**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 had to what I did not have, and 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 I never understood what she meant by that. As a child, I seemed oblivious to the fact that I was blessed with almost everything I asked for and more, I somehow carried this oblivion with me as I grew older and more mature. 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 an introspective, 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 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?”

Having been a tennis player for the past 8 years, I always fancied new tennis rackets. Though I was aware that all rackets served the same purpose, I wanted to upgrade to a better tennis racket each time. This continued until one day I noticed a younger boy 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 had worked very hard in order to make his family proud of him. “If he was content with what he had and was able to achieve through these means, then why I couldn’t?” I would ask myself over and over again.

 Perhaps what got me completely out of the habit of comparison was the “5k Smiles” Initiative that I was a part of. On Independence Day, a team of six students, of which I was one 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 understood the value of my mother’s words, 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.