

MILES TO GO BEFORE I
SLEEP...

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MY START (CLASS 1-4)

Childhood: My journey began at a remote, rustic and rural village in West Bengal (painting in the first slide). I am eldest of 3 sisters.

Muddy roads, no electricity, mud-built houses, walking to school forefoot, coming home fully drenched wrapping the school bag in a polyethene, swinging in makeshift swings in our bamboo bush, climbing trees, picking green mangoes (relishing with salt/chilly), swimming for hours in our pond; stories from around the world from my baba and mathematics from ma (while she did all house-holds).

What's great: (1) relaxed childhood; (2) home-schooled until class 2 (3) cycling, swimming, climbing trees for FREE (4) fresh food and no junk food

What's not great: NOTHING 😊

Long term effect: (1) A strong foundation for mental and physical health and strength ; (2) birth of an explorer and inquisitive mind

MY JOURNEY (CLASS 5-10)

Adolescence: Same village. Falling in love with all the subjects; kindled love for history (knowing the past) and geography (knowing the world); reading plenty of books outside school curriculum. I knew I was enjoying my learning. Deeply focused.

Realized that we are economically weak. There were many things we could not do: travel, buying fancy things. Taught me restraint.

What's great: (1) Learning subjects on my own without external help (2) No distraction (3) Simple life, simple people. [BIG BOONS]

What's not great: Sports facilities. Later in my life, I realized I love badminton, martial arts and swimming. Given opportunity, I could have been great in them.

Long term effect: Self-training, self-exploration → self-esteem

Realized science excites and arts bring peace

Humbleness (villages have it and they give it for free)

"Dream! come what may, passionately love you dreams. Give your best. Don't think beyond." (Principle of Srimad Bhagavatam)- Ma and Baba.

MY JOURNEY (CLASS 11-12)

Testing time: No higher secondary school in the vicinity. Do I have to leave home and stay in hostel ? Harrowing tales of hostels (Girls are not allowed outside hostel; Bad food; don girls not allowing others to study etc) haunted all of us

I decided to get admission to a local school which is reachable in cycle in 2 hours. We had to move out of my sweet village and rent out a place which is 1 hour away from the school. My father/sisters had to travel to the school where I completed by 10th.

Thus, began the toughest phase of my life. Cycling back and forth of school for 2 hours everyday in the world's worst road for 2 years! In rainy season, knee-deep water. But the love for knowledge hunting never wane.

What's great: (1) more self-training; (2) love for knowledge hunting increases many fold

What's not great: (1) First experience of Gender-bias (Some teachers looked down upon girls, some did not allow girls in their tuition. Many said on my face I will lose.) (2) Nobody told me that there is something called IIT JEE exam. The school applied for WBJEE. Extended Family has no doctorate no science graduate.

Long term effect: (1) Physical and Mental Toughness (2) Nobody-can-break-me without my permission (Strong determination/conviction) (3) Important to be "lambi race ka ghoda" / "Prepare for the long run" ; every defeat is not a defeat; for a bigger win some defeats are necessary

MY JOURNEY (UNDERGRAD)

Hurdles Galore: I was hell bent to study COMPUTER SCIENCE. I left EE in JU.

Up to 12th standard, I studied in Bengali medium. For the first time, I was reading all books in English.

Ridiculed for my colloquial language, rural mannerisms. TUMPA (Typical Uncultured Mindapurian People's Association)

In the end, I was the batch topper 😊

I didn't get a job in campus interview 😞 Friends happy with 20k salary. I said myself you cannot set such a small goal. March forward.

What's great: (1) only self-training (no good professors); (2) internship at IITB that changed my life

What's not great: (1) confession: my life's most unproductive time; I could not channelize my energy to creative things outside studies; (2) lonely time

Long term effect: (1) one can stay positive, in the most negative time. It's really on us.

MY JOURNEY (MASTERS)

Towards Great learning and great life at IITM: Enjoyed various computer science courses. "Advanced Algorithms" by Prof. C. Pandu Rangan created great inclination towards Theoretical Computer Science (TCS) and Cryptography which remain my love till date.

Was doing computer vision in Masters and decided to go for Cryptography in PhD

What's great: (1) I remain to be top-class performer at IIT (2) I met my better-half during this period

Long-term effect: Love for Theoretical Computer Science

MY JOURNEY (PHD)

The defining period of my life: At cross-road: whether to do in India or from USA.

Bold Decision: We (me and Ashish) took doing PhD in India as a big challenge. On the hindsight, missed a different, world-class learning experience. But on the positive side, I become an independent researcher on my own very soon and a self-made person. Starting from the first paper, I was the creator! All the self-training I did since my school days started bearing fruits.

New ideas! Great ideas! Ideas in dreams! Ideas while in the bathroom! Ideas coming from every direction 😊 Magical time. This is what I am born for.

But I didn't know that this very decision of doing PhD in India is going to impact my future in many ways.

What's great: (1) the joy of creating and of research; (2) joy of sharing knowledge (3) fitness freak; learnt martial arts

What's not great: gender-bias yet again: there are lab mates who congratulated my male co-authors, while I was the main contributor.

Long-term effect: I discovered what I am good at and what I am passionate about- cryptography

MY JOURNEY (POSTDOC)

Had grown as a more enriched researcher. Travelling bug had bitten me! And photography too. I purchased my first DSLR with my post-doc money. My mornings in the week-end would start at 2 am and end at 12 night. I would start off for a far-way place. It's just my camera, me and nature. Nature unfolded in her most stunning forms in front of me. Hiking for long hours. Learnt to live alone! Learnt to be my own boss.

