M: When did you migrate to Australia?

N: 2018, end of January 2018

M: Motivations?

N: So, my husband got a job in Australia when we were living in Singapore. So we moved here with his job, sort of, migrated here for the job. We had the option to stay in Singapore. He could have continued to look for jobs in Singapore or move here with his job and I can ask my company to move me here. Umm. Why we decided Australia over Singapore? Couple of things – I think the first and the foremost was about visa. So, Singapore’s visa and PR laws are very very difficult. Almost all Indians are not getting their PR in this point of time, and the work visa is only for 2 years. So, renewing your work visa is difficult and company sponsoring work visa is difficult as well. Australia from that point – our work visa is for 4 years so it was more comfortable and in that process we can apply for PR and Australia as a country is more open to sponsoring PR for Indians.

M: Right, Okay. So your intentions of living in Singapore were also to get PR at some point?

N: We don’t want to go back to India. We want to live outside and needed some sort of flexibility and some sort of, confirmation, I guess, that we will not be chucked out of a country if we don’t have PR. So some stability there.

M: Why not India?

N: I think couple of reasons – a. employment opportunities, pay scale is much better outside of India and safety is a very big thing for me. I used to live in New Delhi and I don’t think it’s a very safe city for girls. So, I think that and obviously cleanliness, and standard of living I think is much better outside.

M: Professional background?

N: Yes – so Im in HR and that’s where Im working currently, and I used to be a recruiter back in India and then moved in to recruiter cum HR generalist role. I’ve studied back in India with a Masters in HR, and yes I’m currently pursuing that in my career.So, I was working for the same company in India and then in Singapore and they just moved me here in Australia so its primarily the same company that I’ve been working for for 6 years. They just moved me here.

M: Was that easy?

N: It was – because Ive always handled Asia Pacific in my role. So, I handled Singapore and Australia both. So Singapore, Australia was still part of my role. That’s why they could move me here. With Australia the reason they moved me was because they didn’t have to sponsor my visa. I’m dependent on my husbands visa so it was primarily just moving me from one entity to the other and just move me on salaries, and that’s it. Had they – if they had to apply for my visa I don’t think they would have done that for Australia although they had applied for my visa in Singapore. It would have been a tough one because I’ll tell you something. We did try to migrate somebody from the US entity to Australia and Australia had some specific laws on x amount of dollars that you should spend on training to be eligible as a sponsorer, which we don’t do because we have a really small team in Australia. So I think it would have been tough.

M: How long did you consider/plan your migration?

N: I think it wasn’t very long because when my husband got the offer from the company – Obviously, that’s when the decision phase happened. Should we accept it or not. So, it was about going back and forth to move. So once he accepted, everything was taken care of by his company. We really didn’t have to do anything except for closing all our…closing our chapter in Singapore and moving here. Maybe 3-4 months – and they took care of our visa and everything. So, really we didn’t have to do anything. We just had to pack our stuff and move out.

M: Did he actively pursue this job?

N: He just got the offer from the company because the recruiter reached out to him in Linkedin but he was really excited because it was one of his dream companies.

M: Did you think about other visa options?

N: No because I’ve been to Australia once before. I moved here for work. My husband had never been to Australia. So, it was also an opportunity to see if we like it, if it will work out. We have the work visa for 4 years so we could just wait and see if its actually a place where we want to live to apply for PR or not. We were never going to just apply – I mean, we haven’t applied for PR yet.

M: When did you come to Australia before?

N: 2016 or 17 for work for a couple of days in Sydney.

M: Did you conduct any research on moving here?

N: Yes obviously a lot of research online. I think the first thing was really on compensation to see what is the trend of compensation and cost of living comparison between Singapore and Australia. Both for my partners job and my job as well. Anyway, Im in HR so I had to see what it… how does it translate. I have a cousin here so we did reach out to him a couple of times to ask what he thinks about Australia, living in Australia, challenges, things like that. I also had a friend here who moved from India so I did reach out her to ask how life is, how expensive things are here, housing, rental etc.

M: Tell me about your family and their role?

N: So my parents are the ones that probably influenced us the most and I remember when we told my dad about it, he was was ecstatic. He had been to Australia before. He loved Australia and he said absolutely go for it. My sister lives in the US so my parents are very open about sending us outside. So, he was all up for it. My mom on the other hand wasn’t very happy about it because she wanted us to be close to India and Singapore is very close to India. So, although career wise she was very happy for my husband but not for the fact that we will go away proximity wise. My husbands family was completely supportive of whatever decision we took. Moms consideration – cheaper flights, shorter flight duration – so yeah.

