

## **My Migration Story**

**By Anonymous, senior participant at AMCS social cafes**

I arrived in Australia on a contributory parent visa, in October, 2017, at the age of 70. We, both (I and my husband) were independent, had a job and good income, social status, comfortable living and had two cars. Our children, two daughters and the son were married; leading a happy family life along with their six children; and all are Australian citizens. Although they wanted to take care of us, we had various constraints. So, they suggested us to migrate. Initially, we agreed and paperwork was started but later, my husband was reluctant to leave his profession, independence, and social life because migration makes us to be dependents. There were several discussions and arguments. Considering the facts that we are growing older and weaker; our life years are limited thus, one of us may die early; the remaining person has to face various difficulties; I decided that it would be better to live with our children. But he did not agree. Finally, expecting that he will make up his mind later, I planned my migration. I had to sell a part of my property to pay the visa fee of \$42,000. Contributory parent visa was granted within 1 ½ years in 2015, but I was not ready to leave immediately because I had to look after my mother who was 97-years-old. She passed away in May 2017 at the age of 98 and 8 months.

I also had professional obligations I was bound with. I was a nurse for 25 years and after my graduation, at the age of 50, I joined as an academic staff member. I was a retired Head/ Senior Lecturer in a government university for 14 years. After my retirement, I joined as an academic consultant in a proposed private university. Academic planning and development activities were my responsibilities. Academic programs has been developed and approved after a detailed review by the University Grant Commission. Having received the accreditation, nursing degree program has been started as the first program. (*Out of the 30,000 diploma nurses in the country, around 300 nurses were graduates. The only higher education for nurses was offered through distant learning mode, which was not much popular among nurses*). Even before we started, there was a waiting list for admission because we proposed face-to-face teaching and learning method. Since I was the sole responsible person, I decided

to stay until the first group of undergraduate nurses has their convocation. One week after the convocation, I left the country but it was hard for me to leave my husband alone at home after 34 years of marriage life.

As an active academic person, I thought it may not be easy to stay at home without any productive life. I thought I could do my reading for a doctoral study. After arrival, I have focussed on that aim and prepared a proposal for doctoral thesis along with other documents and mailed to a reputed university. My proposal was on, 'experiences of transition and relocation of migrant parents' using mixed method research. It was rejected because none of the professors covered that area of research. Then, I worked on another proposal on, 'experiences of accepting and cooperating with the diagnosis of breast cancer.' This was sent to another university. Meantime, I got my Australian Driving license. The second university rejected saying that the GPA score should be 80 or above, but mine was 79.8. I was so disappointed. For the first time in my life, I felt that **my old age has become an obstacle**. I had the information that in this country, people above 60 years of age have free university education, but it was not a reality with me. I thought for other means to spend my time.

I changed the place of living; one month at each of the three house of my children. However, all are away during the day time and I was alone. Meantime, one of my daughters found a knitting club at the nearest community center. I joined with them and knitted beanies, scarfs etc. for homeless people. Next, I joined with a meditation group. Since I was a nurse for 25 years, I applied as a volunteer worker in the hospital, but was not selected; could be because I am **old**. At the beginning of the second year, I heard about the community group of seniors from my motherland. I joined with them. Some of the members were familiar. The society was well organised and interactive. We had a lot of activities and fun. Trips organised by the committee gave us a change and made us more knowledgeable. End of the year, there was a variety show as a fundraising activity. Every member took part in it. I also participated in three items out of which, two were dances. My children supported me in various ways for all these things.

Contacts with Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS) brought us a new era just before the lockdown. AMCS provided us with a lot of information and raised the awareness of the benefits we are entitled for. They arranged an exercise and a yoga program through which we benefitted. COVID-19 changed everything. We all were isolated for some time. Again, with the support of AMCS, those two programs were conducted through Zoom technology. We did exercises and yoga while we were at home. Our senior group meetings also started through Zoom. We had singing competitions, puzzles, telling stories etc. Then another Zoom activity organised by AMCS changed our lives. That is Knitting Cafe, Art and Craft café and Gardening Café. Knitting was something I knew. We shared our knowledge and learnt new things happily. Necessary supplies were provided by AMCS. Earlier, I thought to practice painting during my old sedentary years. So I wanted to learn the skill. Art and Craft Café have given an opportunity to learn painting. It relaxes the mind. Again, necessary items, such as paints, brushes, papers etc., were provided by the AMCS. We have started and enjoyed both painting and knitting. The coordinator is very friendly, informative, and made us busy throughout the week. No space for loneliness. Painting and knitting opened a new way of life for me while living in Australia.

Before and after arrival, I never thought that I could have such kind of support. I am sure I will never feel loneliness for the rest of my life. I can continue these two skills until my life ends. When thinking of this, I feel sorry for my friends and others of my age who are living in my motherland. They do not have such type of support, care, and plans for their old age. I value the support we receive from this country; we are looked after and cared for especially, during this covid period. I appreciate all the members who have contributed with their time, resources and knowledge, to raise the awareness and bring happiness to our seniors.