That day, in the doctor’s office, Meredith and her husband Matthew received the news that they had been dreading to hear for three months now. The couple had been trying religiously to welcome a new member into the family, but had been beleaguered with failure. Yet, this visit was particularly devastating, as there in that doctor’s office, all hopes were lost when they learned that complications on Matthew’s end will prevent them from every expanding their family.

The next few weeks were awful for the couple. Dinner would be silent and when they went to bed it would be like they were two complete strangers being forced to share a bed for the night. After this pattern kept on repeating itself, Meredith decided that she had enough. As she looked through the World Travelers magazine with her morning coffee, she stumbled upon a majestic destination, India. Meredith fell in love with everything the magazine depicted of this magical place, from the delicious ethnic foods to thousand-year-old fortresses, and handmade embroidered clothing with the most intricate designs she had ever seen. She immediately knew that they both needed to get out of their current situation, and a vacation like this would be just the spark they would need to rekindle their marriage while getting over the fact that they cannot bear a child together. As Matthew came downstairs to get ready to leave for work, Meredith
broke their awkward silence by bringing up the idea of going on a month-long excursion to India.

Matthew agitatedly answered by saying, “Why would I pay to go see a third-world country like that, do they even have hotels?”

Meredith refuted by yelling, “We haven’t been ourselves every since we got the news. Everywhere we go our friends and family remind us of this horrible tragedy and we need to get out of this place to overcome this. India a beautiful place with a lot of things to experience within it and a trip like this would also change your world views.”

Meredith’s response made it clear to Matthew that he had upset her. He then agreed to this trip and the couple proceeded to eat together. The following few weeks were spent all in preparation for their majestic excursion. Everyday Meredith would only talk about how amazing this trip would be and how it will change their lives forever.

The day finally arrived and before they knew it they had landed in Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, India. As they walked out of the plane and into the terminal, they were greeted with a new and unfamiliar smell. Meredith characterized it as a beautiful fragrance, while Matthew raised his shirt to his nose to cover up the smell. They were then greeted by a taxi driver who was holding up their names. He greeted them in perfect English which came as a shock to Matthew who thought he would have to use hand signals to get people to understand him the whole trip. As they left the airport, they witnessed so many things that they have never even imagined before. Simple things such as driving were so much more different than in England. For example, no one really paid attention the driving lanes and gave no indicators when they did change lanes. At traffic lines, you could be right next to a brand new
BMW, but at the same time, the underprivileged of the country would be selling different toys and such during red lights. Meredith was absolutely in awe at what she was seeing. She couldn’t believe how vast the differences were, but she embraced these differences with love for the Indian culture. Matthew, on the other hand, was completely repulsed at the trash on the side of roads, and the overall commotion on the streets because of the absurd amount of people that live in New Delhi. However, once the driver pulled up to the gate of their hotel the five star and world-renowned Leela Palace, both Meredith and Matthew were completely taken aback in shock of how magnificent this hotel was. As they pulled up to the entrance, they were welcomed by four people two of which took their bags, one offered them complimentary drinks, and the other guided them to the reception and then their room. Even their room was gorgeous with amazing amenities and a dazzling view of the New Delhi skyline.

The next two days the couple spent touring the city. They visited destinations like the Red Fort, which is arguably Delhi’s most famous attraction. Both Meredith and Matthew were overly impressed at the amazing architecture that India developed all the way back in 1638. Meredith particularly felt attached to the symbolic history of the Red Fort, because it also symbolizes India’s struggle for freedom, which after some struggle they were able to achieve what they want. Another staple of Delhi that they visited was Chandni Chowk, the main street of old Delhi. It is essentially a huge marketplace with narrow pathways shared by cars, cycle rickshaws, hand-pulled carts, pedestrians, and even stray animals all compete for space. The chaos of the marketplace acts as its own charm because as the couple squeezed through the streets they experienced everything from people bartering with business owners to smelling the aroma of fresh Indian food being prepared on the street corners. Meredith went to try the Chandi
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Chowk favorite and New Delhi famous snack called Pani Puri, which is round, crisp, and hollow wafers filled with a mixture of flavored water, tamarind chutney, potatoes, onions, and chickpeas. As she was about to order, Matthew stopped her saying, “Don’t eat that there’s no way it’s safe for you”. Meredith ignored him and ordered it anyway. Meredith asked the street vendor for some utensils and he laughed and responded, “this is finger food, welcome to India”. At first, she was hesitant, but she embraced the idea and picked it up with her hands and with the first bite she tasted the explosion of flavored water and the crunchiness of the wafer and absolutely loved it. When she offered some to Matthew, he immediately refused and said that he didn’t want to take the risk of getting some disease.

