ECHO
Roots & Routes
(For Private Circulation Only) The Quarterly Alumni Magazine of IcfaiTech Hyderabad Issue: 7 June 2025

Contents

Dr K.L.Narayana
Director
IcfaiTech, Hyderabad

Message from the Director

Dear Readers,

The successful publication of another issue of our Alumni magazine, 'ECHO, Roots & Routes,' is truly heartwarming and encouraging for IcfaiTech Hyderabad. We are continuously striving to build strong alumni-institute relations. Our alumni possess immense potential and can contribute to building the institution's brand. Conscious of this fact, we are committed to adhering to high standards when organizing events and activities in association with our alumni. The Alumni magazine 'ECHO' is a testament to this commitment.

The articles within the magazine have a good influence and reach among students. The breadth and scope of these articles are profound, covering topics from motivation and inspiration for students to the knowledge and skills required by the industry. Each article aims to build confidence among students, prepare them for challenges, and make them aware of the opportunities that await them. The time and effort invested by every alumnus in preparing these articles is commendable and deeply appreciated. I wish them continued success in their careers and all the happiness in life.

It is also crucial for students to engage with the thriving alumni community and their generosity in coming forward to help both students and the institute. Our alumni can instill confidence in students and motivate them to emulate their footsteps, leading to success in their professions. The mentoring provided by our alumni is unmatched and can have a far greater influence than anyone else. This vital dimension is what we aim to harness and grow with every new issue of the alumni magazine, 'ECHO.' I appreciate the excellent work of the Alumni Relations Cell team at the institute and wish they continue to work with the same energy in the future. I congratulate the ARC team for successfully bringing out yet another new issue of the alumni magazine, 'ECHO.'

EDITORIAL
ECHO

Dr Digvijay Vishwanathan Nair
Faculty, Incharge Alumni Relations Cell
IcfaiTech Hyderabad

The immense love and affection shown by our alumni have been instrumental in successfully bringing you another new issue of our alumni magazine, 'ECHO, Roots & Routes.' Our alumni have consistently and favorably responded to invitations, contributing wonderful articles that take readers on exciting journeys. They share their experiences, insights into technologies dominating the industry, essential professional skills and knowledge and the importance of resilience and hard work in one's life and career. This generosity from our alumni, having come forward to motivate and inspire young minds and help our students prepare for a successful future, is why we continue to produce issues of the 'ECHO' magazine.

This edition features several important articles from highly experienced alumni who are now senior corporate executives.

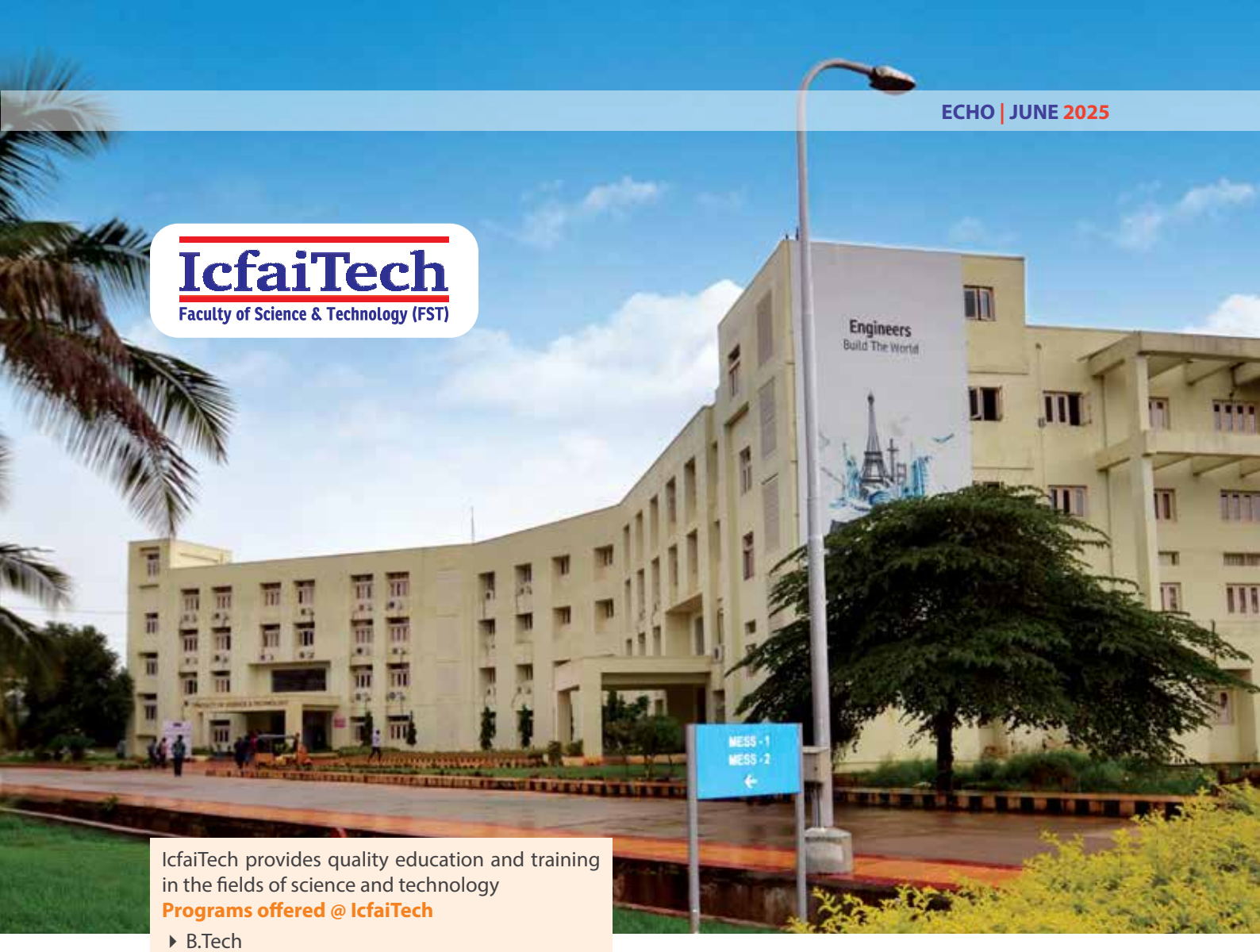
We start with Mr. Rahul Kumar, who discusses the importance of AI in today's world. He explains how AI can be leveraged to hone skills and knowledge, making individuals more prepared for competition and challenges. Mr. Kumar emphasizes that young students should avoid over-reliance on AI for quick solutions. Instead, they should use AI to build their competence, applying it to complicated scenarios to develop their own solutions and responses. This practice will undoubtedly help young students use AI for growth and confidence. He concludes his narrative with the powerful phrase, "Use AI as a Coach and not a Crutch."

