

# Meghna Sharma

I was the first person in my family to go to a UK based university so I didn't really know what university life over here would be like. I moved into one of the university accommodations and within days I had become friends with people from all over the globe. I was fascinated with their cultures and stories. It was nice to have their support considering they understood what it felt like when homesickness crept in. I had always heard people saying that London is "less English" and "more international".

While spending time with people at Cass, the little knowledge I had about different countries through

movies or TV series changed into having some real insight into their culture. My perceptions about them drastically changed while studying here and I would like to share two of many incidents. I always used to find East-Asian people slightly reserved and therefore I always refrained myself from starting a conversation with them. But in no time this thought changed when a Chinese girl competed for the post of class representative. The whole class actually voted for her because of the way she interacted with all of my coursemates. She keeps organising various social events giving everyone a chance to build a stronger bond with each other. In addition to this, the image of Pakistani people that I had in my mind for years really changed while studying at Cass and I am really glad that it did. Coming from India, I have grown up listening to the historic rivalry between India and Pakistan and witnessed the Kargil War, 1999 during my childhood. I always thought that if being an Indian, I would hope for peace between the two countries, why would people from Pakistan not vouch for the same. I never had any Pakistani friend until I moved here. I got to interact with some of them during lectures and soon I realised that we all were very much similar. Not only in terms of the cuisines we eat or the language we speak but also the thoughts. Especially when the recent tensions between the two countries escalated, what surprised me that each one of us hoped for nothing but peace. Now I do not see a Pakistani citizen as someone to be an anti-Indian, rather I am very fascinated by their deep rooted culture and the Sufi music. I have actually learnt a bit of Urdu from a fellow classmate and I hope to improve on it during my time here.



Studying at Cass has changed my life in more number of ways than I could have imagined. If I had to keep it short, it's the type of person you become while studying here. I very well know the feeling of living in that comfort zone where I had to worry about nothing. It's daunting at first, but like most things in life, you get used to it. I learnt the smallest of things like budgeting my groceries to planning my weekly expenditures. Surprisingly, I built up on my cooking skills Meghna Sharma MSC Actuarial Management when my friends made me realise that they were above average. From my Indian to non-Indian friends, everybody loved the food I cooked so every two-three weeks, we cooked together complementing it with some fine wine. As a result my friends also started cooking and now we all are happy with the little savings we do by cooking on our own. Also since health care is free in the UK, this was awesome to save upon more and rather spend it in doing something that I always aspire to do when in London – that is travel!

I noticed how travelling in and out of London is deeply ingrained into the culture and how frequently students travel in the breaks taking advantage of the cheap flights to Europe. Since London itself is a beautiful city, I tend to spend most of the weekends with my camera outside exploring all these hidden treasures that I never knew existed. The monthly student bus pass really helps me in travelling throughout the city at a very affordable cost. From so many mesmerising parks such as Richmond Park and Hyde Park to free museums and street plays at Leicester Square, this city really leaves me speechless at times. People in London are so full of life and approachable which makes it altogether so much easy for an international student like me to settle down. From walking to travelling in a tube and also while sitting at a restaurant, I get to hear how much the guy next to me loves his family or have a waitress tell me her name with a big smile asking me about my day. Everyday I wake

up with so much zeal and love to look forward, which doesn't only make me a better individual but now I know what does it mean to have that "once in a life time kind of experience". I am glad that I got this opportunity to live it here at Cass in London.