



**SHANTANU DATTA**  
Resident Editor

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4th September, 2003

Ms Rohini Nilehani  
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Dear Rohini,

City Express is celebrating its second anniversary on September 27 and we would like to commemorate the occasion with a one-of-a-kind edition as a tribute to the Bangalore that has been so good to us all.

This year's theme is **BANGALORE FAST FORWARD:** What to look forward to in the coming year as Bangalore continues its journey towards becoming a truly international city.

We would like you to be among a select few writers whom we have requested to do columns for the special issue. Would you please contribute a 500-word article on **KNOWLEDGE CITY?** The deadline is September 15.

Your contribution will make our endeavour all the more special.

Thank you,



**THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS**

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Bangalore is a Happening City. We've heard it so many times. But what does that mean?

Did the people of Magadha say it was a happening city? Or the citizens of Awadh?

Or nearer in time, did Bombayites think their city was happening? And did this actually start getting said because the city in some sense had already happened? That it had all the great hallmarks of a metropolis – a growing business/trade district, participatory politics, arts and culture, tolerance of migration, social peace – and an aspirational status that allows everyone and anyone regardless of class and caste, to think of it as a desirable destination.

In that sense, Bangalore has already happened. It happened two or more decades ago, when it officially became the fastest growing city in Asia. It is one city among many cities in India that were primed for a similar take-off around that time – e.g. Pune, that has more than lived up to its expectations.

I think that has happened because this one city has become a true microcosm of the larger social macrocosm in this country. It is a city in the right place at the right time.

But this article is not about what has happened, but about what we can expect to happen.

I personally am an optimist about this city. I live and work and dream in it every day; I visit other cities and return home with a sense of relief; I try to be in touch with all developments on all fronts – social, civic, cultural, political, corporate, developmental – that are synthesizing in this city – and I believe it to be the centre of the universe as I understand it today.

Is that an exaggeration? Maybe! But that's how I like to see it. And it is when a citizen has a vision of his city, when she feels a sense of ownership and pride that she can make it happen. When she believes in the city as it should be more than as it is that change becomes as common place as blooming of flowers is in a rose garden. Ask any gardener!

And I also know I am not the only believer. That there is a dedicated tribe of Bangalore Believers – maybe we should form a club – that loves, respects and is committed to this city. I am sure many of them are contributors to these pages.

With such a confluence of resources, energy and belief, I think we can expect just about anything from here – look forward to these pages!

When all of us are looking for human regeneration – when we all know that something is wrong and something needs rebuilding even if we are often not sure what – we can look around to find it here.

Because Bangalore is at the forefront of many movements – in science, politics, business and the arts, where it is finding its voice in the world.

To name a few:

**Belonging** – A lack of the sense of belonging is at the heart of many international issues today. In Bangalore, although you will immediately be tagged as native or immigrant – you will not be discriminated against – hats off to our original Bangaloreans for that, as also to the reality check provided by generations of immigrants who understand that this city is dependent on immigrants.

**Infrastructure** – Facing much criticism for urban-centric elitism, recent governments and especially Krishna's - have gone full steam ahead developing Bangalore. It's getting better, not worse. Those who criticize everything need to think about how other cities in the world fare. In this transition to the idea of bigger and better, there will be an initial suffering period that every growth spurt will cause (think of your teenage sons).

**Arts/culture:** Any day, any season, take a look at the daily events page of any newspaper. This city is alive, throbbing with the expression of its own and other artistes. The National Book fair, the International Film Festival (which never was) – Bangalore has become a hot spot for everyone.

**Business** – the IT capital of India boasts of the best corporate culture which includes not just bottom lines but heart lines as well! I know of few other cities where the corporate sector has come forward so grandly to give back!

**Social Capital** – Bangalore is at the heart of some truly revolutionary movements in redefining democracy and governance. And our voice is being heard across the world. BATF, Janaagraha, Proof, Azim Premji Foundation, Akshara Foundation, Sanghamitra, Dr. Devi Shetty's Yashasvini, PAC, IFA, AFFA, Dr Sudarsdhan's many initiatives – all this is just the tip of the iceberg – Bangalore is the get away for NGO/NPO initiatives both from India and around the world.

**Spiritualism:** Bangalore is the ultimate Mecca for millions of followers of Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, ISKCON, and others. In every lane and every neighbourhood, we see the human spirit rejoicing in submission to Ram, Allah, Jesus and other saviours.

Today, Bangalore stands for **Business, Bytes, Bio-tech, Booze, Beauty, Benediction and Buzz.**

Yet, a footnote:

Tomorrow the Bangalore Boom can go Bust. But only if Bangaloreans stop Believing.

Let's just  
Believe in Bangalore!

Rohini Nilekani.