Next, our esteemed alumnus, Bhimavarapu Deepthi Reddy, writes on building AI for development and its numerous possible applications. She highlights the rapid transformation of AI, from voice-over interaction to emotion-aware chatbots and increasingly intelligent applications in our daily lives. Her article lays out the possibilities, scope, and power of AI, while also giving a sense of future applications. She summarizes the essential back-end and front-end tools, as well as AI models and architecture for various applications.

In another significant article, Abhisek Gaurav presents guiding principles for becoming a successful leader. He stresses the importance of hard work and perseverance, along with the need to understand and prepare for future challenges. He brings awareness to the forceful impact of AI and cloud-based technologies on industries in the future. His personal journey exemplifies patience and perseverance, showing how clinging to his goals, standing strong against adversity, and never giving up led to his success. He passionately urges young students to adopt the same motto in life.

We conclude this edition with the spirited article filled with enthusiasm by our esteemed alumnus, Devi Dutta. In her inspiring article, 'Forging Your Path: Embracing the Entrepreneurial Journey', she issues a clarion call to all students to dare to think of becoming entrepreneurs, urging young students to embrace the idea of entrepreneurship. As a successful woman entrepreneur herself, Devi Dutta stands as an inspiration to the student community, encouraging them to take on the challenge of building their own companies and leading from the front.

We wholeheartedly thank our alumni community. Together with them, we plan various activities for the benefit of our students and are consciously working to build the brand of our institution. We also extend our thanks to all stakeholders who have supported us and helped us improve over time.



IcfaiTech
Faculty of Science & Technology (FST)

IcfaiTech provides quality education and training in the fields of science and technology

Programs offered @ IcfaiTech

- B.Tech
- M.Tech
- B.Sc.
- BCA
- Ph.D (Full-time & Part-time) in Sciences

Body of Knowledge

IcfaiTech integrates into its learning system an innovative and emerging body of knowledge. The following are its highlights:

- Cutting-edge course curriculum capturing the contemporary and effective pedagogy, with emphasis on both fundamentals and applications.
- Encouraging students to not only articulate science and technology needs but also provide appropriate solutions.
- Developing appreciation for synthesized multidisciplinary learning by way of internships, measurement techniques, workshop practices and other group learning assignments.

Objectives

- To acquire a reputation as a highly purposive, innovative institution setting the pace for workable reforms in professional education, suitable and most relevant for the Indian cultural milieu.

- To provide high-quality, cutting-edge and career-oriented education programs in science and technology, to student population across the country.
- To provide highly motivated and successful science and technology graduates to meet the current and projected needs of the knowledge-workforce.

Investiture Ceremony
Passing over to new student ARC team for year 2025-26

A Journey of Growth with ARC

Sidharth Panyala
Student Secretary, ARC 2024-2025

My journey with the ARC Team began in 2024 as the Social Media Head, where I first experienced the power of connection through digital storytelling. Being part of Quintessence 2024, our alumni meet, gave me a deeper insight into the value of alumni engagement.

In 2025, I had the honour of serving as the Student Secretary, a role that allowed me to lead and launch meaningful initiatives like the Alumni AI Workshop and our new alumni coffee chat series, Apèro with Alumni. Both received wonderful responses and strengthened our alumni-student bond.

The highlight of the year was Flashback Fiesta 2K25, which turned out to be a grand success. Every moment - from planning to execution - was a team effort, and I'm grateful for the unwavering support from my team, faculty mentors, and Director Sir.

This journey taught me resilience, creativity, and the true meaning of collaboration. It's been an incredible chapter I'll always cherish.

With equal pride and optimism we now pass the torch to the new ARC team. We are confident they will bring in fresh perspectives, dedication, and enthusiasm to carry the legacy forward.

