

Growing up in Lucknow, a tier-2 city in India, I was surrounded by a close-knit community of family, friends, and neighbours. Yet even in those early days, I knew my aspirations were different from most of the people around me. I longed for something beyond the familiar streets of my hometown. I wanted to leave my nest, fly, see the world, and make a name for myself through hard work, persistence, and sacrifice. But that vision often felt isolating as I navigated the divergent paths my peers and I were taking.

When I moved to Mumbai for college, my social circle seemed to explode initially. In the first year, I had a thousand friends, all eager to make connections in a new environment. But as the years progressed, that number steadily decreased—to 100 in the second year, 10 in the third, and finally just 3 in my final year. It might seem like I was becoming more aloof, but the reality was that I was becoming more introspective. This shrinking of my circle wasn't a sign of retreat but rather a refining of the connections that mattered to me, the ones that were aligned with the path I had chosen. It was during this time that I also maintained a 4-year romantic relationship, something few around me could sustain.

Despite this perceived social withdrawal, my journey was far from lonely. Every step, every transition—from Lucknow to Mumbai, and later to Austin and London—was filled with personal discovery. Moving to the U.S. for graduate school, I encountered an entirely different world, both socially and academically. Here again, I found myself choosing the path less traveled, moving from large social gatherings to smaller, more meaningful interactions. And while it may have seemed to some that I was becoming increasingly self-reliant to the point of selfishness, what I was really doing was honing my sense of purpose and individuality.

As I completed my graduate studies in the UK and now continue my journey in Ireland, the pattern of introspection and self-expression has deepened. I've had to find my own way repeatedly - adjusting to new cultures, new environments, and new expectations. And with each move, I've shed the unnecessary and focused more on what truly matters to me. My story isn't one of isolation or rejection of social bonds, but rather one of understanding myself better, choosing quality over quantity, and making room for what fuels my aspirations.

Finding my way has required a kind of self-reliance that may come across as distant to those who don't understand the choices I've made. But for me, it's always been about the long-term vision of growth, self-expression, and carving a path that's authentically mine. And while the road may be less populated, it's one I walk with clarity and purpose.