

SALAAM

Spring 2007 Vol. 8 No. 1

An abstract painting with a vibrant, warm color palette dominated by reds, oranges, and yellows, interspersed with cooler tones of blue and green. The brushstrokes are expressive and textured. In the lower portion of the image, there are dark silhouettes of human figures, possibly dancing or in motion, set against the glowing background. The overall mood is dynamic and celebratory.

SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURE AND ARTS MAGAZINE
A Tufts University Student Publication

SALAAM 2007

Editors-in-Chief:

Tara Dhawan
Aniruddha S. Nene

Contributors:

Christine Ash
Lolly Berger
Meena Bolourchi
Jennifer Earls
Anabel Goa
Karan Jain
Biodun Kajopaiye
Rodela Khan
Unaza Khan
Michael Luu
David Mou
Anjali Nirmalan
Ronak Parikh
Karina Picache
Ameer Shah
Veda Shastri
Rakhi Trust

The South Asian Literature and Arts Magazine (SALAAM) is a sub-group of The Tufts Association of South Asians (TASA). The magazine was created to celebrate creativity in writing and visual arts among members of the South Asian student community. The magazine showcases talents of a people with connections to a subcontinent that is immensely rich in culture.

The first issue of SALAAM was distributed on the Tufts University campus in the spring of 2000, and featured the works of a diverse group of students. Though created with the hope of encouraging students of the South Asian community, we welcome and appreciate submissions from all students in the Boston area.

We would like to thank the members of the SALAAM staff and the Tufts Association of South Asians for their continued support.

We hope you enjoy the spring 2007 issue of SALAAM!



What is Art? It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the Real.

-Rabindranath Tagore

Table of Contents

Untitled- Ameer Shah	Front Cover
Jetlag- Unaza Khan	6
Untitled- Anabel Goa	7
Play- Rakhi Trust	8
Garbhangra- Anjali Nirmalan	8
Liberated- Rodela Khan	9
Notre Dame- Meena Bolourchi	9
A Fat Frog- Michael Luu	10
The Play of Consciousness- Rakhi Trust	11
Untitled- David Mou	11
Clouds in the Valley- Ronak Parikh	12
Salt Fields- Ameer Shah	12
Old Eyes...Novel Hands- Anabel Goa	13
Don't Think- Unaza Khan	14
Crossing the Brahmaputra- Ronak Parikh	15
Catch of the Day- Christine Ash	15
The Taxi Stand- David Mou	17
The Curious Eye- Meena Bolourchi	16
Mutation- Jennifer Earls	17
Holi Hai! Veda Shastri	18
My Walk- Ameer Shah	19
Shoe Merchant in Tehran Bazaar- Meena Bolourchi	20
Broken- Anonymous	21

Market- David Mou	21
Miraj-Anonymous	22, 23
Brothers- Karan Jain	24
A Whisper- Rakhi Trust	24
Packed Bags- Karina Picache	25
Walk to Annecy- Aniruddha S. Nene	26
Sharp- Lolly Berger	26
Enough- Anonymous	27
Children of Fiji- Meena Bolourchi	28
Shower- Karan Jain	29
Insomnia- Tara Dhawan	29
A Fish- Michael Luu	30
Smoke- Karina Picache	31
Jazz and Lies- Anonymous	31
The Biblical Body- Biodun Kajopaiye	32
Behind the Veil- Meena Bolourchi	33
your smile- Anonymous	33
The end, for a new beginning- Rakhi Trust	34
Indian Sunset- David Mou	35
Nepali Rumal- Anjali Nirmalan	Back Cover

