

# Personal Statement

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Most Indian youth are not fortunate enough to have access to undergraduate education at one of the premier institutes for higher learning. Having had that opportunity myself, I have realized that my desire to make a positive impact on society has been reinforced by my experiences in sharing knowledge with people around me and my participation in organizations with such activities. I feel obliged to make use of the opportunities I have to give back to my society.

Born and brought up in Chennai (Madras), a metropolitan city in the southern part of India, I spent my childhood days with my grandparents before shifting to Hyderabad, another city in South India, where my parents had been transferred. I had to adapt to a different culture, learn a new language and make friends afresh. But despite these circumstances, I have always excelled academically, and have consistently ranked among the top 10 % of my class. After staying in Hyderabad for 5 years, my family moved back to Chennai, where I continued my education. With a great deal of encouragement from my family, friends and teachers, I participated in various national Olympiads and competitions. During high school, my desire to pursue undergraduate education at a renowned technological institute combined with the encouragement received from my teachers and peers motivated me to attempt the Joint Entrance Examination, a gateway for the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

IIT Madras is home to students from various parts of India and I was excited to be a part of their Chemical Engineering program. I tried to make the best use of the facilities at IIT Madras through my projects and the various co-curricular activities I participated in and helped organize. In retrospect, though I feel like I could have done better academically during my first semester in college, I continued my pursuit of academic excellence diligently. I discovered my passion for research, realized what it meant to experience the satisfaction of discovering a solution first and the joy of learning through my projects. Since then, I have channeled my passion, perseverance and dedication to excel academically and consistently maintain my rank as a topper in my department.

In the summer of my junior year, I had the unique opportunity to pursue a summer research internship at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland. Apart from the great research experience at EPFL, I also had the chance to tour 7 countries in Europe and experience European culture. In the course of my internship, I enjoyed bonding with my lab mates at EPFL and enjoyed spending time with them at Barbecue and Pizzeria trips. Brought up in India, my experience in Europe helped me understand the value of cultural diversity from a whole new perspective and I will definitely cherish that experience for the rest of my life.

Besides my academic ventures at IIT Madras, I have also had the privilege of being involved with various organizations such as the National Service Scheme (NSS) and the Science and Math Academy for Real Talents (SMART) in a bid to share my knowledge with motivated yet deprived students. In my first semester at IIT, I came to know about the benevolent work done by the volunteers of the NSS. Inspired by my parents, who have long since supported organizations such as Child Rights and You (CRY), I decided to sign up for the NSS and help their cause. With NSS, I helped design and demonstrate science experiments to under-privileged school students as a part of the Science Activities team, along with a group of 30 students. We created various real-life working models and demonstrated the experiments to middle and high school students in about 10 schools in the lesser developed areas of Chennai. We also participated in rallies organized in coordination with the Spastics Society of India and other NGOs to create awareness among the general public. My association with the NSS at IIT Madras was an immensely satisfying experience and has motivated me to pursue such altruistic endeavors in the future.

With SMART, I had the pleasure of training a group of sophomores from high school for the Mathematics Olympiad at SMART, Chennai for a period of three years. I worked with around 30 motivated

students each year and coached them for the Regional and National levels of the Math Olympiad. I was elated when one of my students was selected to attend the International Mathematics Olympiad Training Camp held in Mumbai in 2009.

Thus, based on my past experiences and passion, I sincerely believe that by pursuing graduate studies, I can effectively combine my interests in research and my love for teaching. I feel that a career in academia would help me contribute something to the society by enabling me to improve the quality of education in lesser developed regions. Hence, I believe that a graduate study at UC Santa Barbara will help me nurture the skills required to achieve these goals.