

Exchange Report

An exchange report by Kristina Walter, a Master student in the double degree program at Chemnitz University of Technology. From January 2012 – June 2012 exchange student in the field of Printing & Media Technology at Manipal Institute of Technology, Manipal, India.

While I was finishing my B.E. in Media Technology, I was looking for an appropriate master program, which can give me the possibility to deepen my professional skills. Another important aspect was to give me the possibility to do again a study abroad semester, as I already studied for one semester in Australia during my bachelor studies. Finally, I decided to start my Master in Print & Media Technology in Chemnitz. This would not just enable me to study abroad but even give me the chance to graduate with a double degree because of the close partnership between the Print & Media Institute in Chemnitz (pmTUC) and the Printing & Media Faculty at Manipal Institute of Technology (MIT).

Compared to my other study abroad semester where I had to handle a lot of organisational issues myself, the pmTUC gave me a really good support concerning accommodation in Manipal, the subjects in university as well as organizing the student visa. Also the financial aspect was no challenge due to a scholarship by DAAD, which especially supports this exchange program.

Compared to the living in a western orientated country, India can be a challenge concerning the culture, climate, food and so on. You have to be really open minded towards Indian customs and lifestyle. This does not just mean to accept and handle that poverty lives next door to prosperity. Also freedom and independence is defined differently. Examples, therefore, are the existing dress code at university, where you are just allowed to wear long trousers and at least short sleeves, though it might have 35-40°C. Another aspect is the gender separation in the hostels, where even a visit of a boy in a girl's hostel is not allowed. The students have just the possibility to spend time at food court and restaurants. Additionally girls have to be in hostel at 10.30pm and the boys around 11.15pm. But still Manipal, as a small university town, seemed to be more liberal than some other parts of India, concerning the dress code

besides lectures as well as the density of clubs and bars. Also as a western mid-twenties person you can get sometimes a special treatment for some of the strict rules. Another significant difference is how authorities are handled. In University lecturers are treated with a high respect, which can be seen in the fact that all students stand up from their seats when the lecturer enters and leaves the class room, as well as you always approach all faculties with Sir or Ma'am in a kind of obeying way.

The same behaviour can be seen when Indian children talk to their parents. As the student fees in India are really high, just the rich ones can mainly afford studying. There are no students who have a side job or get welfare from the government, compared to Germany. The consequence is that the parents are your only financial source, so it is even more important to behave as they wish because your life totally relies on them. The opinion and decisions of Indian mothers and fathers seem to be absolute even when you might be 23 years old. It is really important to have reliable parents and to respect older generations but for us Germans, as mostly independent living students, these conditions often reminded us of our teenage times. Especially because whenever you might get into trouble at university, the first action which is taken by the authorities is to call your parents, which can be a real threat for the students.

These are just some examples of the different German and Indian cultures, but still for every system its own rules seem to work. Though I had sometimes to adjust my perception and behaviour in university and everyday life, the stay in India was one of my greatest experiences of my life. I could learn a lot for my future profession, enjoy beautiful moments, trips and met the most grateful and warm-hearted people. Finally, I think this is even the most important for your own individual character: to learn and accept conditions in a foreign country and to gain the most out of it. If you are confronted with unknown and unusual situations you can learn a lot about yourself.