

## Alien Life by Ujwal Thapa



Another life turning twist happened when I won a scholarship to study in an ‘alien’ world (the United States of America) at 19. I had barely traveled out of Nepal back then. When I arrived at Bennington College--one of the most expensive colleges at the time--I quickly realized I was practically an alien there! Here’s why:

From almost exclusively Boys School (Budhanilkantha) in Nepal--where I hardly spoke to the few girls there--I was off to an almost all women's college (Bennington was 70% women) in the U.S., playing alongside girls in the college football (soccer) team. From a British-run school, wearing the same uniforms for 10 years straight, to the most liberal college in the world where even clothes were optional in classes!

From living through one graded exam after another, I found myself where there were no graded exams ever (instead we had to defend field projects in front of peers every semester). From a school reputed for natural sciences, I landed in one renowned for visual, performing arts. From Kathmandu where I had never seen snow, I endured snow up to 6 months a year in Vermont.

From a safe world of rice onto a brave new world of pasta! I was accused of lying by an American friend when I revealed I never had pasta before coming to Vermont. These ‘surreal but true’ experiences, in this brave new world, gave me all the survival tips I needed for life!



"The Famous Bennington Co-ed Football Team" :)