

# Manipal: A Dreamer's Paradise

My Manipal Experience, the biggest stride in my life so far, began with disaster. Being as lazy as I was, my packing had begun at the very last minute, and the train arrived and left surprisingly on time, without me on it. Having been left without any other options, I ended up on an overnight bus and discovered, unpleasantly, that I was incredibly susceptible to motion sickness. Thus, began my first day at Manipal.

My first month in this town brought with it the nervous enthusiasm that is often experienced when thrown into a new situation. Having never been particularly introverted, I often found myself randomly engaging in conversation with absolute strangers. Not finding an empty table at the ever-so-crowded food court, I'd usually scan the rows of tables for the source of the loudest ruckus and join the conversation with a cheeky one-liner. This especially came in handy during the perpetual rains of Manipal—I always found someone to share an umbrella with. It also made me better understand the wide range of outlooks that students here held, thus influencing my subsequent interactions with people.



The food court

The one statutory fact about life at college is that everything happens at breakneck speed. The combination of classes, sessionals, club meetings, and fests meant that there is never any time for oneself. Adjusting to life at college, which I had until then been very apprehensive about, took place ever so seamlessly, owing to the fact that I never really had a lot of time to introspect or reminisce. Adjusting also meant mastering the art of time management that, up until then, had completely eluded me. The lack of my parent's watchful gaze made me painfully aware that any time I wasted

would have very real and tangible consequences.

The time spent at college coincides with the period of one's life when one must grow out of their childhood woes and insecurities and enter adulthood. This makes the time spent here crucial towards shaping the personality that one takes into the peak of their life. While it's often impossible to ascertain growth, I can safely say I am considerably different from the fresher that was on that bus a year earlier. From adjusting to unpleasant situations to learning to make tough choices, I have had to fit into the responsibilities needed to be taken as I step into this phase of my life.

With my second semester came a feeling of control. Having gone through the gruelling process of adjustment the semester before, I had a much better idea of the challenges that lay in wait. Preparation for sessionals, which earlier felt frustrating, now seemed manageable. Having had a hard time managing attendance the last time, I was much more careful about how many classes I could skip without risking consequences. Balancing work and fun also got a lot easier as I got a sense of how to navigate the unique stress brought about by college assignments.



## Innovation Centre

While some find their passion amongst the subjects deemed relevant by the Indian education system, I found myself drawn towards topics that the curriculum deemed irrelevant. However, being a student lost in a colossal sea of incessant assignments and deadlines, I eventually had to accept the fact that moving on and focusing on the challenges at hand was the only practical thing to do. College at Manipal however, pleasantly surprised me in this aspect. With over ninety student clubs and projects, students here were actively encouraged to follow their passion.

My parents always urged me to grab any opportunity that may come my way. So, when the time came to join clubs, I threw myself into the experience. I attended multiple overlapping recruitments each day, held all across the college; the true challenge was making it to all of them, lest a prospective future be lost. I ended up making the cut in over fifteen clubs, leading to a truly harrowing experience as I tried to juggle work for each. However, the feeling of satisfaction and pride that I felt as I let my passion drive my work was like nothing I had ever felt before. At one of the many clubs I was part of, I found some of my closest friends and most of what I learnt through my first year of college.

The best time of the year at Manipal is during the college fests. It is a time when your passion and conviction to your craft is really put on full display. As clubs scramble to put together events that attract and delight participants, members put in their very best into their respective categories, sacrificing sleep, attendance, and often grades, all for the sake of passion. Even exams take a backseat, in spite of them taking place only a week after. It was at one of these fests, as I sat working through the night on the fest newsletter, that I realised why I loved Manipal so very much.

Change is the only constant and change can often bring with it a host of fear and trepidation. But a future built by following your passion and doing what you love is a future to look forward to. While what the future holds is yet unknown, a continued commitment towards encouraging students to follow their passion and honing their interests gives every student in Manipal a reason to be proud.

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