

Being Simple and Frugal: Intro and A Gist of My Spending and Budgeting Habits Till Now

In this series on *Being Simple and Frugal* I would take you through my experiences, thoughts, and philosophy on how I lead my life with simplicity and frugality, and how I use it to my advantage to attain financial independence and retire early (F.I.R.E.).

My Philosophy

Even before I knew the concept of living frugally, my philosophy of living life was to live it simple and frugal. Now you may want to ask me why I would choose to do that. There were several reasons behind it, and one of my primary reasons was that I could not see myself in fancy clothes, having fancy food or any other fancy habits knowing that most of the people living in India, and around the world are living in poverty who did not even have the resources to meet their basic needs.

Another reason which mattered to me a lot and motivated me to live frugally was that I believe that we, as homo sapiens, who share this planet with billions of other creatures, should be considerate in using the shared resources available to us on earth. For this reason, I try to use and reuse anything and everything upto and beyond its “recommended” lifetime and repair it if it gets damaged, which btw is possible in many more cases than what the profit hungry corporations would want us to think. Learning to repair the stuff that you own not only builds your skill, an asset that most people often overlook, but also saves you a lot of money. It also helps you build your confidence and be independent.

Childhood

Since I was a kid, my mom, an excellent manager herself, taught me the importance of saving money. Every time I would get some cash in gift or as pocket money, I would put it in my savings account that my mom opened in our almirah :P and we would often buy whatever we needed from that. As I would come to understand soon in my twenties, this was an excellent way to enculcate a habit of managing expenses and saving money for a kid, but a terrible method nonetheless because of inflation.

Life at IIT Kanpur

Till I finished my school, most of my expenses were being managed by my parents, specially my mom, which did not give me enough of a chance to manage money and my needs on my own. But, when I moved to IIT-K, I got some room to experiment and manage my own expenses, and I must confess that even though my overall expenditure was not even close to that of many of my friends, I was not really budgeting and spending money in a balanced way.

In general what would happen is that I left it on my parents to send me money on their own and would rarely ask them for money or tell them that I was out of money for which I was scolded quite often. Whenever my parents would send me money, I would spend most of it on eating outside (at least by the time I was in my third year but I was more careful with my spending prior to that). By the time I would realize that I am running out of money, it would be too late. This usually did not affect me as I had almost no expenses of my own other than food. All didn't go too well by the time I reached my fourth year as then I opened a postpaid account with the hostel canteen, and I spent on eating in the canteen almost everyday, and that too without much thought about how much I am spending. Even though my food expenses were not significant compared to what I spend in Delhi

even for my basic needs, it was high compared to how much I usually used to spend at IITK on myself.

Experiences and mistakes like these helped me after I moved out of IITK and started living on my own.

Moving to Delhi

The latest phase of my life started on 22nd of May, 2019 when I shifted to Delhi permanently. I was excited for starting this new phase of my life as now I was excited about managing my expenses from my own salary and start saving for my future. When I moved to Delhi, I had already decided that I was going to have a simple and healthy life and have control over my spending. I started by making an initial investment to set up my kitchen and started cooking on my own from the very first week of shifting here. It took me a few tries to make something good, but, once I had mastered a dish I would make it for a few weeks in a row till I got bored. Since I used to cycle 16-17km everyday, my main focus was to cook dishes which were full of protien and ,not to forget, were tasty.

Quite often, under pressure from work and hectic life, I would go through cycles of burnout, this would lead to deveopment of unhealthy habits like eating outside daily, and spending money uncontrollably, which would go on for a few days, sometimes even weeks, before things would come back to normal.

Fortunately for me, my mantra was to save money first and spend the remaining amount which led me to save money and only spend the money which was left over after saving. I am quite sure that most of the people who would be reading this article would have a similar thoughts on saving. However, my saving habits were still not that aggressive. It took me some time to understand that my saving habits need to be more aggressive and that I would need to not only save money but also invest it smartly for it to grow. We will talk more about this in future articles in this series.

Future

Today I am at a point where I could say that I am more disciplined about my expenses than I was before. Many mistakes and tough times, ultimately leading to better habits, have led me to this point where I could say that now I am beginning to understand what it takes to live simple and also reach financial independence. As of today I still choose to live frugally and simply both for my philosophies and my goals and I hope that I keep doing so in future and am able to be an example for those who share my views.