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My connection with Pilani goes back a long way. I was born here and spent the first 2-3 years of my life of which I have very faint memories, only to return in 2005 from the opulent, glitzy, glamorous city of Dubai. One doesn't need a vivid imagination to envisage the stark difference between Dubai and Pilani. My sister and I kept complaining and gave my mother hell for uprooting us from our beloved concrete jungle.

I was a complete misfit when I joined Vidyapeeth in Grade XI - I wore an ankle length skirt (which I tried unsuccessfully to fold - got caught by a prefect on my very first day), had trouble speaking in Hindi and had zero self-confidence. Everyone seemed to know each other and I had no friends. On top of that, I had missed three months of classes, and was zoned out most of the time.

Fortunately for me, I made friends relatively quickly - two of the funniest girls in class, Gunjan Jha and Prerna Modi sat behind me and we would laugh all day. Did I learn much that first year? No - I barely opened my books, there was a half-hearted attempt to join an IIT coaching class, quickly abandoned in two months, and my grades suffered. But I found a foothold, I had my support system of friends - in spite of itself, Vidyapeeth and Pilani were making their way into my heart.

Two years in Vidyapeeth and it had become home for me. I can only imagine what my classmates who had spent almost their entire childhood here would have felt when it was time to leave.

When I think of the life I left behind in Dubai, I wonder if I would have achieved what I have today, had I stayed there. Perhaps not.....the quality of teachers here and the education I received in Vidyapeeth and later BITS far surpass anything I would have got there. I have made lifelong friends here - my closest friends today are those I met in Vidyapeeth. More than anything else, I learned how to embrace change and adapt to new situations, a life skill I wouldn't have otherwise learned.

Today I live in the soulless, concrete jungle of Mumbai, but deep down miss the familiarity and warmth of Vidyapeeth. When I'm here, I'm home.