Jetlag

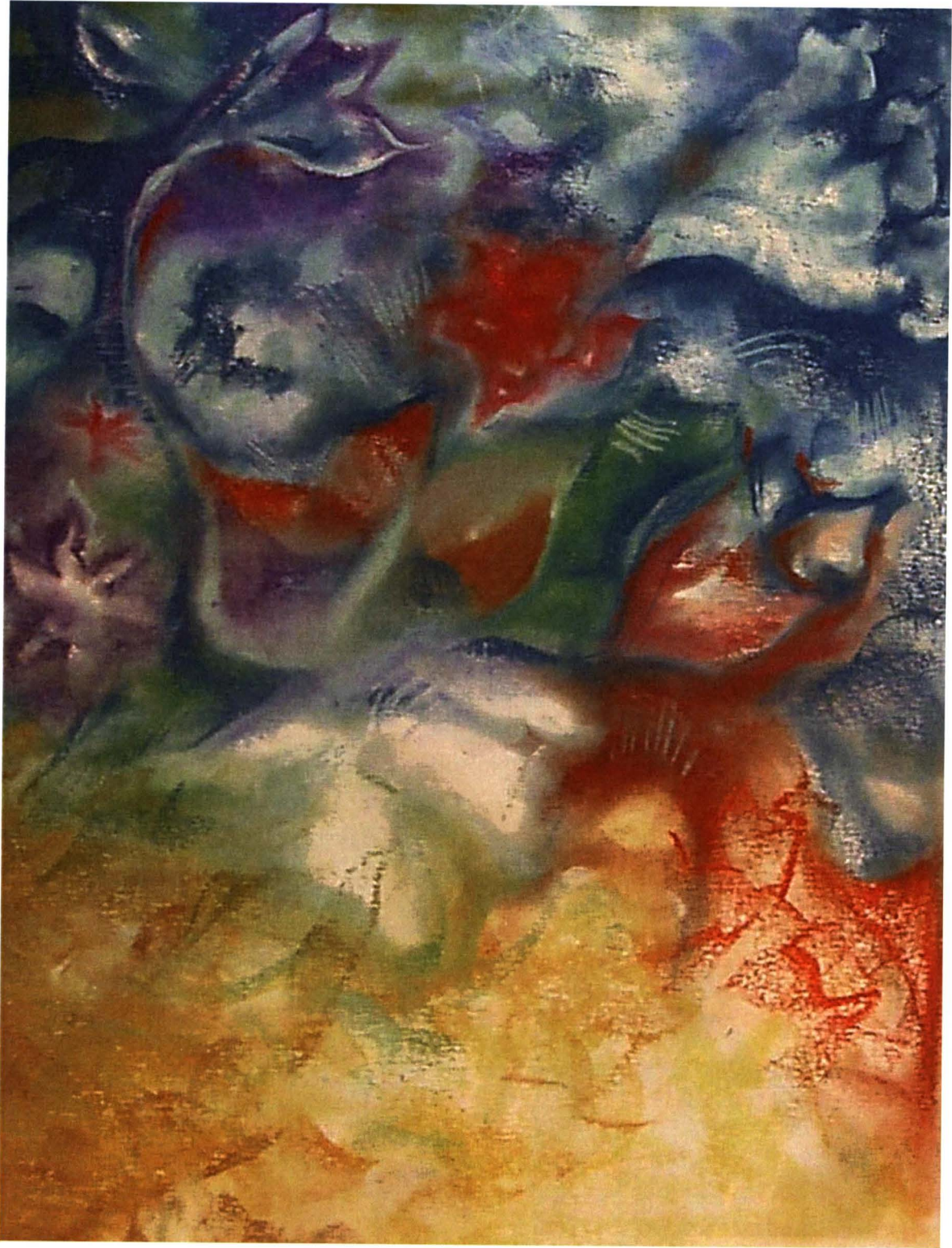
An open hand with lines that don't make sense
lines that don't mean anything
Some way to eliminate what you've done
but don't necessarily come undone
To wait in search for sunset and lives and love
in vain for years and in the years to come
My mind it only wants to learn and you can't stop
a sponge from soaking water from a fountain
and you can't ignore a sponge and leave it to dry in the sun

My face is tan without the sun and my eyes dark like mud
crackling into pieces and evaporating tear drops
I don't expect anyone to know my face or help me up
I am searching for God- speech and some ties
push me and i'll only rebel, talk to me perhaps i'll tell
There are people like me out there, there must be
I am not alone, and I take solace in the fact that even if I was
I am okay with it,
until you remind me that my mind and me is not sufficient
and family, friends and books aren't sufficient
and fear of commitments only leads to solitude
and life itself to me is not sufficient

If I was to die today, I'd like to say:
"i kept on looking for the truth and didn't comply into a carbon-copy
life without at least trying"
I won't settle because there is so much out there
perhaps there are others searching for truths
Too bad, I ask for an ear and I get stacks of condescending advice
Too bad, I ask for independence and I get shackles in life
Too bad, I ask for sincerity and I get conditional ties
Too bad, I ask for connection and I get fears and lies
Too bad, I ask for myself to be and I just go hide.

Not so bad, waking up at 4:30 a.m. and reflect and realize your own
power and powerlessness at the same time.

Unaza Khan
Tufts '07



Anabel Goa
Tufts '08

Play

The moon is hanging low tonight,
it's like a golden pendant,
hanging low in that dark plunging neckline of the night.
Grand and yet serene, knocking at my window;
Come, let's go play games with the moon,
for the Creator seems to be in a playful mood,
and I,
His subject of keen interest tonight!

Rakhi Trust Tufts '07



Garbhanga
Anjali Nirmalan
Tufts '09

Liberated

I imagine a metal so soft that the graceful touch of my hands could shape it.

Feet prickled by sharp grass that smells of sweet summer rain- and feels like joy

I'm running through as fast as I can.

Feet tickled by the gentle points of each blade- and feels like laughter

I'm running and running, until I can't stop.

Feeling my hair bounce around- weaved into strings of wind

It is nature's loom, joining all together and creating harmony.

Just like the way the ocean unites with tiny grains of sand,

Crashing against them like a timed heartbeat.

I hear the rhythm of the music vibrating through my veins constantly

I'm dancing away to where I should be.

Drunken with uncontrollable happiness

I'm dancing and dancing, until I can't stop.

If only I could drink the blue waters from the fountain of youth- this could all last forever.

I'm living as much as I can.

I want to capture the ecstasy of life.

I'm living until I'm liberated, and I won't stop.

**Rodela Khan
Tufts '08**



**Notre Dame
Meena Bolourchi
Tufts '08**



A Fat Frog
Michael Luu
Tufts '07

The Play of Consciousness...

As waves of consciousness hit the shore, they slapped my back...
Some gently caressing me, others nudging me to turn and look them in the face...
as the tide went in and the powerful rays of Surya dimmed, gently, I moved.
Meditative, pensive and careful – I turned to face the all-encompassing ocean of
consciousness.
Suddenly I was flooded with thoughts, emotions.
Some, that I identified with and others that perhaps had sailed away never to return,
until today.
They hit me like one wave after the other.
I sat there. Witnessing.
Bearing my bare self to the madness of Creation.
“Who are You?” I said. “What do You want from me?” “Are You challenging me?”
“Do You believe You can loosen my anchor by the ripples You are causing?”
At times I surrendered to the power. At others, You gave me strength to blind them
with Your brilliance.
As the waves of consciousness surfaced time and again, the play of consciousness
continued Her game.