After two days in New Delhi, it was time for them to move onto the next destination which would change their lives forever - this place was Rajasthan. Rajasthan is located in the northern part of India and borders Pakistan. It is known for its magnificent palaces and forts that have historically been in the region for hundreds of years. The couple was going to spend the rest of their time in the pink city, otherwise known as Jaipur. This part of the was different from the others because now they were in a tour group with other people and tour guides and some servants who would help with whatever needed. One of these helpers caught the eye of Meredith, he was a young boy no older than twelve, his name was Sher. He wore old clothing and seemed a little too skinny for his age. However, his personality was what made the tour group enjoyable, he would make jokes with all the tourists and he would quickly be able to win their hearts. In Sher’s eyes, the closer he was able to get with the foreigners, the more money he would make. It was quite obvious to Meredith that he was living hand to mouth so naturally, from the start, she was extra kind to Sher. One of the first days in Jaipur, the tour group was going to visit Hawa
Mahal and Amer Fort, two of the most popular destinations in America. The Hawa Mahal is famously known for its advanced architecture where the design mimics that of a honeycomb of a beehive with its 953 small windows called jharokhas, through which the breeze flows in and keeps the palace cool. Meredith and Matthew were stunned at how in the year 1799, the Indians were able to essentially make a design where the palace was essentially air conditioned through the small windows being built in such a calculated way. Because Rajasthan is a desert area, Meredith was feeling a little dizzy with the heat and Sher noticed immediately. He brought her a bottle of water without even being asked too and asked her to sit down. Matthew also stayed back, but Meredith told him to continue on with the tour saying that she would catch up in a minute. Interestingly, Sher stayed back to keep Meredith company and he started to provide her with facts about the Hawa Mahal as if he was the tour guide. She was in awe and asked, “Sher how do you know all this history, did they teach it to you in school?” He replied, “No, I have never joined a school, but have picked up English and all these facts by doing these tours every day.” Meredith was amazed at this young child’s ability to latch onto a complicated language like English without any formal learning. They then caught up with the group and then went back to the hotel. Meredith kept on going on about how amazing Sher was to Matthew. He responded by saying, “Be careful with these people Meredith, I have heard they will appear nice and friendly at first only to then steal from you.” Meredith was absolutely disgusted with Matthew she screamed, “How dare you try to profile a young innocent child like this.” Matthew tried reasoning with her that he was just looking out for her safety, but Meredith was having none of it.
Their next excursion was to the Ahmer Fort, another huge landmark of Jaipur. This was perhaps the most amazing place the whole tour group had seen up until this point. This palace was resting a cliff and seemed as if it were spanning for miles. The main courtyard was so majestically decorated with patterns and designs never seen before. However, both Meredith and Matthew were not enjoying as they still were in that argument regarding Sher. Meredith was still so furious that she was only associating with Sher during that trip. At one point, she had to use the restroom and she gave her purse to Sher to hold onto. He was patiently waiting when he approached by a man who asked to see the bag. Sher refused to give it to him, but this was a full grown man he was up against and he punched Sher right in the head and took the purse and fled the scene. Matthew saw what had happened from a distance and ran to Sher’s side to help him. Meredith came out from the restroom and screamed at the look of Sher being unconscious. They rushed him to the hospital where he was found to have a deep concussion.

Sher woke up the next morning and saw Matthew and Meredith sitting right beside him. He was startled at the site of being in such a nice hospital and immediately asked to leave because he could afford to stay there any longer than he already had. They both assured him that the bill was taken care of by them. The only thing they needed from him was his parent’s contact information to let them know what had happened. Sher quickly became silent and muttered, “Why do you need their information.” Matthew explained that they just wanted them to be informed because if it had been their own child they would want to know. Once again, Sher did not say anything and Meredith started to understand the situation. She softly asked, “Sher do you have someone who takes care of you?” He answered shakenly, “My mother died a year ago and my father then also abandoned me.” Both Matthew and Meredith were in shock from this news.
This boy had been surviving on his own for the better part of the year without anyone’s help.

Matthew and Meredith both looked at each other and Matthew asked Sher to come to live with them where they could provide him with a home, new clothes, and an education. Sher could not believe what he was hearing so much that he burst right into tears. The couple embraced him as if he was their own blood son, and that was the start of their new family.

Story Summary

This story tackles a lot of the global issues that we examined in class. Starting with Matthew who at first can be seen as almost a racist. He represents a lot of the western world’s view on India, which is that it is a poor dirty culture. Much like the movie Slumdog Millionaire which only focused on the negative aspects of an otherwise thriving country. However, in the end when he experiences everything that India has to offer he was able to see past those prejudices. On the other hand, Meredith represents the people who generally care about different cultures and want to learn. This was important to show because not every foreigner has the viewpoint of Matthew. Last but not definitely not least Sher represents the underprivileged person who always gets seen for less than what he has to offer. Just because he was poor did not mean that he had any malicious intent when he was getting close to the tour group, especially with Meredith. Sher also means Tiger in Hindi and a Tiger represents courage which is put on display when Sher fights for Meredith's purse.