

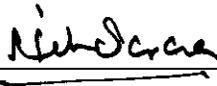
**Changing Views of India**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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## Abstract

This project examines how people's views change after being immersed in a culture completely different from their own. The thesis records and examines the views of seven people who participated in CAPAsia III, an eleven-week field study program based in south-Asia with a focus on India, in the spring of 2003. A questionnaire was given to the participants before they left for India and after they had completed their stay in India. Moreover an interview was held to learn their impressions of India in detail. The answers to questions were analyzed to identify the changes in the views of the participants. While everyone had developed new perceptions of the world, none of them have totally changed their views. The experience they gained seems more like expanding their worldviews, not replacing their views with new ones.

## Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank the thirteen students that participated in the CAPAsia program who shared in and supported my learning of a new culture, especially those seven undergrads who participated in my project.

I am also grateful to Ball State University for allowing the CAPAsia program to continue, without which this project would not have been possible.

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## Introduction to Project

Any type of foreign travel is expected to impact the traveler. Yet I had a broader interest behind my decision to join the south Asia-based, CapAsia field study in the spring of 2003. In addition to learning about other cultures that are very distinct to my own, I also wanted to learn about myself through the immersion in a culture that is completely different from my own. This was a principal goal of CapAsia as well. I therefore wanted to record how my own values, opinions, views, and beliefs changed after living in a foreign environment, specifically in India. This Honors Thesis Project is an expanded version of this interest. It explores the transformation my American colleagues experienced when they were subjected to a very different culture in India.

In the spring of 2003, fourteen students (seven graduates and seven undergraduates) participated in the CAPAsia field study. The eleven-week field study in South Asia studied the topics of Urban Planning, Architecture, and Landscape Architecture. The trip included four days in Bangkok, Thailand, six weeks in India, five weeks in Sri Lanka, and four days in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Despite the fact that all these places are Asian, their cultures are substantially different. Therefore, I chose to focus on our experience in India where we spent the most time. We lived and considered Delhi our home for six weeks –more than half the time we spent in Asia. Even though we did some traveling, after every visit we came back to the same apartment and would continue with our work in Delhi. We were independently responsible for our own food, transportation, entertainment, and other necessities. During our stay in Delhi, we worked on our studio projects. The undergraduates worked with the third year planning students at the School of Planning and Architecture creating

a Development Plan for Pondicherry city and the graduates worked with the National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA) on three self-built low-income settlements. We lived in an ordinary neighborhood near downtown New Delhi, called Jangpura Extension, which is not a tourist area. In fact, I only saw two tourists in our neighborhood throughout the duration of our stay.

As mentioned above, we did some traveling in India. This helped us experience India well. Not only did we have the opportunity to live in one place and get to know it well, we also had the opportunity to see what other areas of India are like, how dissimilar cultures may be from one region to the next, and develop a strong comparative perspective. Below was our travel itinerary:

January 8	Arrive in Delhi
January 8-17	Get acquainted with area and project introduction
January 18-19	Travel to and explore Chandigarh
January 20-21	Delhi, work on project
January 22-25	Travel to and explore Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Jaipur
January 26-27	Delhi, work on project
January 28	Travel to Pondicherry
Jan 29- Feb 7	Pondicherry Field Work
February 8-9	Return to Delhi
February 9-21	Work on Project
February 21	Leave Delhi

The investigation was carried out through a survey process. The survey (see appendix A) included questions about poverty, family values, diversity, and food. In addition to these broad questions, the questionnaire included some specific questions related to urban planning, especially on topics such as transportation, zoning, and land use. Urban planning is selected for two reasons. First, it is my major and I have knowledge in this area. Secondly, the project that was carried out in India was an urban planning project. So the entire group developed some familiarity with urban planning.

These questions were asked before they arrived in India, i.e., before being exposed to the culture. The purpose was to know their opinions from their own personal experience in the USA, especially their state of mind in regard to various issues before their views had a chance to change. This would help identify the transformation through comparison. The participants were the undergraduates in the group, including myself. The reason for such selection is that they largely had the same experience in India as they were involved in the same group project. I also included some questions about the background of the participants to see whether the responses are conditioned by their previous experiences.

In the following pages, I shall examine the responses to the first questionnaire to see the respondents' feelings on questions. Then I shall describe our experience in India, and some of the lessons learned. The events recorded were brought up in conversations between my peers and I during our travels. To conclude, I will examine the participants' exit interviews, comparing them to other in the group as well as their initial responses to hopefully show in what the ways in which they have changed and how they have stayed the same.

## Introduction to India

India is a vastly different country than the United States in many ways; it has a whole different culture, way of life, and worldviews. Those who have not visited the country are unable to understand the depth of the culture. This lack of knowledge about Indian cultures, religions, and traditions often leads to stereotypes, unfounded fears, and ignorant truths that try to explain this exotic place. As well, when an individual from India or a person who resembles an Indian is involved in a dangerous, hurtful, or illegal act, this reputation is projected onto all the Indian people. Even in the case of an open-minded person who is looking to travel to India, those aspects of cultural stereotype can be overwhelming to take in. This is why a study abroad or other type of extended trip to India can be an eye-opening, life-altering experience.

