

A simple question that many people back home asked me was, why did I want to migrate to America, so far away from home just for education. I must have asked myself the same question a thousand times. In December 2012, I had to make a decision about where to go for college for my under graduate studies, whether it's eight thousand miles to America or just a few blocks down the street to a college in New Delhi. For many, it may have been a simple decision, but for me it was one of the toughest things to decide on. The decision seemed bigger than the distance I had to travel. The answer that I was seeking was why should I leave my comfort zone, my friends and family and a city that I grew up in behind, and relocate miles away, to a system of education and life that I know nothing about. My auto ethnography is not just about my journey and reaching the final destination, rather is about the factors that led me to take the decision to migrate. Moreover, it's about the introspection and soul searching that I am going through as I continue my journey into college. Migration is a simple act of a person moving from their home to another part of the country or the world. It might be a simple act but involves making decisions that cannot be called simple in any way. It has both a physical and a

psychological implication; hence, one needs to think it over many times before they can move with bag and baggage.

In economics there are two factors that affect the decision-making in the act of migration -- The push and the pull. One of the most influential push factors was the stagnant education system back in India. The Indian education system has not changed much, neither in course material nor examination format, over the last few decades'. New colleges have been established, but the ever-growing need for infrastructure is still far from being met. Approximately two lakh students graduate out from high school every year and the only recognized university in Delhi has around sixty thousand available posts. Out of these available posts, fifty percent are reserved for underprivileged and caste based students, so the rest are left to fight over only remaining fifty percent of the seats. These numbers itself show the cutthroat competition. Since the demand for a seat in a college is much greater than the supply, one is required to get an unreasonably high percentage to get admission. The students are assessed on just one final exam that determines their entry into any college. However, the irony is, that after working hard and getting into the so-called "prestigious" Delhi University the incentives of

staying in college aren't much. The classes are often cancelled, Professors are usually unprepared and the students spend most of the time texting instead of being involved in the text. Having studied incredibly hard to get a position in a college of good repute in the Delhi university, the system of studying and teaching is a let down.

On the contrary, the American education system seems like a whiff of fresh air for a student thorough bred of the Indian education system. When writing a two thousand word assignment seems enjoyable rather than being a burden and the readings for the sociology class are interesting, instead of dosing you of to sleep, you know something is right with the education system. The liberalized education system followed in America, helps the students explore and experiment with the different avenues available to them. With Teachers and students both being passionate about their subjects, it leads to the discussions going beyond what the textbook states. The course material being taught is much more challenging and thought provoking .The old rote system of learning isn't followed, rather its more about the understanding and analysis of the topics. Moreover, the interaction with people from diverse cultures and countries helps one learn so much outside classrooms, which broadens ones horizon.

The clear distinction in the two systems can be seen, and it's safe to say that the Indian colleges drove me out to America

The transition for me was just not in the education system but also the change in the lifestyle from what I was living back home to the one that I have come to adopt here. A twenty-two hour journey and a distance of few thousand miles seemed to change everything. Back home, I was driven to the airport in a chauffeured car .The driver put my luggage on the trolley and waved out a sweet goodbye. However, on reaching the Hartsfield Jackson airport, I was lugging my own trolley and had to stand in a long queue to wait for the shuttle to arrive. It seemed like over night my life had been turned upside down. Belonging to a background where I didn't even have to get up to get a glass of water, as someone was there to get it for me, the initial few weeks of my arrival were a bit over whelming .I had to do everything on my own, whether it was figuring out how to make the washing machine work or to pay my own bills. On coming here and performing all these tasks that I took for granted it help me learn the applicable meaning of two words self-dependent and self-coherent.

Apart from the explicit meaning of living on 'my own' there was also an implicit meaning that meant making all my decisions ,independently and without a second or even third opinion from my family.For me, my comfort zone is where my family and friends are. A month back, I walked out of it and came into a world where I am responsible for my decisions and had to deal with its consequences. The right and wrong had to be decided by me , there were no rules to follow rather I had to lay them down for myself and there was no one to show me the way to be followed instead I had to tread my own path. This increased the responsibility upon my shoulders because making my own decisions also meant living upto the repercussions, good or bad. This independent living has become a chapter in my learning experiences, a lesson about maturity, independence and accountability.

When we are so far away from our zone of comfort, we start to look at little things for solace. My little object of solace became my mobile phone. Who knew an object made from glass, metal, rubber and plastic could hold so much significance to me. This little artifact came into existence as a telephone, which evolved to become a cordless phone and is now known to us as a smart phone.

This black rectangular gadget, which is as big as my fist that we practically carry around everywhere, acts as a bridge to me into a world that I left behind, to come to The United States of America for education. Sitting eight thousand miles away from home, a mobile phone seems like a significant part of my life now .It helps me connect to my loved ones at a blink of an eye .I believe this object has helped make this world what I like to call a “global village”. I feel I carry around the people I love in my palm. Through the help of this gadget I am not very far away from them emotionally, even though I am seas apart, physically. Talking to three of my closest friends on a conference call or watching my parents play with our dog back home on Skype, helps the miles to melt away and makes me feel like I am still a part of that world no matter how far away I might be living. When thought is put to this little action, one starts to realize the importance of the little things we begin to take for granted in our busy lives.

When my father recalls the time when he went to college , things like Skype, face time and viber didn't exist. He could call back home maybe once in two weeks and could talk for a maximum of only three

minutes at a stretch, but thirty years later the technology has revolutionized to such an extent, that it has helped reduce distances maybe not physically but emotionally. One can be a part of someone's life even without being present there, which has become possible for me only because of a gadget like a mobile phone.

I have often wondered, why salmon leaves its comfortable life in the ocean and swims upstream in the river to go and spawn. Till a month back I felt like a salmon and wondered why should I leave my comfort zone of a protected comfortable life and an education environment that I have grown up with and come eight thousand miles away to a life and education system that I don't know much about. It was this predicament, that did I do the right thing.

Talking to people who have crossed this bridge and introspecting what all I have been though during last few weeks when I was writing this paper, helped me discover myself as person. I have learnt that fear of unknown keeps us from experimenting, but once we take the plunge human spirit is strong and ensures that we as an individual overcome the obstacles. The second observation has been that education is not just limited to textbooks but a journey to explore oneself and ones surroundings. When I

look back from the time of my arrival to the present it's been two months and the quantum of things I have learnt is immense. Whether it's making my bed for the first time or buying my own groceries. I have had lunches and dinners alone with my thoughts as well as made friends from all parts of the globe and all walks of life. My only hope is that when I am a month away from graduating, I look back at this predicament and feel nothing but absolute pride in this decision that I took. Back home I would never have picked up the pen to voice my personal thoughts as it was outside my comfort zone, having achieved this here it is giving me a feeling that Edmond Hillary must have experienced on scaling mount Everest.