M: Other community networks here?

N: No – not at all. So, I personally didn’t know anyone expect for, like I said, that one friend who has now moved to Singapore from here and that family that we had here. I didn’t know anyone else here. When we were making the decision and going back and forth, it did play a big role because Im a social person. I have a lot of friends in Singapore and I knew that I wouldn’t know anyone here so it was a tough call because that did play a factor but in the end, that was the trade-off.

M: How long did the initial visa process take?

N: So, we had a situation here. When the visa process actually started with the company, we were not married. So, the option was either we apply right away as a de-facto partner or we wait to get married and then once we have a marriage certificate, we apply as husband and wife. The visa agents recommended that we do, we get married and then apply. So, once we had the offer, we actually did not apply. We just collected some documents, and I wanna say in maybe 3 months, and then we applied only after we got married.

M: Did this push your decision to get married?

N: It was always happening. We had the dates, we had everything done. So, even during the interview process, even before we had the offer, the timeline was set very firmly with the company to say that any move will only happen after we get married, and whatever time the visa takes and all that so we would consider that. The second consideration also was that we were actually renting an apartment in Singapore and we were already tied in that contract till Feb. So, we had requested that any move only comes after that.

M: Interested in your move in Singapore?

N: I knew him before moving to Singapore. I met him in India but my plan to move to Singapore was already in place before I met him in the sense that I wanted to move out of India. I had started interviewing in companies in Singapore – other recruitment firms to see what the job market is like because a lot of my friends and colleagues from x company had moved to Singapore. I had travelled to Singapore a lot of times with my job so it was an attractive place to work from and I wanted to move there. So anyways, those interviews were going on. I did get some offers and then when I started dating my husband now, I did also start a conversation with my company to say I want to move there. And that’s what happened. They were able to move me in the beginning of 2017. I start5ed the discussion in 2016, and he was able to move there as well with be because we were kind getting serious in the relationship and he had his own company at the time, which he could easily operate from in Singapore. For me, it was my company and because we were married, he couldn’t be a dependant, and Singapore doesn’t move on de-facto. So, he was sponsored by his own company.

M: How long in Singapore?

N: 1 year. We lived there for one entire year. We didn’t have any plan to move out because my visa was valid for 2 years and he had started looking out for new jobs at the end of the year. Then, obviously this Australian company happened.

M: How do you consider yourself to be skilled?

N: Me, specifically – So I am not talking about my partner here? I think the skills that I have, which is currently about my career is mostly recruitment, HR, employment law is what I work on and the fact that I have experience across regions. I not only handle one country. I handle 6 different countries in my role. So, I think thats a good skill that I have, which I haven’t seen a lot in Sydney or Australia. Everyone in the same field has usually or more often only just handle Australia in HR, and that’s also most probably because Singapore is considered a headquarter for such roles where they are handling a broader region of more than one country. I think, that’s where I have that skill. So, my skill is still listed in the long, is it long? – as a long-term skill but there is a problem there. What Australia considers skills for HR manager, I don’t fulfil that because of them the team size should be bigger than the team that I currently handle. So, as per Australia’s definition or skills definition, I actually fit into the HR adviser role which is a much more junior role than I’m at so I don’t fit in to an HR manager role.

M: Mapping

M: Point of initial status to now.

N: Employment pass – so there are two categories: the student pass and employment pass, and for employment pass there is pre-requisite for the dollar value that you are paid. You’ll only get an employment pass if you’re on $6000 Singapore a month.

So my visa took a lot of time to come for processing from Singapore. That’s because, again, my company was really small and their details were not registered with the government. So they came back with a lot of questions. My partners visa came much before my visa. We had actually moved to Singapore even before I had the visa. So I had already signed a contract with the company and I was off India payroll and on Singapore payroll already when we moved but I was travelling significantly for work in that first month. So, I was hardly in Singapore. So, technically and legally I started my contract with the Singapore entity when my visa came, which I think was the 11th of Feb and my visa process I think started in December. Before that – it was like a business visitor visa. So, I wasn’t getting paid anything. I only got paid once I had my visa. So when we had to sign the lease as well for the apartment, because we moved in, I couldn’t sign the lease as well because I didn’t have the E-pass that was needed. That was fine because my company had sponsored a month’s accommodation. So now, here [Australia]. So, processing time, the visa, when they applied for it, it actually came back in 5 days. We went for our honeymoon, we put in our documents, we were back in and we had the visa. I think that’s also because they [the company] are like a platinum sponsor or something like that. So, processing time just for visa was 7 days. And then a month to move after the visa came.

