

Entry 1: Poem

Date: 10-01-2020

*Unspoken Words...*

Baba called today from thousands of miles away,  
I hear his voice through my phone,  
As he speaks to me,  
I picture him in my mind,  
Perhaps his hair has grown long during this quarantine,  
Or the dark circles around his eyes have dominated his face?  
I am not sure how to picture him in my mind.

My thoughts then shift to all the details I want to fill him with about college,  
“Baba, I woke up at 8AM to study for my classes.”  
“Baba, I had math, english, and a seminar class today.”  
“Baba, I am scared that I will fail in college and fail you and Mami.”  
These were all the few things I wanted to share, but didn't.

The thoughts are interrupted by his weary voice,  
Which meant that he had to leave soon,  
“Need to buy some supplies for Bua,” he says,  
The conversations about college remained in my head,  
Now they are being integrated into this poem,  
But, will they ever make it to Baba?  
Perhaps they will,  
Most likely, they won't.

Entry 2:

Date: 10-09-2020

### Mami's Homemade Momos

It baffles me how I was ashamed of being Nepali and indulged in internalized hate when I was younger. Growing up in Nepal, I was constantly aware of social constructs like colorism, and caste-based stereotypes. My parents had an intercaste marriage which succeeded in strengthening my outlook on life, but failed to fully protect me from seeing the world for what it is. In hindsight, the failure was not a failure, but it prepared me to recognize places where I can feel safe. Although I grew up believing that my caste does not define me as a human being, the self hatred caught up to me once I moved to the United States. I was 9 years old when I moved here with my family, and at that age, I was impressionable. Looking back at my time in elementary and middle school, I was more focused on becoming like the rest of my peers and desired to meet the western beauty standards. At that time I was not aware of the microaggression towards me, but little memories resurface once in a while and I try to forget them because it truly hurts me. My mami's homemade momos remind me of Nepal and who I want to become in the future. They remind me of our family values, the values my parents instilled in me. Her homemade momos remind me that although college is difficult for me, I can survive this. I can survive anything.



*Mami's Homemade Momos*

Entry 3:

Date: 10-15-2020

Reflection on my college experience:

I remember during my junior year of high school Huy, the Upward program advisor, told me that some students' performance curve once they get to college or higher education shows a negative trend. After that conversation with Huy, I was a little more conscious about my unhealthy studying habits and wanted to practice more self-care. I failed in my attempts to balance school with personal and social life because I always felt rushed. My love for school and serving my community was what pushed me, but at the end of my senior year, I was extremely burnt out. Before I realized that I had pushed myself too hard, I applied to internships that I could participate in the summer before college. I was accepted into both, but decided to do only one because of COVID-19, and taking that opportunity has been the best decision I have made so far in my academic journey. About two months before college started, I would spend my weeks studying for Chemistry, Pre-Calculus, Bioinformatics, Bioethics, Science and Communications, and Social Justice class. It sounds like a lot and it was, but the relationships I made during those classes with 12 other students has been incredibly rewarding. My eyes tear up when I think about the people who have guided me through high school, and life in general. Although I enjoyed GenOM ALVA (the internship), the late nights I spend studying, and sometimes worrying over my test scores took a lot of energy from me, which I was slowly beginning to realize. Feeling like I don't belong and am not academically competent is not a new feeling to me and in some cases is inevitable. Soon after GenOM ALVA ended, I had two days to prepare for my early fall start class, which again was something I was looking forward to because Professor Moody was teaching it. The class was called, "The Biology of Human Consciousness," where we learned about the many tricks our mind plays with us. I would love to talk more about that class, but sadly, I don't remember all that much. It saddens me to think that I can not recall a lot of the content we learned in that class because I love learning. Once learning the material in that class became more of a chore than actual enjoyment, I knew that I was burnt out, was focusing too much on how stupid I felt in the class, and the grade. I know college is about experiencing new things while also focusing on your studies, but I don't know how people manage to do both. A week after the early fall start class was over, the fall quarter started and I have been trying to keep up the pace and finish strong. As cliché as it sounds, I want to care more about the journey than the destination. I know that I put a lot of pressure on myself, and expect a lot from myself, but I do care a lot about learning. I recall the conversation I had with Huy once in awhile because I need to remind myself that I can not give up on myself and that I need balance in my life. I ended up writing about the Nepali flag for my SA2 and I remember that the flag represents balance, which is what I need in my life.

