Singapore:

Quest, Struggle, and Dreams Unbound



Dr. Amita

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Preface

People often wander through the realm of imagination, making every possible effort to turn their dreams into reality. This is why the idiom *"khyali pulao pakana"* (cooking imaginary pulao) or building castles in the air is so well known in India. Dreams, after all, can take countless forms, and the desire to travel to a foreign land is one of them. Whether rich or poor, many people nurture the dream of boarding an international flight at least once in their lifetime, crossing familiar borders, and experiencing life in a world they have known only through stories, films, and photographs. It is a different matter that not everyone's dreams come true; in fact, chasing such dreams sometimes leads people straight into scams or bad company.

The idea of going abroad always evoked a mix of emotions in me. On one hand, there was excitement, thrill, and the desire to see a new world; on the other, a quiet, unknown fear. Foreign lands were always a source of intense curiosity for me—part fascination, part apprehension. Cinema from my childhood portrayed living abroad as a life filled with hardship

and devoid of warmth. I had watched the film *Naam* several times, and Sanjay Dutt's character painted a picture of life overseas on the cinematic screen that made the very thought of going abroad terrifying. The film deeply etched an impression in my mind that moving abroad meant being cut off from one's loved ones. I came to believe that life overseas turns into a living hell, where people—trapped in the shadow of loneliness—get entangled in wrong paths that leave them neither able to truly live nor die. The film left me with an image of foreign lands that was heavy with struggle and isolation. It felt as though going abroad meant losing one's very identity—a path marked more by hardship than happiness, and more by solitude than success or celebration.

Yet, on the other hand, I had also read about and observed the lives of towering figures and freedom fighters like the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who laid the foundation for social revolutions precisely after traveling abroad. The knowledge and experiences they gained on foreign soil allowed them to alter

the course and destiny of the nation. They awakened their compatriots and sowed the seeds of social revolution.

Because of their journeys, a quiet desire to see the world beyond remained alive in some corner of my heart. I kept hoping that one day I, too, would see with my own eyes the world I had only witnessed on screen and read about in books. Perhaps I could learn something there and give back to society —and driven by these very aspirations, we set out on our path toward Singapore.



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The Visa Drill

Part- One

Our trip to Singapore- that is, for my husband, Dr. Santosh Kumar Baghel, and me- was our very first journey abroad. We were not traveling with any intention of settling down, but rather for academic work and sightseeing. The primary catalyst behind this trip was my friend, Dr. Ramavtar Yadav. The occasion was the conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), hosted in 2025 at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information under the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

We were eagerly waiting for our submitted research paper to be accepted for this conference. The acceptance arrived in March 2025, after which we decided that we would indeed travel to Singapore to present our work. I had moved to Uttarakhand only a few months earlier, but I was constantly coming face to face with the region's many hardships. My paper focused on how the media covers migration caused by climate change in Uttarakhand. My initial days spent amidst the valleys of Uttarakhand were filled with the beauty of nature, but equally with the realities of human struggle. Every