M: So let's just begin with When did you first migrate to Canada?

Am: April 2018.

M: Okay, and why? What was the motivations behind your migration? Like what were you considering?

Am: Opportunity. Like career-wise. I did my masters in United States. Then back to India for work. Worked there for 3-4 years then back to Canada.

M: And what part of India?

Am: South, Mysore.

M: And so in terms of like applying to migrate to Canada Did you consider a skilled migration pathway like So did you do the Express Entry?

Am: Yes.

M: And did you consider other destinations?

Am: Yes, Germany and Australia.

M: Okay, and why Canada then?

Am: Germany again language was one of my main concerns and not sure why I didn’t choose. It was a selection between Australia and Canada I like the cold, and the winter more so yeah.

M: And in terms of other factors that you considering in making that decision like what did you consider like what else was kind of going on? Like why did you have to get out of India for example?

Am: Main reason was work I guess. I was not happy there – at least where I was. I was looking at maybe changing jobs within India but was unsuccessful for close to two years.

M: And what what's your profession?

Am: Mechanical engineer, and here it is more or less the same. Not like core mechanical but related. It is way better than India.

M: Okay, all right. So, in terms of considering your move, like how long did you plan your migration?

Am: I already had my IELTS, since I knew I would be interested in migrating anywhere. So that was out of the question. Started maybe 2017 of April. So then I applied in June 2017.

M: So how did you know that you were already gonna migrate somewhere?

Am: As soon as I got out of the the United States in 2012, it was already an option, Ilike, I would go abroad. Like I had my IELTS.

M: And where did you study in the US?

Am: In Chicago.

M: So what was the options of living in Chicago?

Am: I wanted to but because of the visas and all that I didn't get an opportunity.

M: So how did you learn about the different migration options that were available to you like what kind of research did you conduct?

Am: I think CIC website. That's it. Germany, well, a few of my friends went to Germany to do their masters so I heard it from them. And Australia, I have a few friends there.

M: Okay, and do you have any friends and community here?

Am: No – after I moved, yeah. But before no.

M: So how did that affect your decision?

Am: It didn’t have any affect.

M: Okay, and tell me about your family and their role.

Am: They're all very cooperative. They were helpful. Im the only son and mom and dad, that’s it. They wanted me to get married and still are. That’s one of the reasons im here. [Laughs].

M: You don't want to get married? How old are you?

Am: 31.

M: And in terms of other family, friends and community in India, like I mean, where you were or where are in the US, like, how did that affect your decision where there are people there that are close to you that you kind of have to leave?

Am: Yeah obviously, but you know, like this is not the end. I can always go back and visit them.

M: All right, what type of visa applications Did you consider and what visa did you arrive on?

Am: I did consider like, the first priority was express entry. If I couldn’t get through then I was thinking about the provincial nomination but I got through the express entry. My initial choice were between Toronto or somewhere in Alberta because of the opportunities there. Toronto is too big and lot of competition. Ottawa being close to Toronto and smaller, so better chances for career. I did have like full time job there [in Ottawa]. Then they had some requirements in Toronto and I got a significant pay raise. So couldn’t say no to that.

M: And how long did your initial visa process take?

Am: I started research in April, applied in June, only delay work with getting the police clearance from the FBI. That took about 4 months. Apart from that, I applied in June and it was approved in August. So this is all 2017. And then I arrived on 2018. So took some time to wind up everything.

M: And now the sort of question about this research is how do you consider yourself to be a skilled migrant like what are the skills you're contributing?

Am: like currently I work for a company that's involved in expanding the metro system in Toronto. From the point of skills, like, whatever I studied like a little mechanical, but not completely also I did the same thing back in Ottawa too and then successfully like, launched the metro system yesterday. So, like, kind of happy that I was part of a pretty big project. For right now, it is all about career.

M: Mapping - So pretty much any visas that you went on, starting from studying to migration.

Am: I completed my undergrad in 2009. Then, about 9-10 months I guess, then I went to the US. Before I even started my undergrad I had a plan of doing my Masters, like Not exactly the US but somewhere somewhere. Germany and Australia. Germany because of the mechanical opportunities and again I picked up the phone with an agent, and researched and all that, And everything was on the German. And I was like, I cant write an exam in German. learning basic German is different and doing a course In German is a lot difficult. Then something happened in Australia which made me change my mind. Oh, yeah. There were some racial attacks on Indian students. So I was like, Im not going there.

