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

Although I stood still, my heart was racing as if I were running a marathon; I felt goose bumps rise on my forearms, yet I was sweating. A chill ran down my spine as I watched the queue of students slowly slithering towards the gymnasium to cast their vote. Each had a small pink paper in their hands that consisted of eight names next to empty tick-boxes of which one would be ticked. That name, the one which secured the most number of votes would be elected as the student representative council member of 2015; the girl who would lead her peers, be their voice and have the power to inflect positive change. I was so deeply involved in the process of observing my peers cast their votes that I could hear their pen strokes scrape against the paper and the old wooden tables. The day had finally arrived and I reflected on my journey that had led up to this bitter sweet day.

Grade eightmarked the first year of high school. It meant moving into a new building of the school campus, wearing pleated skirts and shirts instead of floral frocks and being one of the many small fishesof the big pond. I wanted this journey to be rewarding and seized every opportunity to do so, the first of which was this election.

For me this role wasn’t just a position of responsibility and power but chance towards personal growth. Out of 122 students, 8 ran for the election – a lengthy process whichincluded writing an essay, giving a speech and having a poster pinned on the notice board, post which it was up to those very students to see what they had made me into; and they did.

One component of the election was to deliver a one-minute speech on the female studentleader who I admired the most. I stood in anticipation as I watched the auditorium get filledwith students and their excited murmurs. At first, I was terrified to speak and froze from the pressure of performance. Yet, the fact that my opponents were waiting for asingle vulnerable moment where they could triumph upon me gave me the strength and determination to perform. This was my greatest takeawayfrom that experience - that I had the gift of taking up a challenge or demotivation in my stride and turning it into my driving force.

After each ballad was emptied, every last slip unfolded, counted and recounted, the whole school assembled in the courtyard and the principal announced my name as the representative. Heads turned mostly in appreciation and some in envy.

This achievement felt like I had defied all odds and truly sparked a period of personal growth as I grew to understand that true happiness lies in the effort and not just the accomplishment. I learnt to focus on myself- one brick, one weakness at a time.

Once I took up the responsibility as the student representative council member, SRC meetings were held weekly with the principal, head of departments and representatives of all grades. Being the youngest member around the table was truly daunting and it took a while to gather courage to speak but the day I did, I felt my confidence sky rocket, just like it hadwhen I had delivered my winning speech. I believe that the journey that led up to being elected and serving as the representative for nine months – a period where I believe I was metaphorically reborn – made me who I am today, until I move again, waiting to face challenges head on.