Entry 4:

Date: 10-24-2020

Dear 2020,

Two weeks before the start of the new year, I flew across the globe to visit my sick *Ama* grandmother in Nepal. I did not have high expectations for the “trip” even if I was going back to Nepal after five years. *Baba* (dad) had purposefully bought plane tickets that granted us an opportunity to visit my *Phupu* (aunt) in Hong Kong for a day. I had never met her in person, only talked to her periodically on the phone my whole life, yet when I stepped inside her home, she had prepared a delicious meal for *Baba* and I. After dinner that night, I slept next to her in my cousin’s bed who had moved out after her marriage. We talked about 40 minutes before falling asleep because my *Baba* and I needed to catch a flight to Nepal the next morning. Once I stepped inside the Nepali airport momentarily after the plane landed, I began to observe how my country had changed since the last time I saw it. Sadly, I noticed more chaos, more pollution, more holes in the roads while on our way to Pastor Manoj’s house, and more gentrification in the city of Butwal. Despite the chaos, I knew that people had become accustomed to their new life and made the absolute best out of it. Then I thought, I had no right to judge the condition of my country because I am now a resident and citizen of the United States, but I couldn’t help it. I was not expecting, but hoping that things would look better, more clean, and there would be less pollution. I was not disappointed especially after I met a Pastor Manoj’s family in Kathmandu, the capital, because they welcomed *Baba* and I into their home and gave us a place to stay the night. I was only there for a day, but I felt like I was more at home there than I have in almost nine years. After a day, my father and I headed to Butwal, my first home, before we went to New Delhi, India to visit my grandparents. The one person I was looking forward to visiting in Butwal was my beloved cousin, and my best friend, Pretti. Pretti and I grew up and did everything together despite how polarized both of our parents were. After staying at my cousins house for less than a week, we had caught a train to India and there I met my grandparents. My stay in New Delhi confined to the small hotel room my grandparents had rented out near the hospital where my *Ama* was receiving her cancer treatment. As expected our short stay in India and Nepal was over, but I was heartbroken to leave my grandparents and parents in Nepal to come to the United States with my brother. I was happy that my family had reunited in Nepal after about a decade, but we were separated again. India is one day ahead of the United States, so I celebrated New Years in a train that was taking *Baba* and I back to Nepal. All I remember from that night is being paranoid of losing my family and crying myself to sleep. I knew after that night, 2020 was not going to be the year for me because I just remember thinking of all the ways my life could go wrong. I was worried about *Ama*, *Mami* lost her job, college applications, and being reunited with my family. Now looking back at my situation, I could have been more positive because *Baba* and I were safe while unknowingly traveling to Hong Kong amidst a global pandemic. *Baba* and the rest of my family members did end up missing my graduation, and I had to say goodbye to my senior year of highschool (along with

the first two quarters of college). My heart goes out to the families who lost their loved ones, who have not been able to see their family members in months (it'll be a year one January 1st since I have seen *Baba*), and to those who have been making ends meet for what seems like an eternity. We are all survivors in our own ways.

Entry 5:

Date: 10/30/2020

### Midterm Reflection

I have taken many standardized tests and exams in high school, so I am used to being stressed out during this time. I did not think that I would get a 100% on both my math and chemistry midterm exams, but I was hoping for the best. In high school, I cared a lot about my grades, so I did not think it was possible to care more than I did then. I was wrong because the pressure of performing well in my college courses really did get to me. I do not want to self diagnose myself and state that I have test anxiety, but I experienced it during my math midterm, which I took first. In total, 80 minutes were allocated for the midterm and there were only 5 or 6 questions. I decided that I would take my time solving the problems to avoid mistakes, but I spent about 35 minutes on the first problem. By the time I had moved on to other problems, it was too late and I ran out of time to thoroughly think about the rest of the questions. I think that I would still be able to answer the rest of the questions had I not panicked after checking the time. I was experiencing a roller coaster of emotions because first I went from feeling anxious to upset to disappointed. I knew I had to let go of that or out that exam on the back of my mind because I had to mentally prepare for a chemistry midterm. The chemistry midterm actually went quite well and I am satisfied with my score. Overall, I think for my first ever midterm exams in college, I am happy that it went the way it did because now I can learn from my mistakes.

