

SALAM

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South Asian Literature and Arts Magazine

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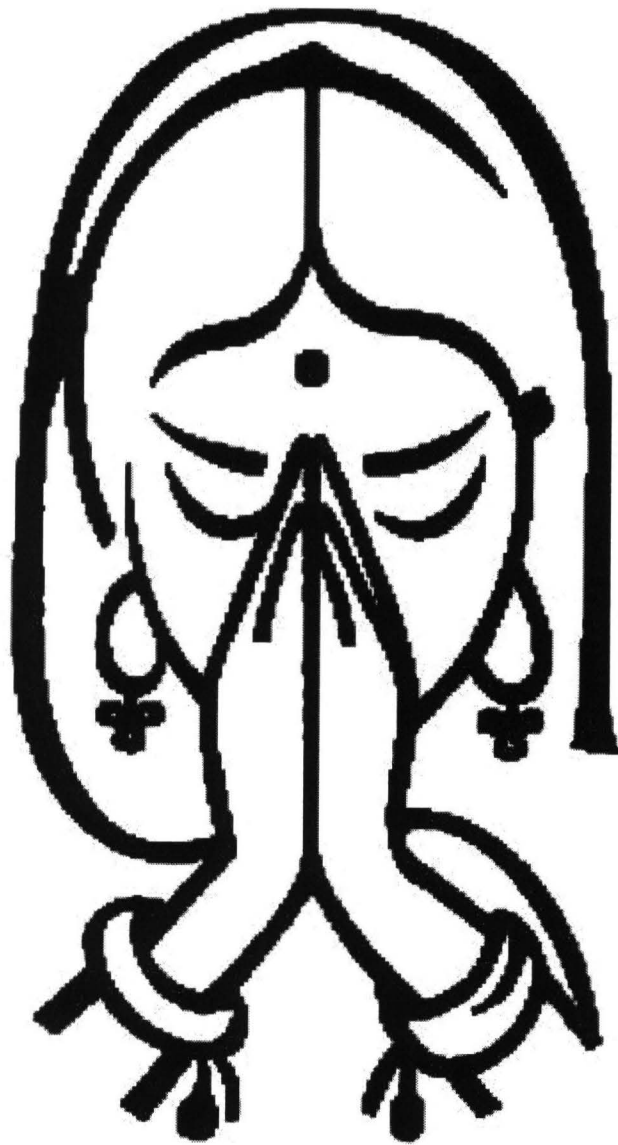
SALAAM (*South Asian Literary And Art Magazine*), a sub-group of TASA (*Tufts Associations of South Asians*), was created in order to celebrate creativity in writing and visual arts among members of the South Asian community.

The magazine has now expanded to a broader audience, attempting to represent the diversity at Tufts University as well as the greater Boston area.

We are proud to be a part of the team that has promoted SALAAM's growth as a literary outlet for the diverse communities within the Boston area.

We hope you will enjoy the prose, poetry, photography and artwork and continue to appreciate and contribute to SALAAM.

A special thanks to the Tufts Association of South Asians for continued encouragement and support, as well as the entire Tufts community for their appreciation of the arts.



*“Without art, the crudeness of reality
would make the world unbearable.”*

George Bernard Shaw

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Red

canoe filled with flowers
floating
on a sea of fire
when you were asked how much you care,
you said you'd pass
the next question may never come,
I know too sad
the boat will drown and I can't swim
a sad way to die, not knowing your past
the river was deep and the air so polluted
I couldn't breathe up,
couldn't breathe under
the gypsy blood rose to rebel and
surrender
you might look down on the flowers that float with my leaking blood
the river so polluted
by the color red
but these are the ones who mix,
the good with the bad
there is no truth in my words
no sight in my eyes
no meaning in my words
but a heart that pumps blood to color the river
the sacrifice, the sacrilege
to color your life
red

Unaza Khan
Tufts '07



Generations
Jessica Brauser
Tufts '06

Triangle

The heat plays
with the image of an airplane,
somersaults it over the cape.

*Kanyakumari*ⁱ – a rock
spreads its mountain hands,

hugs the children drumming their heads
against five hundred year old forts –
their shirts buttoned, their pants vanished.
People. Cows. Tared dirt roads. A scooterist
wiggles his way to an unseen source of the *Ganga*ⁱⁱ.

In huts of mud and plastic, monks dream:
a billion mouths open, breathing water.
Crushed plastic cups
in the cabin mock steel tumblers. This
is a *Diwali*ⁱⁱⁱ night. The seatbelt buckle
shoots light on the ceiling and the engine,

taking you away, echoes the *bhu-chakra*^{iv}.
Miles below, a firework dents
the palm of the gasping land-god
and a child laughs.

A truck driver with a goat on his conscience is a one-line story.

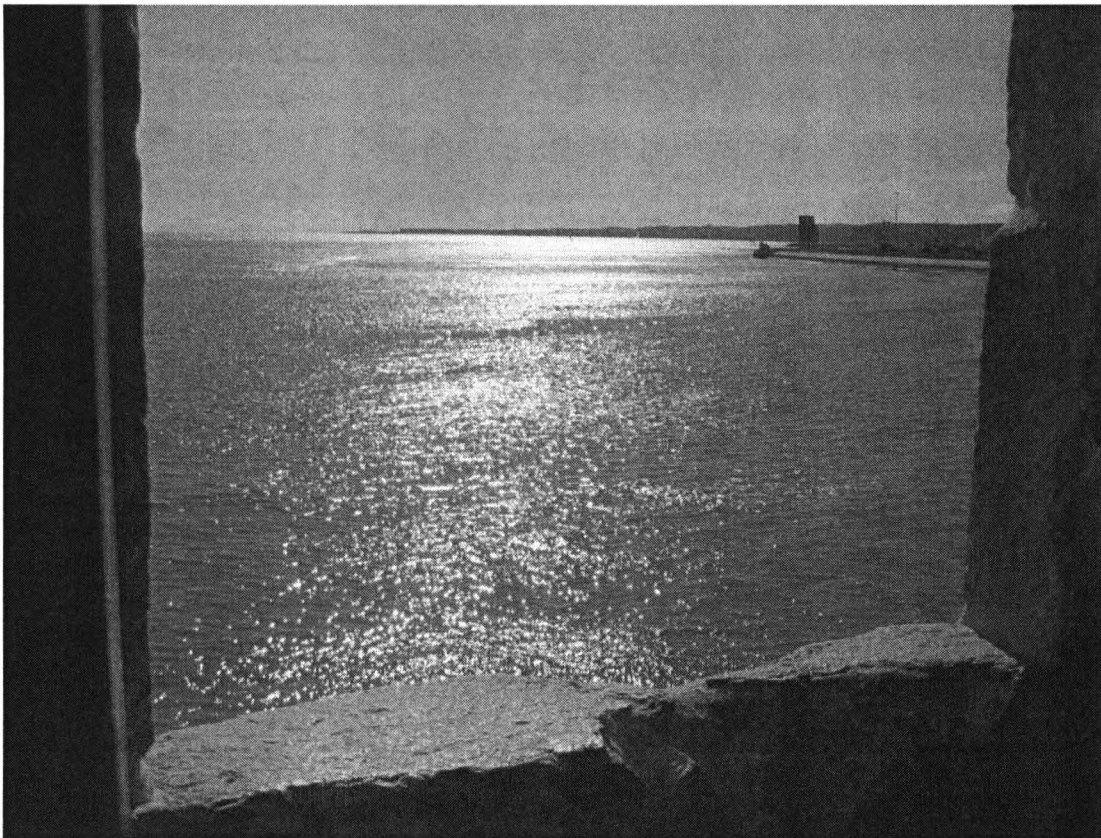
The window has darkened. The clouds under the carpet
cool the country, dissolve the mirage.
The mountains shrink back. The goat finishes
bleeding on a one-lane highway. *Dwarka*^v ...
is here, in the sky; you leave the land to enter,
you leave here to descend and forget. Firework