What's great: (1) more research; (2) photography (3) travel

What's not great: Nothing

Long-term effect: (1) Discovered another passion: photography; (2) discovered that in the low time, travel and photography can repair my mood

MY JOURNEY (IISC:2014 ONWARDS)

Dreamy start: A dream came true. I wanted a research institute for my career. In addition, students who are mature and inclined to do research. What better place can one expect?

Juggling amongst, teaching research and life and photography

Spent first 6 months salary on a new camera!

What's great: (1) research friendly ambience; (2) students who are friends, sisters and brothers; you are into genuine relations; young people keeps you young mentally (3) campus

What's not great: prejudiced system; believes PhD earners from India not as good as PhD earners from abroad; discriminates people based on academic pedigree, gender; unfair advantage to certain people. I faced some major biases.

Realization: dream! come what may passionately love you dreams. Give your best. Don't think beyond.

MY JOURNEY (MOTHERHOOD)

Paradigm shift: I was all for the change. I wanted the change. It was crystal clear that I wanted it. And the conviction that I can do both together. I was not wrong. Starting something new due to peer pressure. My daughter, Aparajita, initiated me into painting

What's great: (1) life with little Aparajita; (2) got my parents close after a long hiatus

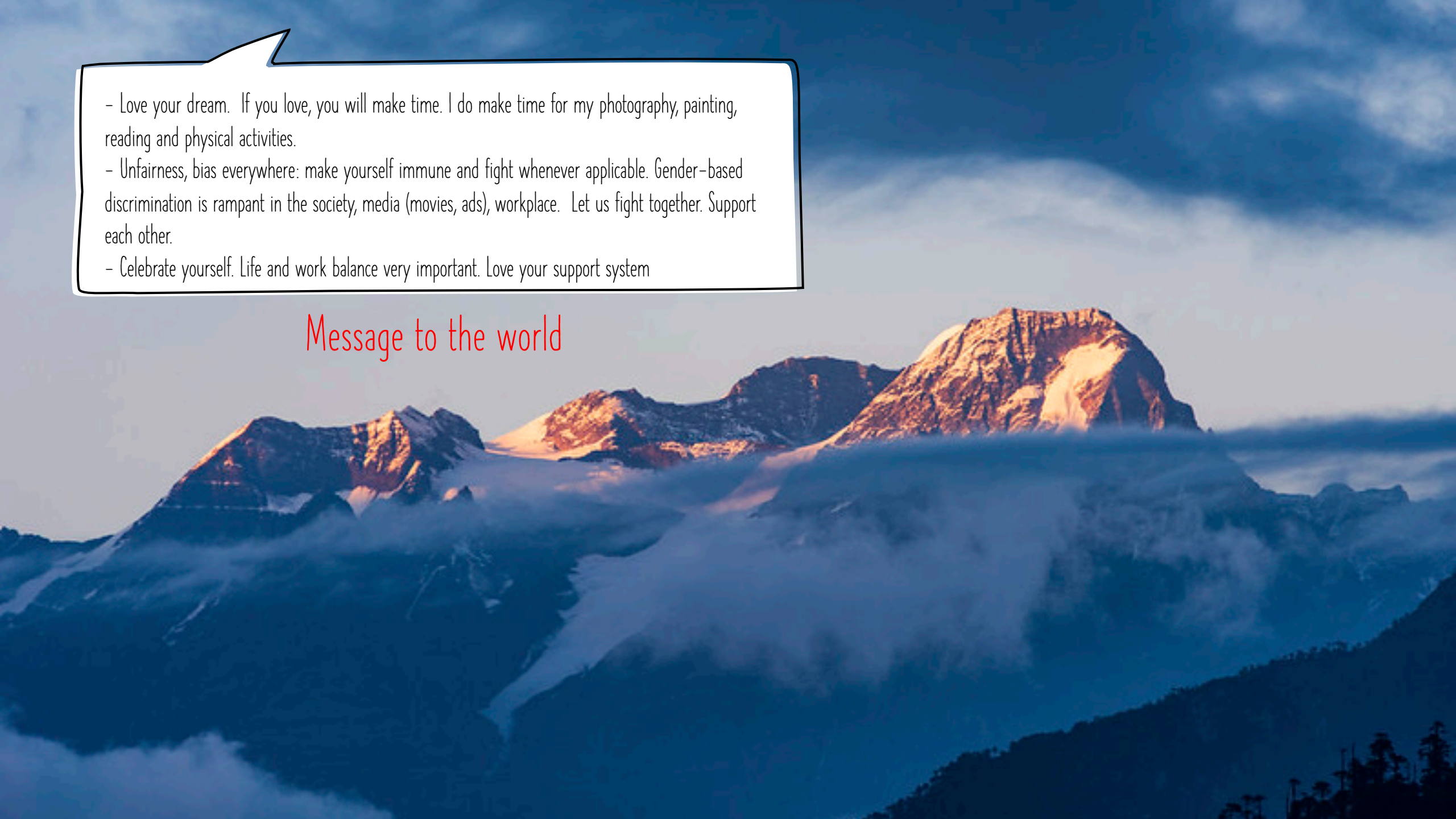
What's not great: Maternity leave is still called vacation by some!

Female faculty with x years experience vs male faculty x years experience. Both have similar profile. Judgement: Male faculty should get promotion earlier, because female faculty was on "vacation" due to child-birth.

Realization: dream! come what may passionately love you dreams. Give your best. Don't think beyond.

- Love your dream. If you love, you will make time. I do make time for my photography, painting, reading and physical activities.
- Unfairness, bias everywhere: make yourself immune and fight whenever applicable. Gender-based discrimination is rampant in the society, media (movies, ads), workplace. Let us fight together. Support each other.
- Celebrate yourself. Life and work balance very important. Love your support system

Message to the world



THANK YOU!

Arpita Patra

