

7. Please choose one of the following two essay topics:

a) Have you ever experienced culture shock? What insights did you gain? (250 words maximum)

When in 2008 my wife and I were visiting the Niagara Falls (USA), we decided to use the opportunity to see that natural wonder from inside, taking a walk to a special observation spot located behind the mass of falling water. With the crowd of other tourists we headed for the elevators.

Unexpectedly, at the moment when we were just about to get into the lifts, a terrible thunderstorm has suddenly begun. The great gusts of wind roared outside, rain was pouring, the sky grew black, illuminated only with lightning. Although the elevators continued operating, Americans and Europeans seemed reluctant to use them and go down, exposing themselves to the warring elements.

Adrenalin pushed us into the elevator. We were not alone - Indians, Malaysians and Japanese people were there. And even in the elevator I was struck by how calm they were compared to surrounding quiet panic. However, it was when we left the elevators that I was really shocked. The falls were booming, the wind was practically threatening to throw us into the raging waters. It would not be untrue to say that it was one of the most frightening experiences in my whole life, but our fellow tourists looked content and relaxed.

When on our way back I started asking them about this striking fact, they replied that there was no use fearing death, especially death from natural elements, which was considered honorary in their societies. It is important to live honorably, they said, while death comes whether you expect it or not. I have been thinking about that matter a lot afterwards and I can truly say that those unique insights from other cultures helped me to overcome one of the strongest human's fears - the fear of death.