

Airports have always held a unique sense of familiarity to me. The sounds of suitcases on the clean floors, the boarding call of an aeroplane and the excitement of getting to a whole new place are all things I have grown up with. This is largely due to my father, who travels all over the globe due to his job. Due to him, I have had the fortune of travelling at a very young age and having experiences outside my own culture. In retrospect, it is clear to see that my experiences have done more than give me travel stamps in my passport.

When I was young, travel was an adventure. There was an interest in things that I did not know, such as new foods, languages that I did not understand, and streets that were different from those that I knew. I found it surprising how quickly I adjusted to new things and the ways in which they were perceived by me. For example, new food that looked very strange to me started to be my favourite food. Some words from a different language were used to communicate with people.

But as I have grown up, I have come to realise how travel should be perceived by me now. Travelling for me means challenging the notion that my way of doing things is the only way. There are infinite ways of celebrating, communicating, worshipping, eating, learning and building a community. Diversity does not exist between nations. Diversity exists between people, generations, communities and families.

Having such an outlook on life has also made global problems more personal. When I hear about conflicts, displacement, inequalities, and climate change, I am not thinking of them as problems which belong to someone else who is miles apart from me. Instead, I am reminded of all the communities that I have come across and how interdependent we all are. An action taken in one nation could impact lives many kilometres away. A crisis in one corner of the world could lead to repercussions in other parts of the world.

As a Year 11 student, it is starting to become clear that global connectivity is not only about how easy it is to travel from one country to another. Global connectivity also means how ready we are to be receptive to the ideas and experiences of people who are not the same as us. Through my experience, I know that global connectivity starts with curiosity.

I know that having the ability to travel is a luxury. Not everybody is privileged enough to be exposed to the world as I do, and this just adds up to my gratitude for the privilege my father's job has afforded me. However, I know that understanding diversity does not necessarily need a passport. One can start appreciating diversity from the comfort of his/her classroom, dining table or just a simple conversation with a stranger.

It could be that my father's job helped open up the world for me to experience, but the individuals I've encountered and the different cultures I've been introduced to have helped me gain insight into how to view the world. They have made it clear to me that our diversity need not be a source of division but can provide additional reasons for why we should hear and learn from each other. And perhaps it is the greatest lesson of all – the world grows larger rather than smaller through perspective.