

Udaya Tejas Vijay Anand

Ms Kara Fontenot

WR 1010

4 November 2022

### Me, Myself and I

Several characteristics influence us as humans as we grow, which define who we are and where we belong. From the cultural background to the kind of people we are surrounded by to the variety of food we eat – every small little aspect affects a person's ~~trait significantly, shaping a person's~~ ethics, morals and values system. This is closely related to how we're ~~getting~~ brought up as a child – which makes each ~~unique in their ways but nothing alike~~. But I'm also a person who believes there are phases or particular incidents in life that transform a person entirely while also subconsciously affecting their decision-making processes. ~~I have connected with certain parts of my life to make a deeper interpretation through this essay.~~ **Rewrite intro for conciseness and clarity.**

Coming from the most cultural and well-respected background of Tamil Nadu (in India), I was taught devotion, respect, brotherhood, and gratefulness. We do not have a school to teach us any of these. Still, the parents raise their kids, making sure they learn to respect everyone and to be grateful for everything around them – this is a mutually accepted environment where everyone comes from the same background, where we strongly believe ஐந்தில் வளையாதது ஐம்பதில் வளையுமா – which translates to “a mistake which is not corrected at five will not get corrected until 50”. Therefore, individuals in this community generally ~~tend to have a well-~~ disciplined behavioural and scrutinised systems well taught at a very young age to lead a better life and make appropriate decisions. With the pride of holding the world's oldest language, it

also has several cultural aspects that align closely with Hinduism. Therefore, our values are heavily derived from Hindu mythology, the stories of the gods themselves.

We respect our mothers as equal to gods, and these stories are narrated by themselves, which makes it special to shape the kind of person we are today.

With an undeniably perfectly developed morale system, the beginning of my teenage life introduced influences which started shaping my personality. I went to an American boarding school with people from all over the world from different cultural backgrounds. That was when the cultural differences started questioning my values over what was right and wrong. Coming from a well-disciplined background and community, everything was new around me – for instance, touching our books without brushing and showering was considered disrespectful to the god of education, Lord Lakshmi. In contrast, people were waking up five minutes before class and walking right out of bed to class, which startled me the first time I saw it because it wasn't normal where I was from. The other aspect was the inappropriate language used while communicating with one another. There were so many curse words in a single line of sentences, it was tough even to interpret what they were saying. It took me much longer than usual to adapt to such a language and culture. With a huge cultural barrier, getting accepted as a part of their community was much harder than I thought, and I was even worried that it would change who I am and affect my values... over the course of four years, it did. To be compatible with everyone and to look “cool”, we as people try to fit in by putting on a façade, hiding who we are and wrapping ourselves in branded attires. This gave rise to many toxic traits like being judgmental and objectifying people, which I never knew existed. Looking back at what I've become has wholly changed the individualistic charisma that a person portrays.

Covid break gave me the time to take a step back and gave me the time to get back to who I was, and it was more like a reality check. When I returned to school, I didn't care about the community's impression of me. The third phase was during my sophomore and senior year, which didn't affect who I was to get accepted by the community but to get accepted by the person I was in a relationship with. Running after getting accepted all my life over and over has seriously made me think about the purpose of my existence and if this is how a person should live. Taking a break from my friends and my relationships allowed me to explore the possibilities. I realised that my happiness and love have always depended on the people around me but never really came from within. I conclude by saying that – the people around you determine the kind of person you are, and taking a break from society to reset back to normal or to have a reality check is essential.

When you say "reset to normal," do you mean return to the values taught in your childhood?