

Expectations

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It is my fifth day in Mumbai. I am about to meet a heroin addict for the first time, during my first visit to the drop-in center. Although it is midday, the sky is filled with swirling monsoon clouds, casting a gray shade over the city. The city's bustle is not subdued. The bamboo shade that serves as a door parts to let me in, and I step into the cramped, dimly lit space. I am in the middle of an overcrowded space filled with the very depths of physical and emotional suffering, and I cannot escape. I am assaulted all at once: the sight of men and women with bony arms, legs wrapped in

rags, dark red scars running the length of their veins, unkempt and tangled hair. A large color TV in the corner of the room plays a low-budget movie from South India. It is interspersed with the drunken mumblings of those who are high. The smell of sweat, marijuana, alcohol and Mumbai's sewers emanates from two dozen unwashed bodies. I can still feel the humid air from outside on the back of my neck but the ceiling fan cools my face. What assaults me most is the visceral taste of hopelessness, bitter and raw. These are people who have given up on life, who are knowingly and gladly killing themselves, evading their horrible realities transiently with the nectar of the opium poppy until their final escape comes to claim them. I can do nothing but let it enter me. The shock is so powerful that I cannot fully feel the emotions it will provoke in me yet.

This has become my new classroom. After a couple of days, I've forgotten all about the neat rows of chairs and desks back at school. I adapt quickly. Kamathipura becomes my element. I have always felt a deep connection for this country, and I am excited for a summer of "becoming Indian." I have never lived in India, but have never belonged anywhere more than I belong here. I miss the beautiful beaches and delicious sunflower seeds of Kenya, my birthplace and home for the first nine years of my life. I appreciate the open atmosphere and opportunity of the United States, my home for the past nine years. But I love India with my heart and soul. I love the way the word "thank

you' is implied and not said. I love how only Indians can understand the characteristic head wag that can take on any meaning. I love the pot-holed roads, decorated trucks, clanging temple bells, deep-throated Azan, strong scent of coriander and cumin, bright red dots on the foreheads of old women, and incessant honking. Most of all, I love the people. These are my people. The same blood runs in our veins, the same sun shines on our faces, the same shade of copper colors our skin, and our eyes are as dark as the earth of our beloved Mother India, the land of my great-grandparents and now mine.

I have many expectations for myself as I start this journey. Mostly, I want to be turned into a veritable Mother Theresa. I believe that witnessing suffering will mold my incomplete character into my idea of an ideal one. My thoughts will be concerned only with helping those in need. I will give generously to beggars and greet everyone with a smile. Upon returning to Brandeis, I won't make superfluous conversation or laugh loudly at politically incorrect YouTube videos. I am excited about my research on heroin and harm reduction, and want to become an expert on the topics I'm summarizing. I want to learn the names and stories of the drug users and sex workers who inhabit Kamathipura; I want them to become my friends. I know I will miss Mumbai sorely when I leave, but I am sure that I will have been transformed into a better person.

"The curse of the romantic is a greed for dreams, an intensity of expectation that, in the end, diminishes the reality."

~Marya Mannes

After a three-year absence from Mumbai, my transition into the rhythm of the city has been as smooth as the creamy chai I've already developed the habit of drinking every three hours. I already have a routine, as if I have been living here my entire life. My mornings begin at 9:30 by walking down a staircase covered in red paan¹, being careful not to step on sleeping goats. The road is already filled with the ubiquitous black and yellow taxis carrying burqa²-clad women and bearded men, horns blaring, swear words in Hindi flowing swiftly out of the drivers' mouths at hand-cart drivers who block the road. I walk past the furniture bazaar filled with wooden cabinets, past parked horse carriages decorated with silver peacocks, and thin horses with moist black eyes framed with feathery eyelashes. A boy about my age carrying a baby comes up to me. He is caked in dirt and his bony legs show through the tears in his brown shorts. He calls me "*didi*," sister, and tells me his younger brother hasn't eaten in two days. I give him 100 rupees, about \$2.50, and he thanks me gratefully, asking God to find me a good husband.