By traveling to India, one can begin to look beyond the stereotypes and realize that Indians themselves are very different from each other. Also, one can experience the traditions and cultures that may seem weird to an American, such as eating food without utensils. Yet when taken in context these are very normal life practices. While traveling and learning about the Indian way of life, one can recognize that there are different ways to solve problems. Solutions that may not be commonplace in America are worthwhile and effective ideas. Just because actions or ideas are different in India does not make them wrong; they are just different. This is a theme that has the same logic in America. For example, if a



A man raking leaves shows how an ordinary task can be done differently than the way Americans would do it.

male does not believe in cutting his hair due to religious beliefs, it does not make him wrong; it just means that he has beliefs that are different than a regular Christian.

The CAPAsians discussed some of these thoughts, ideas, and opinions before traveling to India. Many friends, family members, co-workers, and strangers have expressed untruths about Indian culture to us before we left. While many were in jest, some of the suggestions were believed. Statements such as “those people are terrorists,” “this is where blonde-haired, blue-eyed girls get abducted and stolen into slavery;” and more silly comments such as “don’t piss off any cows, you’ll be pissing off someone’s mother,” and “good luck using the bathroom” have been used as warnings against travel. In spite of all this, fourteen students, including myself, participated in CAPAsia, an eleven-week program centered in India, including a long stay in Sri Lanka and short trips to Thailand and Malaysia.

We knew the dangers and controversy of participating in this trip, as we would be leaving just fifteen months after the September 11<sup>th</sup> bombing of the World Trade Center Towers in New York City. Also, political tensions between the United States and countries in the Middle East, most notably Iraq, were escalating. Taking these situations into account, we did not think our presence in India would cause us danger. We soon realized that being Americans would not make us targets in the eyes of all of India’s population, which exceeds one billion people.



This gathering of Indians around our group shows that they were more interested in observing us than threatening us because of our nationality.

In fact, one of the reasons that interested the participants in traveling to India is that it is so different from western European countries, which are very popular travel abroad regions for the College of Architecture and Planning (CAP) students. We wanted to learn first hand what Indian culture is all about, not just to hear about it from books, television, and skewed opinions from people who themselves have no direct experience. We knew that there is a wide difference in population and population densities, religions, foods, clothing styles, architecture, histories, and beliefs, and even everyday life practices. The matrix below compares the United States to India, displaying some of the statistical data that shows the differences between these two countries.

	UNITED STATES	INDIA
Population	280 million	1.045 billion
Growth Rate	0.89%	1.51%
Land Area	3.7 million sq. mi	1.2 million sq. mi
Major Religions	Protestant 56% Roman Catholic 28% Jewish 2% Other 4% None 10% (1989)	Hindu 81% Muslim 12% Christian 2% Sikh 2% Other 3% (2000)
Ethnic Groups (2000)	White 77% Black 13% Asian 4% Other 5%	Indo-Aryan 72% Dravidian 25% Mongoloid and other 3%
Languages (2000)	English Spanish	English (official) Hindi (national) 14 Other official languages
Life Expectancy at Birth	77 years	63 years
Literacy Rate	97%	52%
GDP- Per capita Income	\$36,300 (July 2001 est.)	\$2,540
Percent below Poverty	13% (July 2001 est.)	25%
Unemployment Rate	5%	9%
Composition of Sectors	Agricultural 2% Industrial 18% Service 80% (July 2001 est.)	Agricultural 25% Industrial 25% Service 50%

Source: CIA- The World Factbook 2002

This matrix gives a sample of some of the contrasts between life in the United States and India. India is a much more densely populated and poorer country than the United States. There is also a much wider variety of ethnicities, races, religions, and languages of people in India. This illustrates the fact that India has a widely diverse population. Just as a Hispanic American can be different from a Caucasian American who can be different from an African American, Indians also have categories of Indians who are different from each other.

These are the facts that were known about India: it was a denser, poorer, less advanced, and widely diverse country. We wanted to experience these facts in reality and learn what makes India: what comprises its population, land, and culture. We were also prepared to see the unexpected. With our curiosities arisen, we set on preparing for our travels.



A typical street scene in India reveals the congestion and over-crowding caused by the huge population.

## Pre-trip Views of India

Before traveling to India, I asked the participants some questions to develop an understanding of their opinions of India, what travel experience they have had, and how they felt about some specific issues. These issues include questions on poverty, importance of family, European influence in Indian society, and also urban planning issues such as transportation, land uses, and zoning. The aim was to get the group's opinions on how they viewed India and what they expected of India. For the most part, all of the participants had similar views. For a matrix of the student responses, see Appendix B.

The participants are from various parts of the United States: California, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and from Illinois. Their hometowns range from small farm towns to suburbs to major cities. The reasons for liking their hometowns varied: amount of activity, diverse population, large population, small population, small town atmosphere, and friendly people. Some towns have a large percentage of its population belonging to certain ethnic groups, some accommodate a number of religions, some are comprised of highly educated people, and some have high-income residents. While some hometowns are mixed in regard to the incomes, some are fairly homogeneous. My own hometown is a fairly middle income, blue-collar town, with recent increases in minority populations. Some degree of poverty exists in all hometowns. With this information I feel that we as a group comprise a fairly broad representation of American citizens; we all have different backgrounds that have shaped our personal beliefs and views.

