

Close-knit new world

US resident Jinal Shah explained how life in the era of Facebook and Skype has changed in the context of keeping in touch, in a talk in the city

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In the past, the stories of exile and immigration have most often evoked a sense of heavyheartedness — the idea of separation from the motherland and the warmth of a community. One had to wait for days in hope of a letter, the only way of communication between two distant places.

But US resident Jinal Shah has realised that the life in the era of Facebook and Skype, has become much more easier in the context of keeping-in-touch. A globe-trotter at heart, Jinal has been staying in USA for the past 13 years. She works as a global strategy manager for an American multinational company. Recently, at a talk session, titled, *Geographies of the Heart: How 'digital' is transforming the Indian immigrant experience*, hosted by Godrej India Culture Lab, Jinal spoke on of her own experience abroad and how with the

tide of time, she finds it easier to stay close to her family in India. "When I had left India to study in the US, the only thing available were blogs and that too not many people actually used. Even the call rates were very expensive. So, the frequency was lesser. But now I can call her and ask her the process of how to make *kichhdi*." "The point being, earlier due to limited resources, one could only share the milestone or the banner events, but now we stay even stay updated about the internal gossips too," she chuckles.

In the age of technology, the idea of boundaries is becoming more and more dilute — perhaps the reason why India saw a 40 per cent increase in the Visa applications on May 28.

"I had gone to the US in search of more opportunities and after 13 years, I don't regret, only that I don't know what would have had happened, had I stayed back," says Jinal.

But the flip side of the coin, also deals with the virtuality of communication.

"Especially in the last five to six years, people have actively participating in the phenomena of social media. But what one might miss is that people share only one aspect of their life their, whereas the reality is much different. When someone on Facebook tells me how awesome my life is, I say yes I have an awesome Facebook life."

The scientist and inventor, Pranav Mistry has tweeted recently showing an interest to quit his job with Samsung and come back to India to work with the new government. "Sometimes it is difficult to leave the life that you are leading somewhere, but I recently worked for a project in Mumbai and I realised that the youth here are incredible; if I ever get an opportunity which is challenging in a global context, I would perhaps gladly accept it."

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