



## **Launch of the Public Humanities Initiative (PHI) at IIT Hyderabad**

### **Highlights:**

- Launch of *Public Humanities Initiative* (PHI) from 25-28 March 2025, by Dr Shuhita Bhattacharjee (Department of Liberal Arts, IIT Hyderabad)
- The highlights include an interactive and absorbing art installation (*The PHI Art Arcade*), coordinated by Dr Shuhita Bhattacharjee (Department of Liberal Arts), Dr Ankita Roy (Department of Design), and Dr Seema Krishnakumar (Department of Design), IIT Hyderabad
- The event brings together interdisciplinary collaborations between Departments of Liberal Arts and Department of Design, with a range of diverse experts—Graphic Artists, Academicians, Civil society figures, School children, Scientists/Engineers—featuring talks, an interactive art installation on public-facing research, and a student panel on Gender politics by IIT Hyderabad's Liberal Arts Department students.
- Interactive art displays and life-size installations by students of Design and Liberal Arts Departments based on social sector research that addresses the urgent need for adolescent sexuality education, the safety of all persons from gender-based violence and emotional/physical abuse, disability-friendly campuses, and the praxis of Socio-Academic inclusion. Attractive displays on the history of Hyderabad through food and comics.

**Hyderabad, 29 March 2025:** IITH proudly announces the launch of the *Public Humanities Initiative* (PHI) under the leadership of Dr. Shuhita Bhattacharjee, Department of Liberal Arts, as part of an Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) Major Research Project initiative. The launch event took place on 26 March 2025 at IITH and was inaugurated by Prof Murty, Director of IITH and concluded on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025 with the insightful messages by the esteemed guests.

The Chief Guest for the event is **Professor Pramod Nayar** (*UNESCO Chair in Vulnerability Studies and Professor in the Department of English, University of Hyderabad*).

The Guests of Honour are **Professor Pushpesh Kumar** (*Professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad*), and **Tashi Choedup** (*Queer/Transgender Rights Activist and Resource Person, QT Centre Hyderabad*). The Special Invitees for the occasion are **Jaideep Unudurti (Jai Undurti)** (*Journalist, Researcher, and Famous Graphic Novelist*) and **Dr Ravikant Kisana** (*Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Chair of Media and Journalism, Woxsen University*).

The *Public Humanities Initiative* (PHI) aims to foster interdisciplinary research and dialogue by bridging the gap between Humanities and Social sciences while addressing critical social issues through innovative academic practices. This initiative is set to position IITH as a leading hub for Public Humanities research and engagement.

The four-day event marked the inauguration of the *Public Humanities Initiative* (PHI) at IITH. This scholarly hub highlighted/facilitated the kinds of research from the fields of Humanities, Art, and Design which bring concrete changes to the realms of Policy, Medicine, Governance, Ecology, Education, Science, Technology, and Law. The centre will establish the importance of public-facing humanities and creative research, bringing into conversation Artists and Policymakers, Literature Scholars and Medical practitioners, Designers, Educators, Activists and Scientists.



The event was a vibrant conglomeration of people from diverse fields—Graphic artists and Engineers, Educators and Scientists, Civil society Actors and Academicians. The program included talks by eminent Academicians such as Professors Pramod Nayar, Pushpesh Kumar, and Ravikant Kisana, prominent civil society figures such as Tashi Choedup, and celebrated Graphic artists like Jai Undurti. The art installation was at the heart of the program where the IITH students of Design and LA Department who have designed the interface interacted with school students from nearby institutions as well as the larger IITH community. The students from the Department of Liberal Arts participated in a panel discussion about the theories and praxis of Gender politics, describing the tense overlap of the academic classroom with the social field.

