

# A Theatre of Dreams

A week after my 18th birthday, I arrived at the place that was to be my home for the next four years of my life. I didn't really know what to expect from Manipal; it was a small town, quaint and quiet. A bit odd to a person who lived in a steel and concrete jungle, but a refreshing change nonetheless.

I was greeted by the infamous Manipal rains as I stepped out of Mangalore airport: a light shower, unlike the constant deluges we would be battered with for the rest of the semester. I got into a cab and promptly fell asleep. By the time I got up, we were already in Manipal. Was the town well equipped to deal with the urban student populace? As we drove through the city, I saw all the big brand shops and food chains, something that gave me a slight sense of familiarity. Perhaps I had been too quick to judge the place.

I got a room on the 10th floor of Block 17. Sheer luck had me choose an odd-numbered room, and that was excellent because the view I got was insane. A vast wooded expanse with rolling hills in the distance, it gave me the motivation to get up early in the morning. That, as I would come to find in the subsequent months, was one of the many beautiful sights Manipal had to offer.



The breathtaking view from the First-Year hostels

The first few weeks were a whirlwind of classes, exploring the campus, and meeting new people. The rains were ferocious, relentlessly beating down on us as we made our way to class at 8 in the morning. As per tradition, most of us would have our umbrellas stolen, and would, in turn, steal a few of our own. Living alone might have been a new experience for a lot of people, but I was used to it, and I adapted quickly. The campus had stores with pretty much everything you could need, and if there wasn't something you could find, there was a market right outside campus. Pretty soon, I made myself at home in Manipal.

Soon after the start of college began the sickness. A new environment, different weather, and long hours took its toll on most people, pretty much everyone fell sick a couple of times. The all-important 75% attendance rule had us walking

through the cold rain to get to class, no matter what. Around the same time, we had various clubs and student projects wooing us. There are a ton of options to choose from and motivated by newbie fervour, most people opt to join more clubs than they can manage.



The heart of the campus: The Student Plaza

By the time club membership was finally done, their ranks solidified, we had our technical fest: TechTatva. In my opinion, the better of the two fests, TechTatva had us MIT Post recruits running around campus covering events and then slaving late into the night working on the next day's newsletter. A thoroughly exhausting experience, yet still fun in a weird way.

After TechTatva, the rest of the semester was a rush of tests and labs, interspersed with a beautiful Diwali celebration and a food poisoning event that put half the college out of commission. The first semester ended with parties and hugs all around, and we went on the month-long sabbatical none of us

wanted.



The night sky bejewelled with lanterns on Diwali. Credit: Debarun Ghosh, The Photography Club, Manipal

Back in January for a new sem, we were stoked. With more fests, Holi, inter-section football, and no rain, this sem was bound to be a lot more fun. Unfortunately, the forces that be in the universe had other ideas, but we still made the best of the time we had. Revels, the cultural fest, was a lot more fun to cover for the MIT Post, and we still had plenty of time to hang around campus and explore the fantastic food available.

The only other event we had was Holi, a wild celebration, and shortly after, the year was cut short to send us back home in the wake of the coronavirus. This time there were no goodbyes, owing to the general confusion and panic.

Though the end was sudden, the first year of college was unreal. It is everything you dream of, and it can be

everything you want it to be. It really is the best time of your life.

*Finally, as a total abstainer, I never really got to see the wilder side of Manipal, but there are plenty of opportunities for that too, in case that is your game. I wouldn't know.*