

Part 1

One of the most defining moments in my life to this day was my trip to India back in 2019. My parents would frequently share stories of their upbringing – stories marked by clear contrasts between life in the United States and life in India, reminding me of the value of gratitude, strength, and empathy. Growing up in the Hindu culture was helpful to gain answers to many questions about who I am and who I have to be as a person. The Hindu culture really impacted me in a positive way because I am used to living in a country that has so many resources other countries do not have. Visiting India and observing the poverty as well as their living conditions was very eye-opening as it showed me not to take things for granted. Traveling to India and visiting my first wonder of the world, such as the Taj Mahal, gave me a cultural shock by showing me my origins around things such as music, food, and religion. I learned about the history of the Taj Mahal, and how it was built for Shah Jahan's favorite wife in the mid-1600s. I then got to visit the tallest statue in the world called The Statue of Unity, which derives from the state of Gujarat, where I am from. The statue resembles a nonviolent activist who worked alongside Mahatma Gandhi named Vallabhbhai Patel. This experience taught me to not only focus on my American heritage but also my Indian heritage. This experience was eye-opening and was by far a critical moment in my life.



Part 2

My great grandparents lived in India their entire lives. They had to experience their lives under British rule until 1947 when India got their freedom, and my grandparents felt like they had a voice. India was known for the country of diamond and jewels; there were jobs and opportunities for people and not as much poverty as we see today. My great grandparents and their kids (my grandparents) were known as “hira wala” this Gujarati term translates to The Stone People. They spent their days polished and shaping diamonds to make a living and support their families. There weren't as many diamonds and jewels left after the British invaded India and took the most valuable thing they had. My grandparents told me that although many got taken away from them through many hardships, their name and reputation were holding up; people trusted them with their valuables and the kind of work they did. The British invasion didn't make them weaker but yet come out stronger and understand that at the end of the day, who you stand as a person is by far more valid than what you have. My great grandparents learned to appreciate life with what they have and make the most of it, and that is what led them to be the well-known people they are to this day. To this day, when my parents or even grandparents visit India, they are still known as the “hira wala,” which shows to be an incredible defining moment in their lives. Pondering upon India's past, a country I derived from has positively influenced my background and my life to this day.

