

Reflection

by Nicola Rodrigues



Of the numerous pictures I have till date of my life as an immigrant, I chose this particular one that started my journey as a student in a foreign land.

It's August 2000, and there I am standing on the doorstep of my apartment building in St. Paul, MN heading out to my first class in McNeal Hall on the St. Paul campus. I am excited and hopeful, yet nervous wondering what this new phase of life will bring. I've always loved school and always loved studying never shying away from homework or projects or exams but instead working hard at each one hoping for the optimal outcome.

Most often than not I've always been able to reach my goals and overcome my challenges but what's different around this time is the fact that I'm going solo in a new country with a culture different from what I'm used to, an educational system vast and unfamiliar requiring a new level of understanding and navigation, away from my parents, my extended family and friends who I've known for all my life-my strongest supporters, my safety net and the ones who've always nurtured me.

This picture represents my past and my present. It reminds me about how far I've come! I am no longer by myself, in the sense I have a family of my own, a husband and three bright, energetic, sweet, affectionate boys who remind me that I'm loved every day. However, there are several days when I am flying solo navigating parenthood in a culture with certain values, attitudes and behavior different from the ones I was raised with, understanding my children's school system which is vastly different from the one I went to and dearly missing the bonds, relationships and friendships I left back in India and those I cultivated during the 7 years I spent in St. Paul-my home away from home. As an immigrant to this country, I realize that the feeling of 'being settled' may never happen during my lifetime and that I am always going to be standing at the doorstep of a new entrance, hoping that doors open wide, people are welcoming, opportunities present themselves at the right time and that learning continues as I travel through new and uncharted territory. I am grateful for my past and my present, especially the people who have and continue to journey with me along the way.