leaves stick to the window, this is Boston, there is no
need to stop: once you were
a child, a monk, a drunk
truck-driver on a cow, a holy
Ganges water-drop, a *bhu-chakra* in the air.
The words freeze and thirty thirsty tongues
chant to one ear.

Sravana Reddy
Brandeis '06

Notes:

- ⁱ The city at the tip of the Indian peninsula
- ⁱⁱ The original Sanskrit name for the Ganges
- ⁱⁱⁱ A Hindu festival marked by the lighting of lamps and fireworks
- ^{iv} A kind of firework that spins on the ground. It translates literally to 'ground-wheel
- ^v The Sanskrit word for paradise



Open Window
Brandon Hays
Tufts '05

Aalia

Now I am on the train into Boston and I feel confident, excited about beginning my final year at college, and invigorated by the August evening weather, humid and sweet, with the air brimming heavy with moisture and possibility. I wonder if the way I imagine her in my head is the same way that she will be when I see her - her large, blinking eyes, that I remember most, her petite figure that moves with a fragile grace, her high cheekbones, her Persian skin that makes mine look almost dark. She is conventionally beautiful, a characteristic that sharply contrasts with her other traits: her ability to arrange words in sentences in ways that are so refreshing that I have wondered if anyone had said them in that order before, her almost spiritual devotion to Bono, her love for books that nobody else has thought of reading. When I think of her reading, I remember moments from the first time I had gone out with her, moments that I have kept secret from my closest friends in an effort to prevent them from knowing about my ability to sink into a social awkwardness to which I had believed myself to be immune.

I cross onto the Charles River Bridge and look out over Boston. It is gorgeous; the skyline flickering through the oaks that rise up over the water, pulsing with a silver electricity. I turn from the view and begin walking and suddenly she is there, and we admire the view together, without looking at each other, without investigating how inaccurate our recollection of the other person might be, perhaps because we are afraid to, and perhaps because Boston is a beautiful excuse to look out upon instead. We walk then, from the bridge down to the street, and we begin to talk, and I am almost suspicious of her, of our interaction, of how easy everything has suddenly become.

Tonight, in Boston, with her, has been refreshing, because we have not held hands walking through the city, because I have not brought her flowers or worn cologne, because it is easy, the wind is right, and because we are simply drifting with each other.

She walks me back to the commuter rail stop. We are relatively silent, but it is a comfortable quiet. It is not unforgiving, like the first time on the silent shuttle bus back to school, when I had felt a powerful urge to break it by saying something significant to her, instead deciding to comment rather stupidly on the effect of September 11th on Halloween, on how "people were putting out flags rather than ghosts," after which she had told me then, rather incisively, to stop talking. Tonight, I have the opportunity to replace it with the easy quiet that lives between friends, and so we do, walking along Hanover Street, she realizing that I never walk in straight lines but always slightly to the right, and I noticing that she takes rather long strides for her height.

We reach the platform just as the train is departing. A conductor hangs from the door and watches our exchange. I look at her, and she is a different person to me now, a girl who lives and works in Boston, who drinks coffee and who I can walk beside without my heart beat-

ing sideways. I could kiss her but this would run counter to our unconventional night, but not kissing her would feel inconclusive and almost predictable. I watch the conductor, as if he might provide me with a clue. But in my hesitation, she makes a decision: she extends her hand and shakes mine with more strength than was needed. Her eyes are confident and her expression stern, almost as if I have completed a successful interview, and quickly she turns and walks off the platform. I leer at the conductor who laughs and goes inside his train. I climb aboard too, find a seat and stare out of the window. He must see this all the time, I think; a train conductor, taking people apart and bringing them back together again, all while watching from the safe distance of his cabin door. For a moment, I envy him and his distance and power to watch the drama of beginnings and endings. And then, quite suddenly, I do not, because the things worth seeing are those small, brave, tremulous things that happen in between.

Sushrut Jangi
UMASS Medical School

Free

We color our water,
And rank our needs,

We paint our nails,
To hide our scars.

We succeed and bleed,
For a place somewhere,
Unlike the way it seems,
A fancy house,
On suburban same street,
Won't help you sleep.

Paven Aujla
Tufts '05



Jumbo Gone Wild
Ron Issac
Tufts '07

Gorgeous

On a Wooden table with oraq al misriyah (Egyptian leaves)
And the maa (water) that I drink will never squench my thirst
And I sit here trying to conceptualize
the time frame, al waqat (time)
and they ask me why qahira,(Cairo) the city of mars
the strong one, that survives
ma'a (with) my maa (water) that can't even satisfy me,
Can I offer you this drink my love
I know, la aaherif (I don't know), inta (you?)
Laeqin (But) I want to get to know
The mystique of poverty that is never told
Will you join my fate or will I join yours
Qahira
Je t'adore.

Unaza Khan
Tufts '07

Rajasthan

In the land of Kings
and forgotten Palaces,
Halcyon days can go unappreciated:

Confined in a box on wheels with little kids and
Parents,
I yearned for superficial socializing
and partying,
not seven days and six nights of
sightseeing and bonding,
family bonding.

