

Azim Premji University Student Reflection

Anjali Paul is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Development from Azim Premji University. She has graduated from Sarvajanic College of Engineering and Technology with a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture .She also had prior work experience with Bodh Shiksha Samiti before enrolling for the Programme. We caught up with Anjali for a candid conversation. Anjali also shares her experiences here at Azim Premji University.



Q: The general trend in Master's is to choose a program related to your Bachelor's. Could you tell us what made you choose M.A in Development?

Having made a drastic switch from working in the fancy, creative and imaginative world of Architecture to face the ugly truths of reality in the Education Sector, I was honestly very confused as to what I wanted to do in the future. I wasn't well read about what is going on in our country, shied away from conversations related to anything and everything ranging from politics to philosophy and felt that my whole world revolved around what was in my immediate surrounding and in my control. There was a part of me which always wanted to read and write, and when I heard about what this course would entail, I jumped at the chance immediately.

Q: Where did you first hear about Azim Premji University?

I was extremely lucky to have been really good friends with my colleagues at Bodh, two of whom also happened to be APU's first batch students from the Education programme. Through them, I had met nearly half of the first batch students (such a diverse batch!) who created an impression in my head that this University changed lives and I loved how they all kept in touch and met regularly despite being posted in different organisations and states across the country. They each had a different tale to tell and it was

wonderful to see how passionate they were about the work they were doing.

Q: The transition between learning a pure discipline (in graduation) to an inter disciplinary programme in your Masters. How was that journey?

To be very honest, it was a difficult journey with a lot of pitfalls and days when I would constantly keep questioning my decision to take up this programme. I remember failing my first test in Economics during the first semester and how dejected I felt but I also remember how the professor of that particular course helped me handle that, making me strive harder. Most importantly, I had a wonderful set of friends who spent hours teaching me and making me understand all the concepts which seemed like Greek and Latin to me at that time. A year later, in a different class, I ended up explaining one of those concepts (Purchasing Power Parity) to an entire class of students which made me feel like that first failure was totally worth it. :)

Q: If you have to look back, do you think you have changed as a person?

I want to say that I've changed as a person, but I don't really know whether it's that dramatic a change. It's the small things, I guess like being more understanding and empathetic to others, be it fellow classmates or professors. I've always thought that I was incapable of time management and there were days in the first semester when everything would overlap and I just couldn't finish things on time, to the level that I wanted to. Over the past two years, I've attempted to manage time wisely and tackle stressful overlapping of assignments by prioritising them and finishing them much before the deadline.

Q: Have you opted for a specialization? Where did you do your Field Project? What job options are you looking at?

I did not opt for a specialisation.

I did my first 6 week internship with C-NES in Assam where I traveled with the boat clinics to the inaccessible riverine islanders as they provided healthcare to them. This was an enlightening experience and I've continued to work on the same for an independent study in the final semester.

The second field work project was in Ahmedabad, when I tried to understand the territoriality of street vendors in the natural markets of the

city.

During the past two years, I realised that I had a liking towards research work and I've been placed at CMCA - Children's Movement for Civic Awareness in their Policy Advocacy team, where I'm hoping to get a lot of experience in the same.

Q: Do you have specific career objectives in mind and how do you think the journey in the last two years will help?

I have never seriously thought about what I would do further until I joined APU and through my 2 years here, I feel that the professors have helped me hone my skills at giving presentations, academic writing, research work and the like.

I hope to do a PhD in the future and I know that what I've learnt here is something that will guide me through all the processes because it's created a good foundation for a lot of my future endeavours.

Q: Any other comments on your experience here at Azim Premji University

This University has provided me with ample opportunity to find my interest area and do something about it. The faculty and students have been ever supportive; be it just a kind word here and there, feedback on assignments and pulling me up whenever I thought that I couldn't do it on my own. I also loved that they have a counselling centre (without whom I wouldn't have remained sane in the past two years) to ensure that mental wellbeing is always looked after.

I didn't know what to expect when I came here and for that I'm glad because everything that happened to me here ranging from realising that age is only a number or friends are the best teachers or we're all same same but different, caught me by surprise and it was definitely 'yadgar'!

Anjali is graduating this May 2017 and can be contacted at Anjali.paul15@apu.edu.in

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