Three of the seven participants have never been abroad (excluding Canada). This includes myself. The others have traveled to continents such as Eastern Europe, Western

Europe, the South Pacific, Asia, as well as to Guatemala, the Caribbean, and Spain. The range of countries traveled abroad also helps to diversify our group and makes each person's opinion different.

When asked about societal aspects such as family importance, European influence on Indian society, and poverty, all the respondents gave answers similar to mine. The responses about the family had variations of the same answer in that the family is important in America and will prove to be equally important in India. In terms of European influences, I was interested in this topic because of pre-trip meetings, which revolved somewhat around European colonization of India. I had no idea how much European colonization is affecting present day India, but I did assume that the Indian culture would be emulative of European cultures.

I received different answers in regard to whether the participants expected much influence, and to what degree would European influence be embraced by the Indians. Some thought the Indians were influenced by the idea that being educated and dressed in Western fashion meant they would be more desirable and highly civilized. Others thought the influence would be more political and structural, being ingrained in the government set-up, policy, and the built environment. Others, like me, really had no clue how much influence Europe had on the country. There was not one unified opinion on how European or Western influence would have affected India or how the Indians got along with it.

Also, poverty was an issue that I felt we might encounter frequently while in India. I therefore felt having the participants define poverty was important. All of the responses were similar, being defined as people who live in unsanitary conditions, or

those who cannot earn enough income to support basic needs such as food and shelter.

We all agreed that poverty is an issue in both America and India, some thought like myself, that it would be more so in India.

The most crucial question I asked about the Indian culture was whether they like Indian food. I personally do not like spicy food. The answers were split: three people, including me, do not like it, one is neutral, and the other three enjoy it.

In terms of urban planning issues, I had a few questions regarding cities, transportation, land use, and zoning. All of the respondents share comparable views with me on whether they think that American cities are sprawling, too dense, or not dense enough, mentioning that in many cases cities are tending to become less dense, mostly due to suburbanization. They would like to see major cities and downtowns populated more efficiently before residents start moving outward. Everyone expected that India's cities and landscape would be denser than cities we are used to.

Also, in regards to diversity, everyone is in agreement that most cities in the United States are heterogeneous, incorporating for the most part a variety of religions, cultures, ethnic groups, and income levels. Whether or not these differences are evenly spread out through cities or tolerated is not so agreed upon. There were similar results in terms of Indian cities and how tolerant Indian residents are of differences.

I feel incorporating mixed land uses in American cities are vital in ensuring that they are active, livable places. My fellow travelers are in agreement: they all answered that mixed land use is beneficial as it would help diversify the urban landscape, help make the land more efficient and enable people to rely less on personal automobiles. In accordance with this view is the thought that zoning, the practice of separating land uses

such as industrial from residential for safety and other reasons, is a good practice but should be used sparingly. Zoning should not dominate the landscape, nor should it separate all uses. If zoning can successfully separate non-conforming land uses while allowing the co-mingling of acceptable uses, then it should be used. Likewise, all the respondents had similar views on transportation. I believe that Americans have an amazing amount of freedom of mobility, that is if they own their own mode of transportation. However, we all agree that cities should provide better mass transit opportunities. I would not use public transportation because it is not efficient enough to be my first choice, which seems to be the opinion of my peers.

The final questions I asked were more personal. I was trying to figure out what the participants expected to learn from studying in India, and from the rest of the group. I, like a few others, expected this trip to challenge my ways of thinking, but was not sure in what ways. Others had an idea of what they would have problems with, such as poverty or the attitude towards time. As well, I expected to be able to open my mind up to new possibilities, new experiences, and new and different ways to solve both current and future problems that plague us as Americans. As an urban planning student, I expected this trip to teach me how to work through cultural barriers in order to prepare me for a future career. For this question, there was a range of answers. The most popular response was to learn about and appreciate a new culture.

In conclusion, about one-third of the answers to the questionnaires differed from the popular response answer. The questions that prompted the most conflicting answers were those on zoning, heterogeneity of cities, European influence, and what aspects of culture will be agreeable or disagreeable to the most.

## Experiences Encountered

The following are events or observations experienced while traveling through India. I am using these stories because these are some of the views that helped us learn about the Indian culture. Many of these stories have been mentioned in the student's post responses, or could be supported by them. For a matrix of student responses to the post-trip questionnaire, see Appendix C.

The very first encounter that we had with Indian culture that proved to be memorable was at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi. We arrived late at night, and after going through the customs we found our bus driver. As we followed him out, a few adult men went for our suitcases and started carrying them and wheeling them for us. We were confused; we weren't sure whether they were with the bus driver, or porters. I assumed the man who took my belongings was with the bus driver.

The group stopped in the parking lot as the bus had moved, and when we did, one man who had been moving two members of the group's luggage demanded one American dollar. The two students did not know what to do, so one of them pulled out a dollar bill. Upon giving the man this dollar, the man glared and demanded five American dollars. My two peers refused, and he asked again, even more demanding in attitude. Because of this exchange, we realized that he was not a legitimate porter. So, I took my belongings back from the man who had mine, and the other students in the group took control of their belongings as well, facing demands for money. Our bus finally rolled around and we carted our own luggage, dodging men as they tried to grab our bags and pull them for us in return for money. One girl had to scream loudly at her pursuer, "No!"

many times and grab her luggage away from him. Yet he still persisted. We weren't safe from these solicitors until we made it on the bus and shut the door.