I continue underneath the JJ overpass, an imposing grey convex ceiling protecting the heroin addicts and rabid dogs that take shelter underneath it from the monsoons, and into Null Bazaar. Null Bazaar is one of the innumerable marketplaces in Mumbai, small streets lined with storefronts covered by street stalls that take up the entire sidewalk. As a result, I am forced to walk in the middle of traffic. What used to be a sidewalk is cluttered with stalls selling shoes, umbrellas, kajal³, small children sleeping on tarpaulin covering the wares. Bicycle bells ring, brushing past me. "Oh, madam!" men in lungis yell in warning, pushing wooden cards loaded with pounds of steel past me, sweat streaming down their faces and backs. On my left are a row of bangle stalls that have naked bulbs strung in front of them and light

up blindingly as soon as the sun shows the slightest sign of retiring for the night.

I walk straight on through Null Bazaar, past the pink temple in the middle of the road that rings its bells at dusk and which always has devotees inside, no matter what time of day. On the left of the temple are hordes of lower-class men chatting, smoking charras⁴ or cigarettes, chewing paan and spitting out the red residue, or squatting on the road, waiting tiredly for a large truck that will come and pick them up and sweep them away to an unknown location to do some sort of construction work or heavy labor.

Null Bazaar abruptly ends and I enter Khetwadi, a residential area adjacent to Kamathipura, Asia's largest red-light district and my workplace. Past Khetwadi, into the shopping area of Girgaum, are several music stores that line both sides of the road, painted sitars and tablas adorning the old wooden buildings. The burqa-clad women of Dongri have gradually faded into jeans-wearing high school and uniformed primary school students who attend the numerous schools around Khetwadi. A man selling coconuts sits near a narrow lane lined by teetering, peeling apartment buildings. A left down this lane and I come out near my office, but a twenty-minute walk to my right lies the infamous Kamathipura. Many Bollywood and independent movies, all dealing with prostitution, have taken place inside its walls. The physical location of Kamathipura and the phenomenon of prostitution are inextricably linked. Kamathipura during the day seems like any poor area of Mumbai, except for the large yellow signs depicting a smiling woman waving a condom and "USAID- From the American People" in large letters. During the day, the only other way one would be able to identify Kamathipura as a red-light district are the very few women with copious amounts of makeup soliciting clients on street corners or haggling with fruit vendors.

To discover its true nature, however, I will take you inside the brothels.

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These crowded buildings are filled with small 5 by 15 foot rectangular rooms lined with beds stuck to the wall. Each room may be home to two families. Underneath the beds, or slabs of wood, young children sleep on cement floors next to a portable stove – the kitchen – where, during lunch hour, the cooking turns the room into a sauna. Two beds on the left and right as soon as one enters the narrow and low door may belong to a pair of sisters and their husbands, many of them about my age. Venturing further into the room, about six to seven feet in, there is another pair of beds with the same set-up underneath

them. Another family lives here, who may or may not be acquainted with the people whose feet are a few feet away from their heads every night when they sleep. Some sex workers come and leave without warning, no one knowing where they are coming from and under what circumstances. Beds in the brothels are high-demand real estate. A vacant one is snatched up by a woman needing a place to live and work. All that is needed is a little space. The identity of one's roommates is little cause for concern or anything more than the slightest bit of interest. Appearances of new faces and disappearances of old ones are as commonplace as the daily chore of buying vegetables.

The vegetable market in Kamathipura is like any other poor Mumbai vegetable market. So are the numerous shops that sell saris, petticoats, and fake gold. Identical copies of these can all be found in Dharavi, Asia's second largest slum, located several miles north. Kamathipura is busy during the day, the roads choked with colorful lorries painted with lotus flowers, the sign "Horn OK Please" adorning their backs. There are dozens of empty taxis parked along the streets, the drivers drawn here for the area's specialty. It is hot and dry and dusty, except when it rains, a rare occurrence before the monsoons. Then, small naked children come running out into the street, splashing in the puddles, screeching with excitement and pleasure. They gather water in buckets and empty them over their heads in innocent bliss, shivering and laughing, not yet knowing about where they are and what their future holds.

