

MLK Design Seminar
17.922 IAP13
Assignment 3 – Autobiography
M.I.T. Student

I have never time traveled but I know what it feels like to cruise time aboard a time machine and to go pass Napoleon's army storming Europe and then a gigantic mushroom rising from Nagasaki and then the first man landing on Mars in 2040. I don't need a time machine or even a wild imagination, I just close my eyes and trace my life back and run it like a video in my mind. The places I have been are as contrasting as medieval France and Mars and every time I move from one place to another I witness the evolution of man's technological advances. This I believe is the reason for my presence here today.

I spent most of my childhood in southwest Ethiopia (East Africa) a place of absolute beauty, greenery but also remoteness. My birth place was a place of abundant natural resources where there are jungles with titanic trees having broad leaves and trunks so wide that several children can hide behind them all at the same time (making hide and seek a dreadful game of my childhood), where apples, oranges, Mangoes and so many other fruits, including Ensat, the very popular source of food that resembles a banana tree grow naturally throughout the year. People do not have to work very hard to grow anything. They do not need sophisticated equipment to survive in an environment like this. There are no vehicles, tractors or any roads for that matter. There is no electricity or tap water supply. Nature provides everything, a kind of life that resembles the life before civilization.

And then I moved to Addis Ababa, the capital of my country, a city where the past and the future meet. Addis could have electricity, pure water supply and other basic infrastructures but it lacks the most recent technological innovations. It seems as if a new technology takes fifty years to get to Addis. You could see the first vehicles or cell phones or you could witness people in old fashioned cloth in old fashioned buildings. Addis Ababa shows the time when civilization had begun and was in the process of developing.

Then came the most recent event in my life getting an opportunity to study in USA in one of the finest schools in the world, MIT. This presented me with the chance to see where man is in his technological advances. High speed Internet, fast and comfortable vehicles, beautiful and huge sky scrapper buildings, the modern era where technology is at its peak. My lifelong journey transformed me from a person who believed the universe started and ended in my birth place to a person who believes that there is always a place to discover or a new thing to innovate.

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