I do enough of that already.
I wanted fun with friends.
Yet marveling at the grandeur of homes after homes of
Grand *rajās*
was what I had to do.
Not to mention
family bonding,
seven says and six night
of it.

But then again
there's something
Surreal and Wonderful
about devouring *cheesetost* and
sipping *chai* with loved ones on a terrace
in Boondi
and anticipating
the appearance of a paw print or even
the Tiger itself
in the tree-shrubbed sanctuary
of Ranthambore.

And who can forget
laughing at the *bandars* as they swung through the trees

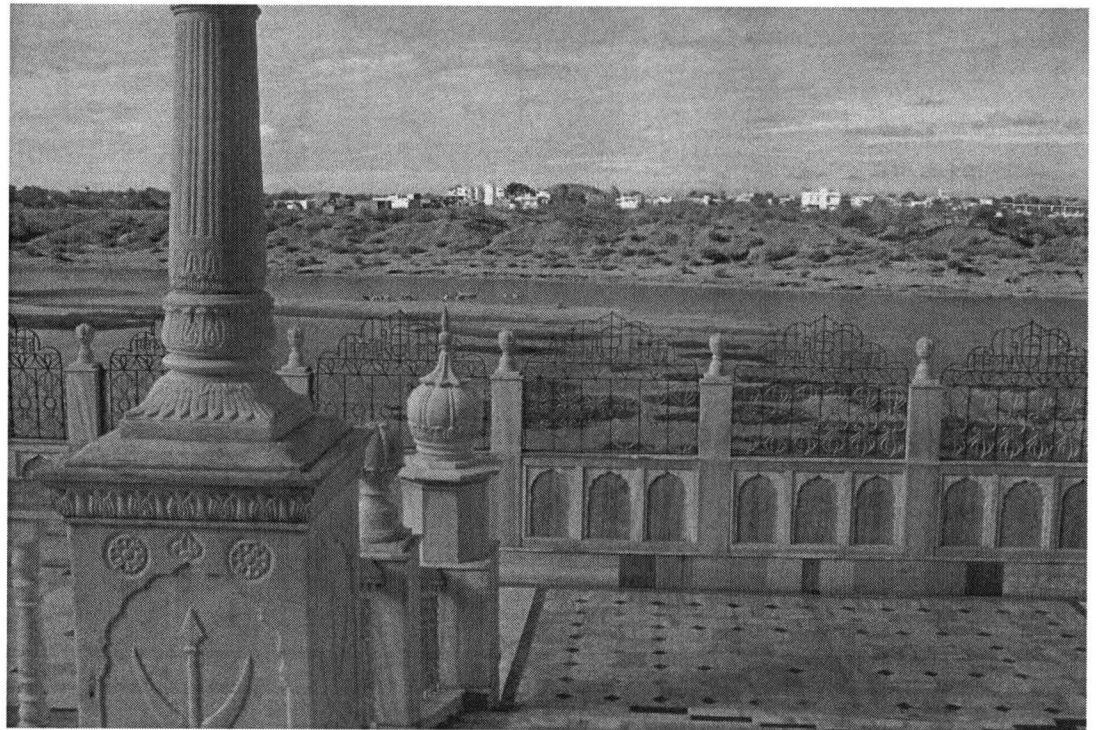
of Chittorgarh,
enjoying tomato and *dhania* juice
by the pool side
in Devigarh,
and skimming the serene waters of the lake
at Udaipur.

Trivial Pursuit under the
Stars,
Tangy *chaat* at the local *mela*,
And cherished moments never to be
Replaced.

Rediscovering forgotten Palaces
in the land of Kings
and not enough family bonding,
only seven days and six nights
of it.

Tara Dhawan
Tufts '07

Godavari River from
Gurdwara Nagina Ghat
Sahib, Maharashtra
Arjan Singh Flora
Brandeis '07





Split Identity
Meena Bolourchi
Tufts '08

Evanescence

I'm standing still, with resolve,
In the pathway of your heart.
Then I find myself surrounded by nothing but
Devotion
Solace
No,
It's not.
Your heart, it's missing from your soul.
It's all just empty.
I'm standing there, lonely and longing for...
An ephemeral vision
Confusion
And I realize now that it was all just an illusion.

Rodela Khan
Tufts '08



Havana, Cuba
Maithili Khatau
Tufts '07



Descending Love

The mild and cloudy night,
Was thick with humidity and fear,
We lay in the field and watched the clouds race by,
They moved fast; the storm was near.

Raindrops fell lightly as he leaned towards me,
Whispered his story and kissed my soul.
His kiss was the rain; his story was the sky.
The rain fell into me like I was the earth,

I blinked and he was gone.

The angel passed his message of heavenly love,
The storm disappeared without his rain.
I was left alone with the mourning dove,
Empty.

I imagined his stormy sky, and I felt his pain,

I blinked and I was gone.

Back again as the earth, dying without any rain.