I watch these kids play from the shelter of a HIV/AIDS voluntary testing and counseling clinic. I smile. In only a week, this has become my home. I have recovered from my initial shock of going into the brothels. I expected the

brothels to seem familiar after watching every documentary or fictional movie about sex work in India that I could get my hands on. I thought I would be all efficiency and business when I finally entered them, not allowing my emotions to get in the way of an amazing real-world learning opportunity. Very few people, especially women who aren't sex workers, have access to the brothels. There is hidden and complex legal and violent reality of the area, due in part to its turbulent relationship with the Mumbai underworld, which has great power and influence in the area. Corruption in the Mumbai police force and municipal government also play a part. The police protect their stake by banning journalists and filmmakers from filming openly and interviewing sex workers. Much of the footage of Kamathipura has been taken by cameras hidden in pens or duffel bags.

I have the unique status as being the first and only intern of Population Services International Mumbai, an organization that has been functioning in this area since 1988, working to educate their target group, sex workers, about HIV/AIDS and its prevention. My vision of what the summer will be is clear: I am interviewing sex workers and drug users, learning from their stories. The women and men I walk to love me, the dynamic and outgoing American who defies stereotypes and understands the very root of their struggles.

There's nothing like actually being here – I can't smell the rotting trash and feel the wretched air in a movie, or see the glistening rats and rabid dogs. The brothels are old rickety buildings with narrow entranceways and stairs with no railings, covered in trash, which are terrifying to climb. But the worst part is those stretches of empty space from one part of a building to another where there is absolutely no light and the ground is covered with rainwater flavored with sewage. I can't see where I am stepping but I can hear the squeaks of large rats all around me. I forget about all the human suffering going on around me. I forget about the young girls who haven't even entered puberty being raped by old men, by women who have been born into this horror and have known nothing else. I am overcome by the air and the suffocation, and it overpowers me. I forget why I came here, and I can think of nothing but escape and sunlight.

"Progress lies not in enhancing what is, but in advancing toward what will be."

~ Kahlil Gibran

Population Services International Mumbai is a chapter of an international organization with offices in far-flung corners of the world. Even in Mumbai, there are multiple offices, drop-

in centers (DICs) and clinics. Its buildings and rooms are in distant parts of the city, located hours away from one another, as culturally and socio-economically varied as the people that make up this multifaceted organization.

The head office is located in the shopping area of Girgaum, a crowded Hindu vicinity filled with young middle-class students. Groups of boys order sandwiches from the sandwichwallas⁵ who roll their spicy wares around on little metal cabinets. Middle-class ladies in their forties and fifties yell at tailors about botched orders. Jain priests wrapped in plain white cloth bless lower-class white collar college boys on their way to work. Elderly women on a visit to their grandchildren wait for bus 121 to take them to the poorer suburbs that they call home.

The shops lining the streets sell fancy saris geared towards the middle class. In the midst of these is Kulkarni Brothers, an eyeglass clinic. Its glass windows are decorated with pictures of beautiful young Italian men and women in passionate embraces. Next to Kulkarni Brothers is a small candy stall, about a foot wider than a red telephone booth, where my sister, Zazu, and I say hi to the candy boy, Arun, every morning. Arun is in his twenties and with his green eyes and perfect smile is astoundingly good-looking. He can't speak a word of English, and gives Zazu and I red and white Alpenliebe lollipops for two rupees every morning without us having to ask.

After getting our lollipops, we enter the landing next to the candy stall, ascend a narrow staircase, and find ourselves in a small, cramped network of offices that are the headquarters of PSI. PSI has been working in Mumbai since 1988, marketing oral contraceptives, male and female condoms, lube, safe sex practices, and information about AIDS to sex workers and their families, as well as the general population. Balbir Pasha, a fictional character created by PSI to spread AIDS awareness through mass marketing, became a household name in the nineties. He was an icon of Mumbai's pop culture during a time where talking about AIDS and safe sex in mainstream media was much more taboo than it is today. The campaign consisted of television, radio and billboard advertisements with conversational questions and statements about AIDS. The ads involved other people asking questions about Balbir Pasha's sexual activities, and the question "*Balbir Pasha ko AIDS hoga kya?*" meaning "Will Balbir Pasha get AIDS?" in conversational Hindi. The campaign targeted young lower-class men as the segment of the general population most at risk. It used catchy slogans that really resonated with the audience and didn't seem too lofty or academic. This is one of PSI's greatest strengths, and why they have been

so successful in their efforts. They understand the target group and how to reach it, and therefore, the target group is willing to listen.

