

## **Swati Khare**

I got my primary, secondary and higher secondary education from Sri Vidya Mandir school on the outskirts of a city called Salem in Tamil Nadu. In school, my favorite subjects were English, physics and biology. I came across the concept of 'genes' and realized that I wanted to learn more about them. So I went ahead to get a B.Tech in biotechnology from PSG College of Technology in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. After completing my B.Tech, I started looking for jobs in India and realized I would need a higher education in order to get research positions. In order to apply for graduate degrees in the US, I wanted to earn some money for the applications, so I joined an IT company called Cognizant Technology Solutions in Chennai and worked there for a year. During that year, I applied for masters degree programs in the US and received an admit from the University of Florida for a masters in biomedical engineering. I came to Gainesville, Florida in the year 2011, and joined a neuroscience and genetics laboratory in the University of Florida where I studied human brain diseases by replicating them in simpler systems like the fruit fly. After completing my masters, I joined another laboratory which was working on a rare brain disease. In this lab, I worked as a technician for two years and decided to continue on as a PhD student because I liked the work and the people. While in Florida, I really enjoyed going to the beach and freshwater springs with my friends when I was not at work. Midway through my PhD, my boss moved from Florida to Arizona to join a nonprofit organization. I moved with him and completed the last two years of my PhD in Arizona. Arizona has beautiful deserts and I had a fun time exploring them in my time off. Since my PhD graduation, I have moved to New York and am looking for future job opportunities here in the nonprofit sector. Career path decisions can be both fun and stressful. At every stage, I have thankfully found help in the form of mentors and advisors. I would love to discuss some of the things I have learned in this process with students.