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 journey home.

When driving home, bumpy roads scare us least. Albeit, the same cannot be said about umpteen herds of sheep claiming those roads. Both greet us unfailingly, each time we go.

 In the summer break, my family and I make an annual pilgrimage to Kashmir. Nothing is more reminiscent of the journey than the Russian poplar trees that decorate National Highway 44. I can never forget,-the way they swing in hypnotic rhythm against an impossibly blue sky-chaotic winds beating them in unison. They merge into an endless array of what feels like welcome signs. The air is remedy in all torment; bleating sheep traffic or otherwise. Complete with pollen and pine, koshur air ,its dusty sometimes,but nonpareil .

I came to Delhi with my parents and two siblings  in 2011 in pursuit of a good education. The rest of my family, my aunt, uncle, nanna, stayed behind in kashmir. We are constantly in touch,maintaining a joint family, long distance. Suffice to say, ive witnessed the unique mingling of the rustic with the city life,a great patriarchal brood with small nuclear family. If home is where heart is, then my heart is in two different places at all times.

 Kashmiri music is my escape when i miss home the most.. Of my favourites,  Rasheed Hafiz singing the words of the great sufi poet Soch Kral in “dapyomas balyaras”  ,when he says “ i said/asked to the beloved. what lies inside and what lies outside” ? his diction echoing with ache , i let  it resonate in my ears; quiet, a head full of questions that just float, not bothering me for sometime. I just float and i am taken back to the snowy winters in kashmir.

sometimes i feel the icy presence of pretense. I find myself myself practising my naitive tongue in the mirror. almost afraid ill fail some test,  when I visit home again. My family dissects my incongruous accent, as though measuring the amount of blunders -to make sense of how much time ive spent apart. I can't help but feel only impending the inevitable question “Am I Kashmiri enough?”

It is a resonating song, absurd when heard for the first time, but frightening. Sometimes i can hear millions of others singing it with me. Their  steady hands in formation like a great big wave- chanting to someone somewhere, “am i man enough? “ “Am i beautiful enough?” , a million voices with a million questions. But here lies the trick. I close my eyes and i think of how i feel when im home. And i feel kashmiri enough. We are enough.

Peoples unique backgrounds equip them with different perspectives. And kashmir has been my telescope for it all.I continue to explore everything through its lens, and my own.

It helps that in my exploring, i can close my eyes no matter where i am, and think of the river Jehlum, the mighty mountains that follow the river everywhere, and i am at peace.

Soch Kral wrote, “ That which is outside  is inside” . Only in an exploration of all dichotomies, one that we don't want to believe and one which we want to believe most, when we truly see both(all), we understand better and get closer to being better.