M: And why not India I mean India has a quite a good engineering colleges and stuff right so why not India?

Am: I guess I Just wanted to leave home, like not forever like a few years, like 10-15 years and and then go back.

M: And what was the motivation for that?

Am: Travel. I like to travel and I travel quite a bit. So it was a two years Masters while I was there. Okay, cool. It was good. That was one of the reasons I chose to Canada. proximity to the states. The possibility is always there.

M: Alright, cool. Okay. So and now we'll move on to your other visas, which is your Canadian visa. So this is all of the study ball and then you move to India and then so let's just put that on the map as well. So other visas that you went on? And was do you think that was working in India a little bit tougher after having lived in the States or you just didn't like the job?

Am: I didn't find it difficult but, I guess the job part. It was not easy to find one. I had to like took me about a year. They were like you have a masters from the states. Certainly, overqualified for the positions we're offering right now. And then few other people were like, you will obviously be looking at a higher salary since you’re a Masters from the States. And Im like No. I just need experience for now. I was even willing to work for free. So I was competing with the graduates from the local cities. And then there are the IIT’s that are a completely different level. My parents wanted me to go for that but for me, but I told them in the beginning, that’s not happening. I've seen people from there. They're like, they don't last long. Like by 35- 40 they’ve had enough. Because I think that is the pressure that goes into it.

[long pause] [thinking/drawing]

M: And what were your family's thoughts at this time that you know, when you were in India?

Am: They were like if you don’t like what you're doing you can always quit, like our whole family, they’re like entrepreneurs. Like, I can have work in their company. Only problem is none of them were in mechanical. Like, I have studied for 6 years. I don’t want to like give that up. [drawing] It’s my first time doing this. So, [on the map] meaning that I wanted to consider places where I could speak the language. I did, like, I did learn German like the basic. Like I just didn't want to let this, like if this didn't work out, then I wanted to have an option to go there. But luckily I’m here.

M: OK, so now the commercial services that used so throughout your migration journey.

Am: No agents, no lawyers. IELTS for Canada and GRE and TOEFL for the US. Obviously paid for the visa… fees for that. So, GRE is a quantitative and English test – it’s a Math and English test. Those are the only ones apart from IELTS. And there was application fees, Oh, yeah, quite a bit. I applied to 7 or 8 universities and it was like $100 or $200 each time. Yeah and medical test. I didn't have police check for the USA and health insurance.

M: And how did you find the university?

Am: Like a few of my friends like about 5 or 6 of us, from school and like, undergrad? university? We got plans to go to the US. When we were applying at the same place, all 5 of us got together and did it. A year worth of living, obviously fees, had to be shown at the time of the visa interview. This was completely paid for by my family. So that's commercial services for US and then Canada. Canada, yeah, IELTS – since it has a validity of like two years, I give on a 2012, 2014, 2016 so its times 3, which is kind of good, like I improved over the years. I did one in 2012 and that expired in 2014. Then again, I didn't go anywhere. I was still there so like had to do it again. IELTS and medical. I heard stories of the agents, they misuse, or are ignorant you can say, and I didn’t want a rejection because of someone else. If it’s because of me, that’s okay. Got my education assessment from WES. We had had a family auditor… he takes care of my mom, dad so was using them for few years that as well as - Health insurance was for 3 months here. In Ontario, the health insurance is not covered for the first three months as a PR. Only and I think Albert and another province is covered from day one.

M: Now let's go to the role of technology.

Am: Most of it was online I guess, other than like friends, everything was pretty much online. The main one is with Facebook, CIC website, Google. And I don’t know the site exactly but someone suggested me to check out crime rates. Like, obviously when Im choosing where to live. Because living in Chicago, I was like it cant be worse than that. I used to hear like, gunshots outside all the time and one of my friends got mugged in Chicago. Not all of Chicago is like that but… its way safer here. So is there an app for I don't remember I saved it on my on my laptop. Oh yeah. One of the forums is quite popular - Canada visa. Oh yeah few of the whatsapp groups. You get added on the whatsapp group to the forum, kind of, and then it goes from there. Initially I got added on to one of the groups from the forums, and then like in that group someone suggested some other groups so I went on those. And they discuss like what to do when to do? How? It did help but not to that extent. Like, I knew most of it, but just as a support, just to ask any questions it was good to have.