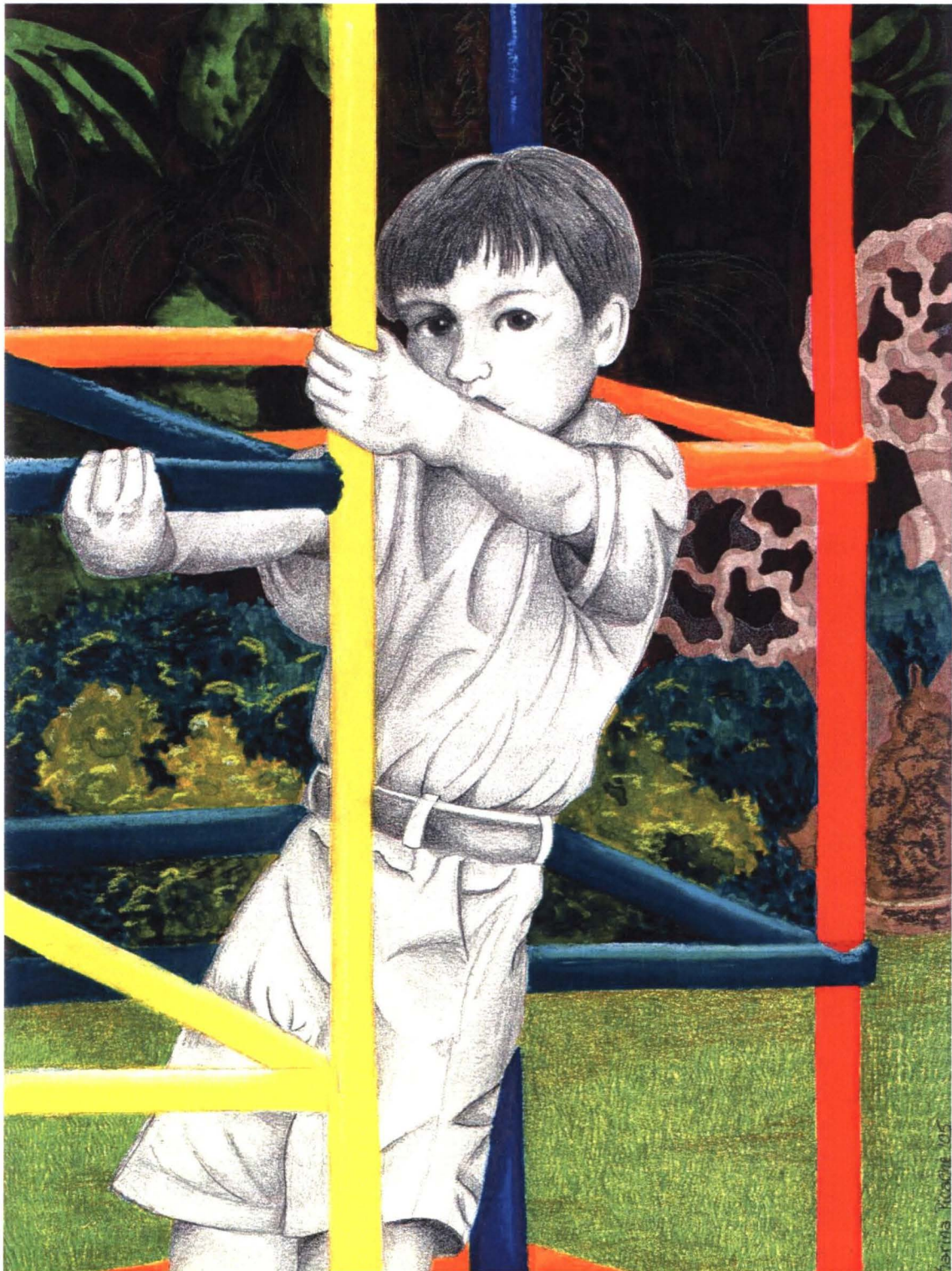
Paven Aujla
Tufts '05



Through Her Eyes



High Hopes
Meena Bolourchi
Tufts '08



Nostalgia
Karina Picache
Tufts '07

The Monkey Feast

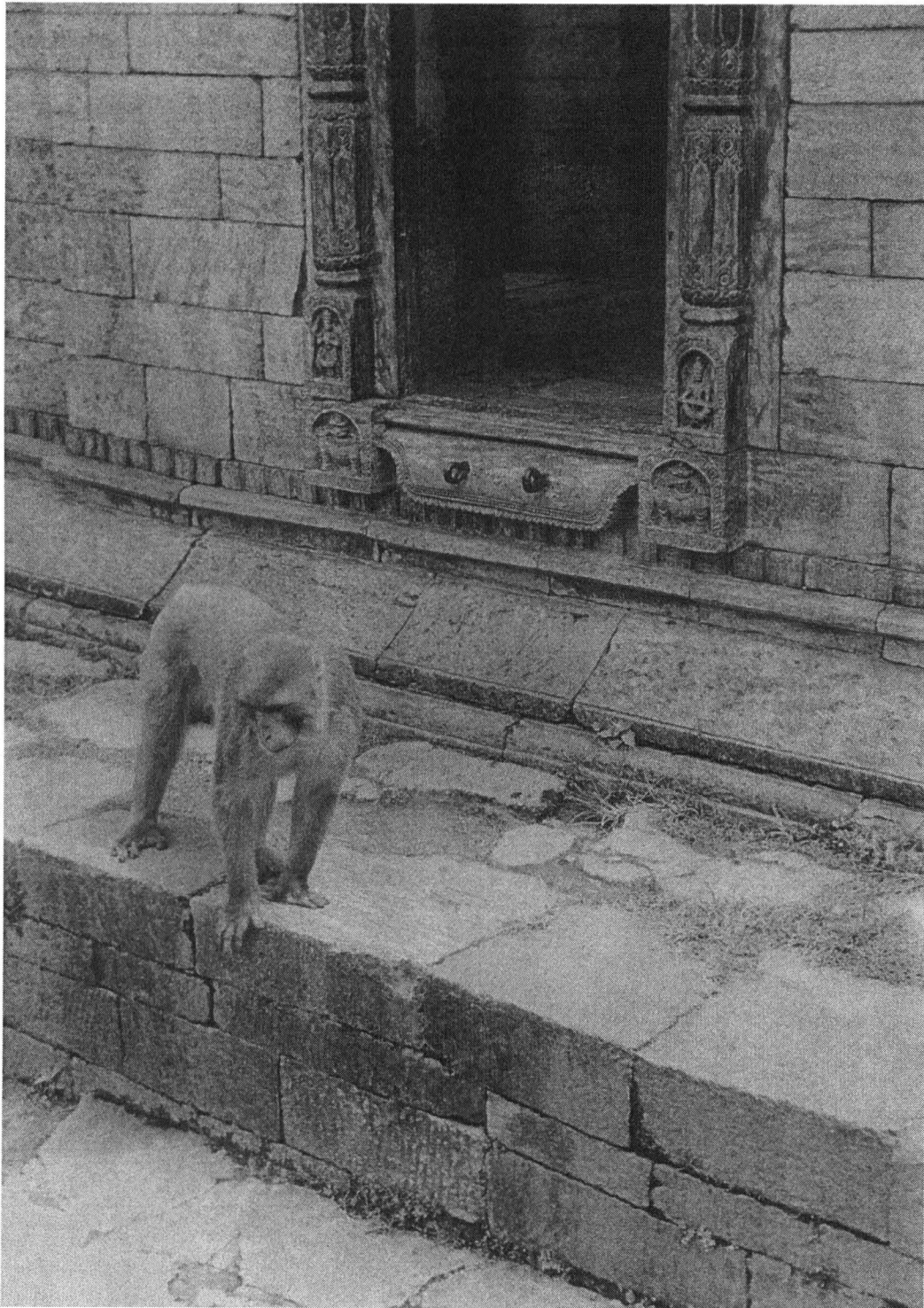
This is holy ground.
The rock statue of a deity
Stands silently in the center of the small courtyard.
Foreigners watch reverently as locals
Slowly circumambulate three times,
Then kneel and deposit at the base of the stone their offerings:
Prayers, oranges, flowers, rupees, rice.
Even the monkeys,
Who make their homes in the mountainside that this temple has interrupted,
Peer quietly from the rooftops,
Observing the daily morning procession.

