

MY COLLEGE YEARS EDUCATION

## Go for your dreams



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**For thespian artiste P.C. Ramakrishna, the show goes on. He reminisces about his mentors at Loyola College**

“Life is my college. May I graduate well, and earn some honours,” said Louisa May Alcott. Veteran dramatist and voiceover artiste PC Ramakrishna has done just that. It has been 48 years since PC Ramakrishna transformed from a student actor, first appeared on the stage of Museum Theatre and took the world by storm. However, neither have the lights dimmed, nor his

passion for all things theatre. The show goes on, unabated and unstoppable. Ask him if he had always envisioned himself as a dramatist and pat comes the reply, “I had no idea until I started acting in plays in school. College opened up a plethora of opportunities, and once I became a part of the Madras Players, it was evident what theatre meant to me.”

### **Lessons from life**

A student of B.A English Literature from Chennai’s Loyola College, he jokes about how one of the most important lessons college taught him was how he himself could never be a teacher, “My teachers were so good!” he exclaims. “Back in the 1960s, only a handful of us opted for literature for the love of the subject and, we were extremely lucky because we had a set of teachers who were terrific. It was then I realised that wherever else my skill sets lay, teaching was not one of them as it required a certain skill which they possessed and I believed I didn’t.”

Consequently, he joined the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and went on to graduate with a degree in business management.

He almost became a musician but bowed out in the last minute. “I am a professional mridangam player – I have played at the Music Academy,” adds the actor who is clearly the Jack of multiple trades. “Though I spent many years training under stalwarts like Palghat Mani Iyer, I chose not to pursue it after graduation as, back in those days, there just wasn’t enough remuneration in music as a profession. Imagine a veteran like Palghat Mani Iyer being paid a paltry Rs. 450 per concert!” he exclaims.

Though he briefly pursued corporate life after this, he could not ignore the insistent beckons of the stage. “The year was 1969. The Principal of Loyola College asked me to direct a play – it was Loyola’s first move out of Bertram Hall, into the Museum Theatre. I directed a WW1 play which was well-received. However, to my dismay, I found that all my characters sounded like how I would sound had I played those characters – an extension of the fact that I believed that I couldn’t teach. However, this went on to become one of my most memorable events in life as it introduced me to the Madras Players,” he explains.

### **Mentors and motivation**

His main source of inspiration over the years and during college was Rev. Fr.G. Francis. “A graduate from Yale University, he was constantly brimming with novel ideas – it was he who brought the play out of Bertram Hall and into Museum Theatre! Two of my teachers, A.M.X Hridayaraj and M. Ramamurthy, were my mentors – they allowed us to explore American writing, European Literature and go beyond what was restricted to the syllabus.”

Mr. Ramakrishna urges today’s youth to relentlessly follow their dreams. “Follow your star. If you have a passion for something, no matter how outlandish it might seem, go for it. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘Hitch your wagon to a star.’”

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