**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.**

Hailing from a well-educated family that followed morals and preached values, brought with it, its own set of woes, at least that’s how I perceived it. Making a mistake only meant learning from it and growing out of it to form a good habit. But this wasn’t always the case; I constantly kept repeating a mistake my parents never approved of - comparison. I would find myself comparing what others have to what I did not have, pestering my parents to get me what others had, as if they had not provided me with enough. “Compare yourself with those who are lesser fortunate than you are, not with the ones who are more fortunate than you are” my mother would say almost on a daily basis but the idea never got into my head. As a child, I seemed oblivious to the fact that I was blessed with almost everything I asked for and more but I somehow carried this oblivion with me as I grew older and matured. I would compare myself with my classmates and neighbours and wonder why I did not have fancy bags or pretty clothes like they did.

Being a wallflower, I have always been a keen observer of my surroundings; so shifting to a new house in a different part of the city made me not only observe but also discover and understand new people and things. Living in a house that was situated right in front of a slum changed the way I perceived things. Every time I looked outside my window I would see families living in houses made out of scrap materials, laughing along with their neighbours as they went on with their work. This sight made me question myself “If they are content and happy with what they have, then why is it so hard for me to be content with what I have been blessed with?”

Being a tennis player for the past 8 years, I have always fancied new tennis rackets. Though I knew all rackets served the same purpose, my mind would still want me to upgrade to a better tennis racket each time. This continued until one day I noticed a boy who was few years younger than me win a match with what seemed to be a really old and damaged tennis racket. When I asked my coach about this boy, he explained to me that the boy came from a very poor background and works hard in order to give back to his family. “If he was content with what he had and achieves through what he had, then why I couldn’t?” I would ask myself over and over again.

But perhaps what got me completely out of the habit of comparison was an Initiative I took part in called “5K smiles”. On Independence Day, a team of five students and I set out to distribute McDonald’s Happy meals to five thousand underprivileged children across Bangalore. The two months we spent collecting donations, calling orphanages and co-ordinating with McDonald’s was all worth it when we saw those children smile as they took a bite of their burgers; for many it must have been their first bite of a dish as luxurious as a burger!

 August 15th 2017, the day I realised that I have been given everything there is for a person to be happy and those not as fortunate as me make the best use of what they have and yet I ask for more. August 15th 2017, the same day I engraved my mother’s word in my head, the same day I learned to be finally content with what I had.

It has been a slow and gradual process of self-realization. ‘Old habits die hard’ they say. I had finally got out of the sinister grip of being narcissistically self-absorbed, to being much more contented and beatific than ever before.