M: Commercial services?

N: Maybe I’ll start with Australia. So, everything was sponsored by his company. So, we spoke with a lawyer, a migration lawyer/visa agent in Australia. So, we were on the call. We spoke with the tax consultant. The migration agent was a corporate one but not with his company. A corporation that they had tied up with. So, going forward if this company applies for a PR, they will use the same agency. Then we had a tax consultant just to ask about how taxes work, and any questions about that – so that was another agency, tax agency. And then there was – how do you call it – this person was part of the company who, what is that word called in companies where they help people migrate – Global mobility representative who was asking about what’s important for us, whats not and when he [husband] mentioned whether its easy for my wife to get a job, and answering such questions. And then there was this shipping company. Again, this was by them – another agency who was, who helped us understand if we need to ship anything, how much it will cost, and if it will be reimbursed by the company or we will need to pay for it. So, for this they had tie ups across the world so somebody came to see us in our Singapore house that we just need to see if you need to move anything. We also had some stuff back home in India that we wanted to move so again, same company’s counterpart in India also visited us. I don’t know the names of these companies. Obviously theres police check and all. So for shipping, in the end we took the option of shipping everything ourselves. We didn’t use this company because we didn’t have enough stuff to ship. We didn’t have, we were not moving furniture, and then were reimbursed by the company. Police check and all we did but again, we didn’t pay for it. We didn’t have to pay – I mean in Singapore you don’t have to pay for police check. Both Indian and Singaporean – both you don’t pay for. Its just a record that they give you when you go to them. We didn’t have pay anything. It was pretty straight-forward in Singapore for both of us. We just had to go and get our police check done and it was done in maybe an hour or something. In India, it was a bit more complicated. So, we did our police check and then we did the health check in India again. This was in India, and we paid for it but we got reimbursed by the company. We didn’t have do anything else – our documents were all in English. My husband didn’t have to give an English exam but he just had to show certificates to show that his education was all in English. So, we just got that certificate.

M: Health Insurance?

N: No – for the first year, his company paid for our health insurance. So, for every year after that we have to buy our own, but my company pays for health allowance for both of us. Private insurance is a requirement of our visa and we get that from my company. Okay so that’s agent when we came here. So She reached out to us as soon as we came here and asked us basic things of how many bedrooms we need, what is our budget, what area we like, what kind of people are we. She shortlisted some places for us and then we had a day booked for us to go look around. She did the – everything she did. We didn’t have to pay basically. And she is also from a partner firm employed by the company. And first month accommodation was taken care of by his company.

M: Cost?

N: Nothing – we didn’t pay anything from our pocket. Nothing at all. We didn’t spend any money in anything in coming here. The air tickets for both of us were also paid by the company. So, nothing. Our dollar value spent was only for moving from Singapore back to India, and shopping. Visa process has been easy – I think that was really easy, I mean the visa. For me, getting the Singapore visa was tougher coz I had to do everything. Here, because the company was so organised, moving – the visa process and physical movement was easy. But when we came here, things were not easy because we were used to living in Singapore and things in Singapore are much much easier. Like apartment hunting as well. Here its – I mean over there, it’s a very buyer’s market. So, we could go and see the same apartment 5 times and they’d take our phone every time we’d make a call. Here you have to make the call the same day or else you lose it. Second thing, fully furnished apartment is a very common thing over there. Here, its not. So just, once we had the apartment just buying furniture and buying everything was a headache. Singapore is great in public transport. Here it is not that great. End-to-end connectivity is not there. We needed a car in the first few months so that was a big challenge itself. Bank account opening wasn’t also as easy as it was In Singapore. In Singapore, you go into a bank and I think in 5 minutes you have everything ready. Your credit card, your bank card, everything. Here, the bank account opening took a few hours and then for the credit card as well, we couldn’t get a credit card because we did not have any credit history and then even when we got one, we couldn’t get one which we could use to get points for our expenses that we did. So that was a bit challenging as well.

