**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.**

“Why would you think customs in a culture have no impact on your identity?” my friend argued with a bewildered look.

“I genuinely think that a whole range of aspects in my life proves that traditions don’t play a significant role in my life, let me break it down for you” I replied cheekily.

A supposedly 5-minute discussion for a presentation about the significance of cultural customs in a society led to a heated debate that took longer than needed. Chaotic, loud, and non-sensical are how I would describe the debate I desperately tried to win. Winning in the general sense would mean that I am able to prove my points to be right as opposed to the opponents. I always get a sense of satisfaction whenever the other person admits their argument to be wrong. That’s how I used to view discussions – winning or losing, opponents or allies.

My mind was racing back and forth for another 15 minutes and it heated my face, not knowing where it was going. After ceaselessly listing out and spouting my logics and reasoning to her, she threw a straight face and said, “Can you give me a second and hear me out?” She curled her fist and I can feel her adrenaline shooting up. I realized that my incessant talking and wanting to explain my side of things hadn’t allowed her to speak at all. My passion towards debates grew over time due to my ambition of wanting to change people’s opinions through my words.

Howbeit, this is where her argument became a watershed that changed my viewpoint on the issue. She explained that my perspective of culture is myopic because I only focus on aspects of culture that were at the forefront of my mind. She further elucidated that cultural customs shape people’s identity and values as it forms their opinions and ideas in their daily lives.

“If your grandparents or parents had different customs raising you, do you think you would still be who you are today? Because I believe you have some values you truly kept due to them” she uttered bluntly.

I paused, blinded by wanting to prove her wrong but I couldn’t deny some truth to her statement. In retrospect, it is true how practicing certain cultural traditions became part of how my values align with what my parents and grandparents taught me growing up. Her statement affected me the more I thought about it, and I could not deny it. It was at this point that I realize that I shouldn’t let my ego get the best of me just because I wanted to win the argument. It defeated the whole purpose of discussion.

I realized that winning is not everything, in fact, it means nothing in a discussion. If I feel like I win an argument, yes, it may make me feel satisfied. However, at the end of the day, it doesn’t come down to dignity and pride, but it comes down to how I can integrate my ideas with the other person’s ideas. Pushing myself to be better than the “opponent” doesn’t mean that I am better, even if my points are stronger. Like the debate with my friend, I do have a strong opinion, but others have their own beneficial perspectives that actually make me think twice about my argument.

It’s not a debate from MUN, World’s Scholars Cup or any debating competition that allowed me to acknowledge my mistakes and always consider both perspectives. I view debate as more of an exchange of an argument where both parties will walk away gaining more knowledge than before. My changed perspective on debate has allowed me to grow to be more open-minded in all aspects when making major decisions in my life, especially when transforming into adulthood. I would plan ahead by considering details from different aspects and points of view to make sure I would make a wise decision, no matter what it is. Many might argue that debating will lead to bad outcomes, I have switched the gears and see debate in a positive light.