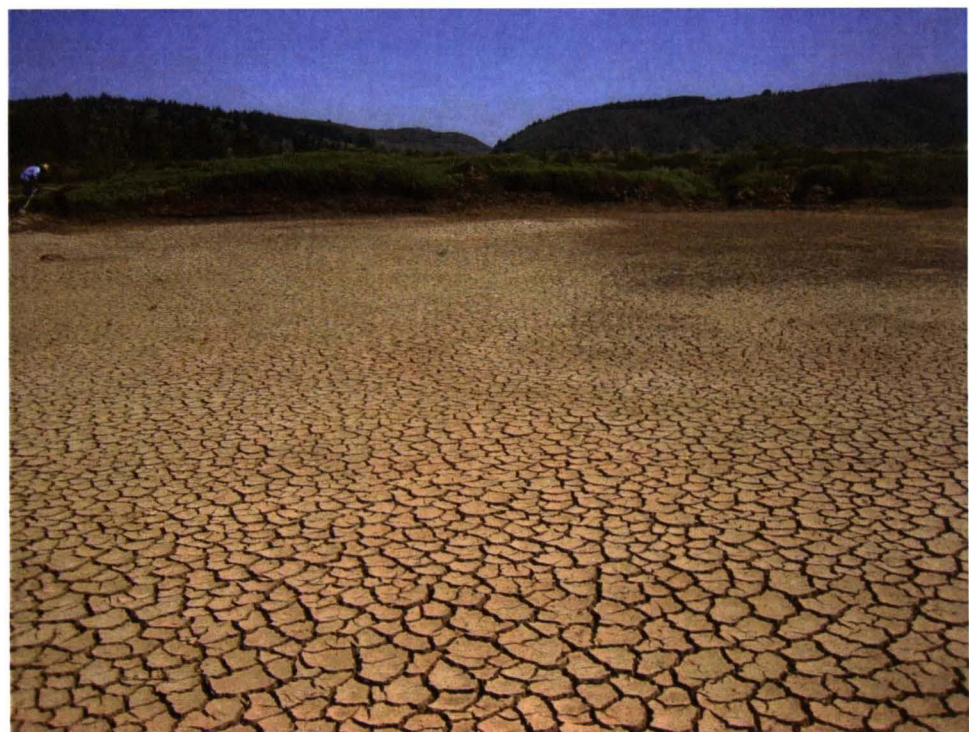
Rakhi Trust
Tufts '07



David Mou
Tufts '10



Clouds in the Valley
Ronak Parikh
Tufts '07



Salt Fields
Ameer Shah
Tufts '07



Old Eyes... Novel Hands
Anabel Goa
Tufts '08

Don't Think

It disgusts me to think that you think I am a disease carrying animal

You won't want your children touching my hands but yet I can work to clean your dishes

Because I am okay for slave labor, eating your half finished food,

Cleaning your dirty toilets, ironing your work clothes

It is not okay for me though to ask for a raise, to ask for an education, to ask period.

Have you even ever tried to come and sit in my home?

It's made of mud but I can swear on my god it's got more peace than yours
Yes, I stamp cow dropping on its outside, to dry and use it for fire
and in the morning I go sit out
watch the sun go up,
Milk the cows
and then bring the fresh milk around

Your neighborhood

It disgusts me to think that your children are going to an excellent school at the time, when my eight year old wakes up he goes around the block with a beginner's alphabet book

Only to play cricket

The only problem you have is that I am starting to think, starting to be disgusted

