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The World before and after COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic changed my life in ways I could have never imagined, shaping me into who I am. I have had the opportunity to live all over the world—London before the pandemic, Tokyo during the height of COVID-19, and Los Angeles as society adapted to the new normal. This background of mine allowed me to see what changed and what remained the same throughout the challenges of COVID-19. The pandemic took away our everyday lives, forcing us to abide by new rules. However, in hindsight, this experience taught me that the basis of who I am will never change.

Before COVID-19, I lived in London. People rarely wore masks there, and when they did, they were judged for it. I have personally experienced this when my mother, sister, and I were walking to the supermarket, and my mother was stopped by a pedestrian for wearing a mask. "If you're so sick to the point where you need to wear a mask, don't leave the house in the first place," he criticised us, right in our faces. This comment brought me to the realisation that this country's culture was distinguishably different from my own. In London, masks were thought of as unnecessary items. More specifically, the pedestrian who judged us thought of it as a sign of being severely sick and believed that anyone who needed it should stay home. This negative view of masks came from a lack of experience with health crises that required such safety measures. However, wearing masks was a common sight in Japan. It was not only used when extremely ill. They were also used for the purpose of preventing illnesses and spreading them. My mother wore them for this exact reason. However, that perspective was not understood by him, stunning me with the cultural difference.

In Tokyo, masks were already regularly worn, but when the pandemic hit, it became mandatory, and the vast majority of the people followed the rule. Due to the feeling of familiarity towards masks, Japan was able to smoothly transition its priorities from individual comfort to the communities' health and safety.

Right as the COVID-19 situation started to improve gradually, my family and I moved to Los Angeles. Wearing masks was optional. Unlike pre-pandemic London, where people were harassed for wearing masks, in Los Angeles, no one was judged for it or for not wearing one, understanding the challenges everyone faced. At the public school I attended, there were an equal number of students who wore masks and those who did not. The pandemic had made people more aware of individual responsibility, showing a major cultural shift.

In each of these cities, London, Tokyo, and Los Angeles, the change from pre-pandemic judgement to post-pandemic acceptance shows how COVID-19 has influenced our perspective and attitude, demonstrating greater awareness of individual choice and health.

While the pandemic created many changes, some things have remained the same. Before the pandemic, small gatherings with friends and family were held often, constituting essential parts of life. Although meeting people face-to-face was restricted, these interactions never disappeared even during the pandemic; they just changed forms. People used phone calls, video chats, and held online events to stay connected with each other. Although the ways of interacting changed, the relationships and the bonds built with the people surrounding us remained the same. One example I distinctly remember of this new form of socialisation is playing "Among Us" with my friends.

"Among Us" is an online game that gained massive popularity for its ability to be played remotely whilst teaming up with friends, even when the streets were on lockdown. Through this game, I was able to stay connected and share moments of excitement with my friends. While it was not the same as physically being together, it reminded me of how fun spending time with them was, and that I should not take any of my surroundings for granted.

By experiencing the pandemic, I have also realised that who I am as a person will remain unchanged. I describe myself as someone with positivity, resilience, and persistence. None of these aspects have changed while going through the pandemic. COVID-19 prevented me from attending school, taking a walk, and going outside in general; however, despite the numerous rules about what not to do, I looked on the brighter side by thinking of what I could do. Because of this, I was able to discover the joy and excitement of dance. My consistent positive mindset and my persistence led me to find something that has now become an inseparable part of my life.

During the lockdown, I had such excessive spare time that I began watching an incredible number of movies. Although I had watched movies before, I had never paid close attention to them. However, when I focused on the small details, I came to realise the brilliance of films. The way the camera angles, the music, and the surrounding atmosphere can alter the meaning of each scene as well as the satisfaction of planting and paying off, captivated me. This feeling of mesmerisation of films made me want to get involved in the filmmaking industry when I grow up. My specific dream is to produce my own work and give the viewers the same impact I felt watching films. My resilience has allowed me to not only adjust to the lockdown easily but also guide me to what I want to become in my future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably changed the world, but it also demonstrated what is truly valuable. In London, Tokyo, and Los Angeles, I saw with my own eyes how the world changed and how society accommodated the new norms. The pandemic taught me the importance of relationships and appreciating the little things in life. The world before and after COVID-19 has changed significantly, but the base of who I am remains the same.