

You might ask: who am I? I am an American citizen, but I was born in India. My parents came to California when my dad joined Microsoft in 1994. I am their first child. My parents didn't have any family in the US to help care for a newborn, so I was born in India in 1998.

Who am I? I am a girl who went to elementary school in Fremont, California during the day and recited ancient Sanskrit shlokas in the evening. On weekdays after school I watched Arthur and Sesame Street on PBS Kids. On the weekends, my dad and I watched TV-serials based on Indian epics.

But who am I? I have been trilingual since I can remember. In fact, I was surprised when my parents recently told me that when I was a toddler, my father spoke only English and Marathi to me, while my mom would only respond if I spoke in Hindi to her! That's how my family ingrained all three languages in me.

As a little kid, the question 'Who am I?' didn't come up too often. Sure, my family was vegetarian. Our house was full of old Bollywood and Indian classical music. Diwali was our big holiday, not Christmas. But my mom brought home that little tinsel tree on Christmas and took my brother and I trick-or-treating every year. I knew the Indian national anthem, but I also knew the American Pledge of Allegiance in two languages.

When I heard my parents discussing our move back to India at the end of my fifth grade, I really asked myself: who am I? At that point, I was a girl who had moved back and forth between India and the US thrice already. I practically changed my accent every year!

It took a while, but I eventually fit in at middle school in India. By the time I started high school, I was so settled I couldn't imagine what it would be like to return to the US. I had become an Indian with an American passport.

A few years down the line, my parents and I decided it would be beneficial for me to study and later work and settle down in the US. Three busy years of high school and college applications were a blur. I didn't really wonder: 'Who am I?' until I set foot on the U of M campus.

Today as I find myself asking my new friends scores of questions about American culture and history, I wonder what it means to be 'Indian American.' When I moved to India, I was 'the girl from the US' to my classmates. Now back in America, am I 'the girl from India?'

Will I live the rest of my life the Indian way, or the American way? Is there an Indian American way? Can you even describe an entire lifestyle or philosophy with a single label?

I wish to support my parents when they are older, as they do for my grandparents, today. I think that it's a beautiful Indian tradition that has made communities stronger and maintained support systems despite there being generational gaps. The ways in which I will take care of my parents probably won't be the same, but it is one of my goals.

My parents' American dream was to gain financial security for themselves and their children and then to return to India. I see myself living and working in America, but my dreams have been shaped by my experiences and tastes acquired in India!

It's hard to answer this question: 'Who am I?' I don't even know if it truly matters. I'm just glad I'm in the right place to start finding answers.