

Fun and farewells back on campus after pandemic pause

Pics: B A Raju & D Suresh Kumar



OLD RITUALS BACK: A farewell under the trees at Women's Christian College

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A young woman and a young man stood across from each other staring at the food on their plates. Before your imagination runs wild, the plates each held a green chilli, a small piece of ginger and a thick slice of bitter gourd. Whoever ate everything on the plate first would win the eating competition that their juniors had organised as part of the farewell for students passing out of Madras Christian College. For the record, the man won, chomping down even the green chilli while woman sat staring at hers in terror.

This is the first time in three years that students have had a full academic year on campus and they are making the most of it. In many colleges, juniors turned the tables on seniors making them jump through hoops, often literally. Some farewells are party themed, others have memes built around them. And there is always dance and feet-tapping music.

At Women Christian College, one farewell had juniors giving their seniors send-off names. Aspiring footballers were named 'bigilu', those who rarely put in an appearance in college were called 'unknown entities'. Anyone caught catching a bit of shuteye was promptly if unimaginatively named sleeping beauty. Those who rarely spoke were called silent killers and those who

were witty were named 'comedy pieces'. "We had fun with these names. Juniors got to know us through the department events and classmates," said Eliza Ninan Kurien, a third-year BSc student from WCC. The year-long offline classes also helped them to get to know each other. The inter-collegiate events and culturals were fun filled.

This interaction and repartee is what they missed the most during online classes, say students. Solomon Mathai David, a second-year MA English student from MCC, said his BA farewell in 2021 was low key. "We were right in the middle of the pandemic and most of my classmates were attending online classes."

The year gone by was the first time many of those graduating now enjoyed college life. For Bharathi Nanthini, a third-year BSc student from Queen Mary's College, unforgettable memories were the butterfly walks within the campus and the magnificent view of the sea and the sands of the Marina.

For Rohan Krishnan, a third-year BA student from Loyola College, the taste of the food from the pushcarts outside college will linger on. "To buy food on campus, we need to recharge the canteen card. So many would rush to the "thalluvandi kadai" for tea and snacks," he said. From 132 colleges under the University of Madras, around one lakh students will graduate in 2023.

A stone for the ages

Long before Hogwarts and Harry Potter had the philosopher's stone, Loyola College had its arrears stone. The story was that whoever sat on the



stone, which was part of an old manual grinder abandoned on the college's campus in Chennai, would end up with exam arrears. The college authorities in their wisdom did away with this stone and erected a human rights memorial at the spot. But the old name still sticks.

Proud to be from the gutters



When MCC-ians say they rise from the gutters, it doesn't quite mean what the dictionary says. They are talking about the channels to drain rainwater from the campus that are a favourite meeting spot for students. They sit under the trees with their feet in the gutters, discussing everything under the sun. Friendships formed here last a lifetime, say students present and old. The water tanks near the botany and zoology departments and the bell tower too are popular hangouts, but the gutters win 'feet down'.

Pathurupa kadai



The Women's Christian College has a nice canteen that supplies fresh fruit juices and an Aavin kiosk that sells flavoured milk and icecreams. But the biggest crowds are at the ten-rupee shop (Pathurupa Kadai). Whatever you buy there -- a packet of chips, or vadaï or bajji -- costs just ₹10. This is a godsend at the end of the month when their pockets are to let, say students.

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