

Exchange report

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Guest scientist at Manipal University, Manipal, India, 20.09.2010-15.11.2010

It was a decision I took within two minutes – going to India for two whole months to get to know more about the educational system and our partner university in Manipal. I already had been there twice, but only for a few days. This is not enough time to understand Indian culture and way of life. Even the two months were not enough but at least now I have an idea about all these things and that may help us for our work here.

My stay in India started with a delegation trip organised by iMove, an initiative of the German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) dealing with international marketing of vocational training. The focus of the delegation trip was on the Indian education and training system. We visited a wide range of decision makers such as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), discussing the objectives of India's education & training policy and possibilities of cooperation. On the other hand, we got an insight into state-of-the-art vocational training system at an Industrial Training Institute in New Delhi as well as at Don Bosco Training Center. Another two days of the journey, we went to the "World Didac India 2010" fair in Mumbai. Here we got the possibility to meet further companies and discuss their range of products at the German pavilion.

Next stage was the Kodak Digit Conference in Manipal. Within these three days I got to know a lot of new people and I also had to give a presentation. After that event, the first two weeks in India already passed by and finally I moved from Western style hotels to an Indian guest house. For the next 5 weeks this had been my home in Manipal. Now I started to accommodate in this fascinating country. It seems that anything these people do is related to their religion and I had been lucky to get some friends at the university who explained everything to me with great patience (well, on the other hand, I also had to answer 100 questions a day :).

In Manipal I took the opportunity to visit the different lectures of the Department for Printing and Media Engineering and to discuss with the students. I also had the possibility to give some lectures for the Master students and Bachelor students in their 5th and 7th semester. It was a big difference in comparison to give a lecture at the university in Chemnitz. First of all the lessons are only one hour and not 90 minutes and second, students are really interacting with you, asking questions, discussing results and so on. This was a very new experience for me and I liked it very much. I also visited the TMA Pai Polytechnic and Manipal Press. These visits had been very interesting for me, too. Especially the new building of Manipal Press was impressing, because during my last visit in April 2008 this building had still been under construction.

During the week I came home around half past five and then usually started to work for my job in Chemnitz, because at the Department I did not have a very good Internet connection. The time passed by very fast. My weekends only consisted of Sundays, because Saturday is a normal working day in India. Therefore I did not do any big trips, but took the time to discover the surroundings of Manipal or just to relax. My favourite place was Manipal Lake. It is a very calm place where you could sit down and enjoy the silence. Together with my friends I also visited different temples in and around Manipal. For me, these places are very mystic and I could sit there for hours just watching the people doing their holy rituals and listening to the holy songs.

The best adventure I had was a more or less spontaneous football match on a rainy day. During lunch time the students decided to organise a kind of tournament for the Department. Some of the people already knew that I play football in Germany, because of that they asked me to play, too. The match should start at 5 p.m. in the playgrounds at Endpoint, but due to the weather conditions (it was raining the whole day) this changed and we met at MIT playgrounds. The pitch was already a big sea of mud and puddles when we arrived. A heavy thunderstorm started, but nobody seemed to take care so I did neither. The match was really funny, because some of the players did not even know the rules and some others played without shoes. But we all had a lot of fun and after the match we were totally drenched and sprinkled with mud. Thanks to all of those who attended this event!

The last days I spent in Mumbai together with the Head of our Representative Office. We visited two more Printing Colleges and some other official persons. Further, the organisation of the upcoming Indo-German conference on “Trends and Developments in Packaging Printing” had to be finalised.

In summary I can say that these two months were very interesting and I learnt a lot about India. I really enjoyed the time, I tried everything (even wearing a Sari), I liked the food, and I found a lot of new friends. I celebrated Diwali together with Indian people and learned to stay calm and to be calm (and that is really good). The only things I missed were German black bread and a friendly hug. What for a German friendship is a very common performance, in India does not exist. I never realised before, that this small gesture is so important for me.



Manipal Lake – Enjoying the silence



Guest lecture at TMA Pai Polytechnic College



Time to say goodbye... Thank you all!