When the prayer is over,
And the people have returned downhill to their homes
To start cooking rice
Or to their jobs
To earn money
To buy oranges and flowers,
The monkeys descend.

In the temple square,
They hurry about,
Grabbing oranges,
Stealing flowers,
Hoarding rupees,
Gorging on rice.

And when evening comes,
And the people climb back uphill,
The simians reunite,
To hover over the faithful,
Waiting until the offering is finished.

Christopher Quirk
Tufts '05



Monkey, Pashupatinath Temple, Kathmandu
Sriram Ramgopal
Tufts '08

Is it just me?

I'm sure that everyone faces their own daily battles against themselves, and most of the time I consider myself fairly sane, however some days, like today, I'm not so sure. I woke up to the piercing call of my alarm clock, which like every other day is my worst enemy. It doesn't just wake me up. It tortuously invades my dreams, warping my sub-consciously created fantasies to anxiety dreams about not just missing the first hour of my biology exam, but also showing up naked, with the freaking alarm clock itself attached to me somehow. Still beeping.

Sometimes I bring it into bed with me. But not out of affection or tenderness (obviously), out of sheer laziness, so that I don't have to reach my arm up for the eighth time to hit the snooze button, which is a stupid thing to call it, because who snoozes anyway.

I finally open my eyes and consider the consequences of never getting out of my bed. I mean, what's the worst thing that could happen? I create my own guilt right? I could just not go to class, decide not to feel guilty about it, get the notes later; no one would ever have to know. People need to sleep; it's like human instinct or something biological isn't it? The thought lulls me and I turn into my pillow, my sole protector. It's held my tears and my head up. Literally.

But then the voice of my father, in full out Indian accent, pierces through my contentment and into my thoughts. At least it's not the freaking alarm clock. He tells me how hard he worked so I could go to class today. FINE. I'll go. I'm awake anyway.

I roll out of bed, putting my clothes on over my pajamas, my favorite secret. As I'm leaving I remember I was supposed to see my advisor before I go to class. The thought of his office makes me dread walking outside in slushy snow/ice that is too dirty looking to even want to jump up and down in.

I show up at his door a few minutes later and he's not there. But the door's open. So do I go in? Or do I stand outside and wait? I lean into the door and look at the computer screen. Something interesting about neurological experiment. Or wait, is that someone's transcript?

"Hi."

He caught me peering into his office with my butt sticking out staring at his computer screen. Well, it could be worse, right? Maybe not.

"So you need a letter of recommendation?" He asks, with a tone that implies that my science grades aren't good enough. Of course his tone doesn't actually imply that, my academic insecurities are just especially sensitive in the morning, just after I get up, with pajamas under my clothes and sleep in my eyes. We talk about it awkwardly and I notice that he is always wearing a vest like he is about to embark on some kind of nature journey, hiking or boating or something. I wonder what kind of car he drives, but I keep it to myself and thank him politely for having my recommendation ready by the end of today.

I get to my next class and take off my jacket, looking up at my (male) teacher and realizing that we are in fact, wearing the same red sweater. I wonder if he notices when he hands me back my assignment after I say my name 12 times. Oojula. No. Ouwgala. No. Injala. No. Augla. Yes. Close enough. I look at him again when I sit down and it reminds me of that that episode of Full House when DJ wears the same outfit as her teacher the first day of high school and eats lunch in a phone box because she's so embarrassed. Even though there are no phone boxes in high school. Are there even phone boxes in this country? I don't know. I don't know what he's even saying. Talking about some kind of presidential poll. I hope Mike isn't daydreaming as well so I can get his notes later. The class goes by kind of quickly actually and I'm sure it's because my coffee has perked me up and made me feel put together. I feel pretty spiffy sometimes with my legal note pad in the front row, especially when I realize that I don't care and no one else cares what I'm wearing or what our professor is saying about population sampling. It makes me feel better about not paying attention.

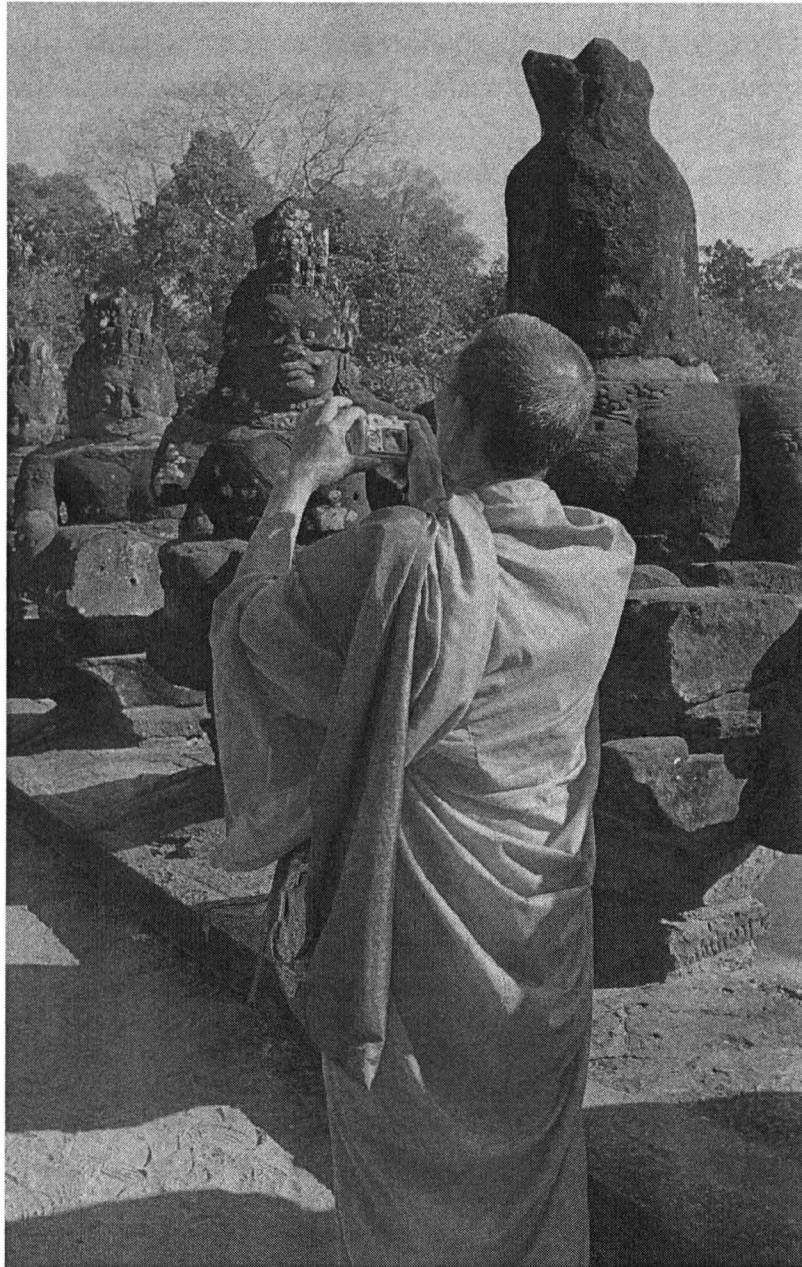
I walk towards my next class and start to feel my insides turn over. Oh no. We all know what it means when you feel a Mac truck running over your uterus. Just in time for biology, how appropriate. That class drags too and we