M: Technology

N: So Social media mostly in terms of reading articles about, umm migration to Australia. There was a lot of information available on what you should be prepared for. Google. Then also about, I guess, compensation and benefits analysis through different. This was mostly through recruitment reports in terms of how much will it cost or how much the same role will get paid in Australia. Cost of living adjustments and that was also through payscale as well as online through google. Taxation because there was a lot of – the biggest thing for us was that there was a lot of difference within the taxation in Australia and in Singapore in corporate tax. So, just understanding how that might affect us in terms of compensation as well. [income] Not better off here although the income is slightly more than Singapore, but the taxation is much more – practically double. So, at the end our take home is much lower here than it was in Singapore. But, having said that again, there are pros and cons to be balanced here as well, in terms of how bit the role is and what we’re doing here and stuff. But yeah, the taxation is very very high. There’s some things that are more expensive in Singapore. There’s some things that are more expensive here.

M: Tell me about personal dynamics?

N: So it was very tough. We were settled in Singapore. We weren’t yet married and we were just looking forward to being in Singapore. I loved Singapore and there was no reason to move. We did get an opportunity but he was interviewing in Singapore as well. He would have got, if not.. as big a company but we would have got a job in Singapore as well. So, I was against it. We were not ready for it. We even went to a point and said, okay say no to the company. I think it was just, the more we talked, the more we asked people, the pros and cons, we realised that we’ll take it. Just for future stability, we’ll take the decision from the point of view of again, visa, if we plan to have a family, Australia is a better place to have a family, point of view of owning a house, owning a car – things that Singapore will never allow us, and in Australia those options are possible. I think the big thing was the weather Singapore’s weather is definitely not the best weather. Those reasons – we did go back and forth and even in the first year we weren’t sure that we made the right decision.

M: Role of social connections.

N: I think just the cousin that we contacted. He was the only family that we had here. He had been here a really long time and his.. his take was, we live in paradise. I think that’s something that really, like, paradise, is what attracted us to consider okay it’s a great place to live, we have some support from family, We talked about opportunities, the country is so beautiful, a lot of things to do, and that sort of thing. Influencing social connection is just them. That’s all we had. Nobody else.

M: Settling.

N: We love the country in terms of everything it has to offer. Yes, it is expensive. Yes our take home money is less than Singapore but then much more things here in terms of travel, in terms of exploring, in terms of learning. Its very multicultural. Learning new things. Its very outdoorsy. My husband is extremely outdoorsy so he loves the fact that hes able to cycle to work here. He goes for running and doing a marathon. I think I have learnt a lot here as well. I never drove in my life. Im driving now. The country has a lot to offer. Again, if you think of having a family and future, we definitely think we would like to bring our child in the world in this country rather than other places where we’ve been before. Will we always be in Australia? We’re still not sure on that because again I still love Singapore a lot so if, in the future, if we do happen to get a permanent residency for Australia, probably we’ll see if there is an opportunity to move back to Singapore just because I like the country and its closer to home. Maybe ill put my father on the map just because it was important that I spoke with him and he was extremely for Australia. So, that I think gave us the confidence and boost that we’re making the right decision. For both of us, I think we really look up to my father. He’s a businessman and is smart enough to make those decisions. So, we do look up to him.

M: Thoughts on immigration policies?

N: A little bit, like, not a lot. But a little bit because we are looking at applying for PR so changes in the skills from short-term, long-term, mid-term – how things are moving from there. So, a little bit.

M: Obstacles/Challenges

N: I think the number 1 challenge is making the decision to move here. So decision making, whether we move here or not. There were some disagreements [between me and husband]. I really liked Singapore, There was no problem, I still had my visa, he would have got a job easily – his skillset is in demand. So, yeah, it was, that was the number 1 challenge. The second challenge, Im just gonna mention in terms of moving. Second was, I did know not know even till the visa process had started, if my company will move me here. [going back] I also researched about employment opportunities here. So, I had started talking to employment agencies here to see if I will get a job here. So that was the challenge before we moved here. Once we moved, I guess, should I write about things like not having a car/mobility. Also, not having enough funds in the beginning because we didn’t move all our funds to a different country. So, we had to really think about spending or where we were spending, bank, credit card, and just for everything – in terms of how the country operates, from transport to opal card to what you do – there was nobody to tell us that. So, I guess general country whereabouts. So, there was a lot of self research that we were doing about it. So, Although here I would say – his company, they had a portal where expats go and talk about different things on – whether its about opal card or its about your wife finding a job. I think that was a big thing because that portal has a lot going on about expats. So, in their internal portal, people post that – like my wife is looking for a job, bla bla. They also share experiences very very openly where they talk about x has happened, what’s going on, just very open. They do have meet-ups where people who don’t speak English, they meet up, and wives will meet up, so a lot of that is there. But that’s about it. There’s groups on Facebook and Social media where, I haave seen specifically, like Indians in Sydney, people looking for jobs and stuff. So, I’ve seen those groups as well. I am a part of this group om Facebook but I have don’t have any input on that group but I find out about anything that’s happening in Sydney – any event or anything.