**Prof. Pramod Nayar, UNESCO Chair in Vulnerability Studies and Professor in the Department of English, University of Hyderabad,** said *“The Public Humanities initiative in IITH is a timely and necessary step. It interfaces academics with the public and has the potential to bring issues like Biodiversity or Climate Emergency to the public, with the academic rigor but minus the fearsome jargon. I congratulate the coordinator, Dr Shuhita Bhattacharjee, Prof BS Murty and the LA Department of the IITH.”*

**Prof. Pushpesh Kumar, Professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad,** said *“Participating in the Public Humanities event organized at the Department of Liberal Arts, IITH, was an incredibly enlightening experience. From discussions and conversations to artwork, paintings, and collages, it appeared that the humanities in confined spaces of classrooms are moving towards and connecting to people's real-life experiences. The various artworks sensibly depicted gendered violence, histories, and memories of diverse groups from diverse perspectives. I hope to see more such upcoming events in the future.”*

**Tashi Choedup, Queer/Transgender Rights Activist and Resource Person, QT Centre Hyderabad,** said *“The PHI initiative at IITH is a much-needed attempt to potentially erase the false, illusory separateness that is being created between the knowledge production and everyday public domain, to have this aid more meaningful interaction between this knowledge and the everyday life in relation with state and society.”*

**Jai Undurti, Journalist, Researcher, and famous Graphic Novelist,** said *“It is very exciting to take part in this conversation - the future is what we put into it. There is a sense of one cycle of time ending and another yet to begin. This in between that we are in is precarious and yet shot through with light, like from a dying star.”*

**Dr. Ravikant Kisana, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Chair of Media and Journalism, Woxsen University,** said *“With social media algorithms opening up access to discourse in a way never previously possible-- this is the era where academics need to dialogue with society in new ways. Public humanities work needs to be seen as central to dialogue and dissemination. The future is memes more than conferences, podcasts more than research papers-- the traditional forms of academic work will always be relevant, but these new spaces and formats need serious consideration from academia.”*



**Prof. B S Murty, Director of IITH, said,** *"The launch of the Public Humanities Initiative (PHI) marks a significant step in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration at IITH. By bridging Humanities, Social Sciences, and Technology, PHI will pave the way for innovative academic engagement and real-world impact."*

**Dr. Shuhita Bhattacharjee, Department of Liberal Arts and Affiliated Faculty of Design, IITH, said,** *The PHI is a crucial initiative, socially and politically necessary, and internationally valued. The IITH Public Humanities Initiative will be one of the very few Public Humanities hubs in the country that will locate the issues of South Asia centrestage, and that will establish the tangible and transformative importance of humanities, art, and design. I am proud of the collaborative ways in which the departments of Liberal Arts and Design, especially with their bright cohort of students, came together to make this centre a research focus and creative goal. And I am truly grateful to the concrete ways in which IIT Hyderabad, while being a tech school, recognized the immense value of the initiative and strongly supported me in bringing this event and the centre into reality.*

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**About IIT Hyderabad:**

IITH, established in 2008, as one of the second Generation IITs, has reached a respectable position in both academics, research, technology development and Startups in the short span of 16 years. In the recent Indian National Ranking (NIRF-2024), IITH is placed at 3<sup>rd</sup> in Innovation and 8<sup>th</sup> among Engineering institutes in India. IITH has been striving for excellence in academics, research, technology development and startup ecosystem with a motto of "Inventing & Innovating in Technology for Humanity (IITH)".

With 325+ full-time faculty and 5,300+ students (PG+PhD students accounting for about 60%), IITH has a strong research focus with ~4500 projects worth of Rs. 1400+ Cr of R&D funding (Rs. 250 Cr funding in 2023-24), 11,500+ publications, 2,15,000+ citations and h-index of 141, 500+ Patents (210 patents in 2024 and a commitment to "Patent a Day: Mission 365" for 2025 to earn 365 patents by the end of 2025), and about 260+ Startups (that have generated 1100+ jobs with a revenue of Rs. 1500+ Cr). The attached documents will give you a brief about IITH.

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