learn about cutter ants in tropical rain forest and I wonder about all those kids that want to save the rainforest in fourth grade. What ever happens to that? How do people change from wanting to save the rainforest and those ugly sloth things to being business executives and money mongrels? It must be growing up.

Maybe it's a curse. Maybe it's a blessing. Usually it's both. But thankfully, that's not my decision to make.

Happy Tuesday.

Paven Aujla
Tufts '05



Modernity
Jessica Brauser
Tufts '06

Brother

He clads himself in Nike t-shirts, shorts that must fall just below his knees, white socks that have to be an inch above his ankles, and comfortable, no necessarily stylish, basketball shoes. Is he fussy? No, just particular. Raghav is greatly amused by his mother and sister and what they consider fun: shopping, something he detests, especially with them.

He walks with an air of self-confidence that makes him bigheaded around his family members and manifests itself into charming obnoxiousness around classmates. Friends with everyone at school, he is also a real sweet talker with the girls, even though he shies away from discussing his love life.

This affectionate boy comes from a home of people who truly care about him. He makes sure to spend time with his grandfather and reprimands his sister for not doing enough of it. Raghav respects his father greatly and cherishes his mother's attention. He loves his sister, hates her, and sometimes even likes her, but hates to admit it. A couple of years ago, he could not beat his sister at basketball; now standing at 5' 10", thin and tanned, he can defeat her one-handed.

Raghav is very much a homebody: reads the sports page every day, yet does not bother putting the newspaper in order when he is done. Once he sits in front of the television, he is too lazy to get up. Yet he will not get off the basketball court when it's time to go home after school. Raghav loves to argue about trivial things for the sake of arguing and thinks it is the most fun thing to do after annoying his sister. He does not like eating because, according to him, it's a waste of time.

He has short chocolate brown hair that feels like freshly cut grass and a smile that takes up his entire face. His deep brown eyes sparkle when he speaks and disappear when he grins. While secure and outgoing around familiar people, he cannot ask a stranger for the time. This boy has grown up traveling around the world and these experiences are reflected in his character and worldliness. While he is an intelligent young man, he lacks tact at times. Unorganized and irresponsible, but still a leader, Raghav can admit when he is wrong, except at home. But then what can you expect from a 17-year old? Full of surprises, he is.

Tara Dhawan
Tufts '07

Terrestrial, Nirvana

Antelope:

at dark the rain
a shoe sinks into the bog
among sleeping cicadas

do mosquitoes sing?
slug against finger
throngs of cloud

Buddha:

bonfire melts the cards
beg for desert
boldest of fireflies drops to the floor

wheels within wheels
trace five-pronged stars
four human pains

Concave:

call through the tree trunks
can knowing have mass
children scramble inside

an escaped elephant
mahout scratches himself
the pool is drying

Depredate:

dell swallows sunlight
dear jewels dear butterflies come home
doorway empty and leafless

a man smokes

in the watchtower
his radio was trampled

Ensnounce:

escape is a holiday
elixirs scratch bodies
erect and forested souls

hibernal branches grow bare
animals buried under leaves
only adults remain

Fireflies:

full the cold and light
famished their thirst
fixed the radio when they left

wakes up to count pug marks
birds and staff chatter
first tiger sighting

Germane:

go to the waterhole
glean animal pains
grin at the purple moon

the seers spat on this grass
empty campsite spiritual empty
antelope drinks and watches

Sravana Reddy
Brandeis '06

Golden Love

I awoke that morning to the smell of potato *paranthas* being browned on the stove. My stomach began to grumble as I slowly slipped out from my warm bed and my feet touched the icy tile floor. I shivered as I made my way to the dresser and shrugged on my Red Sox sweatshirt and a pair of wool socks. I had grown up with the chill of winters in Massachusetts, but had never quite become accustomed to how much colder wintertime felt in Delhi. It was around 53 degrees Fahrenheit outside, but the lack of central heating in the house made it feel like it was 53 degrees Fahrenheit inside as well. I brushed my teeth, and snuck out of the bedroom so as not to wake my husband, Amir who was still snoring quietly on the bed.

"Saraswati, please *das minute mein zara chai bannao, saab kilyie.*" In ten minutes please bring some tea for mister, I said as I stepped into the kitchen and helped myself to the corner of a *parantha* from the pile Saraswati had just made. I took the cup of tea that was sitting beside the stove, waiting for me as it did every morning at 9:30, and stepped out onto the veranda. The warmth of the tea counteracted the cool air outside, and I silently thanked my parents for purchasing this apartment. While most of my friends' parents had bought retirement homes in Florida, mine had opted for a flat in Delhi. We had owned this apartment for approximately ten years now, and it had been used fairly consistently in the last decade. My uncle lived in the same apartment complex and made all the appropriate arrangements for me and Amir to have Saraswati help in our apartment for the two week vacation we were able to coordinate. I had just graduated from law school and was taking some time off before I had to start work with my new firm. Amir was working with McKinsey, so he had spent the past week in the Bombay office, before arriving in Delhi to be with me the night before.

