

I still remember the day, last August, I was dragging my suitcase, I turn back and see my parents who have been my greatest support in my life standing among the crowd gathered in one corner of the airport, waving tirelessly until they see me disappear.

Ladies and Gentleman, I can't express enough how happy I am to be telling the tale, the Indian's tale of "Coming to America".

It has been 9 months since my arrival at Boston and every minute spent at Simmons has been enjoyable. Apart from the three powerful letters M-B-A, Simmons has given me "Friends". And by friends I mean not only my classmates but also alums and a few faculty members. And these friends have been my support in America and they have given me a second home.

My first American friend was a Simmons School of Management graduate. "Yes" she was one among you. Her name is April Stele and she had volunteered to help one International Student to make the transition easy. That lucky one was ME. She was "super fast express" with emails. We exchanged so many emails last April that she became one among my family. So even the youngest in the house knew April Stele. Such was her demeanor and friendliness.

My association with my classmates has been one of a kind. They are the most intelligent, polite and respectful ladies. I have been lucky to have very good teammates for all my projects. We would discuss our subject and then we would talk about Brad Pitt's current state of "affairs". We would finish our power presentation and talk about politics. In fact I have learnt so much about Democrats and Republicans from them that I can hold forth on the forthcoming elections if you wish!!!

Before my American friends would delve into the topic, they would stop to ask "Nandini, do you what we are talking about?" They would explain patiently and then re-ignite the discussion. In fact one day my friend kept using the term 'blah-blah-blah'. Suddenly she stops, looks at me and says, "Nandini do you know what 'blah-blah-blah means?" I replied, "yeah it's like yada yada yada". Amazing times, amazing women.

Finally to Professors. These are people with whom the lease of relationship is dated "Forever". In the beginning I used to find it difficult to refer to their names because in India we either day "Sir" or "Madam". Over time I

became comfortable with it. And I would like to tell you one incident, which clearly portrays the commitment of these “messengers of knowledge”. There was a particular subject whose text book I did not have. I did not buy it because I almost fainted when I multiplied the dollar value on the book with the exchange rate. So I borrowed the book from the library all the time. The first exam arrived. We had a review on a Saturday, Sunday time to study and Monday was the exam. Now, weekends I cannot borrow a book. I came to the review class. Half way through I needed to leave owing to an important commitment I had scheduled that day. As I exited the building I heard, “Nandini Nandini”. I turned back to see the Professor right behind me with her book. She said to me, “I know you would not have a book to study so I thought I would give you mine”. This, this is the level of commitment. Each and every time I see such an attitude from my peers, alums and teachers, I tell myself, “YES, this is how I would be towards the new Simmons’ students.

In addition to business knowledge Simmons has taught me to be a woman. A woman who is bold to express her views, a woman who is willing to help as far as she can, a woman who is tolerant of all cultures, a woman who appreciates the good and a woman who stands for ethics. A Simmons woman is one who is TOUGH yet GENTLE. I am happy to see such wonderful embodiments of the Simmons ideal here tonight and I am glad that I will also be a part of this perfection soon enough.
Namaste.