While you would rather have me what you want me to be ignorant and invisible

The only dilemma I have now is to stop thinking because there is no end

Because you are unjust without realizing and realizing your end

And my life

It will not change

No, not for me, no not for my kids and no not for their futures

The only lesson I can give them is don't think: it's a pain

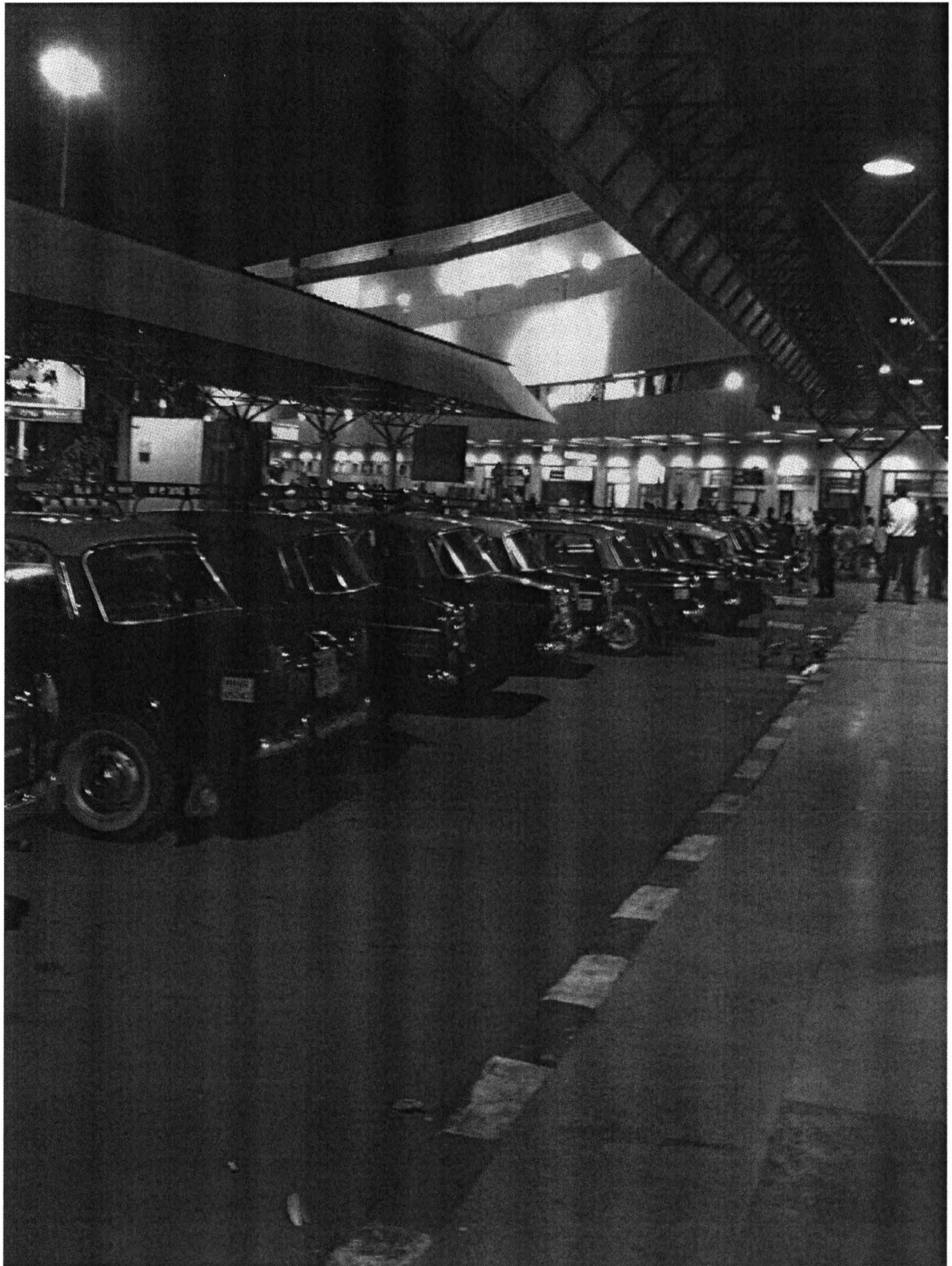
**Unaza Khan
Tufts '07**



Crossing the Brahmaputra
Ronak Parikh
Tufts '07



Catch of the Day
Christine Ash
Tufts '06



**The Taxi Stand
David Mou
Tufts '10**

The Curious Eye
Meena Bolourchi
Tufts '08



Mutation

Tumors arrest my body.

X-rays alert my mind
too late.

I'm a prisoner
of my own cells.

Covered in a white sheet
I'm already fixed in the position of eternal rest.
The ceiling tiles roll past my eyes as I'm glided
through the hallway.

Propelled towards the room at the end of to
light, stark
from which my nakedness beneath the sheet
will find no relief

I'm shaved, hairless
prematurely stunted by a malignant growth on the illusion of invincibility

My fate is in the hands of the shadows obstructing the overhead light
I struggle to stay alert
The shadows, they lean over

Fear
The last drop drains from the IV
I lose consciousness.

Jennifer Earls
Tufts '08



Holi Hai!
Veda Shastri
Tufts '09

My Walk

Sandals flopped against the bare pavement, with

Panic in my step resonating in the midnight wind.

A diagonal path led me away from home.

Street lamps a distant memory and driveway lights the only illumination of the street.

The occasional car crept by, encompassing the foreign surroundings.

Two and a half hours gone with my footsteps, the keepers of time.

No map and money spent.

The Andes peeked, through the clouds, on a rainbow canvas.

Left. Left. Right. Left. Right?

Who was waiting around this corner?

The gunshots of snapping twigs and the resonating bells of jingling keys were

Permanent echoes, an unwanted attraction.

Extending trees lurked on corners, ready to attack any lost and wandering target.

I looked forward only, focused on my destination, looking but not planning.

Three hours. Six miles. Pause. Regroup.

A sign poked through the branches; the rusted black signature read *Simon Bolivar*.

I turned onto his street.

Five hours. Twelve miles. My sign read *Lonely Star*. The iron gate anticipated.

My surreal experience, guided by an entity not myself,

Was a clear destination with no direction.

I thought hard, about everything. But the path home.

Blind turns resembled random wandering; was there a plan?

It didn't matter. We always reach the street, our belonging, conscious or not.

The gate will wait unlocked, not judging our route. Short. Long. Diagonal. Direct.

Learn more in the journey.

Ameer Shah
Tufts '07



Shoe Merchant in Tehran Bazaar
Meena Bolourchi
Tufts '08

Broken

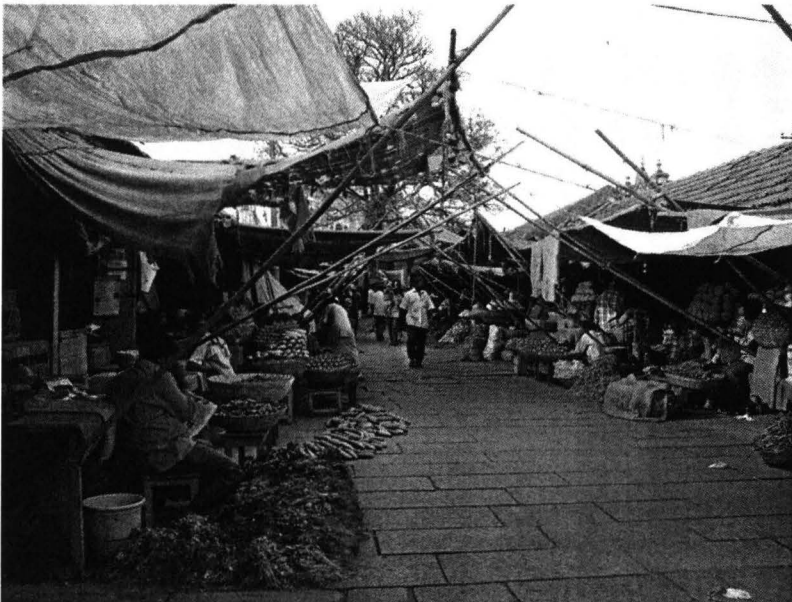
"Why can't she come get me?" the little girl cried
Her face in the pillow, eyes squeezed tight
adulthood coming closer
Broken, she is.
Her hands miss your motherly touch
the way waves miss shores.
Hands curled in a ball, hiding bruises unseen
Her harlem heart torn by what she can't have.