A Journey of Growth with ARC

Nandita Nishanth
Student Secretary, ARC, 2025-26

It is both an honor and a privilege to serve as the Student Secretary for the Alumni Relations Cell this year. As we embark on this journey together, I am filled with immense gratitude for the opportunity to help strengthen the bond between our inspiring alumni and the vibrant student community. With equal measures of enthusiasm for what lies ahead and deep appreciation for this opportunity, my team and I look forward to this exciting year.

Our mission is simple yet profound: to serve as a bridge between alumni and students connecting generations. We are committed to fostering meaningful interactions—through mentorship programs, networking events, and collaborative initiatives—that both honor our shared legacy and lay the foundation for new traditions.

To our beloved alumni:

You are the living history of our institution. Your success inspires us, your paths illuminate ours, and your lasting connection to this campus is something we truly cherish. No matter how many years pass, know that you will always find open arms and smiling faces here.

To our student community:

This is your invitation to connect with an extraordinary network of individuals who once sat where you sit today. Their stories are your roadmap, their wisdom your compass, and their success a reminder of what's possible when passion meets purpose.

To both:

We are committed to creating spaces where laughter is shared, knowledge is exchanged, and bonds are strengthened. Be it through formal events or casual meetups, our goal is to make every interaction meaningful—because ARC is more than a cell; it's a connection that lasts a lifetime.

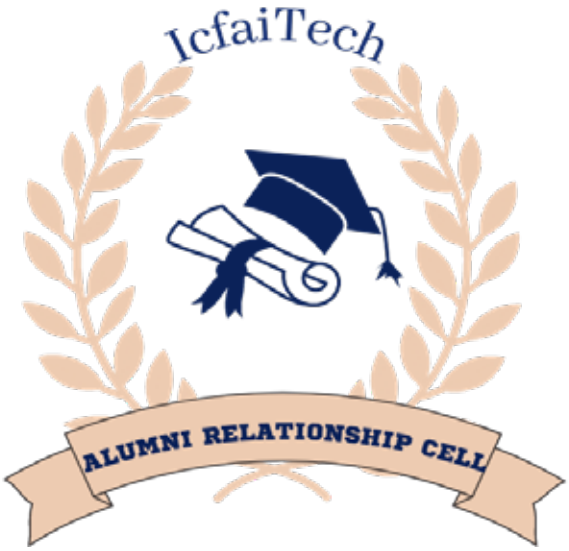
With New Beginnings Come Lasting Connections

As we turn this new page together, we are filled with joyful anticipation—of reunions yet to happen, stories yet to be shared, and bonds yet to be formed. We extend our warmest invitation to all alumni: your presence, whether in person or in spirit, enriches our community beyond measure. And to our students: your participation will nurture these connections and help them take deep root.

Great institutions are built on the milestones of their students—let's make this year a true testament to that belief!!!

With great enthusiasm and warmest regards,

IcfaiTech
Faculty of Science & Technology (FST)



Alumni Reflections

Hiring Engineers in the Age of AI

Rahul Kumar
Early Careers Coach, S&P Global, Hyderabad
IcfaiTech Hyderabad (2004-08)

It's an absolute pleasure to connect with ICFAIians through this article. Though it's been 18 years since I walked out of the ICFAI campus, the memories still feel fresh — the corridors, the classrooms, the laughter, the pressure before exams — all of it has stayed with me. ICFAI gave me the foundation I needed to build my career in IT, and even today, I truly believe that the kind of pedagogy we had — if used well — can give students a real edge. One thing that always stood out during our time was the emphasis on problem-solving. Our assessments were less about rote theory and more about applying what we'd learned. Looking back, that early exposure to analytical thinking really helped shape my journey as an engineer.

Eight years into my software career, I decided to take a leap of faith and follow my passion — I moved into the training and development space. I started off as a freelance trainer, then joined a skill development company where we worked with students to help them upskill and land jobs in the IT industry. Eventually, I returned to the IT world — but this time, wearing a different hat — that of a Learning & Development professional. My role was to design training programs for fresh engineering graduates as they stepped into the corporate world.

Age of AI (Use AI as Coach and not as Crutch)

Life has come full circle in many ways. Today, I do hiring for fresh engineering graduates at my division in the company. A big part of my day goes into reviewing resumes, interviewing candidates, and working closely with our tech teams who are doing some amazing work with cutting-edge technologies. At S&P Global, we've embraced AI wholeheartedly. We're building real-world tools, use cases, and utilities where humans and AI work together to create exceptional outcomes.

But like any powerful tool, AI is a double-edged sword. And rather than dwelling on the fear of AI taking over jobs, I want to share what I'm seeing from the ground. On one hand, I see our engineering teams using AI to significantly boost productivity. But on the other, during interviews, I'm coming across students who've misused GPTs to complete assignments and projects without truly learning the subject. Some can't explain the code they've submitted. Others openly admit their projects were built using AI tools, or worse — downloaded from the internet. I've even seen resumes with fancy AI project titles, but when I ask basic questions about machine learning algorithms, there's little understanding.

I truly believe that a well-done project on your resume can open doors faster than any grade sheet — but only if you can speak about it confidently and explain it well. Using AI just to "get it done" is a missed opportunity. Projects are your chance to explore, learn, and apply theoretical knowledge to real problems. Tools like GPT can actually help — but only if you use them for self-learning, not shortcut-taking.

