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

“So, are you a science guy or a humanities one?”

I stood there without any response to my middle school teacher’s question, as a pair for 60 unknown eyes, in an unknown classroom, in an unknown city, looked at me, awaiting a response. I hailed from a close knit community, surrounded among a group of, kind, empathetic and intelligent people who weren’t a part of the rat race .We had learnt to take life one day at a time. However, now in a new fast paced and competitive city, where a basketball champion was expected to fail in math, and the science child was expected to an introvert; I didn’t have response to such a question.

I was lost, not knowing where I belonged. Seeing how the cut-throat culture led to stereotyping of science kids being “nerdy”, I didn’t want other opportunity to be alienated anymore. From missing my chemistry class due to basketball practice, or going to the infirmary due to a sudden “sprain in my brain” during math, my IQ might have jumped by at least 50 points, by inventing new excuses every day. Things were sailing smoothly, until I realized that, one can only use having “bathroom emergency” as a reason so many times. Missing my chemistry class for the sake of basketball practice or going to the infirmary due to a sudden ‘sprain in my brain’ during Algebra class, my IQ score must have jumped by at least 50 points.I had become a neo scientist by inventing new excuses, almost every day. Things were sailing smoothly, until I realized that, one can only use ‘bathroom emergency’ as anexcuse only a few times during the day. My teachers would look at me with a suspicious glare during our 2 second awkward eye contact in the hallway. It could only mean one thing; I had to come up a plausible excuse, and fast.Finally, the school theatre group came to my rescue as they announced a drama performance in a month’s time. Practices were to be held between 5th and 6th period, which coincided with my chemistry class. It was as if a match was made especially in heaven. Without any hesitation, I signed up for the play. I was awarded the crucial and pristine dialogue of servant 2 – “it’s 3 o’clock now, Eliza ought to be in bed”. Ok that may be a bit of an over statement, but I didn’t mind, as it fulfilled my purpose perfectly at that time. It was the first day at the practice and our drama teacher decided to start with some basic visualization exercises.

*“Everyone close your eyes and image you’re in a forest. Feel the moisture in the air and the bugs around you”*

The only bugs that I was interested in were the mosquitos which had been tormenting me ever since I entered the room.

I stood there for a good 15 minutes thinking of things to keep me occupied as other children travelled through the Amazonian rainforests. Ultimately, out of sheer boredom I decided to give the thought a shot

As I closed my eyes and started visualizing, I was amazed at what had just happened. I was transported to the Pacific Temperate Rainforest, finding my way through the redwood trees and running away from the grizzly bears. All I needed was a hat and a machete, and I’m pretty sure I would’ve been considered for the upcoming Indiana Jones movie and before I could explore the unchartered territory any further, the bell rang and Indianajones was sent to his class to study. My mind kept racing, fascinated at what had just happened.

Slowly, as we rehearsed these activities every day and after every session, Irealized; I couldn’t stop myself from envisioning banal objects like how I had been visualizing in theater.

The play ended long back, but the impact stayed. It dawned on me that fire was no longer just fire; it was a bunch of atoms jumping up and down in excitement. Playing basketball was no longer a game; it became a physics puzzle. A chemical reaction wasn’t two chemicals combining; it was different molecules fighting to prove who was strongest. I had found myself in that theatre class that day. More than the Amazon jungle, I had explored myself. It sparked my love to share my ideas, discover and make an impact. I finallyfound find my love for STEM, but I know, I’ll always find a home in theater