M: So social connections now.

Am: Apart from my parents everybody played a negative role. Like why do you want to go? You’re the only son. That became one of the main things I was hearing. Like, what about your parents. And Im like, what about them? They can always come here. I can always go there. Its not that hard. It was extended family, and friends. Friends – not so much but extended family mainly. My parents were like just ignore them, do what you want. That really helped.

M: Are you keeping on top of current immigration policies? Like do you like to read about immigration policy?

Am: From time to time yes. I’m still active on the whatsapp group. Like, Not all the time. Not always active but I do check on that time to time. There are no changes yet I think since I arrived. It’s a good process. And it is friendly to migrants. When I came the cutoff was 430-440. I was at 487. My Masters, my work experience, and by the time I applied my age was below 30.

M: Tell me the biggest challenges or obstacles that you faced in your migration journey and what kind of assistance was available?

Am: Only one is the FBI clearance. Apart from that, there was nothing really. Where do I put that? It usually takes that long. Like once you apply, you can call them up and check but they don't even like, give you a tracking number. Once they're done, they send it by regular US post and it takes like a week or 10 days just to reach you. Once they finish their process, and there’s no way around it. Like I was scared of even giving them a call and saying something, like what if they delay it further! Yeah, its scary, you know. I like, didn’t look for advice, it was more like consulted for research for the things that were required. I didn’t get too much into it. People were saying like, the economy is slow, no opportunities and all that but I didn’t think about it too much.

M: Okay, next steps. So what are your What are your next steps?

Am: Right now I'm renting and it's very expensive in Toronto. So might consider buying a, not a house, a condo at least, and then obviously wait for the three years and get the citizenship. It depends, if I leave the country for lets say, few months then, have to wait longer.

M: And will you consider migration elsewhere?

Am: No, maybe back home for a few years and then I can come back. But not right now.

M: And now tell me about I mean other aspects of like life, you know, like, for example getting married settling down. I mean, you said buying a house. I mean, I suppose settling down, very arbitrary term

Am: Settling down - I don't think so, because the work I've been doing now takes me everywhere. Like the project I'm working on here, at least could get over 2021. And once that's done Ill have to move elsewhere, meaning like, wherever, we have another project. And that’s in Canada.

M: Tell me a little bit about the social life that you have.

Am: Like when I moved to Ottawa, for the first two months I would spend the day, like, looking for jobs and all that. It was pretty interesting. Everywhere I asked, they needed a licence, a mechanical engineering license and that again takes time. I have to do something till then. So I ended up working some odd jobs. I worked at the vegan cafe, a grocery store, an Indian restaurant. It was a good experience. I learned a lot. And that was, like, somehow, I came across a person when I was working at the Indian restaurant, to who led me my full-time job. He recommended me. Ottawa was easier compared to Toronto. Like here, I don't know why, but I've only been able to meet people through the Meetup app other than my colleagues. So meeting people is hard, or making friends is hard, at least in my opinion in Toronto. It’s a busy city. Yeah. There was Indian food festival. I think I went to that and met some people in Toronto. Meetup has been more helpful so yesterday I went for a hike through the app. Like that was my first time and they have hikes every alternate week so that was quite nice. I drive so that makes things convenient. I haven’t used public transit at all since I arrived in Toronto. Not at all. And I like, work on a project that involves the transit system [laughs].

M: Anything else?

Am: Yeah, even in the WhatsApp groups like, there are people who discourage like, for example last week and all that engineering group will say like he's a manager in India, he had like, what 45-50 lakhs a year like, He was like, what's your opinion, like, should I move? Quit everything and settle here in Canada? And then does the other guy, hes like “if you have a good life? What do you want to move?” And this went on and on and on for a while. Its like really, a lot of negative aspects that he said. You should listen to other people's advice, but its totally upto you. As far as I can think maybe he wanted that kind of life and he didn't have it and [laughs]. I can say, Im lucky. I’ll add that. Me and my one of my close friends applied for the US visa together. Same time, same embassy. All I got asked in the visa interview was which university? And What's your major? That’s it Two questions? You didn't ask me for any paperwork?, nothing. I don't know like, what happened with my friend, but he got rejected twice… as a potential immigrant for US. And even Canada Day. I got done in a month or max two months. It was very straight forward for me.