I thought about my last trip to India, six years before. It was the last time I had seen my grandmother before she passed away. "Good morning," Amir had groggily made his way to the veranda. He pulled up a folding chair next to me, kissed my forehead and began sipping his tea. "You never met my *dadi*," I began, talking more into the air than to Amir. He had heard about her on countless occasions, she was the glue that had bound my family together for as long as I could remember. When I was born, *Dadi* left India to help my parents raise me and my younger brother since they both worked long hours at the hospital. Amir sighed.

"Maya," he said slowly, noticing the tears that were welling up in my eyes.

"The last time I saw her was in this apartment, six years ago," I continued. "My *dadi* gave me a necklace the last time I was here. It was twenty two carat gold, that's the purest form of gold you can buy, and had a beautiful pendant in the middle of the thick chain, it was my twenty first birthday gift." My voice cracked, and the familiar feeling of guilt and nausea welled up in the pit of my stomach.

"Where is the necklace now?" Amir asked, rubbing my back gently.

"Gone," I muttered when I regained control of my voice. I was staring into my teacup, recounting every detail of the three days before I left India, before I left my *dadi*. On the morning of my twenty

first birthday, I remember waking up and joining my family who had already been awake for hours on the kitchen table. I was greeted with hugs and kisses, and my mother announcing that she was taking me to Haas Kaas Village for some shopping, followed by lunch at my favorite *dosa* place. *Dadi* sat down to my left and slipped a Khanna Jewelers bag under my hand. A smile spread across her face as she waited patiently for me to open the red strings of the velvety bag. I pulled on the bunches at the top of the bag, and reached inside to reveal the elegant piece of gold, my grandmothers eyes sparkled as she saw the joy on my face. I gave her the tightest squeeze I could manage around her tiny frame, and she merely said, "you can exchange it if you don't like it," knowing very well that anything she had ever given me would have automatic emotional attachment with no hope of being exchanged or returned.

"Keep it away properly now, otherwise you will lose it."

"So what happened to the necklace then?" Amir asked.

"I left to go shopping with my mom, and put the necklace in the bedside table drawer, I forgot about it for the next day. It wasn't until two nights before we were leaving for Boston, that I thought to take out the necklace and give it to my mom for safe keeping. I took out the necklace at night, and put it on top of the table so that I wouldn't forget to put it away. The next day, I ate breakfast, and then went out to see more relatives. It wasn't until the evening, when we came back that I even noticed the necklace was missing.

"I must have looked in every possible corner of the house for that necklace. I didn't want to tell anyone how careless I had been with gold, so I began very casually prying information out of my family. I went to my mom and asked her if I had given the necklace to her to pack away yet. She didn't have it, nor did my father, my brother, or my grandparents. I thought to ask Urmila, the domestic help that was taking time off from my aunt and uncle's house to work for us, but I knew that asking her would seem like a direct insult, like an accusation that just because she was the maid, she was also a thief.

I left India without the necklace, assuming that it would turn up at some point, perhaps I had already packed it in my bags and forgotten about it, yes, I was convinced that is what I did." Saraswati called us in for breakfast.

"So you never found it in your bags then huh? Maybe the sweepress stole it." Amir said calmly, as we made our way to the dining room. "It's not your fault everyone in this country is corrupt."

"When we came home from that trip, twenty four hours after I had said goodbye to *Dadi*, we got a phone call saying that she suffered from a massive stroke and had passed away. I don't know who could have possibly taken it! I knew everyone in the house! The sweepress came there twice a day, but Urmila always watched her carefully to make sure that nothing was removed from its original place. All I know is that this past week I have relived what occurred six years ago. I have gone crazy searching every corner of this apartment hoping that it would just turn up somewhere that no one thought to look before. I do this every morning, I think I need to realize that my grandmother is gone, the necklace is gone, and that sooner or later this thought that has haunted me is going to have

to go for my own peace of mind.” And with that, I promised myself that I would stop obsessing about the end of *Dadi’s* life, and how I had carelessly lost something that her small hands had touched before she passed away.

I stepped out from the tiny Maruti my cousin Aparna had driven to South Extension two hours later, determined to do some serious damage to my credit card. The shopping arcade was a series of small sari and lengha shops, with some jewelry stores mixed in between. The area was so crowded, it was nearly impossible to walk around the corners without bumping elbows with at least three other people. The air was saturated with the smell of car pollution and new clothes, a fragrance that I had grown to love. We walked into “Ram’s Saris”, and sat down in front of one of the vendors who upon our arrival pulled out six different designs to display for us. As we started discussing with the vendor the styles of material we were looking for, a young girl in a soft pink, cotton silwar kamese, with the sari shops emblem sewed on to the blue vest she wore on top, came to offer us a cup of tea. Knowing that we would be spending at least another hour in this store, picking saris and material that could be made into saris for each one of my friends back home, Aparna and I graciously accepted the young girl’s offer. We had selected two prints by the time she got back with two piping hot, cardamom scented cups. I reached for the glass closest to me, and noticed how familiar this girl looked. I had come to this store before, but it seemed very unlikely that I would recognize this girl from six years ago.

“*Aap ka naam kya hai?*” What is your name, I asked gently.

“Sumeeta,” she said shyly looking down.

“Sumeeta, you have very beautiful eyes,” I said in my Americanized Hindi.

“Thank you” she replied, this time picking up her head just enough for me to notice a glimmer against her neck. Maybe this was the little girl who used to work in my great aunts house. *Masi* had always been very good to her domestics, often sending them to work part time in sari shops like this so they could get some experience away from the household life, and perhaps become vendors some day.

“Are you from Jeet Singh’s house?” I inquired, cocking my head to the side. She shook her head no, but the girl on the other side of the store was.

“My mother used to work for her niece and nephew in Defense Colony though,” she replied. I froze. The face I had so often accepted food from in every previous trip to India had been standing in front of me for the past fifteen minutes.

“You are Urmila’s daughter?” I asked in disbelief. The last I heard, Urmila had left for vacation to go back to her village for a week, and not returned to my aunt and uncle’s house. My family had tried to contact her, but she would not reply to any messages we sent to her village. It had been two months before we hired Saraswati to take her place, realizing that Urmila probably missed her family too much to stay with us, but did not want to insult our family by telling us that she was unhappy. Sumeeta nodded her head slowly.

“How is your mother? We haven’t seen her in years,” I responded.

“Mummy passed away five years ago,” she said quietly. “One day we all woke up in the morning, and she was gone. We don’t know what happened, she was so happy to be with her family again.” My heart sank. There was no way my own family could have known about this, but I wish there was something we could have done. The sari vendor was growing impatient with our conversation, and coughed loudly to regain my attention.