While this scene, our very first impression of India, was a little scary and tense, it proved to be educational. It prepared us to acknowledge strangers and treat them with a different care than one would in the United States. We did not expect people to take initiative by grabbing our belongings and then demanding money. In the United States if a person wanted to earn money by porting luggage, he would ask first, or offer his assistance for money. In India, it showed us that the people who want your money are more aggressive than in the States. They do not ask; it is as if they want to intimidate you into giving them money by automatically performing a service and making you pay them. As well, this incident prepared us for the anticipated, and constant bombardment of beggars that we would experience almost everyday in India.



A girl begging a group member for money on a street in Delhi is a common sight.

Related to this incident, the next few days in Delhi introduced us to the wide scope of an impoverished, over-populated country. As we traveled around Delhi to get our bearings and start our projects, we observed the urban landscape. The urban environment of cities in India resembled that of cities in America, except for the extraordinary amount of rural animals roaming and making their homes on the streets and in open stretches of land. Cows, goats, pigs, as well as your average urban dogs and cats

were commonplace on the streets of many Indian cities that we visited, especially in Delhi, which is the capital city of the entire country. Aside from this, or aiding this, is the amount of garbage that not only littered the streets but was dumped there purposefully. These street animals seemed to live off the food left in the trash, and resided wherever they found empty places. The animals were not the healthiest, and many of them were undernourished, disease ridden, wounded, or even missing limbs. We had a pet dog which came around almost every morning with a hurt leg. One of our students fed it with her leftover scraps from breakfast.



On garbage day garbage is thrown onto the streets and picked up periodically by large machines such as this front end loader.

Signing up for this trip I anticipated experiencing poor conditions, but I did not expect to see rural animals everyday in an urban setting living off of waste. This helped me understand how severe and deep poverty is. It did not occur to me that an impoverished country not only had to deal with problems associated with trying to provide people proper living conditions, but animal welfare as well. In a discussion with a fellow student and three Indian students, I asked why Indians did not take better care of their animals, and clean up the streets. Their reply was that India is a Third World country; it hardly had enough resources to feed the people, let alone pay for civic functions such as city beautification and animal welfare. Once they become a richer society then they can tackle such problems.

From observing hoards of animals roaming the streets, we began to notice bunches of people along the roads, performing very tedious duties. At one such instance, while driving in a cab, we noticed about ten people painting a fence in the median of a boulevard street. These people, both men and women in normal everyday clothing, were painting this fence with pieces of cloth. On another day we observed five people cleaning a street, using shovel-type tools to scoop the dirt into dustbins. We later learned that these were jobs. In a country with a billion people, jobs can be hard to come by. In America, fences would be painted by paint guns, or brushes, at the least; streets would be cleaned by machines. However, these improvements in technology only reduce the number of people needed. In India, they need more jobs, and since labor is so cheap, it is feasible that they employ more people to do a simple job. This makes sense, but I would have never thought that such wearisome jobs would provide a lot of people with a living.

In a few days of arriving in Delhi we started working on our project. We met with the students of the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), with whom we were working. They were very friendly and helpful and their hospitality more than exceeded our expectations. In a short time we learned a lot about each other, and about Indian culture as well. We learned a lot about the social structure and hierarchy in a college environment. The students had a great respect for their professor, however, the way they showed it perplexed us Americans. We noticed that every sentence was almost always initiated by saying "Sir." We felt it was a little silly considering in most cases, unless specified, we call our professors by their first name. Nonetheless, the SPA students only refer to their professors by their title and last name, or sir.

However, the SPA students' actions towards their professors confused us. Many times at lunch break they would purposefully wait ten to twenty extra minutes before heading back to class, late, claiming that the professors had to wait on their schedule. Also, during class students would talk out loud while their classmates were presenting, making it hard for the professors and any other student to hear. In America, the situation is reversed. Even though many American students find no problem in smoking cigarettes in front of their professors, or calling them by their first name, we show our respect by showing up on time for class, paying attention in class, and being prepared for it.

Another social norm that we frustratingly discovered was while the SPA students and we were on a field trip to our project site in Pondicherry, southern India. For the latter half of our twelve-day trip we were minimally supervised- basically on our own to gather data and perform other necessary objectives. Everyday we American students would arrange a time to meet with our SPA groups for the next morning; every day, without fail, more than half of American students waited over an hour for our groups to arrive. This was discussed vigorously amongst us as we waited. We were at first annoyed by it, but as the days passed we were pretty angered by it. We felt that if we would start on time we could accomplish our duties earlier, allowing us to shop, visit the beach, tour other places, or just relax. However, this is not how Indians do things, we learned. It turns out that the students would rather take their time before venturing out for the day. They had a very relaxed way of doing things, which just frustrated my peers and myself.