In fact, I'd encourage students to use GPTs more smartly. Ask it to create a learning plan, generate practice questions, give you coding exercises — the possibilities are endless. The future belongs to self-learners, and with AI, self-coaching has never been more accessible.

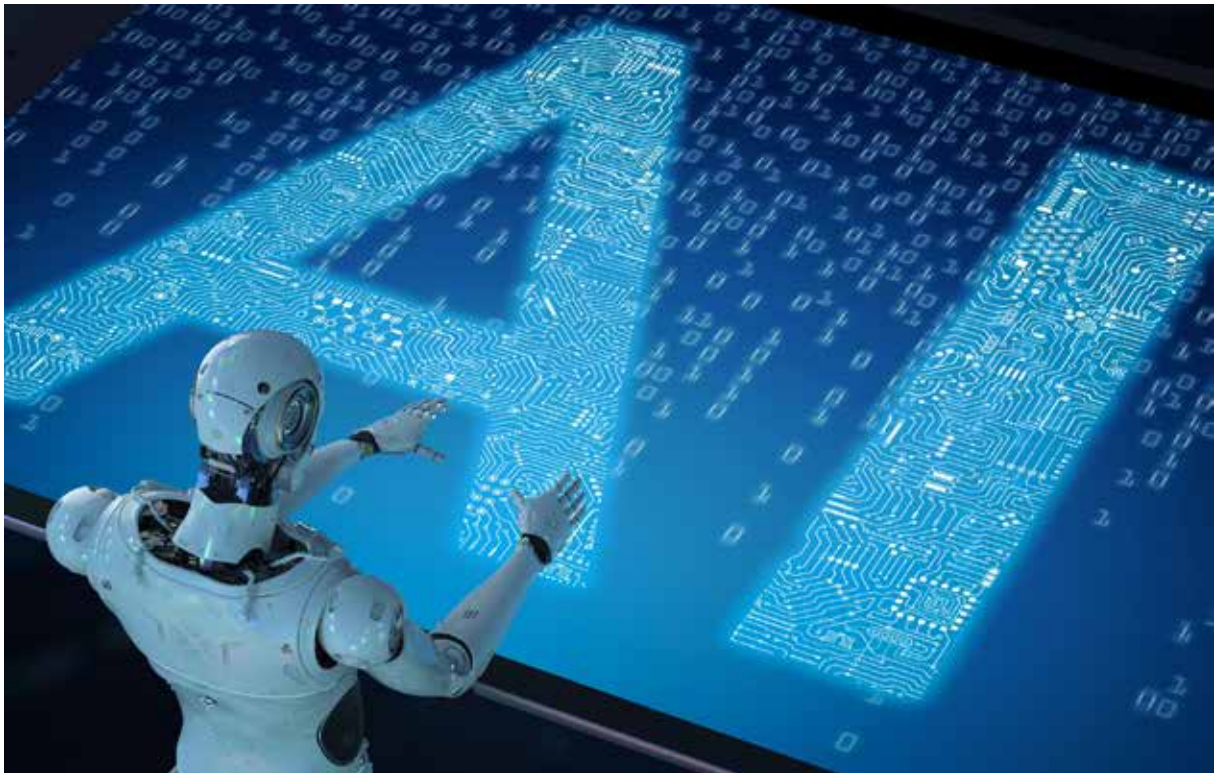
Another important thing — and this is especially relevant for those eyeing AI roles — is to understand how tools like GPT work. At our company, we prefer candidates who have at least a basic understanding of large language models (LLMs), and we get genuinely excited when someone showcases a cool use case they've built using LLMs. In many interviews, this becomes the deciding factor between a hire and a miss.

Research shows that AI now contributes to nearly 40% of code generation in some companies — and that number is only going up. But here's the truth: AI won't replace humans; it will augment them. That said, we still need strong fundamentals. Many tech managers in my company have said the same thing — to work with AI-generated code, you first need to be a solid programmer yourself. Problem-solving remains key. Breaking down complex problems into smaller steps is still a human skill in high demand.

So, my message is simple: if you use AI just as a crutch, it won't take you far. But if you use it as a coach, a guide, and a partner in your learning journey — you can go a long way.

Tech revolutions have always created more opportunities than they've destroyed. This time will be no different. We just need to be prepared the right way.

Wishing you all the very best on your journeys.



Bringing AI to Development: Building Intelligent Applications

Bhimavarapu Deepthi Reddy
Full Stack Developer
Daimler India Commercial vehicles (DICV)
IcfaiTech Hyderabad (2015-19)

In today's rapidly evolving tech landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a separate domain reserved for data scientists or machine learning engineers. It's now becoming an integral part of the core logic of modern applications. This paradigm shifts AI to Development means moving beyond rule-based systems to building intelligent applications that can:

- Learn from data
- Understand human language
- Recognize patterns, faces, and emotions
- Make decisions or predictions

Why AI in Development?
Traditional apps follow fixed logic. But AI-powered apps can adapt, personalize, and improve over time by leveraging real-world data and context.

From AI tutors and resume analysers to emotion-aware chatbots and voice assistants, developers now have the tools to integrate deep intelligence into everyday applications.

