State Award for Educational Excellence in 1999. Known as Kanika or Kaniha (Tamil) and Sravanthi (Telugu & Kannada) on screen she has featured in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam movies. Her list of films includes *Otessi*, *Chepputanna* (2003 in Telegu), *Annavaru* (2003 in Kannada), *Autograph* (2004 in Tamil), *Aethiri* (2004 in Tamil), *Dancer* (2004 in Tamil), *Ettinum* (2004 in Malayalam) and *Godfather* (2005 in Tamil).

**Padmini Chettur** is a choreographer and dancer. She studied in BITS between 1987 and 1991 and several BITSians who were on campus then remember her well from her performance in the EDC plays. After graduating from BITS, she joined the dance company run by Chandralekha. Padmini has created her own identity and style, drawing from her early training in the traditional Bharatnatyam dance style. Her first solo work ‘*Wings and Masks*’ (1994) was followed by ‘*Brown*’ (1994). She collaborated with Krishna Devanandan for the duet ‘*Unsung*’. Her other works include ‘*Soliloquy*’ (1996), ‘*Fragility*’ (2001) and ‘*Solo*’ (2003). Her most recent work ‘*Paper Doll*’ premiered in Netherlands in 2005. In ‘*Paper Doll*’, performed by Padmini Chettur's company of five dancers, she examines the chain of paper dolls cut out of a piece

of paper. The dolls were identical representing perfection but two-dimensional and attached only at the arms. In an article she wrote about the show and her work, she says “I represent an India still in the process of assimilating urbanity into its culture, an India where the ‘body’ still longs for freedoms it doesn’t yet have.”



Shanti Sharma

**Shanti Sharma** (nee Vaidhyanathan) is one of the finest classical vocalists in India. She graduated from BITS in 1978 with a Masters in Chemistry. She learnt music under Pandit Amarnath in Bharatiya Kala Kendra, Delhi. She later went on to become his assistant. In an interview with *The Tribune*, she says “I am happy I have stuck to music and not given into the temptation of earning quick bucks by becoming a science teacher. Music, for me, is a vocation. God’s gift, which I humbly accept and nurture.” Shanti has won many awards and has been instrumental in the success of many artists who were her students. A deeply philosophical person, she says “my *manzil* is

to reach the heights of sublimity in singing”.

## Engineering & Technology

In an article called “Can science be women-friendly?”, the noted journalist and Chief of the Mumbai Bureau/ Deputy Editor of The Hindu, Kalpana Sharma talked about how difficult it would be to comprehend and administer the larger issues of “gendered” science - the need to evolve a system of knowledge that integrates a gender perspective in its approach and direction. While there are laudable efforts in this direction like the special “Women’s Scientists Program” by Department of Science and Technology’s which pledges to make concerted effort to give women a strong foothold into the scientific profession, help them re-enter into the mainstream (post “break in their careers” arising out of motherhood and family responsibilities) and provide a launch pad for further forays into the field of science and technology, both from the point of view of pure science and its application to societal development, there is an urgent need to address the more immediate concerns plaguing the women in this arena . The most significant of it being the reluctance on part of the women to specialize exclusively in any of the organized and niche areas of science or engineering – areas considered beyond their realm of capability.

In fact, as recently as five years ago, when a well-known all-women’s college in the United States, Smith College, announced that it was offering a

degree in engineering, an electronics magazine ran an article with the title, “Is Female Engineer an Oxymoron?” The author claimed that in his 32 years as an engineer in power electronics, he had never worked with a woman engineer. He concluded that women did not have a love or aptitude for “real” technical work. These women defy any such hypotheses.

Shoumi Das (now Sen), (EEE, 1997-2001) is one of those lone rangers, who has focused on a career in the noticeably underrepresented area as far as the number of women working in it is concerned - the HVAC (Heating, ventilation and Air conditioning) industry. She works as a Project Engineer at Carrier, the famous air conditioning company and has, so far, not met a single engineer in her company who happens to be a woman. She was at the receiving end of incredulous looks from customers and colleagues alike initially. In fact, in her training programmes at work, her instructor keeps referring to the team as “gentlemen” and adds the word “lady” as an afterthought!! But of course, the men had no choice but to get used to having her around, especially she is so dedicated. The RF industry is no different story either, points out Sangeeta Iyer, who is working as in RF engineer at LCC International in North Carolina. More often than not, women have to deal with pre-conceived notions from their peers of the opposite sex that women will succumb to the relentless work pressures and long hours. But of course, over a course of time and due to tremendous perseverance by the women to prove themselves, the men have begun to have second thoughts about their notions. Maybe the