

Krish Sharma

ksharm12@uncc.edu

It Runs in the Family

I gazed up at the clock, analyzing every tick of its hands nervously fidgeting its way around the circle. My mind was elsewhere, directed back home to the grueling suburbs and lush tree's of North Carolina. For now I was stuck in my Mother's country of India. "Three months", I would often scoff under my breath. I knew I was stranded in this captivating country . I saw the teachers frosty eyes survey towards me. I hardly know the language and yet she wishes for me to recite and repeat ancient scriptures of one of the worlds most beautiful religions. Today I was saved, those eyes of hers looked right passed me and upon my cousin. An amiable person, a bit older than me, he always knew the perfect response to her questions.

Class was over, and we were dismissed. We walked through the military base back to my cousins house. A captain in the navy, his father lived on India's largest military base right in the capital of the country. We indulged in conversations about the many important things in life at the time; Which at the fledgling ages of thirteen and sixteen were all about sports, girls, and what we wished to do as we got older. My cousin would always look at me with gleaming eyes as he told me his future. How he wanted to leave India and how he would study engineering in Germany to make his family proud. I wondered at the time what was his fascination with familial pride. I was always raised with the mentality of finding what would make me happy rather than what would make my family proud, and when I heard him neglecting his personal happiness I asked him the only "Logical" question on my mind.

"I know you want to make your family proud, but what'll make you happy in life? What if you get bored with work, than what?" I thought he would give me an actual answer, perhaps what he

actually aspired to be. But alas I was to never know his true dreams. My cousin chuckled, and unhesitatingly snapped back

“There’s nothing more important than seeing my mother and father proud, and I really couldn’t care much about what I’ll be doing in the future as long as I can look see that I’ve made them proud.” I honestly had no idea what to think of his answer. Of course there’s something admirable about a young man giving up what he wants to do for the good of his family. But honestly I never understood the notion. My Mother always tried to implant the idea of me pursuing a field in medicine or in engineering, constantly clamoring to me about how great the pay would be, or how proud she would be of me. My father (Much to my mothers dismay.) would always stand his ground and support whatever I wanted to follow; though he would lose this position as time moved on due to the influence of many other people contorting his mind

As we finally approached the house I noticed the scent of cooked mustard greens and bitter melon. It’s slightly piquant aroma could be noticed outside and instantly made me and my cousin excited. I rushed in, making sure to set my bag down next to my bed on the way to the table. “How was class?” my mother yelled.

“It was fine” I shrieked while washing my hands. When I finally got to sit down at the table I saw the usual Indian feast with the classic Roti, dry subji, and curry. Personally my favorite part of visiting India, is that I could finally eat with my hands without being looked at like a dolt. Across the table sat my Aunt, a very sweet woman who from what I could perceive truly only wants the best for her family. She sat with excellent posture, always keeping her back straight, making sure to give off an aura of discipline and domination. She was the only one in the household who refused to eat with her hands.

Everyone ate the meal at the table together. I couldn’t remember the last time I ate with all my family at the same table. Together we laughed and conversed about how our days went. Everything from what learned about in our Hindu studies class and to if we’ve decided where in India we wanted

to visit before I had to return to America. As time went on I kept thinking about the clock I saw in class, in my mind it was still ticking, and with each tick we got quieter and quieter. I think back now and wonder if I cherished those moments enough, whether I truly appreciated the connections I formed or if I was just rushing through them. It's tough to remember sometimes, but I like to think that I seemed appreciative, because despite the many things I may believe, or the silly things I would say regarding our cultural differences, I still love my family all the same.

As I continue to grow older, I find the many moments of my visit to India to be something worthwhile in my life, something that I can share with others, and something I can reflect on when in need of comfort. The experiences I went through help me open up to other people, the little things I used to get bullied for, the many places I've been, all attribute to pieces of my personality. I often miss my cousin and I would check in with him from time to time. It may be old fashion but I always chose to send him letters through the mail. One year I stopped receiving letter from him. I was sad I hoped I'd here from him eventually. One year turned to many and I began to lose hope. My melancholy ended when I received a letter from Germany.