Conceptual Requirements for AI-Powered Applications

To build an AI-integrated application, developers must plan both technically and conceptually. Here's a structured way:

1. Select the Right Architecture

AI apps need to be modular, scalable, and sometimes distributed. Choose your project structure based on complexity:

- **Model-View-Controller (MVC):** Simple Express/Django apps with LLM logic in controllers.
- **Client-Server:** Next.js frontend + Node/Flask API backend with OpenAI integration.
- **Hexagonal Architecture:** For scalable AI systems using adapters like OpenAI, HuggingFace, or vector DBs.
- **Turborepo Monorepo:** Best for full-stack teams building modern apps with shared UI/components using Next.js and React.

2. Choose the Type of AI to Integrate

Depending on your use case, select the right AI capability:

1. Text Generation (LLMs)
2. Facial Emotion Detection
3. Voice Input/Output
4. Chat Interfaces (Input Output)

3. Design the LLM Interaction Flow

To make AI useful, you must design how the LLMs (like GPT-4) respond to users.

Prompt Engineering: Frame questions or instructions clearly to guide responses.

Context Handling: Decide whether to maintain chat history or use standalone prompts.

Window Management: Limit the tokens (words) passed in each request to avoid cutoff.

Response Streaming: Use real-time loading for better user experience in chat.

4. Choose UI Frameworks for AI Frontends

For smooth user interaction with AI, modern UI frameworks are key:

- React.js / Next.js – For dynamic UIs and server-side capabilities
- TypeScript – Helps in managing complex AI data structures
- Tailwind CSS / Material UI – Quick styling, responsive layouts

These tools allow for building chat UIs, webcam inputs, voice recorders, and more.

5. Backend & AI Integration

The backend serves as a brain to connect everything:

- Call APIs like OpenAI, Google TTS, or HuggingFace for AI features
- Use LangChain for chaining prompts with memory
- Store and fetch data from PostgreSQL, MongoDB, or Vector DBs (like Pinecone) for Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)

Optionally, train your own lightweight models or fine-tune LLMs for custom tasks

6. Deployment: Hosting and Scaling AI Apps

For reliable and scalable hosting of AI-powered apps:

- Use Vercel or Netlify for frontend (Next.js) deployments
- Use Railway, Render, or AWS Lambda for backend and AI logic
- Use AWS Cloud for scalable infrastructure, GPU instances, and model hosting
- Use Docker + CI/CD pipelines for production-ready workflows

Final Thoughts

AI is not a side feature anymore—it's becoming the foundation of how apps are built and experienced. Whether you're building a mental health chatbot, a voice-enabled tutor, or a resume reviewer, understanding how to bring AI into development unlocks new levels of interactivity and personalization. As a developer, this is your opportunity to create apps that don't just respond — they understand, adapt, and evolve.

How ICFAI Tech Contributed to My Growth

My time at ICFAI Tech significantly contributed to my growth as a developer. Although my core academic background is in Electronics and Communication Engineering, the curriculum in the initial years included foundational subjects like Java, Python, and Data Structures & Algorithms. This early exposure, along with continued technical electives in later semesters, helped me retain and strengthen my core programming skills. Courses in software engineering, databases, and object-oriented programming provided the conceptual clarity and confidence needed to transition smoothly into real-world application development. Additionally, building academic projects and gaining internship experience laid a strong foundation for my current professional work. ICFAI Tech also promoted innovation through startup initiatives and introduced us to essential topics like basic cybersecurity. I would recommend that the institution continue expanding offerings in areas such as cybersecurity and AI, given the increasing demand for cyber professionals in a tech-driven future.

Navigating the Ever-Evolving Tech Landscape

Reflections of a 2004–08 Alumnus (Graduated January 2010)

Abhishek Gaurav
Senior Director - Greytip software Pvt Ltd
LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/abhishek-gaurav
ICFAI Tech Hyderabad (2004–2008; completed Jan 2010)

When I think back to my days at ICFAI Tech Hyderabad, it's hard to believe how much both I—and the world of technology—have grown since 2004. Although I entered as part of the 2004–08 batch, it wasn't until January 2010 that I finally walked across the convocation stage—five and a half years after I first set foot on campus. What happened in those extra semesters, and the challenges I endured, taught me lessons no textbook could. Today, as an engineering leader spearheading next-generation products at GreyHR, I still find myself returning to the same five guiding principles:

1. Foundations vs. Flights: Why Theory Needs Practice
2. Cultivate a Habit of Continuous Learning
3. Follow What Truly Resonates
4. Prepare for a Future Dominated by Cloud & AI
5. There Is No Substitute for Hard Work

Let me unpack each of these—and share how the highs, the setbacks, and the backlogs at ICFAI shaped the engineer and leader I am today.

1. Foundations vs. Flights: Why Theory Needs Practice

During my first two years at ICFAI Tech, I immersed myself in theory—data structures, algorithms, discrete mathematics, operating systems. Frankly, I was still trying to figure out what to do with those concepts. It was only in my third year, when a few backlogs forced me to pause and reflect, that everything clicked: computer science wasn't just another degree; it was my passion. That semester of self-reflection opened my eyes to why I'd chosen B.Tech in the first place.

Before that realization, I used to think: "Theory explains everything—but until you apply it, it's just abstract." Once I embraced that, I started experimenting in small ways—debugging deeper in the lab, collaborating with seniors on mini coding exercises, and reading beyond the syllabus. From that point on, the real computer science journey began.