In an earlier episode in Delhi, some peers and I attended a movie with some SPA students. This movie, Mr. and Mrs. Ayer, was about a Muslim man and a Hindu woman

traveling on a bus across the country through dangerous terrain as a guerrilla-type group hunted for Muslim people to kill. This movie, while spoken in English, also had moments when the characters spoke in Hindi and Tamil. Sometimes there were subtitles; sometimes there were not. In an effort to help us Americans understand the movie, the SPA students from time to time would lean in and translate, or explain a scene that we might not understand. At one point when the Hindu woman discovered her traveling partner was Muslim, an SPA student leaned over to one of my peers and explained matter-of-fact that Hindus hate Muslims. Period. Venturing on this study abroad, my peers and I knew that there were tensions between Muslim and Hindu people. I personally thought that the majority of the conflict was similar to racial issues that we in America experience; there may be small groups who are racially hateful but not the majority of our society. I was not prepared to hear a college-educated person speak for a whole society and say that they hate Muslim people.

One time in Pondicherry our group experienced some threat of danger. It was not because we were American, as none of us felt any danger from our nationality, but it was because we were foreigners. Some SPA students and us went to a beach near Pondicherry in the early evening. After about an hour of swimming and hanging out we witnessed a fight between a European woman and a local Tamil man. Once both parties separated it, the local man and his friends came toward our group. An SPA student recognized the aggressors as Tamil and spoke some Tamil words to them. The angry Tamil man replied that whoever was not Tamil better leave, or they will be back. As they left us they pushed a few of us down, both American students and Indian students. We didn't expect a confrontation like this, especially while hanging out with Indians.

However, our Indian friends were also victims of this conflict; they were not Tamil and in as much danger as we were. We discovered that that at night the beach is not a safe place, as fishermen tend to drink and bully people who they feel do not belong.

In terms of urban issues, the group was a little more divided on opinions. Some felt there was a presence of planning and organization, others did not. There are disagreements over to what degree cities are planned, or uses are separated. This also leads into whether or not Indian cities would benefit from or even be able to incorporate American standards and policies such as zoning or city planning. Still others think that American policies are a viable practice in India. The following accounts point out some of the things that many of the students agreed with.

One element in Indian cityscape that many of us found interesting and unique was the creative ways in which Indians, more notably in Delhi used land and space. An idea that was popular among us and noted in some responses was the efficient use of vacant space that was created by fly-overs from the highways. In America, these spaces usually lay vacant and unused. It is bad enough that highways usually divide neighborhoods into two, causing displaced people and services, but also the land under them eventually become sites where trash collects or is dumped, graffiti is made, illegal activity takes place, or worse. The land becomes wasted space, land that is not valuable and usually unwanted by surrounding neighbors.

However, in India, this is not the case. When highways were built through neighborhoods in cities, the land under them has been used in effective ways. To do this, walls have been put up under fly-overs and storefronts have been created. In India there are cases where land is developed illegally. However, I believe that this sort of

development is legitimate: government banks and businesses are located in these spaces. These spaces under fly-overs are an example of how Indians use land efficiently. Land in India is hard to come by with a population of over a billion people; it cannot be wasted. They do not see land as invaluable. By creating uses for undesirable land like this it perpetuates solutions to problems that might have emerged.

Walking down neighborhood streets in any city we went to, we also noticed that activity seemed to be hodge-podged together. In the street would be carts of fresh fruit and vegetables or hot food sold. All sorts of goods were being sold, ranging from shoes and clothing to kitchenware and furniture. The stores would be open to the street and the merchandise actually moved into the street. Mixed into this variety may be more industrial related services, such as small machine shops, tool and die shops, and carpentry and iron works. Also jumbled onto the streetscape could be a variety of other services such as temples, health facilities, hotels, restaurants, and housing, from single-family homes to multi-units. For us, the streets seemed a bit chaotic. We are used to a more orderly system of organization: food places and some commercial activity placed together near residential, large-scale shopping complexes selling everything you may need but located farther away, and separated from manufacturing, industrial, or similar types of businesses. We are accustomed to separate land uses due to zoning restrictions.

In India zoning is not really incorporated into the cityscape. From some student observations, however, it seems that there is some system of organization in many neighborhoods and cities in India, just not what we are familiar with. One student observed that neighborhoods tended to be oriented to one trade or another, such as hardware, carpentry, or cloth. Other students also agreed in saying that while the streets

seemed unorganized, it seemed to work for the people who lived there. Zoning as we know it in America wouldn't be conducive to these places. Because of noise, air or water pollution, traffic congestion, or aesthetics, certain uses that we have seen mixed into a typical neighborhood in India would not be permitted in America. However, Indians deal with the inconveniences caused by the mixing of these land uses in order to make their livings and organize their neighborhoods.

## Post-trip Views of India

After spending six weeks in India the group responded to a second questionnaire. This focused on how the same topics in the first questionnaire were viewed after experiencing India. In comparing these with the first set of questions I hope to understand how the group changed.

The first question asked how the participants felt challenged by the Indian culture. They highlighted the differences they observed such as poverty, Indian attitude towards time, system of organization, informality of society, and hawkers constantly harassing the group. Except for time and poverty, no other challenge was expected before the trip, although everybody did expect some challenge. There were no expectations of what the participants would enjoy in India, but the answers given after were the attitudes of and interactions between Indians, the experience of different places and cultures within the country, the variance in architecture, and the city of Pondicherry.

