

The first day

Academics are idiosyncratically different, but a few can bring the best out of their students.

BY V PRADEEP KUMAR

It was our first day at the Management Institute (some 28 years back). The first class was by the Director, Prof Tarkeshwar. Short, burly, baldy and reputed for volatile behaviour, he walked in briskly and set the ground rules unilaterally: no bunking classes and no delays in assignments.

With initial warnings and briefing about the gradation system, he spoke right from Adam Smith to Karl Marx to Keynes and repeatedly highlighted his days at the London School of Economics. Except a meek clarification, it was an hour of monologue.

Dr Chatterjee smilingly walked in next. With a seemingly large heart, he went out of his way to un-

derstand us. He made us (including the last benchers) comfortable with jokes, but his strong recommendation to buy his finance book explained his 'large heartedness': a small price to pay for an hour of relief after the Director's verbal diarrhoea.

At the break, we walked out to support the smokers. But a few puffs and one angry look of the Director, we all rushed back. Pretty faced Malathi walked in with a figure as uninteresting as the statistics she was to teach. Speaking like a parrot, she was the pet of the director. For the naughty last benchers though, she was the perfect prey to return the compliments to her mentor.

Next, tall and dark Vishwanath was masking his stammer with a permanent grin, giving the first benchers a taste of his showering (saliva spraying) speech. He made us feel proud with his unknown American degree, but was sadly mistaken to be the stand in captain of the institute, though the director

would have preferred him to be a stand by. The last was the smart and knowledgeable Prof Vidyasagar, a distinguished visiting faculty. He punctuated the lecture with practical industry jokes. Subtly ridiculing the scholars as bookish, he remarked that nothing significant had ever emerged from them and there was no substitute for practical hands on experience. Urging us to leave the scholars run through their agenda, he motivated us for successful careers, and left us deeply impressed.

While my books have gathered dust and I have turned grey with industry experience, three more Directors have come and gone. The current director with unknown American degree still talks about it proudly while the pretty parrot has turned grey too. Thankfully, shivering first hour experiences have stopped; the first benchers are still having showering experience and the last benchers are having the last laugh.