

Shraddha Singh
@timesgroup.com

year B Tech (mechanical) engineering student.

Urdu finds favour with technocrats

Compared to just 28 students who took up the language last year, this year 70 students have joined the elective course of Urdu poetry and prose, while the more serious 39 students have taken up Urdu script course

Keeping aside the general belief that youngsters are not inclined to embrace Urdu, engineering students at Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, are learning not just nuts and bolts of their chosen subjects, but also brushing up their knowledge of Urdu, a language full of charm and elegance.

Taking inclination towards Urdu *shayaris*, *nazm* and *ghazals*, around 70 students, including three girls, have joined the elective course of Urdu poetry and prose, while the more serious 39 students have taken up Urdu script course, where they get to learn to write Urdu. The course conducted by Professor Hamida Banu Chopra, who teaches Urdu at University of California, Berkeley, has gained immense popularity at the institute.

Compared to just 20 students in the first batch of Urdu classes last year, the increased attendance of students shows that these techies do have a creative bent and are open to learn and explore a language, which holds strong significance in the independence of India.

Talking to *Mirror*, Prof Hamida Banu said, "I think it's a wrong notion that the youth are not interested in learning Urdu as the status at IIT-Gandhinagar depicts a more encouraging scenario. I am pleasantly surprised at how these young minds are interested in learning a new language, which is considered to be a difficult one. Most students have joined the Urdu poetry and prose course to polish their spoken language and understand Urdu *ghazals* and *shayaris*, while the rest have joined the Urdu script course to brush up their writing skills in Urdu."

The professor finds the interaction with such young people and teaching



Prof Hamida Banu from University of California, Berkeley is conducting the course

them Urdu a great experience as they are more open in their approach to learning the language.

With the influence of English, Hindi, various foreign and regional languages in modern times, it is said

that Urdu is struggling to find a place. However the engineering students at IIT-Gn, who are learning the language, feel that its importance cannot diminish.

"A language that has *sarini* (sweet-



B Tech student Amandeep Kaur joined the course soon after it started

ness), *latifat* (that gives you pleasure), *nazakat* (delicacy), and *nafastat* (fine and polished) can never die. I joined this course because I love the style and diction of spoken Urdu language. Though no one in my family knows Urdu, I wish to enhance my personality with this language as it helps in bringing in more sophistication and ease," said Rakesh Pargi (22), a third

"I am learning Urdu because it interests me, especially Urdu poetry. I feel it is a very sweet and intimate language. Urdu has helped me improve my pronunciation. We come across many words which have a hairline difference in pronunciation, but different meanings. Besides, there are some distinct sounds in Urdu which are missing in other languages," said Vikram Vishnoi (21), a third year B Tech (mechanical) student."

The students get to read and learn great works of famous Urdu poets and authors like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ghalib, Sahir Ludhianvi, Bahadur Shah Zafar, Maulana Azad, Premchand and Jigar Muradabadi.

Amandeep Kaur (21), a third year B Tech (chemical) engineering student joined the Urdu class after one week of its start. "I wanted to experience the Urdu class but I was apprehensive. I was so eager to learn Urdu, that I even dropped one elective technical subject. This course takes me to a different world, far away from technical knowledge. This course has helped me in bringing out the creative aspect in me. Attending Banu ma'am's class is refreshing. Moreover, the language has a very successful and rich literature."

Among the courses being taught at IITGN include literature and languages. This includes English, French, Urdu, Philosophy, Sociology, Indian Heritage, Anthropology, Ancient Indian History, etc.

IITGN Director Dr Sudhir K Jain said, "At IITGN, we believe that any technology development must be for the well-being of society. That is why we put emphasis on humanities and social sciences, both in curriculum and in other facets of academic life. Further, we want to provide our students good language skills and hence we offer a number of related courses."