- Theory laid my foundation. Those lectures on algorithms taught me how to think systematically. When I wrote proofs about worst-case analysis, I was learning to reason rigorously.
- Practice became my vehicle. After I understood my passion in the third year, I began treating every assignment, every lab, and every late-night debugging session as a chance to breathe life into those abstract ideas. I realized that a strong foundation meant almost nothing if you didn't take the leap from "concept" to "code that runs in front of real users."

In hindsight, those extra semesters—clearing backlogs, staying late in the lab, revisiting old lecture notes—weren't setbacks; they were the process by which I internalized the fact that theory is your compass, but practice is your engine.

2. Cultivate a Habit of Continuous Learning

I finally graduated in January 2010—five and a half years after I first joined. Immediately after convocation, I joined a small startup whose backend was built on Python—something I hadn't formally studied at ICFAI Tech. Even though I'd just cleared my backlogs, I realized that graduation didn't mean "I'm done learning."

In that startup, I spent nights poring over online tutorials, contributing to minimal open-source snippets to decode Pythonic idioms. That summer, I learned that if you ever stop being a student of technology, you get left behind.

From 2010 to 2025, I've experienced countless paradigm shifts. In those early days:

- Facebook's Graph API was just gaining traction.
- AWS was young enough that "EC2" felt experimental, not ubiquitous.
- Machine learning was largely academic, not embedded in everyday developer toolchains.

Fast forward to 2025, and you'll find:

- Emerging languages and frameworks (Rust, Go, React 18, Vue 3) competing for attention.
- Cloud services (serverless functions, managed Kubernetes, data lakes) powering startups and enterprises alike.
- AI driving efficiency in code completion, automated testing, and product personalization.

If you're in college now—or even a few semesters behind—make continuous learning a habit: spend 15–20 minutes each day reading about new libraries, watch a short tutorial on container orchestration, or experiment with a basic TensorFlow model. Those incremental efforts compound faster than you think.

3. Follow What Truly Resonates, Not "What's Safe"

During my second year, many peers talked about joining big IT services firms right after graduation. It sounded secure: a structured career path, a decent starting salary, and a clear hierarchy. But I realized that if I took the "safe" route, I'd forever wonder, "What if I'd chased my real interests?"

That internal tug came to a head in my third year: once I was free all thanks to my backlogs and gave myself time to reflect, I discovered why I'd joined B.Tech (CSE) in the first place. I was fascinated by computing—by the elegance of well-written code, the thrill of making machines learn patterns, and the power of software to solve real problems. Once I recognized that spark, I pivoted away from "everyone else's plan" and dove into whatever fuelled my curiosity: operating systems projects, Linux kernel whitepapers, and eventually, Python-based web services.

That decision to follow passion over convention wasn't easy. There were late nights when I wondered if I had made the wrong choice, especially after that backlog extended my degree timeline. But ultimately, when you work on what excites you, you invest more, endure more, and learn faster.

4. Prepare for a Future Dominated by Cloud & AI

When I entered ICFAI Tech in 2004, "cloud computing" was a term you heard only in research labs or at a few forward-looking conferences. Today, in 2025, cloud and AI are the twin pillars of modern software engineering:

- **Cloud computing:** No longer do you lease physical servers, negotiate support contracts, or manage racks of hardware. Platforms like AWS, Azure, and GCP let you spin up a Kubernetes cluster, host microservices, and auto-scale based on real-time demand - all within minutes and pay-as-you-go. If you want to build a scalable product today, you simply cannot ignore cloud-native architectures.
- **Artificial intelligence:** What once felt like "academic-only" research is now embedded in every layer: from code completions (GitHub Copilot, Tabnine) to automated code reviews (DeepCode, Snyk). On the user side, AI powers recommendation engines, chatbots, and computer-vision services. Tomorrow's engineers will need to know how to integrate pre-trained models (vision, NLP, recommendation systems) into real-world applications, how to fine-tune them for specific domains, and how to reason about the tradeoffs—accuracy vs. latency vs. cost—when serving predictions at scale.

If you're still on campus, start exploring the free tiers on cloud providers. Deploy a simple Flask or Node.js app, hook it up to a managed database service, and experiment with a basic AWS Lambda function. Likewise, try running a small PyTorch or TensorFlow model on sample data. By the time you graduate—whenever that may be—you'll already have hands-on experience with the very platforms that will define the next decade of software innovation.

5. There Is No Substitute for Hard Work (But Smart Work Matters Too)

When I finally cleared my backlog and finished my degree in January 2010, I thought my struggle was behind me. But in reality, those months of extra effort—revisiting old courses, burning the midnight oil to study algorithms yet again, and rewriting flawed assignments—forged my identity as an engineer and a hustler.

There are no shortcuts to building that muscle memory: the more time you spend sitting in front of a compiler, chasing elusive bugs, or rewriting a SQL query that "almost works," the more you internalize core engineering instincts. That said, smart work is equally important:

- **Automate repetitive tasks**. Back in 2007, I once typed out fifty lines of shell script to back up a project directory. Today, a simple cron job or CI/CD pipeline would handle that in seconds. Learn to write scripts that automate mundane chores—so you can focus your mental energy on creative problem-solving.
- **Leverage existing tools**. In 2010, I spent an entire weekend writing a small text-processing routine from scratch. Two years later, I discovered that most of that code was already available in open-source libraries. Knowing when to "stand on the shoulders of giants" can save you weeks of work.
- Invest in good practices early. Whether it's writing modular code, setting up version control from day one, or writing unit tests, those habits will pay dividends. They're the difference between "hustle" and "hustle intelligently."

