

How My First Car Changed Everything

When I turned sixteen, my grandparents gave me my first car. I remember the day vividly. My whole family had come to the Audi dealership to see this big moment. It was somewhat of a surprise as I knew I would be getting a car, but I did not realize what brand or model it would be. In the back of my mind, I was hoping it was for me, but I didn't want to say anything. When I walked into the dealership, there it was: the 2022 Audi Q3. It had a red bow on it, which made the moment even more special. I was ecstatic to have this new sense of freedom and be able to feel this new feeling of adulthood. My grandpa, in his usual joking tone, said, "You better come over to our house a lot now!" I laughed, not realizing how true those words would become. At that moment, it was just about the car, the excitement of being sixteen with the freedom to go wherever I wanted. But looking back, that car meant so much more. It wasn't just a vehicle—it became a way to explore my world and, more importantly, strengthen the relationships that mattered most.

The first time I took the car out alone, I felt a sense of freedom that I had never experienced before. The keys jingled in my hand, the open road ahead—everything felt possible. I just wanted to get in the car and drive wherever in my new car, but I knew my parents wouldn't let me. However, I first went to the temple, 35 minutes away, as it is a Hindu tradition to get the car blessed and prayed for. I had never been a religious person; however, at that moment, I would have done anything my grandparents asked of me. After having done that, I started to grow my relationship with God, and I look back at it every day and wonder how different my life would have been.

But the most unexpected part of getting my first car wasn't the independence or the excitement of exploring new places. It was how the car became a bridge between me and my grandparents. True to my grandpa's word, I drove to their house more and more. What started as occasional visits turned into regular trips to their home. The car made it easy to pop in whenever I wanted, and soon, "you better come over" became a regular part of my routine. We spent more time together than we ever had before. My grandparents started to share stories about their own adventures on the road—stories of family road trips and of long drives to visit relatives in far-off states. I began to see that this gift wasn't just about giving me a car but about passing something down. With every visit, we grew closer, and I realized how much I had taken them for granted before. Those drives became more than just visits—they became moments of connection. The car was no longer just a way to get from one place to another; it was the vehicle that carried me into deeper relationships with the people I loved. As we spent time together, they shared advice, wisdom, and the kind of stories that only grandparents can tell.

Looking back now, I realize that this car was not just about the freedom to explore the state or go on adventures. It was also about building connections—both to the places I discovered and to my family. In many ways, the car symbolizes what automobility means to me. Yes, it represents independence, the ability to chart my own path, but it also stands for connection—bridging the gap between distances, both physical and emotional. Growing up in a car-centered culture like America's, it's easy to overlook how significant these machines are in

shaping our lives. They're more than just tools for getting around; they're tied to our experiences, our relationships, and our sense of identity.

Now, whenever I drive to my grandparents' house, I think back to that day when they handed me the keys. At the time, I had no idea how much this gift would change my life. It's funny how a simple object like a car can carry so much meaning. What started as a teenage milestone turned into something much deeper, something that connected me not just to the roads of my state, but to the people I love.

Unfortunately, my grandfather isn't with me anymore but I never forget that moment and am so grateful that I was able to share all of those experiences and learn so much from him

I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not. Amar Singh