

Nandi's Choice

Nandi is a newly married young man living in India who comes from a financially modest background. A month after his wedding, Nandi and his wife receive two pieces of important news. First, they learn that they have a child on the way. Second, Nandi learns that he has received a scholarship to pursue a college education at a prestigious university in the United States. After discussing his options with his wife and his parents, he decides to seize the opportunity and move with his wife to America. They promise, however, that they will return home to his family after Nandi receives his Bachelor's Degree.

While living in America, Nandi, his wife, and their daughter begin to assimilate to American culture. After four years of hard work, Nandi is presented with another opportunity—a place in one of the best Ph.D. programs in the world with the promise of full funding and the prospect of a successful and lucrative career upon completion. Given this life-changing opportunity, Nandi decides to postpone fulfilling the promise that he made to his family to return home until he completes his Ph.D. As time goes by, four years becomes five, five becomes six, and six becomes seven. After seven years away from home, Nandi receives a call from his mother with the news that his father has passed away. He immediately books a flight home with his wife and daughter to see the rest of his family.

It is Indian tradition that, when a father dies, his eldest son must complete his final rites. Moreover, it is expected that the eldest son will support his mother and welcome her into his home. Nandi's mother, however, refuses to leave her four daughters (Nandi's younger sisters) and the country that she has lived in her entire life. She adds that Nandi's promise to return home is three years overdue, and she urges him to stay in India rather than returning to the United States to complete his Ph.D. His mother worries that if he does not, she will have no one to live with and support her, and she will grow old without ever getting to know her granddaughter.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Does Nandi have an obligation to abandon pursuit of his Ph.D. for the sake of his mother and Indian tradition?
2. What are the relevant factors Nandi should consider when making his decision?
3. Does the fact that Nandi has a daughter who has spent the first seven years of her life in America make an important difference to how you consider this case?