As she sits on the porch steps, watching her walk away
The salt from her tears won't let the wicked wound heal
"When's Momma comin, I wanna go back" the little girl weeped
But back to what, babygirl?
Adulthood comes closer
Broken, she will be.

She lifts her puffy face, slowly but with strength
Her hands sweep the tears from her cheeks
Broken? Or a new beginning?

"Why can't she just love me?" her voice trembles
She searches for answers alone-
Wishing for the love of someone
never to return.

Anonymous



Market
David Mou
Tufts '10

Miraj

Neither day nor night
Neither hope nor fright
How much longer shall we wait?

Extinguish the voices, one by one
Blow out the candles, just for fun
Come home now, it is getting late.

Sleep I, or do I wake?
Give I, or shall I take?
Silent seas sip silent sands
Handiwork of Hidden Hands
"Is" and "Isn't" stop to hold their breath

Words forget their definition
Mind departs without permission
Spirit kisses flesh goodnight
Then baptizes himself with light
Stand for prayer while life joins hands with death

Rise, enfolded by a seamless bathrobe
Your slippers become sandals treading empty deserts
The ceiling becomes a glittering sky!

Awake, alert, you walk alone
In a world of starlight and silence...
But you are never alone.
Your lips hymn the praise of One Sublime

Deep within your mind you find
You left so many things behind
Treasures, trinkets, toys and games
People, places, things, and names
The world and all that it contains

Shall I speak, or shall I hush?
Shall I tarry? Shall I rush?
A voice within is calling, calling
While my leaves are falling, falling
Praise the Light, the Glorious, the Wise

And you shall taste the chill of fear
Muffled footfalls coming near
Walking under looming shapes

Buildings, bridges, fire escapes
Trust in He that lives and never dies

Descend stone stairways, dark and cold
Deposit a quarter, green with mold
Then stand and wait
And hesitate...

A rush of air, a blinding light
A subway pulling into sight
A hiss, a squeal, an open door
Shall you go on, and stay no more?
Hurry now, before you miss your ride

You sit alone, the subway heaves
Then back into the blackness leaves
You puzzle and you wonder
Through the darkness and the thunder
Am I the only passenger inside?

You remember many stations
Deep in your imagination
You recall you were much younger
Knowing nothing of the Hunger
Knowing neither rook, nor knight, nor pawn

A cookie and a cup of juice
A book of verse by Mother Goose
Christmas lights and falling snow
A library, a place to go
A blink of eyes, a rush of wings, it's gone

A dream's time past the final station
You approach your destination
Walking on your weary feet
Into hunger, into heat
The path ahead ascends high into space

Stars so close you feel their fire
Worlds below of false desire
Though you hunger, though you tire
Though they call you madman, liar
Upwards! Upwards! Higher! Higher!

Lift the illusion... Stare into His Face...!

