

My childhood was shaped by significant transitions as I frequently moved to different places due to my father's demanding job. Indeed, by the time I graduated from high school, I had already attended more than six other schools, each an experience in its own right. As a result of these numerous relocations, I was brought into contact with different cultures since early childhood. One of the most defining experiences occurred when we relocated to California in the United States during my 4th grade. Being raised in India, I found its culture and practices to be quite different from those in the USA. I had to struggle to cope with the new environment. My limited English skills put me in an English Language Development class for two years. However, this turned out to be an experience that changed my life, mainly because all my classmates were from different countries like Vietnam, China, Japan, and Korea, and they were going through the same transition as me.

Initially, the differences in our backgrounds and languages created barriers, but over time, we learned to overcome these challenges and truly appreciate the richness of our diverse cultures. This experience shaped my understanding of inclusivity; it taught me to look beyond superficial differences and embrace varied perspectives. When I began my engineering studies, I was able to integrate well with students from 28 different states in India, each having a unique cultural background. I came to appreciate the learning that arose from differences in culture, history, food, and knowledge. I realized that diversity is not just about being different but about building bridges for mutual growth. This helped me become someone who values collaboration and respects individual experiences, fostering an environment where collective learning thrives.

Another key experience was in 7th grade when I studied in Seattle. In India, technology was often seen as a distraction, and I had never used a laptop for learning. However, my time in Seattle opened my eyes to how technology can enhance learning and contribute to the greater good. Upon returning to India, I applied this knowledge to creatively explore concepts using technology, which made me more adaptable to various teaching methodologies and open to challenges.

Currently, I work for a U.S.-based company working with teams in India and the U.S. My diverse background has helped me appreciate the difference in thought processes, especially when it comes to sales and marketing strategies. For instance, I learned how cultural influences shape decision-making and customer contact in different ways. Drawing from my life experiences, I encourage mutual understanding to foster productive discussions that bridge these gaps. In real life, it has really helped in the alignment of goals within the team, making sure everything moves in the same direction.

These experiences taught me that diversity is a strength, one that fosters innovation, perspective, and growth by embracing it. I plan to bring my experiences to Dartmouth and the Thayer School of Engineering in hopes of contributing to an inclusive community.

~Aditi Parvati