The group was split according to Indian food. After the trip two people changed their mind as they became accustomed to eating it. Two people including myself still do not love it.

In regard to poverty, everyone initially agreed on the definition and its significance in India versus the United States. Traveling to India has affirmed these responses, concluding that poverty is more extreme in India than the United States.

While it was not an official question on the initial survey, the group knew the possible dangers of traveling to India given the current political and ethnic tensions surrounding India and the United States. However, we felt as a group that minimal, if any, threat would emerge because of our United States citizenship. This belief was

proved correct as the group unanimously felt that there was no anti-American hatred displayed towards us. As well, the only area in which the majority of the group felt any negative treatment was in monetary exchanges, such as negotiating prices for a rickshaw ride.

Because of some incidents in India I asked whether the group had perceived acts of hatred towards local Indians and if it caused alarm or surprise. Three people were not surprised by acts of hatred observed, although one felt the acts were more focused between Indians and other Asian races; however, three people were surprised by the acts of hatred, such as the incident in Pondicherry. This is in accord with the opinions expressed before travel. Four participants expected some intolerance of differences, and three felt Indians are more tolerant of differences than Americans.

In terms of urban planning problems, transportation was mostly viewed as chaotic and crazy, but it is understood that the transportation system may not be thought of in this way by Indians. Two people felt that the Indian system of transportation needed change and better organization; the others felt it worked well. The whole group responded that the Indian forms of public transportation were efficient and incorporated creative solutions to problems.



Stoplights with the word "Relax" are used to help with the seemingly chaotic road system.

The group is in agreement with the view that Indians make efficient use of land. Some respondents mentioned the creativity of Indians in using land, citing for example such ideas as building stores under a highway fly-over. Also, most of the respondents mentioned that land use in India was not strictly planned but decided among the individual how best to use each piece of land. Similar to this is the idea of zoning. Except for one person, the group felt that zoning was present in some form, however out of necessity and individual action as opposed to planning by the authorities.

Before the trip the group had similar answers in that mixed land use is something that can be seen in American cities but not standard; the group felt more mixed land uses should be incorporated in American cities. Also accepted was the thought that zoning is important but its use should be limited. Perhaps it is these initial views that had given the group such a positive outlook on the diversity and variety inside Indian cities. Also a general consensus among the group is that policies used to control land use would not be feasible in India as it is in America. The Indians' current system of demarcating land use is working. For the American system to work shifts of attitude would need to occur in Indian society and people.

The last question regards standard planning practices and how applicable in Indian society they would be. Two people in the group felt that American practices are in use in Indian society already. The rest of the group feels that the success of such practices would depend on the ability of Indians to be able to adapt them to fit their own culture, making them more Indian practices than American.

The basic changes that the group experienced as a result of traveling to India are the realizations that ideas and systems in America are not the supreme or final

conclusions. In fact, unless radically changed, these ideas or practices may not even work in a different culture, such as India. I do believe that each person in the group gained insightful knowledge into Indian culture and developed an appreciation for it.

## Conclusion

In preparing to travel to India, through various meetings with fellow travelers and also conversations with past CAPAsians, I assumed that traveling through India would be mentally hard due to its extreme cultural differences as compared to the USA. In discussions, the trip was described as challenging, a life-altering experience, and one past participant told another that “a part of you must die” in order to allow himself to understand and appreciate Indian culture. Understanding that these were on the severe end of the spectrum regarding others’ experiences, I expected India to make noticeable changes in each of our personalities and character, dramatically change our opinions of the world and more. Because of this I decided to center my Honors Thesis on this topic- to see what changes in people after traveling to India.

During travel and afterwards, I realized that the drastic stories I heard while preparing to leave were just that- drastic. Instead of sugarcoating the trip, they were meant to help the students understand what we were signing up for, and that some of us may have an extreme experience. Personally, I did not find that there were many outstanding changes in anybody, including myself. For this project I expected the before and after answers to my questions to be radically different. They were not in most cases. Instead, small changes may have occurred in each person’s thinking or personality. While not very noticeable, these changes will probably stick with that person throughout their life. Even after discussing with all the members of this trip how they feel they changed, most replied that they haven’t realized what parts of them have been affected and may not notice until something sparks it. I feel the same way. I could not specifically write out a list of how I personally changed from this trip. However, every now and then a

problem, topic or idea will pop into my head and I find myself thinking of how it may have been solved in India, or how other people in the world may address the topic.

On one hand my project failed in the sense that I was not able to capture the ways in which my fellow CAPAsians changed after traveling and living in India. On the other hand I succeeded in that I have learned a valuable lesson. One can look at the obvious differences of India and Indians such as skin color, historical background, language, style of dress, religions and customs, and think that these people are totally different. They can expect the worse in trying to understand why things are different and in gaining appreciation. Or, one can look past these differences and see that there are simply different methods of accomplishing what everybody is trying to accomplish. I learned that India could be viewed as vastly different than the United States, likewise Indians to Americans. However we can learn to appreciate and understand its differences and change in the mean time, without losing ourselves.

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## Appendix A: Pre-trip Questionnaire

Describe what you like/dislike about your hometown:

-What influences comprise your hometown (culture/religion/race/etc)?