The Green Dot program is PSI Mumbai's newest initiative, focusing on providing harm reduction and HIV/AIDS prevention outreach to the unknown number of heroin addicts who live on the streets of Kamathipura and Dongri. Harm reduction is a philosophy of drug abuse control that recognizes the fact that it is near impossible to reduce the supply of and demand for drugs. Harm reduction focuses on reducing health related harm, such as providing needle and syringe exchange programs to prevent the spread of HIV, and advocating for the use of chasing heroin or opioid substitution therapy to replace injecting instead of advocating for detox and rehab programs with high relapse rates.

I work eight hours a day, five days a week, researching and creating training modules on various topics related to heroin addiction, harm reduction, and behavior change communication.

I have become somewhat of an expert on all topics pertaining to heroin use and addiction. I've read and summarized books and articles on addiction counseling methods, the physiological effects of heroin addiction, United Nations-recommended approaches to drug-related harm, and 12-step group facilitation guidelines. I've gone into the field and met addicts from all walks of life, seen them preparing injections and shooting up, and helped them get out of the street when wandering around high. I have become close to the other outreach workers, both in the Green Dot program and the sex worker program, who feed me, take care of Zazu when I'm in the field, and ask me every day when I will be removing my dreadlocks, which are reserved solely for ascetic holy people in India. I am doing important, meaningful work with people I love, and will leave something concrete behind.

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Every day, three times a day, groups of two or three outreach workers go into the field wearing white T-shirts with large green dots, carrying blue bags full of new syringes, needles, condoms and flipcharts. Their job: find as many heroin addicts as possible and teach them something new about AIDS, persuade them to get tested for VCT, exchange their used needles and syringes for new ones, and just be friendly and see what they need.

I am now one of these outreach workers, seeking out and speaking to sex workers and heroin addicts, both young and old, HIV positive or very close to it.

*“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls;
the most massive characters are seared with scars.”*

~Kahlil Gibran

The drug users are the most real people I’ve ever met. In my conception of the world, I believe that only suffering can bring out humility, and humility is the very essence of goodness. All of the people I’ve met, even the disgruntled Kalpana, a female addict who yells about everything and isn’t treated with half of the respect I am given by the male drug users, have something real inside them. They know *that we know* they have been reduced to the ghettos of humanity. They are slaves – slaves to a substance, and everything they do hangs upon that substance. We outreach workers see them when they are high, when they are irritable, when they are bleeding from multiple abscesses. We see their stick-thin legs, a symptom of spending all their money on garrad⁶ and none on food, and we know their deepest desire: to rid themselves of this curse.

It is my second visit to the drop-in center. Sex workers, their children, and heroin addicts congregate in these centers all day long. They come here for meals, for chai and biscuits, and for companionship. They come here because there is nowhere else for them to go. There is nowhere to experience

their sadness and joys. The stagnant and sick air of the brothels stifles the sex workers, and the suffocating smell of the sewers in which they live stifle the heroin users. Only in these small square rooms lit by cheap fluorescent lighting and covered with pictures of the outreach workers and Ashley Judd (PSI’s Global Ambassador) do they find solace. Here, they feel as if they are somebody, with a name, a face and a personality. People care about them here.