Things I learned:

1. TIME MANAGEMENT: make sure you do not spend too long on a question (maximum 10 minutes and then move on)
2. Answer the longer questions first
3. Answer questions with the most points
4. Study weeks in advance and always stay caught up on readings/other assignments
5. Make sure to stay calm during the exam
6. Be kind on yourself

Entry 6:

Date: 11/8/2020

Reflection: Election Week, Registration, and Classes

This week I did not sleep peacefully as I worried about the future of this country. Being an immigrant, and a woman of color, I have come in terms with how important it is for all of us to be civically engaged because we represent so many unheard voices. I know few people in my life who are undocumented and they live in fear of being deported from the country they call home. I was a freshman in high school the year Donald Trump was elected president of the United States and I remember my teachers telling the class of 2020 how important it was for us to vote during the next presidential election. We were mentally preparing ourselves for this moment, but we were not ready for the global pandemic. After these long and dreadful four years, this election was very important to me and the people I care the most about. I did not sleep the night of the election because I had so many things running across my mind like what will the future of women's rights look like, what will happen to the rights of people in the LGBTQIA+ community, et cetera. During this time it was especially difficult to focus on school assignments and make time to study because all I wanted to do was curl-up in bed. The way I felt about everything projected on my work ethic as I was not able to bring myself to complete assignments. This week I realized that I need to balance my school life with my personal life because it can take over my rhythm regarding academics. The long and anticipated wait was worth the while because I was content with the election results. I know I already wrote about this year, but I think the events that lead up to this year's election drained me mentally. I am excited yet concerned for the years to come because the turns our lives can take are still unknown.

Poem:

*Crystal Ball*

Life is far from a clear crystal ball that show our near future,  
Rather life is as gloomy as the winter morning when the fog covers the sky.  
Life is far from the purity of a crystal ball,  
Rather it is a mixing pot of residues from various moments in our lives,  
The feeling of joy you felt when surrounded by loved ones mixes with the hurt experienced from  
a relationship breaking.  
Life is complex, we are complex, and there is no telling where it can lead you,  
Life is far from a circular crystal ball that can be held in our hands,  
Rather life is imperfectly shaped and convoluted.  
Life is not a crystal ball.  
Life is not perfect.  
Life is not conventional.  
Life is not predictable.

Life is not a myth, it is reality that is meant to be lived.

Entry 7:

Date: 11/8/2020

*Affirmation*

"I am loved."

"I am appreciated."

"I am intelligent."

"I am beautiful."

"I am surviving."

"I am enough."

I can write these affirmations on a piece of paper,

But do I believe them?

I can read these affirmations,

But do I mean them?

I can go as far to look at myself in the mirror and construct these affirmations with my mouth,

But do they resonate with me?

I can write daily affirmations,

But does that mean I am covering up my insecurities?

I do not have an answer to these questions,

But I can try to challenge myself to love more of myself than I have growing up.

Growing up I was constantly measured and compared to others, but in a positive way that benefited just me. I was told how beautiful I was compared to my cousins because of my skin complexion. When I reminisce back on that now, it normalized comparing myself with others at a young age. Comparing and measuring myself with others introduced toxic attributes like Imposter Syndrome into my life. After enrolling in college especially, I have been evaluating the effort I make in school and think that it is not enough. This has only made me not want to complete my work because I am scared that I won't be as good of a quality as I want it. I will start this week off by writing these self empowering affirmations that will hopefully be uplifting. I will eventually write a reflection at the end of the week on how it went.