“I am very sorry to hear that,” I said slowly. The little girl before me began tearing slightly, as she began gingerly fingering the chain around her neck. As I stared at the girl before me, my own eyes welled with tears. There, across the young girl’s collar bones was a very familiar looking twenty two carat gold pendant; the last physical representation of her own mother’s love.

Supna Oberoi
Tufts ‘05

Intoxicated

Her voice dripped from wine bottles
and flowed in sparkling spurts
from the fountain, gorgeously choppy
like so many sonatas played that night.

By accident and intention
men had drunk themselves of her,
as she poured herself into everybody’s glass:
a merlot, crimson in the crystal,
tan bits of cork bobbing at the surface.

Danielle Stein
Tufts ‘08

The Red Clock

At 2:55 pm on Sunday my husband came home with a red clock. It was a circle clock with red hands and a red center. He told me that it reminded him of me. I laughed loudly and my hair bounced to my laughter on my shoulders. I hung the clock above the red velvet chair in the living room. It looked calm, sitting proud and contented. At 3:10 am, I was hungry. I wanted some cinnamon drops that I keep in a little silver tin next to the phone. I like how they tingle in my mouth. I was warm in my fuzzy bathrobe and matching slippers as I climbed downstairs humming a song ACDC used to sing. As I shuffled past the living room, I decided to check on my new red clock. I flicked on the overhead light in the living room and glanced at the red clock above the red velvet chair. The clock read 11:25. I stared at the clock. I stared at it for a very long time. It kept yelling 11:25. I grabbed the clock off the wall. I shook it, waved it over my head like a piece of string, I banged the clock against my knee and began to dance with it, pushing it against my heart as I jumped to the ACDC music in my head. In a burst of exhaustion, I dropped the clock onto the wood floor. It still read 11:25. My husband flew down the stairs in a burst of blue plaid pajamas, begging me to be quiet. He starred at the broken red clock lying helpless on the floor. "Oh well. Things break," is all he mumbled as he turned back around on the stairs while scratching his neck. I shivered, suddenly cold, as I watched the clock. I began to imagine myself breaking, lying on the floor. And my husband walking into the room, simply mumbling, "oh well, things break," as he scratches his neck. After all, I am a red clock. With red arms that read a wrong time.

Molly L. Ritvo
Tufts '05

Untitled

Listen to me!

You cannot, Simply cannot!

think about his smile

His high induced shiny eyes

Ruffled up hair

Funny comments he ties

to serious graveness of life

You cannot, please do not

Haven't you already cried?

You know it's wrong

Nothing matters, just let it go

Listen to me!

You will give up!

Stop right now!

No one can you like?

Let go of your mess

Yes! I know how tempting is his nest

Leave your mind, please...

Why do you hate yourself?

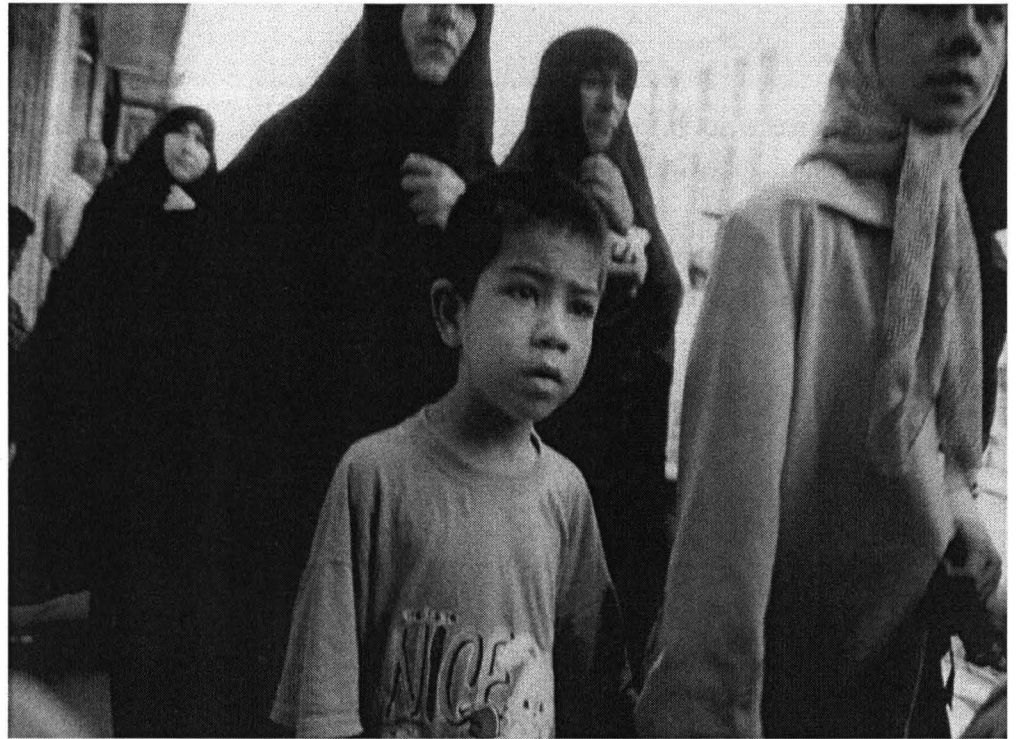
I know you won't listen because

You have already claimed your death your long awaited
lover.

Unaza Khan

Tufts '07

Looking Forward
Meena Bolourchi
Tufts '08



On Encountering a Mutant Cow After Watching a Body Burn

Photos are not allowed at the funeral pyres.
Some believe they interrupt the passage of the dead.
Others think them just rude.
So instead I stare at the families
weeping for their loved ones,
piling together dead sticks,
placing heavy corpses on top,
lighting fires underneath,
observing flames engulfing flesh.
We all stand together
and watch for hours
as entire bodies melt away.

When the ashes are swept into the river,
I plod back down the road I had come,
now blocked by a deformed cow.

A leg stems from its left flank,
and extends over to its other side.
A knee hovers above the backbone
and a hoof dangles limply
beside its right ear.

It was a refreshing sight,
a good chance to take photos.
Tourists returning to their hostels
stop to stare at the steer.
Many laugh and point;
some reach out their hands
to pat its head,
touched with red *tikka*
and shrouded with a holy, orange raiment,
or to stroke its misplaced leg.

I linger a bit longer,
amazed by the heifer, which continues
to chew its cud
despite a vision obstructed
by a game, shriveled limb.
So this is why it is sacred, I think.

Christopher Quirk
Tufts '05



Self-portrait
Sara Safraz
Tufts '06