But even with all of the above, I still believe there's no real substitute for hard work. If you want first-hand experience, try this challenge: pick a problem you've never solved before—say, deploying a containerized web app to Kubernetes or training a small image-classification model. Block off a weekend and immerse yourself. You will run into dead-ends, typos, and unexpected errors. When you finally get it to work, that sense of accomplishment is what transforms "textbook knowledge" into "real-world capability."

How ICFAI's Foundation, Struggles, and Passion Shaped My Journey

Looking back on the roller coaster that was 2004–2010, I see a series of crucibles that turned me into an engineer, a problem-solver, and ultimately, a leader.

- **A Strong Foundation at ICFAI Tech.** The rigorous curriculum forced me to think abstractly, reason about algorithms, and break down complex problems into smaller subproblems. Without that bedrock, I never would have survived the real-world challenges that came later.
- **Struggles & Backlogs Made Me a Hustler.** Being "behind" my batchmates stung at first. But with every missed exam and every late-night retake, I learned resilience—and how to hustle when the odds are stacked against me.

- **Hard Work Made Me an Engineer.** There were no magic shortcuts. Every algorithm I rewrote, every lab I re-ran, and every code review I endured taught me discipline, grit, and attention to detail.
- **Learning Made Me a Leader.** Today, as I build next-gen engineering products at GreyHR—overseeing cross-functional teams, designing scalable architectures, and mentoring young engineers—I rely on the habit of continuous learning more than anything else. Being open to new languages, frameworks, and architectures is what lets me guide my teams through uncertainty.

Closing Thoughts

To every student who's questioning whether a late semester or a backlog spells disaster: remember that your journey is only as good as what you make of it. If you adopt the five principles I've shared—valuing practice as much as theory, committing to lifelong learning, following your genuine passions, embracing cloud & AI, and dedicating yourself to hard work—there is no limit to what you can achieve.

For the Class of 2025 (and everyone who follows), I leave you with this: your degree is not just a certificate; it's a launchpad. It doesn't matter if you finish in four years, five, or a little longer—you'll never regret the time spent learning, failing, rebuilding, and growing. In those trenches lie the habits and insights that will carry you through a rapidly evolving tech world.

May your journey be as challenging and rewarding as mine has been. Keep your eyes on the horizon, remain curious, and know that the best is yet to come.

Forging Your Path: Embracing the Entrepreneurial Journey

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IcfaiTech Hyderabad (2003-07)

Who knew that a simple idea scribbled on a café napkin could turn into a full-fledged D2C brand? I certainly didn't—yet that's exactly how my life changed. After years in corporate roles, I earned an Executive MBA in Design Thinking in Australia—and then dared to turn a café-napkin sketch into a D2C brand in period care. Launching felt like stepping off a cliff—terrifying yet exhilarating—and every step & delay taught me that entrepreneurship is a wild, beautiful journey of pivots and lessons. I'm driven by the passion to build my own venture, fuel growth, create jobs, and play a part in India's booming D2C landscape—solving real problems while empowering communities with innovative, purpose-led solutions.

But how to go about building, here are few of my key take aways -

1. Design Thinking: Your Secret Weapon

Forget rigid plans or assumptions—design thinking saved me from building products no one wanted. It's really just empathy in action:

- Talk to real users, listen to their struggles-primary research: Weekends in cramped chai shops, chatting with potential users about their real struggles, revealed insights no desk research could.
- Pick one clear problem to solve: Packing those stories into one challenge—"How might we create a product that feels liberating, planet-friendly, and affordable?
- Find simple solutions: Brainstorms with a cross-functional dream team/co-founder

- Prototype & Test: Create quick, rough versions of your idea & testing them with friends & family.

That cycle of build–test–learn not only refines the product; it builds trust with the earliest adopters.

2. India is a Goldmine!!

Here's some keywords for thought, TAM (Total Addressable market), Gen Z, Creator economy.

- **India is a Massive Consumer Market** India's online retail space is set to hit nearly US$200 billion by 2026. Essentials like personal care and comfort wear are at its core.
- **Gen Z & Globalisation** With roughly 400 million members, Indian Gen Z is digital-first, socially conscious, and allergic to anything "mainstream." They crave authenticity and sustainability—and they'll call you out if you fake it.

3. Building Your Moat

A killer product is just the start. Here's how to make it hard for copycats to catch up:

Supply Chain Resilience
Vet multiple manufacturers who can ramp up fast. More spreadsheets and factory visits pay off with uninterrupted stock. Onboard multiple vetted suppliers who can scale quickly. Build deeper connections with the suppliers improving credit cycles and exclusivity

Smart Imports
For specialty fabrics or niche components, partner with trusted overseas mills. Keep enough buffer inventory to dodge delays without drowning in dead stock.

Omni-Channel Play
While your website is ground zero, pop-up events and retail tie-ups help reach customers offline—and nudge them back to your D2C store for exclusive perks. Use your website as the hub, but leverage Quick Commerce, pop-up events and retail collaborations to reach customers offline—and guide them back online for exclusive benefits.

A strong behind-the-scenes engine lets you promise "next-day delivery" and actually deliver.

