



## My Sweet Journey from a Village in Bihar to California

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India is developing and so there is a trend to migrate from a village to a city in search of better education and job opportunities. I am one of them. My father is a farmer and like all father he too wanted me to have a good education. I was born in a rural village in Jehanabad district (Bihar, India) where there were no signs of urban facilities. Even now there is no electricity, sanitation facilities, a good school, road and access of medical facilities. Thanks to the cell phone technology that is the only source of telecommunication now.

I started primary education in the Government Primary School in my village along with other students (total about 30 combing Standard I through 5). The school building was very small with 2 rooms and some open space. The school itself was in very poor condition with no sanitation facility, no class bench, a few semi-working blackboards, no books, and all classes' students use to sit together. Many things are still true and there is yet no toilet for students. There was only one teacher and he was very well respected by both students and parents. I do not want to go in detail about my primary schooling and life then (which by the way was a good life with no stress) as it is very difficult to express in words for me and it will be difficult for you to appreciate if you have not experienced yourself. None of my city friends from India and abroad believe it when I tell my story as it might sound filmy. After standard four in village parents sent me to an English medium school in a "Block center" in Jehanabad district, where I did my class 5 through 7. I moved from a Block city to Jehanabad district city and completed my high school degree from a Government High School and then Intermediate education (ISc) from a Government college. My parents wanted me to appear for various job tests including the dream job of all Biharis (IAS) after graduation. That time one of my elder brothers went to Patna for a coaching class to prepare for engineering entrance examination and he told me about state and India level engineering colleges. I also went to Patna to prepare for the engineering entrance tests and this was the time when I first traveled to Patna and other places in Bihar out of Jehanabad for tests. Due to my financial condition I stayed with a cousin in Patna

and joined a coaching class. This was the first time when I had access to good books like the famous Physics book by Prof. H. C. Verma. Anyway that year I got admission in BIT Sindri, a premier engineering college in Bihar now in Jharkhand. I was very happy though but I wanted to study in an IIT, so I appeared again in IIT entrance examination (JEE) being in BIT Sindri and got admission in IIT Kharagpur in 1995. This made me, my family, my school and college very proud and I moved out of Bihar.

Getting admission in an IIT is probably the biggest success in my life till today. The learning experience, friends, and education environment were amazing. I had friends from all parts of India with various premier educational backgrounds compared to mine. First time I had access to proper sports and education facilities. After completing my integrated master degree in Exploration Geophysics I joined an oil company based in Mumbai as Petroleum Geophysicist. I became a metropolitan boy from a village boy. Many of my friends from IIT went abroad for higher education that motivated me to give it a try. After working for one year in Mumbai I too applied for higher education in USA and joined The University of Texas at Austin in 2001 for PhD in Geophysics. The education system in USA is quite different from India. The most impressive in USA university education to me was the friendly and helpful nature of professors. It was very easy to meet and discuss with world famous professors there. My interaction was mostly with science and engineering students and professors. I found that science and engineering students were equally respected, unlike in India where engineering is preferred to science education and I think this disparity is due to the better job prospects to engineering students in India. In 3.5 years of my graduate education towards PhD, I developed friendships with students from various countries, met world renowned scientists, professionals and professors, and visited various parts of USA and other countries for conferences. During my graduate study I was fortunate to receive full financial support from the university and lived like a normal people. I was able to afford a car (a dream in India for me but a necessity in USA), visited various places in USA and traveled to India every year



to see my family. After my PhD I desired to return to India, but I wanted to support my family and I stayed in USA to help my family and gain professional experience. I joined an international oil company in 2005 where I am working as Research Geophysicist based in California.

My journey from a village in Bihar to California was slow but steady, and this re-iterates “slow and steady wins the race.” I feel I have a long way to go to become a good professional and a good person. I believe in setting high standards and in sincere hard

working in achieving that goal; however your luck is equally important. To me, the change in moving to a Block center/district center from village was much bigger than in moving from Mumbai to USA, even though the life style and culture in USA is very different from India. Right now I am associated with various professional and social groups in India and interested to collaborate with them. If a village boy from Bihar like me can reach California, there is nothing impossible. I hope my story will motivate some common people to dream high and achieve high.