-Is there poverty present in your hometown?

-What is your definition of poverty?

-Have you ever been abroad?

-Do you think American cities are sprawling, overcrowded, or not dense enough?

-Do you expect a difference in India?

-Do you think American cities (should) incorporate mixed land uses?

-Is zoning important?

-What do you think about our transportation system is it efficient? How mobile are people?

-How important is the family in America? Are family values important? Do you expect a difference in India?

-How heterogeneous are American cities? Do you think differences are tolerated in India?

-Is poverty an issue in America? India? How should (could) it be solved?

-Do you expect European influence to have a huge impact in India? In what ways? Do Indians embrace it, cope with it?

-What do you expect to get out of this trip?

-What do you think you will agree/disagree with most?

-Do you expect to be challenge by any aspect of culture?

-Do you enjoy Indian food?

## Appendix A: Post-trip Questionnaire

- What aspects of culture (travel, Indian life, etc.) challenged you, or your thinking?
- What did you enjoy the most?
- How do you define poverty? Is it a different definition than in the US?
- Did you feel any anti-US sentiment, worry about war, or personal danger?
- Did you feel screwed because you were white, or get special treatment?
- Were you surprised by Indian v. Indian hatred?
- Transportation- how did you feel about their systems?
- How do you feel about their public transportation?
- Land use- how did you feel about their use of space/land?
- Should there be better policies to control land use?
- Zoning- were uses such as industrial, commercial, manufacturing, residential, etc. separated as perhaps they would be in America? Should they be?
- Would standard practices, such as zoning, comprehensive planning, architectural standards, and transportation policies, be applicable in Indian society?
- How formal or informal is Indian society?
- Any other comments? Experiences?

## Appendix B: Matrix of Pre-trip Question

QUESTION	ME	F
Describe what you like/dislike about your hometown:	I like the smallness of it, but also how close proximity to the city and other activities. I like the rural features.	The neighbors are friendly, I know everyone. However, it is too small to meet needs, provide everything I need.
What influences comprise your hometown (culture/religion/race/etc)?	Mainly Catholic, white middle class, in the 1960s, higher years the population is increasing in Hispanics and blacks.	Blue collared farmers.
Is there poverty present?	There is some.	Not really
What is your definition of poverty?	Poverty is having a lack of resources to oneself or a family to ensure proper food, shelter and other necessities to live a healthy life.	Making a less-than practical amount of money to support themselves.
Have you ever been abroad?	No. (Canada) and France, Italy.	No.
Do you think American cities are sprawling, overcrowded, not dense enough?	I think people are wanting more space and are usually rapidly moving out of cities. I personally prefer dense cities, and think cities should be more densely populated at an efficient capacity.	It is different according to each city, in some cases it is in a city's character to be very dense, others are not. The general trend, though, it seems is to have your own large lot of land, meaning you have to move out of the city.
Do you expect a difference in India?	I do as they have a much bigger population in about half the area.	Yes.
Do you think American cities (should) incorporate mixed land uses?	I think many large cities do, but as people are crowded in many out new urban areas are experiencing traffic and segregated land uses, such as all residential, commercial, etc.	I think it is happening.
Is zoning important?	Yes it is for safety and health sake, and help control the future of a city.	Yes.
What do you think about our transportation system- efficient? How mobile are people?	People have all the freedom to go anywhere, but they have the resources, however those who do not usually have a hard time and depend on great public transportation. I believe, except for cities such as Chicago and New York, most cities do not have adequate systems.	We are very mobile, people can efficiently get from one place to another.
How important is the family in America? Are family values important? Do you expect a difference in India?	Family is important, but in different ways for it has been in the past. I expect that family matters will be more of an issue in India than in America. I think the family is important in India.	Family is a big part in many people's lives. No.
How heterogeneous are American cities? Do you think differences are tolerated in India?	Most American cities are diverse in terms of culture, religion, and classes. I expect some differences because of groups of people get along in each city in a different manner. I think Indians will be tolerant of differences.	Those cities that haven't had a difference in its residential breakdown in the past are starting to see changes- I think American cities are heterogeneous. I assume it would be different in India.
Is poverty an issue in America? India? How should (could) it be solved?	It is an issue in both, I think more so in India. Being that America is so much richer than yet it still has poverty, I don't know how it could be solved.	Yes.
Do you expect European influence to have a huge impact in India? In what ways? Do Indians embrace it, cope with it?	I think it will be ingrained in the education system, way of dress, entertainment, perhaps, so yes. I am not sure how far-reaching European influence will be, but I think Indians will embrace it.	Due to the British having control over India in the past, European influence will be heavy. Indians will have adapted to many of our customs.
What do you expect to get out of this trip?	I expect to be able to understand and appreciate a culture that I had previously very little knowledge about.	Learn about a different culture.
What do you think you will agree/disagree with most?	I will agree with the cheap prices of food and clothing that I hear is normal!	I don't know.
Do you expect to be challenged by any aspect of culture?	I do expect to be challenged, perhaps by life practices, but I am not sure.	Maybe.
Do you enjoy Indian food?	No, too spicy.	Yes.

