

**Happy memories we make with our family is not important. It's everything.**

Sheemantika Nag

I have been asked by my dear friends to share the experience of adopting my child, though not a child anymore but a vibrant young lady, whose growing up has taken us through a journey of joy and heartaches.

Sharing our experience of going through the process of adoption has been a family affair as we all cherish the memory of those times. Our daughter grew up listening to the story of her becoming a part of this family; so to get a proper picture of that experience, we all put in our experiences together. This could not have been possible with my singular effort.

We had decided to adopt rather suddenly, as just prior to that, we had spent couple of months with my sister's family, who had adopted a son and a daughter. In fact, we were highly influenced with the thought of adoption after spending that time with the family and observing very closely the way they were growing as a family with love and affection.

It wasn't a very easy decision, though we had some second hand experience. We did consult our close friends and relatives who had adopted. Probably the first question that arises in everyone's mind before adopting is how difficult is it to develop the bondage. Then of course there were several other mundane queries. All the feedback and their experiences seemed very good and encouraging. Then came the question of genes; yes, we all think a lot about the heredity factors without knowing anything. Today, I can very confidently say that genes surely has been responsible for the color of her hair and eyes as well as to a certain extent complexion, the rest of course is what she got from us over the years. Looking back, these queries and hesitations seem meaningless.

In the 90s, adoption laws were very different and totally dependent on the agencies. We decided that Missionaries of Charity was a renowned agency and got ourselves enrolled. Our first interview wasn't a pleasant one as we felt that the Sister-in-charge was a bit discouraging. My husband was rather upset with this situation but I was determined to go ahead and of course he was ready to give in with a little persuasion, as he too was keen on having a baby girl. Needless to say, the encouragement we got from our parents played a major role.

One might think that the Sister was heartless, being so discouraging , but come to think of it, one needs a lot of mental preparation before undertaking the responsibility of a child and may be the Sister was testing our eagerness for adoption. In the meantime, during these pre-adoptive sessions, there were several meetings with the social worker, and our families. Finally, there was the home study. A social worker visited our house to meet the family, friends and neighbors. I still remember the day and the excitement of my mother-in law. Thanks to her, we had a house full of people who were all very positive and encouraging about adoption. The home study thus was a cake walk, but very helpful.

We continued with our visits to the agency when finally Sister Bernie, who was in-charge, told us that they did have a girl child for us, but she was very tiny and underweight. Taking a decision was difficult and so we consulted an experienced doctor. He said that this was not a big deal as the children at these

homes were usually underweight due to lack of individual care and love and this could be taken care of when she came home. So, we were ready to see our daughter.

I still remember that day as if it was yesterday. Off we went to visit our daughter, along with my mother. We reached the Home a little ahead of time. I was very excited and determined to love the little one, whoever was destined for us. Sister Bernie came in, a baby in her lap. My mother and I were already in the room waiting eagerly to see her but my husband was very nervous and skeptical and decided not to enter the room. So here comes the baby wearing a bright red frock, very tiny, with hardly any hair, two large ears and eyes with a killing smile on her face. It was love at first sight for me and my mother. In the mean time, my husband couldn't control his excitement and peeped through a tiny hole on the door of the room and the moment he saw the smile on the baby's face, he barged in and that tiny little angel looked at him and gave another toothless mind blowing smile and my husband immediately took her in his lap and as it was destined, we became parents!!!

Now, came the hardest part, "WAITING". She had to go through health check up, then the results of some pathological tests as advised by the doctor. It took about 7 to 10 days, and each day seemed like a month. Thank God the results were good and we finally got the permission to bring our daughter home. The very next day our family, with full of excitement went to bring our princess home.

Many years have gone by, some good days speckled with some not so good ones. Bringing up a child is no doubt hard, but it is never boring, rather I would say it is a challenge we enjoyed taking up.



Pradip Nag , my husband and I had adopted Ahana our daughter in 1997. I came across an article about Atmaja in 2002. The concept of adoptive parents association interested me and I got in touch with Nilanjana Gupta one of the founding members, to begin our long journey with Atmaja.