Anonymous

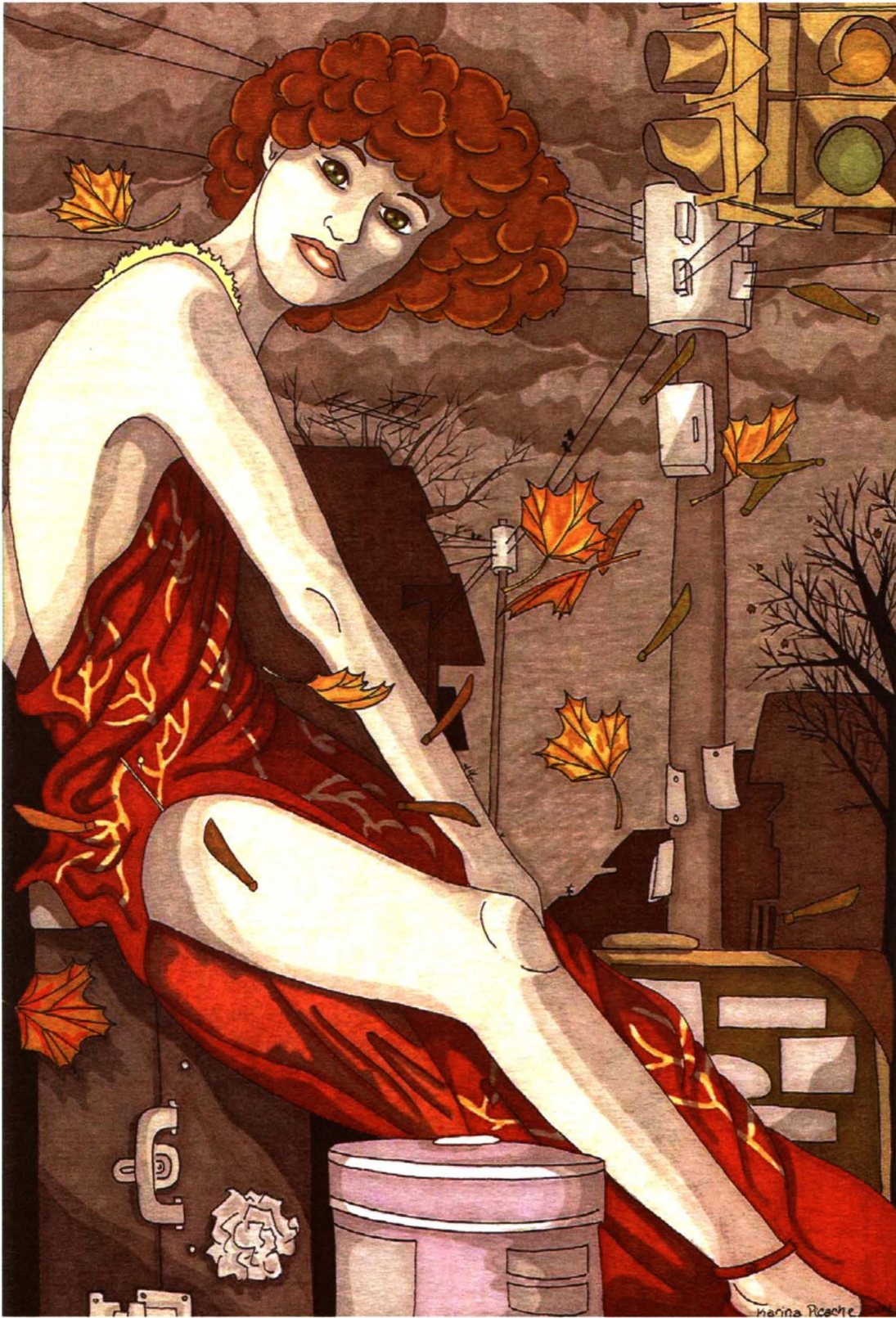


Brothers
Karan Jain
Tufts '09

A Whisper

When all the world is sleeping,
When silence fills the air,
When the divine light throws down its rays
From heaven, I hear a Whisper say...
"There is love in this world
The love for which we are here
The love for which the world is here
The love of which we are in search of.
Yes! The love that lies within us!"
Angels from above whisper in my ear,
When, in the land of dreams, I dwell in that land of love —
My heart!

Rakhi Trust
Tufts '07



Packed Bags
Karina Picache
Tufts '07



**Walk to Anney
Aniruddha S. Nene
Tufts '07**



**Sharp
Lolly Berger
Tufts '09**

Enough

from the tip of my nose, the teardrops
leap towards something below.
can they take the memories as they go?
Only if I'm lucky.

dizzy, my face starts to flush.
well now that's inconvenient.
i'm not supposed to care
Remember?

from the base of my throat comes a growl
but tiger cubs are fierce when they're scared
Or so I've been told.

you thought I would forgive you
like the thousand times before
i just don't have anything left to give.
It's taken long enough.

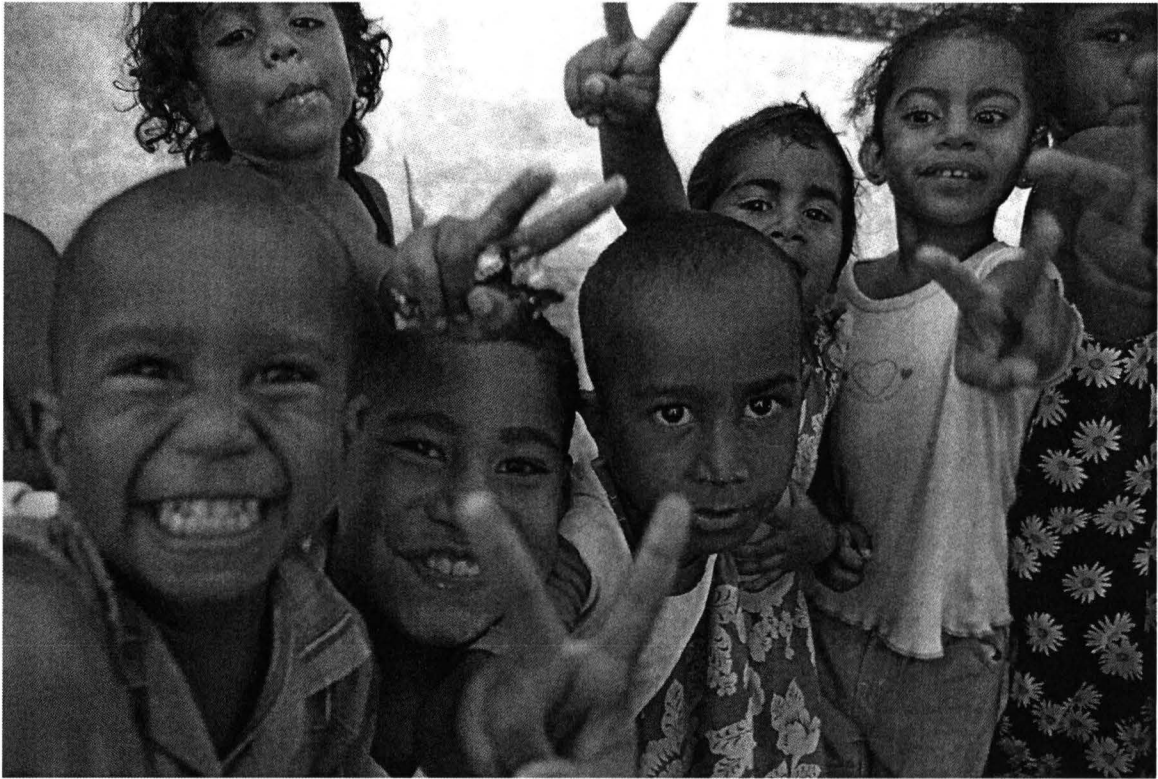
from my accusations I seek meaning
so why aren't they making any sense?
A minute ago, they did in my head.

from the way that you left
i guess that we're over.
maybe I should have listened
But I loathe the 'I told you so's'

and from looking at this thing I call my life
honestly, no more lies
I think I need a break.

