

Family Dobhal

2 hours ago

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We are moving out. The dream is over.

In 1998, my wife, Radha, and I dreamt of moving to New Zealand (NZ). We got in touch with an immigration firm called Dorchester and Campbell (to this day, I vividly remember the name) and we scrutinised our finances, right from buying a house down to the price of eggs. In 1999 my second daughter, Nilita, was born.

In 2012 our elder daughter, Garima, obtained admission to Victoria University of Wellington and 'we' followed in 2013: by 'we' I mean myself, Radha, Nilita and our two cats. Nilita went to Wellington Girls' College and is now in her third year at Massey University working towards completing her Bachelor of Design with Honours (Spatial Design).

With a view to contributing more to our chosen country of NZ, I started up a company in January 2014. The intention was to put NZ on the world map in the shipping of bulk carriers. A lot of sacrifices were made as I had to spend significant periods of time in both Singapore and Indonesia while Radha and Nilita stayed in Wellington under Guardian and Student Visas respectively.

Meanwhile, Garima completed her postgraduate studies in Chemistry at Victoria University of Wellington and then moved to Australia to undertake her PhD studies in Biochemistry. Her reasons for this were that NZ didn't offer much hope for her Doctoral research and beyond.

Newcastle University seemed to better recognise her potential and she went on to obtain a scholarship to assist with her research on cancer cells before moving to batteries.

Meanwhile the company that I had started grew quickly, and we are now a NZD\$10 million business with various branches in operation across the globe. This contributes directly to NZ by paying healthy taxes, and indirectly, by receiving services from NZ based financial institutions and service providers. I am registered with the NZ IRD and pay taxes regularly as an individual.

Come 2018, I started thinking of moving to NZ to build up the company and be closer in proximity to my family. I sourced an immigration consultant who could apply for an Entrepreneur Visa (**EV**) for me. The only way I could work and live in NZ was with an EV. So this whole drill started and an application was made to Immigration New Zealand (**INZ**). They sat on the file for almost 8 months before rejecting the application on the grounds that the company is not providing tangible economic benefits to NZ.

We argued that, like IT, we too provide services to the worldwide shipping industry. It seems that they probably did not understand what we do, how we do it, and what exactly it brings for NZ. They did not question us on our business model or my qualifications (I hold a Masters in Nautical Science with an MBA, Law Degree and a Maritime Dispute Diploma from the UK). Nor did they ask my net

worth in India, Singapore and Indonesia combined.

I took the disappointment in my stride and moved on to Plan B, where we actually started exporting commodities from NZ. We submitted an application with the New South Wales Government in Australia to move the business and were surprised to receive an amazingly quick response to that Expression of Interest application.

We have applied for the Business Innovation and Investment EB 188 category, which is in progress. Simultaneously, we received interest from the Isle of Man in setting up the shop there – this is now also in progress.

On 16th March 2020 I boarded an Emirates Flight to Bali thinking I would return to NZ in April (by now, my usual pattern was to spend one month in NZ and one month overseas for business prospecting). Then the NZ border closed for people like us, and my business suffered and so did my family life. I have not seen my daughters since.

I have missed my daughters' birthdays and it has been difficult to support them with their university lives from afar. Night calls from them if something goes wrong are difficult to respond to (for example, the recent floods in Wellington).

"Papa, I am scared. When will you be able to come here?" they ask. They are grown up now, but still need us occasionally.

A part of our lives has disappeared as a result of this separation. We are grateful for NZ and Australia in that they are providing our children a safe haven by physically protecting us all from Covid, but mentally this separation has cost us far more.

My wife and I are now vaccinated with the AstraZeneca vaccine, and have kept ourselves safe as we await an opportunity to re-enter NZ. We have been waiting every day for some good news. We are disciplined and undertake Covid tests every fifteen days, despite being home quarantined.

Last but not least, we have spent almost \$1million NZ dollars on our children's education in NZ, along with other expenses. As I said before, my company and I pay our fair share tax to NZ. Despite that, we receive no benefits from the Government or any other NZ financial institutions. It is a one-sided gain for the Government, except that we chose this life and were willing to work hard until we achieved our dreams of being NZ naturalised or recognised.

The dream has ended, and now it is time to move on. We cannot keep complaining about the NZ Government's apathy towards people like us and then do nothing about it. I have heard worse stories of split families than ours, so I genuinely feel that mine is not so bad.

Our robust business will move to Australia (hopefully

soon) so that at least we are near one daughter. In the end (whether NZ cares or not) NZ loses a business which contributed not only in taxes, but also in terms of job creation.

We have decided to raise the red flag: *"Enough is enough"*. Time to stop this limbo-life in NZ.

NZ is the most beautiful country in the world with beautiful people. Our departure is going to be a tragic end to all of our anticipated future aspirations.

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