Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story

The one incident that shaped me and my personality happened probably years before I was born. The year was 1947. The year that India got Independence from her colonial masters. However, for my family it is scarred with trauma of Partition. From a wealthy family that controlled lands and employed over 200 people, overnight they were turned into Refugees. Fending in make shift camps, queuing up and fighting for doles of two loafs of breads.

Recounting those tales even after 70 years is gut wrenching for my family and it still leaves them teary eyed. The sudden advent of poverty and their travails thereon can make a very emotive narrative. A father who would break down every night not able to bear the plight of his kids struggling for food and decent clothes. His two sons who never completed education and started work at 16, to assist in family income. The girls who were married off very young to avoid financial squeeze. One incident, generations of misery. It changed the very fabric, the nature of the family.

I can’t recount seeing my grandfather ever chilled out or relaxed. Life was like an ongoing climb, he had to struggle more and more, achieve more and more, save more and more, to secure family against a future unforeseen catastrophe. A trait that my father too has inherited. He would always underspend on himself but ensure that I get everything that he probably missed.

Many people can empathize with the physical hardship of a ‘Refugee’, but very few people appreciate the mental trauma. It changes one forever and the personality baggage runs across generations. Much akin to a mutation.

I often wonder if I am also carrying that mutant gene. It is very difficult for me go around partying like my friends. A prolonged movie session saddles me with an unknown guilt. Trying to continuously excel in whatever I do, reach the absolute limits of my personal abilities, is what gives me immense satisfaction. Its as if working hard, struggling is the source of happiness. I often wonder if I am being the Greek ‘Sisyphus’ and not seeing the futility of the struggle.

Is this natural or that mutated personality trait. I do not know. What I do know, is that it has shaped me to be who I am. I see it as a quest for continuous personal improvement. After-all ‘Kaizen’ is a much-respected trait now.