M: NGOS/Social support?

N: So when I moved here, I didn’t know anyone. I wanted to talk to people.. I wanted to meet more people and I did not have a job that consumed a lot of time. So, I became a part of volunteering organisations. So, the first thing I did was… this was last year… I went and registered myself with NSW volunteering group where there was a training, they just talked about what volunteering is. I had to go and get a working with children check done so I got that done, and there was a police check done as well, so got both done, and with that I currently volunteer with 2 groups – one is St Vincent for youth. So basically, they have events planned every month or every 2 months for youth. They only cater to children, who are from a disturbed family. So, refugees or anyone who has domestic violence in the family, or their parents are disturbed. So, they just take this kids to a move, or a park or something and we just have to be with the kids for the day as volunteers. I do that sometimes. And then Im also part of NSW volunteering but the Lane Cove or the city council which is community service. So, there is somebody in an aged care facility that I go visit twice a month. So, I enjoy meeting this aged care person a lot more than the youth part, because it’s a one-on-one meeting. He has a lot of, hes going through demetia, so he doesn’t remember anything after he meets me. But its still good – I enjoy it.

M: Given any migration advice?

N: No – because Im in recruitment, because that’s my profession, I would say a lot of Indians, specifically, who have moved here on a PR, they reach out to me on Linkedin a lot for jobs and career advise and opportunities but that’s about it.

M: Any advise that did not work out?

N: Yes – its an easy go, it’s a wonderful place, everything is really easy here – but it wasn’t. It wasn’t.

M: Next steps?

N: The next steps would be to get a PR. We are working towards that. My husband needs to be the primary applicant because of his skillset. So we’re working on his skills assessment, and hes collecting documents for that currently and then he has to give an English exam as well. I think for the longest time we were waiting for his company to apply because after 2 years, his company could apply for our PR but that comes with a bond of some time that he still has to work there and we have to share the cost. So, there’s a percentage that we have to also pay. Whereas, if he applied on his own then theres no bond and we don’t know if the laws are going to change so we don’t want to be waiting for that. So, he started the process. Obviously if we have the company to apply, the process would have been easier but hes still working on it. I think he should be able to apply for his skills assessment in the next 2 weeks and then study for his English exam. This has been very challenging because he had to get documents from India which is not easy for all the employers, the letters that they are asking for. He has worked for a company that has been taken over twice. So its very difficult for him to get documentation from that first company that no longer exists. So, that’s one of the challenges. He had his own company as well which got dissolved so getting documentation for that is very difficult. So, his paperwork collection for skills assessment is very difficult. I cant do it as a primary applicant as well because, like I said, Im an HR manager but here I only get identified as a HR adviser. So, this is a bit of a task here.

M: Migration elsewhere?

N: We could – I mean Singapore is one of them definitely. Just because of my husbands skill set, he gets a lot of opportunities from the big tech firms in San Francisco and he’s been saying no because we still want to figure it out here. But, perhaps that could be an option and that’s just because the market in that area is booking for the talent that my husband has. So, maybe US.

M: Future?

N: This is after I have received a PR. So, we definitely want to buy a house here. We will think about starting a family, upgrade our car, maybe that. I think that’s the most immediate stuff that we are planning to do. Current challenges on map – skills assessment. I think still in terms of social circle. So friends, family, and for me it’s also I think, the lack of work colleagues. I have a very small team here and I don’t have any HR circle here. So, from a work perspective, I do attend a lot of talks and seminars and HR meet-ups to know more people, meet up with agencies and stuff. I try to do that a lot. Friends, So we do participate a lot in these meetups with my husband’s company where we meet and go for different events but that’s about it. No so I mentioned driver’s license, that’s one of the requirements here. Right now, we don’t have one. The next sept would be to get a Drivers licence. For both of us. Were both currently allowed to drive on our Indian licenses, but we need an Australian licence. If his company applies, we will still have to pay for skills assessment. So that’s the trade-ff as well. And, because were currently not going through any migration lawyer or an agent to do this, this company will go through the lawyer who’s fees also we will have to split on top of the PR cost. I honestly think we will end up spending the same amount if we do it ourselves of if we do it through them. Of course, the difference will be that the processing time will be much lower considering it took 7 days to get the visa. Im sure the PR will be much faster and the documentation would be less. That’s it.