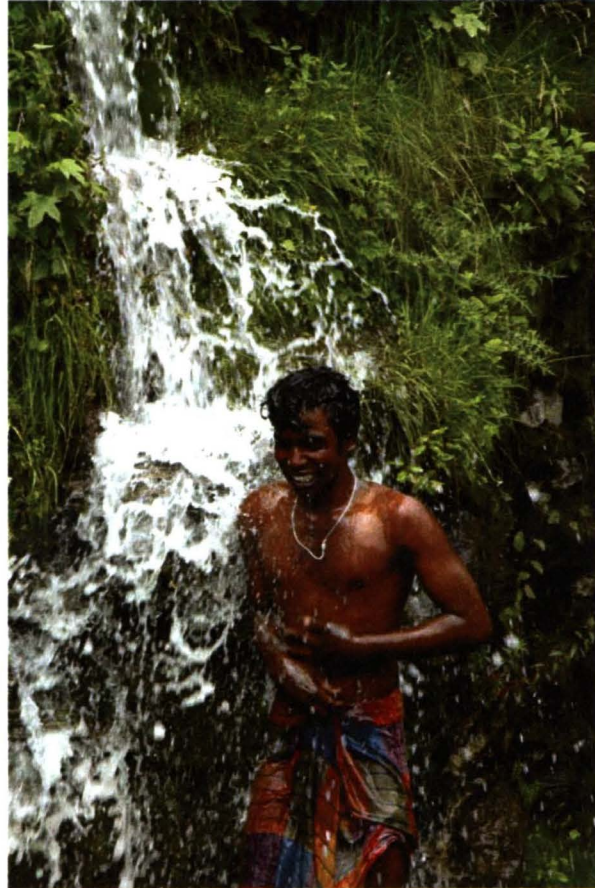
Goodnight.

Anonymous



Children of Fiji
Meena Bolourchi
Tufts '08

Shower
Karan Jain
Tufts '09



Insomnia

To want to sleep is to lie awake
And think
All the world's thoughts,
Worry all the world's worries,
Shoulder all the world's burdens.

In the comfort of pillows, Egyptian cotton sheets, and silk pajamas,
Sleep does not come.
Instead the mind
 wanders endlessly
to memories, what ifs...
the past, present, and overwhelming future.

I recite the Gayatri Mantra softly to myself and focus on my breath, having been told as a young girl that this would always bring me peace and composure...

Om Bhur Bhuvah Svahah... "what do I have to do tomorrow?" ... Concentrate! ...

Tat Savitur Varenyam; Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi... "Oh no, I forgot..." Focus!...

Dheeyo Yo Na... "This isn't working" ... *Prachodayaat...*

"Hmmm, I'm still awake..."

Counting sheep might help... or thinking about my happiest memory or... imagining what life would be like in...

Morning breaks and eyes find only momentary solace in
Sleep.

Tara Dhawan
Tufts '07



A Fish
Michael Luu
Tufts '07



Smoke
Karina Picache
Tufts '07

Jazz and Lies

I love the smoky libidinal murmur
of a jazz crowd, and the smoke coiling
and lithely uncoiling like a choir.

The raven sheen of the baby grand glints
shamelessly in lacquered beauty,
the audacious notes escape into the air
that clings to my skin, heavy with all things masked
by the scent of whiskey and cheap cigarettes

Like the souls of different worlds
the moans of an old saxophone stroke our voices
and I laugh as the dimmed lights mock us,
Knowing to stay low so as not to reveal to us
the truths that only the piano knows.

Outside the smoky windows, winter's first flakes
begin to fall,
Inside our hazy world of smoke, we know of no cold
Only the lies we tell ourselves to stay warm.

Anonymous

The Biblical Body

Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh
Were the first words the first man said when the first woman was given breathe
You, woman could only be sculptured by a grand creator
A precious gem to all those who appreciate her
The bible says all scriptures are inspired by god and sharper than a two edge sword
But not enough scriptures can describe how your mind is a rich and soothing reward
Not even the succulent fruit of the Garden of Eden
Can help me appreciate life as much as you, standing there breathing
While the sweet smell of your body my nostrils, you, continue feeding
The bible speaks of great women like Sara, Rebecca and Rachel
But they were all human, you, you miss are a beautiful angel
So miss give me your hand let us find something to lie on
As I slowly climb your body, like I'm climbing the peaks of Mount Zion
As you lead me through the sea of your passion
As I part those waters giving you miraculous satisfaction
Though I choose to worship one God and one God only
Tonight I choose to worship your body as we make love slowly
Moses received 10 commandments penned on stone
Love is the only commandment we follow when we're alone
Passion is the only commandment I follow as you slowly moan
Now as I start from your feet right up to your lips and eyes
And witness this grand spectacle, more beautiful than Solomon's seven hundred wives
Your legs so graceful, soft, like Egyptian silk right up to your thighs
It would be hard to convince me that you are not an angel in disguise
Slowly touching the skin of your soft tender belly and waist
Softly kissing them as you give that sugar and nectar taste
Now as I look deep into your eyes and see that pretty face
Flawless, unblemished, peaceful with no mistakes
By the Naked beauty of Bathsheba David was enticed to sin
By the soothing words of Delilah Samson was made to give in
But it is the intoxicating depth of your love that does not allow my conscious to win
Solomon asked for discernment and for God to make him wise
Who needs wisdom, when I can gaze into your reassuring eyes
God freed the Israelites from years of captivity
But being captive by your beauty is not a harsh reality
I don't need Solomon's wealth or even his money
When I lay down with a beautiful woman whose body flows with milk and honey
So as we come together my body on top of yours, I grasp your hands,
My body slowly, reaching, reaching, for the promise land
God blessed Job with more for what he'd been through
God blessed me with a biblical body by providing you.

