

Liebe Freunde,

Well, here I stand before you, 38 years later, 38 years older, 9kgs heavier, having behind me 9 bosses, 9 ex-German and 9 ex-Indian colleagues, 9 current Indian colleagues, 9 Lektoren/IC/IP colleagues, and a string of practical trainees both Indian and German (9 seems to be my number!). Today, I am who I am, because of all these people who touched my life, because of my family and friends, and I am grateful to all, past and present, living and also to those who have passed on, for making my life interesting, exciting and eventful. After all, I **have** spent half my waking hours with my DAAD family!

Thank you all for your love and support and for being in my life! You are really special people! I hope, rather I am sure, our paths will cross again and again! In any case, being a strong believer in future lives, there is a distinct possibility that this will certainly happen!

I still remember our 3 room office at MMB; we were 5 people in all (all inclusive!). On manual typewriters, we had to make at least 2 carbon copies of every letter and document we generated – one had the choice of either typing accurately, or wasting a lot of paper – both happened! From the manual, we graduated to the electric typewriter, oh what a sensation! We could actually type without using force! Then followed the fascinating electronic typewriter, where 4-5 words were displayed on a little screen!

I think by this time we had already shifted to our Golf Links office with its beautiful little garden, and a big park in front.

Our programmes increased, as also the work, and the staff. We were all in awe of the computer when it arrived. At first we had only one! And a whole room was dedicated to this awesome beauty; sometimes we got the privilege of actually using it...that is, if we had important enough letters and documents to prepare. Finally, we all graduated to a personal computer each, and got training to go with it. The models and brands have of course changed with time! But interesting though they be, life is not only about gadgets and gizmos, of which we got to see plenty in this office. It is the people I worked with and interacted with, that mattered!

You cannot imagine how rewarding it is to see diffident, uncertain young scholars, so full of doubts and queries, come back from Germany as self assured, confident scientists, and gradually move up in their careers and life. I feel like a mother hen watching her eggs hatch!

Can anyone imagine life without the internet? Earlier, communication was so much slower, but we still met deadlines! Now we are hardly done with answering one email, when we get another with further questions. We ping pong all day long! So the game goes on! And they say that computers and internet have made life easier!

The move from Golf Links to Lodi Estate was both a sad and a happy experience. The new office, so beautifully located, is a joy to be in, the Golf Links office, however, had its own quaint charm. It was the splitting up of our office to 2 different locations, Lodi Estate and Nyaya Marg,

which was not such a happy event, and is still very difficult for me to get used to! In spite of our weekly staff meetings, it's just not the same for us fun-loving, hardworking people.

I have enjoyed the support and kindness of so many people, my office colleagues, both in India and in Germany, and our partners and colleagues outside the office, as well as our alumni, which made the job so much easier and good fun! DAAD has been my home away from home; it is really a unique office, with very competent and happy people - one without **any** office politics! – each one does his/her job independently, but is ever ready to help a colleague should the need arise!

I am going to have severe withdrawal symptoms, I know, but I have to make the break, while I am still able to take on something else – I do not know what, but I am sure when I make space for something new, it will come! Patrick Overton said “When you walk to the edge of all light (like I am now going to do!) and take that first step into the darkness of the unknown, you must believe that one of the two things will happen – there will be something solid for you to stand upon or, you will be taught how to fly.... So watch me take off!

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