In the afternoons, at the drop-in-center for addicts, the outreach workers take turns conducting activities. For the rest of the day, addicts stumble in, drunk or high, and collapse on the floor. Others, sober or almost there, watch low-budget action flicks on TV. Today’s activity is charades, but there is someone new who would like to speak. He walks in dressed in real clothes – a light pink

collared shirt and grey slacks. They are made of a flimsy material, but stand out in sharp contrast to the tattered rags in various shades of brown predominant in the room. I am shocked by the fact that he has a cell phone. He enters the doorway, pressed his palms together and greets me first with a “Namaste,” a greeting to the only woman in the room, to show respect. He tries and greets the other users, but they are too high to respond or feel like ignoring him, disdainful towards his rich appearance. He takes a seat on the floor and interrupts Amol, the outreach worker whose turn it is to facilitate the activity, as he is trying to begin charades.

He introduces himself as Mahesh and then begins to speak about his addiction, looking around him at the other users, in their eyes. Mahesh’s voice is calm and soothing. He used to inject for many years, then one day he decided that he had to quit. He speaks about the physical and mental pain that he suffered through, the trouble he had with his family because of his addiction. Gradually, addicts wake up and become more attentive. They murmur words of acquiescence and shake their heads when they hear something especially poignant, an expression of pain on their faces. By the end of the half-an-hour-long talk, everyone wants to speak. Amol tries to get the room under control, and asks simple questions like “If you could, would you quit heroin?” to facilitate the discussion. The overwhelming response is yes, addicts sucking their teeth and shaking their heads to indicate agreement. One, who has a spiky haircut that I particularly like and who always sits nears the door, says, his eyes completely focused, “There is nothing more than we want in the world.” A loud murmur of accord accompanied by vigorous head shaking ripples through the room.

They are dirty, unkempt, sick and still, they are wonderful. They are real people, and cannot hide their true selves: intelligent, respectful, quiet, introspective, humble, and genuinely good. It is hard to explain why I feel this way. I can see who they truly are, past their societal status as someone who has committed a great sin against the state, themselves, and their families. Drugs are a horrible curse on society and cause great pain to everyone involved. But the drugs are at fault, not the users. Not one of them started using by choice or with adequate knowledge of the consequences of drug use.

Abdul, a 26-year-old intravenous drug user who I interview, has a story of addiction that is standard among most users. At seventeen he was a clothes seller and was introduced to marijuana by friends. He began smoking, knowing nothing about what it was or what it could do to him. All he knew was that it let him escape the world, a world that consisted of constant worrying about his empty stomach. He was twenty-two when he started chasing. “All of a sudden, I closed

the business. I had a loss, and started selling cosmetic items at the trains. There were people there at the trains who did heroin...now I'm 26. I started chasing...After a year, I started fixing⁷. One of my friends told me that by fixing, you get a lot of "nasha,"⁸ a different fix. I still didn't fix, but once I couldn't find good heroin, I started to fix."

Abdul says all of this simply, as a matter of fact. There is no emotion in his words that hints to his past full of suffering. At the beginning of the interview, I tell Abdul that if he doesn't feel comfortable answering a question, he doesn't have to. He smiles, shakes his head and sucks his teeth to indicate that such a notion is preposterous. Why would he have anything to hide? He answers all the questions as if I were asking him about his favorite movies or happy children, but in his eyes I can detect a deep sadness. Most of the drug users are like this. They are unafraid to disclose their most intimate details to us outreach workers, even if they are meeting us for the first time. They are totally honest.

I feel a connection to them. I believe I will take on these qualities that I hold in such high esteem by the end of the summer. I want to rid myself of my American-ness, my pretense of civility, my need to be polite to cover how I really feel and what I really think. I want to be brutally honest like they are, but I don't want to have any thoughts that need to be hidden. I want to expose myself to the world, my flaws and positive attributes, and let people take me as they choose. I am tired of hiding behind a phony American self-identity I have constructed for myself and show who I truly am – Indian.

*"There are moments in life, when the heart is so full of emotion
That if by chance it be shaken, or into its depths like a pebble
Drops some careless word, it overflows, and its secret,
Spilt on the ground like water, can never be gathered together."*

~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

My last week in India, an intense panic suddenly grabs hold of me. I want nothing more than to see my mother. I break out into tears without warning, in public, several times. I need to get to my mother, and I need to escape from Mumbai, the city I love most. I will not understand until later that I don't need to escape from Mumbai so much as I need to escape from myself, the person I have become in Mumbai. It's as if I think that if I was at home with my mother, who knows nothing of what I have become in Mumbai, it would be like it had never happened.