Biodun Kajopaiye
Tufts '07



Behind the Veil
Meena Bolourchi
Tufts '08

your smile

defeats me as I'm left swimming in this shallow pool of confusion,
weakened by your affections
ashamed at my lack of self-control
wondering how a girl like me
could fall so easily for every one of your lines,
lines that countless other girls have had the pleasure
and pain of hearing,
yet every smile convinces me that its only me. how foolish
yet how clever of you
to have the best of all worlds,
while I stand in the light of your smile
forgiving, manipulated, played, and
happy.

Anonymous

The end, for a new beginning

Within every moment of stillness, Your breath pulsates.

As the sails of life continue to blow, the lungs, ever so powerful
constantly pump.

With every breath, the sky changes its hue and with every out-breath
the ocean prepares for a new game.

Sometimes you tease,

The waves crash so hard against my back...slowly, I'm crumbling.

Everyone is right here, with me, but I am alone. On my own.

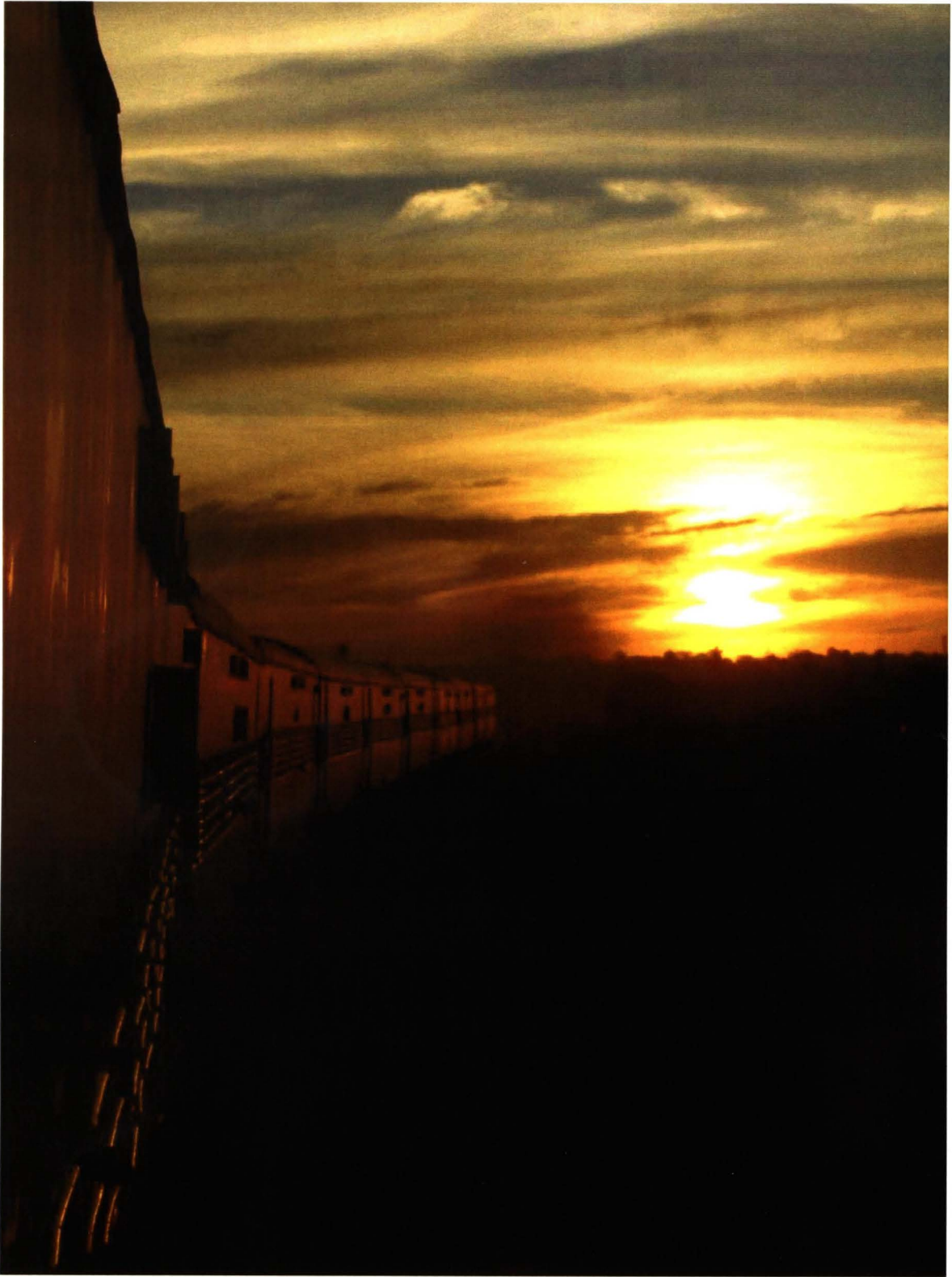
As I call out to You, You dim the lights.

The moon prepares to descend gently upon Your soul and Your breath
continues to pulsate.

As the cycle of this duality- day and night, day and night continues its journey,
my life stands still. But there is hope.

Far in the distance is the ray of light calling, calling on a new dawn.

**Rakhi Trust
Tufts '07**



Indian Sunset
David Mou
Tufts '10



The only lasting beauty is the beauty of the heart.

-Mevlana Rumi