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# An aid to ace admissions

*While being on the other side of the journey, with a number of acceptance emails in his name, could be rewarding enough, that he is able to help many others of his generation is a big bonus.*

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Siddhant Kumbhat

By **Kannalmozhi Kabilan**

Express News Service

CHENNAI: Tell me about yourself.” How many times have you had some version of that statement come your way — in the university admission process, job interviews, personality tests, first dates —and completely froze? How often has that moment made you feel like a stranger to yourself, especially one with no semblance of self or coherence? Seventeen-year-old Siddhant Kumbhat offers simple means to get through not just this, but any other question that might stand between you and the university of your choice with his book *Getting Into Your Dream School*.

For once, while trying to get into an Ivy League high school in Japan, he was faced with the same question: What can you tell us about yourself. “It’s a common question but when you just get it, what can you possibly say about yourself? Back then, I was really perplexed. And it got to me. I flew 11,000 miles and I barely got to speak for 11 seconds (at least, that’s how it felt). They shot question after question and it flew right over my head. I came back home and five days later, I got an email that said my application was denied. That’s when something struck me....it fuelled my desire to study in schools and universities abroad. I had dreams about walking in the most mesmerising of campuses. One night, I applied to some of the best schools in the United States and that’s how my interviewing journey began,” he recounts.

After several interviews, much practice and some stellar help, Siddhant realised that as much as there is a tried and tested way to prepare for competitive exams, there can be a clear way out for acing admission interviews too. At this point in the journey, he had been accepted into several schools in the US — from The Darrow School, The Winchendon School to EF Academy Boarding School.

The book broadly covers four key areas — how to prepare for admission interviews, how best to answer common questions, what to do if you do not know the answer and final tips to ace the questions by reaching out to the interviewer. “If you read the book, you’d feel like you’re actually going through an interview. Colleges get tonnes of information about what you’ve done, school boards, transcripts, standardised testing. But, the purpose of the interview is to get to know the individual behind the test scores. ‘Who are you?’ is the question and that’s why it is completely personality-based. That way, the interview process is similar in many countries. Once you figure out the pattern to the questions they ask you in interviews, you can ace any interview,” he notes.

And students seem to find resonance with such an outlook for the book has already been ranked among the top ten books in Study Skills section on Amazon. Siddhant acknowledges his next-door neighbour Ramya aunty and her daughter Tanu didi for having helped with the book, from start right down to the promotional video for its release. That Tanu had been through the process herself while applying to universities in the US helped immensely, he adds.

While being on the other side of the journey, with a number of acceptance emails in his name, could be rewarding enough, that he is able to help many others of his generation is a big bonus. “I just wanted to reach as many students as possible and I’m glad that’s benefitting so

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many of them. More importantly, I'm happy that this is a book by a student to other students and brings in the millennial perspective," he concludes.

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