# Appendix C: Matrix of Post-trip Questionnaire Answers

QUESTION	ME	A	B	C	D	E	F
<b>What aspects of culture (travel, Indian life, etc.) challenged you, your thinking?</b>	The ever-present display of poverty by people, animals, streetscape. Also, the relaxed sense of time and responsibilities in attitudes was often annoying and frustrating.	I was a bit confused by the system that organizations we needed to get information from for our projects worked on... general organization of systems in India.				How everything was so informal. I was used to a pretty orderly city and life, and I had to get used to the fact that I couldn't necessarily rely on that in India.	The peddlers at every tourist stop or on the streets who wouldn't quit trying to sell you something was really annoying.
<b>What did you enjoy the most?</b>	The attitudes of the people, especially those that I got to know	I enjoyed seeing different parts of India and the variations in people not only from different parts of a city but also country-wide, example experiencing the poorer side of Delhi versus those people who are well off.		Pondicherry was a great experience- I loved the atmosphere of the town and all the things that were accessible to us.	The wide scope of architecture that you can see in one city, the history is alive and you can trace it back by the buildings.	Interacting with and seeing how Indian people interacted with each other. They always seemed so confident somehow, making due with whatever was around them, and adapting to any situation with no hesitation.	
<b>How do you define poverty? Is it a different definition than in the US?</b>	Poverty in India I think is different in the US. People in India do not have as much chances to get out of poverty than people in the US, and also it seemed that people in India normally had less than your average US citizen, in America they would be poor with the same amount of items and money that make them have comfortable lives in India.			There are definitely different standards for different places. Poor people in America have so much more than poor people in India- more opportunity, more money and belongings, more support. Poor Indians may be struggling to live but poor Americans usually are not in that dire of a situation.	There were so many people that could not physically support themselves that they HAD to resort to begging. I think it runs deeper in India than at home, but it still has the same definition, not being able to provide oneself with necessary things to live a healthy life.	I think that poverty is not being able to obtain the nutrition and services you need to live a full life. I would agree with Amartya Sen that poverty should be looked at from more of a quantity of freedom perspective instead of simple economics. There are those who in the US who are more impoverished than in India, though they make a lot more money.	Poverty was much more prevalent in India than in most cases in America.
<b>Did you feel any anti-US sentiment? Worry about war? Or personal danger? such as industrial, commercial, manufacturing, residential, etc. separated as perhaps they would be in America? Should they be? Did they work well?</b>	No anti US sentiment at all, and no worry about war. It may have been mentioned, but no negative comments. Being a white girl with blonde hair and blue eyes certainly realize it than in the US because they looked differently. For example, there weren't many large-scale industrial buildings or complexes that we would be able to label as an industrial area, they were mostly small-scale shops that may be clustered together in a neighborhood. Commercial activity, residential living, manufacturing all went on in a typical neighborhood, but even then there was some organization to it, probably out of necessity rather than policy.	No. However I did not particularly enjoy men coming up to me and asking if we can exchange our	No. No. No. was ok.	I didn't experience anything like.  backbone for organizing Indian cities but it does not seem to be a priority. Zoning is sort of worked out by the people.	Half the time people didn't know we were American, I got Australian a bit or zoning. However, I liked how the streets were always alive because of all the activity from different functions. Very mixed, I think more American towns should be like that.	Surprisingly little. There was criticism of the war, and of George Bush, but I never really felt any hostility were pretty separated, from what I saw. The freeways carved up the cities into various blocks that were separated from each other. Within those blocks there would be areas that were generally used for one type of industry or use. In Jangpura, there was the hardware area, the cloth area, the steel area, etc. I don't know if it was planned that way or not, but it seemed to work pretty well.	No, people were surprisingly friendly towards topics such as war. Sometimes they would try large scale- were were city centers of commerce, service, and government, residential sectors with smaller scale services. Places for heavy industry or transportation nodes like a train station.
<b>Would standard practices, such as zoning, comprehensive planning, architectural standards, transportation policies, etc. be applicable in Indian society?</b>	I think they would be hard to set into place. It seems Indians have figured out the best or most practical ways of living and organizing their needs and physical space in relation to others. Only policies that encouraged this sort of system would work; I don't think practices that work in the United States would fit India.	They would be applicable, but I am sure it would be modified. Indians seem to have a way to change things that they have taken from our culture into ways that fit them better.	In some ways yes and others no. Most important thing that is lacking is organization. If India could get that figured out in terms of planning agencies (governmental or NGO) they could do a lot of stuff. Right now you have to search through all of the mess and most times you don't get past that.	I think the many practices that we are used to are being used in Indian society. It seems that they need clarification over who has the authority to enforce them.		It might help in some ways, but I think it would have to be adapted to the realities of Indian life, instead of just being implemented as it would be in America. Maybe if you took some American practices as a starting point, and tried to work out what would work in India, and what Indian practices maybe work better, and go from there.	Standard practices are in use. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't, but isn't that the same for us?
<b>Do you enjoy Indian food?</b>	Still too spicy, but it was ok.	Not really.	I LOVED it!	Yes	It took a while but I like it.	YES.	Yes.
<b>Any other comments? Experiences?</b>	It took a lot of time and patience to adjust to Indian culture			I really enjoyed the trip.		I miss Indian cheap food.	