With a rock-solid operations backbone, you can confidently promise—and deliver—services like next-day shipping.

4. Beyond Ads: Building a Community

Plenty of brands pour money into flashy ads—but here's what really sticks:

- **Inclusive Storytelling:** If your feed only shows one body type or skin tone, you're missing half your audience. Showcase all shapes, sizes, and stories.
- **UGC & Real Voices:** When customers tag you in selfies, share their posts—warts and all. Their unfiltered takes resonate more than any polished studio shoot.
- **Micro-Influencers:** Instead of splurging on celebrities, team up with niche creators who genuinely love your brand. Their tight-knit communities engage at a fraction of the cost.
- **Events & Workshops:** Pop-up try-ons, panel talks by founders etc builds brand presence and builds customer connect.

5. After Product–Market Fit: Scaling with Purpose

Hitting that sweet spot—when orders flood in and inboxes buzz—is addictive. But growth without a plan is not sustainable.

Fundraising with Finesse

- **Tell Your Story:** Investors bet on people and potential. Share traction metrics (growth rates, retention) alongside a bold vision.
- **Warm Introductions:** Start pitching months before you need capital. Keep investors in the loop, ask for advice—they'll be more likely to back you when the time comes.

Sharpening Unit Economics

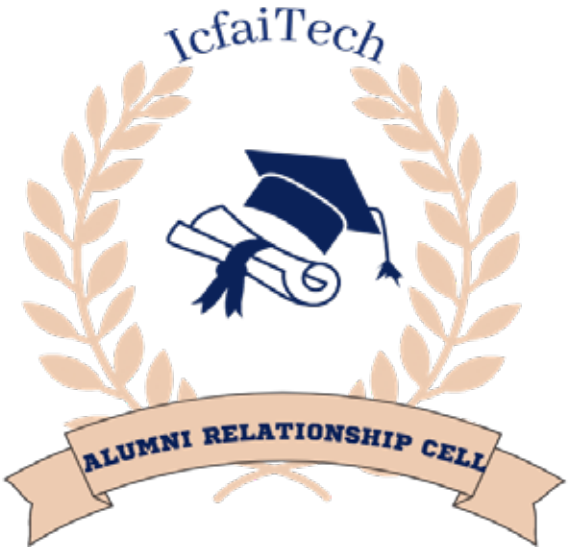
- **Cut CAC(customer acquisition cost):** Zero in on channels that deliver. Experiment with refer-a-friend perks, loyalty tiers, and subscription bundles.
- **Improve LTV (Life time value):** Introduce complementary offerings—starter kits or curated bundles—and surprise customers with VIP treatment.
- **Boost Margins:** Renegotiate with suppliers, bundle shipping, and invest in automation where it counts.

Focus on building a machine that's not just growing fast, but growing well.

Entrepreneurship is messy, exhilarating, and deeply personal. You'll question your choices, celebrate tiny wins, and learn more from late-night failures than boardroom successes. But if you anchor yourself in empathy, stay relentlessly customer-obsessed, and build infrastructure that outlasts trends, you'll carve out a space all your own in India's D2C revolution.

Your adventure is waiting—take the leap.

IcfaiTech
Faculty of Science & Technology (FST)



Coffee with Alumni Series

A Day with Alumni at Microsoft Hyderabad Campus. (April-19, 2025)

Mr Shashank Reddy, Technology Consultant Microsoft, Founder-Ermin Automotive Alumnus, IcfaiTech Hyderabad, 2017-21

The student team of Alumni Relations Cell (ARC) had an exciting and unforgettable experience during "A Day with Alumni at Microsoft" ,featuring none other than our inspiring alumnus, Mr. Shashank Reddy.

From the moment we stepped into the Microsoft campus, the energy and enthusiasm were sky-high. We were warmly welcomed by Shashank, and what followed was an incredible mix of fun, nostalgia, and meaningful conversation.

We kicked off the day with some light-hearted games that brought smiles and laughter all around—setting the perfect tone for the rest of the session. Shashank shared some of his most cherished college memories, giving us a glimpse into his journey from a student just like us to becoming a successful entrepreneur and the founder of multiple startups.

What truly stood out was his candid storytelling—filled with insights, struggles, and victories that inspired every one of us. His transition from classrooms to corporate corridors and startup boardrooms was nothing short of inspiring. He also shared valuable advice on navigating the tech world, innovation, and maintaining balance between ambition and learning.

Spending the day at Microsoft with Shashank wasn't just a session—it was an experience that left us energized and motivated. The ARC team came back with not just photos and memories, but a renewed sense of purpose and passion.

It was truly a day to remember, and we're incredibly grateful to Shashank for hosting us and sharing his time and journey so generously.

Faculty Team

Dr Digvijay V Nair (Faculty Incharge)

Dr Shakeel Hashmi

Dr K Vivekananda

Dr H Sudheer

Dr Divya

Dr Pallavi Mishra

Student Team 2025-26

Student Secretary: **Nandita Nishanth**

Co-Student Secretary: **Bommidi Srikar Reddy**

Event Management: **Kankala Rahul**

Documentation : **Srija Battu**

Technical : **Bhagath Veggalam**

Social Media : **A R Sowndharya Lahari**

Design : **G.Bindu Sree**

Hosting : **Paramveer Singh**

Cultural : **V S P Amrutha Varshini**

Creative: **Bolli Tejaswi**

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