Diversity Statement

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Coming from a region in India infamous for child marriage and gender inequality, and more, I often saw my parents justifying my education to society when they needed to explain, "why are you wasting your money on your daughter's schooling? Save it for her dowry." In the journey of fighting for the fundamental right to education to pursue a Ph.D., I came across all diversity issues — gender, religion, race.

During undergraduate studies, there were few female peers or professors in computer science. We intercommunicated a little with others in and out of class. To overcome this, I developed a discussion group to encourage female undergraduates to share their experiences and discuss academic problems. The discussions have made us realize that we are not alone in our experience. Moreover, I participated in volunteer teaching at primary schools in the poorest area of Tamil Nadu, a southern state of India. There was a huge financial burden for most families and children were not able to receive basic education due to the shortage of teachers and lack of materials. I organized a volunteer group consisting of undergraduates from diverse majors and made teaching arrangements for summer and winter vacations. I have learned how to effectively communicate with students from different educational backgrounds, abilities/disabilities. I believe equal opportunity is extremely important and every student is unique in their own way. I strive to create an open, inclusive, and equal environment in which every student has the opportunity to flourish.

My time as a graduate student provided a well-rounded experience working with wonderful people from all backgrounds. As a part of the Indian government outreach program, IITK has a Ph.D. program with students from Syria and Jordan. I volunteered for the orientation for international students to help them navigate their way into graduate school and advise them on adapting to the new culture. Similarly, at NUS, I would encourage students from different backgrounds to share their experiences to help them have an enjoyable academic journey. I have attended various pre/post-academic conferences, networking, and socializing events indented towards the inclusion of underrepresented groups and mentoring students, like Women in Logic 2022, Verification Mentoring Workshop 2020, 2021, and 2022. As a research community, we are socioculturally diverse, and these events spread awareness about creating equal opportunities for students across barriers of gender and geographical boundaries.

My background drives me to improve diversity in all aspects through understanding and influencing the culture. We need to build an inclusive environment where people should feel comfortable and encouraged regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, and class. Specifically, in academia, diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of who we are. Our commitment to these values should be unwavering — across all of our work worldwide.

I want to accommodate diversity of background and interest in my own teaching and communication about computer science. My goal is to give people of all backgrounds the opportunity to feel comfortable, supported, and happy pursuing a career in computing.