Entry 8:

Chatta (*Terrace*)

A place I call my second home,  
A place that holds my precious childhood memories with my cousins,  
A place where the sun would shine and grace us with warmth,  
A place where the sport of cricket would bring us together,  
A place where Pretti and I would build houses out of bricks,  
A place where *Mami* would apply oils in my hair to keep it long,  
A place where we ate oranges and found comfort in the citrusy smell of the fruit,  
A place that *Mami* and I would go to sleep during summer nights when the lights would go out  
and the generator would not work,  
A place where I could see the night sky being embellished by stars,  
I have not seen the sky populated with that many stars since I felt Nepal.  
A place where *Ama* would plant beautiful and vibrant flowers that gave her joy,  
A place that housed a mini temple where *Ama* would spend her mornings worshipping the  
different Hindu gods and goddesses,  
A place where I would look out the balcony and appreciate the city of Butwal,  
A place where I would play with my dogs, Jackson and Tommy,  
A place where I would return to after five years and instantly get a rush of nostalgia,  
Now the *chatta* has been replaced with more floors added to the house,  
Although it does not look the same, it will always be a place packed with unforgettable  
memories.



Entry 9:

Date: 11/23/2020

### Part of Me

As the quarter is coming to an end, I have been investing a portion of my time looking for summer internships at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the Allen Institute and other places. I can say that doing one internship thus far has changed my life because I am more driven to do research in the future. As a young girl, I always dreamt of wearing a white coat and helping others in need, but my perception of how to help others has slightly evolved throughout the years. I still hold passion for being a Neurosurgeon in the future, but I appreciate the work researchers do behind the scene. They collaborate with other scientists to discover cures, find answers, and gain more knowledge on the subject; their work is noble and exciting. This all ties in with my desire to participate in an internship the summer after my freshmen year because I can gain so much experience from people working in the area I am interested in. When applying to internships, it is important to consider how you will answer the prompt. If the prompts were something along the lines of introducing myself, I wanted to avoid writing about being an immigrant, a first generation student, and inexperienced. While all these things are true, I wanted to avoid mentioning those things about myself because I did not want to think that I got the internship because of my story or to become a diversity token. I expressed my concern to my mentor and she told me that these aspects will be a part of my identity and make me who I am. My experiences as a person, a student, and someone who is passionate about STEM is different from others because of who I am. As much as I can try to run away from this, I will always have to face the fact that I do not have to compromise talking about my identity to save myself from judgement. I was being too harsh on myself regarding this matter thinking that I could not get an internship unless I mentioned these three things, so I wanted to exclude them. I now realize that if college can look at more than just grades when admitting students, then internships will also see me for more than just an immigrant and first generation student. They will see my potential and my passion for STEM. We all have to start from somewhere and I choose to start by writing about me and why I choose to become a part of this field. Being a Neurosurgeon is my dream, but I wanted to go into medicine in the first place to help others. I believe that I can do that through research as well and I am most interested in exploring it more through these internships.

Entry 10:

Who I am thankful for this Thanksgiving.

This year has truly been a lot to handle alone for me, not just because of the pandemic, but because of my personal life. Finding out that my grandmother has cancer was difficult to hear because she lives thousands of miles away from the United States. With no one to take care of Ama and Bua (grandparents), my Baba had to stay back in Nepal. Not being able to see him for almost a year, while starting my college journey in a midst of a pandemic has not been mentally easy. Some days I feel really down thinking about my life in general. I wish I could cure Ama and Bua of all their illnesses (yes, illnesses because they have diabetes, heart and kidney problems). I wish I could bring my family as one so we could celebrate birthdays and holidays together. I wish I could be a spectacular student at UW especially given the fact that I had really high expectations for myself this year. Throughout this crazy and unexpected year, one person was always there for me; my best friend, who is more like a sister to me. Whenever I felt like my world was falling apart, I would FaceTime her and she was always there for me. A year ago, I would have never felt comfortable talking to someone else about my problems, so I would bottle everything inside. To relieve the stress, I would lay down and cry for hours and hours because I had no other way to get things out. Finally one day, I decided to open up to my best friend and she has been there for me ever since. Talking to her gives me the strength to face my problems and not run away from them. She is like the sister I never had growing up, so I will always be thankful for her. She is who I am thankful for this Thanksgiving.