In my quest to become an Indian, I have unexpectedly taken on the negative aspects of the people that surround me instead of the positive. Like my lower middle-class Indian family and coworkers, I have stopped giving money to beggars, started yelling at taxi drivers who try to overcharge me, suck my teeth at slow bank tellers, and bargain with street vendors down to every rupee. I am upset at myself and conflicted about why this is happening, but I can't control it.

My words and anger at strangers start flowing before I can try and stop it. I need to get \$200 to change my airplane ticket. Mumbai is plastered with bright yellow and black Western Union signs but only about ten percent of them are still functional. When I enter a bank with the promising sign on its front and ask for Western Union, the guard looks at me with a confused expression and leads me to a teller. She shakes her head "no," and I erupt, yelling at them in Hindi, "Well then, why is there a sign outside?" I storm out, slamming the door. It's not their fault – they are simply trying to do their jobs, but I have lost the ability to control my emotions, even in the face of reason.

I premeditate my stinginess. I purposely carry bills too large to give to beggars because I know that if I have small change, I will give it all away. I don't know why I have taken on more negative characteristics, but it is an unexpected development in my character.

The night before my flight I lose my ticket – and my self-control. The idea of not being able to see my mother for an indefinite amount of time – until I find the ticket – is terrifying. The sobbing begins, in waves of varying intensity, but the shaking is constant. I lose my temper at the woman who has taken Zazu and I in as part of her family, forty years older than I. She wants to help me find the ticket, but my mind has shut off: I ask her to leave me alone, and when she doesn't I snap and yell, slamming the door in her face. I can't feel guilt or remorse – I can't feel anything. The tears keep flowing and my hands keep shaking. I make frantic phone calls, my speech stuttered with deep breaths in between each desperate plea. I find the ticket packed away in one of the suitcases some time later, but the panic stays for another hour.

"Life is so constructed that an event does not, cannot, will not, match the expectation."

~Charlotte Bronte

Six months later, I walk to class with textbooks in one hand, tea in the other, a scarf wrapped around my neck. My mind replays my daily walk to PSI in the summer heat, through a loud and bustling market, the scent of spices and sweat in the air. The emotions have had time to settle into my thoughts, feelings and actions, but their effects have not started to fade away yet. As the leaves fall outside my window in suburban Boston, the disparity between my present surroundings and my summer environment serve only to make me think about Mumbai more.

I think about my first step into Mumbai. I had high expectations for my summer, having waited to feel the pulse of the city in my veins for more than a year. As I stepped off the air-conditioned airplane into the infamous Mumbai humidity, I left behind my emotional and environmental comforts for the unknown. I wasn't sure what I would encounter, but I was sure of who I was and how I would change. Towards the end of my summer, however, I found myself exhibiting the same qualities that I had condemned. I stopped feeling compassion for the hijras⁹ who asked for ten rupees in exchange for a blessing, and I became a bargainer to rival the stingiest old woman. And now, I have fallen back into the everyday charade of college life.

Despite this discrepancy between my expectations and reality, I am beginning to appreciate my newfound self-

knowledge and understand that it will eventually help me understand my summer and change me for the better.

My days are filled with exams and meetings, but my mind now thinks in Hindi and is filled with the summer, good and bad.

My days are filled with exams and meetings, but my mind now thinks in Hindi and is filled with the summer, good and bad. I think of the brothels and sewers in the dusty heat where the sex workers and heroin addicts I have come to know and love are dying of AIDS. But I also remember the beautiful Marine Drive, where my sister Zazu and I spent countless hours hand in hand besides the sea, the moon over our heads, the cool, salty breeze playing with our hair. I remember

my first shocking encounters with the city and its people, which eventually became the routine and ordinary. I hear the blaring horns and clanging temple bells during my daily walk to work through a bustling market. I feel the air suffocating me during my first time in a brothel. I can

recite statistics and facts about heroin addiction and harm reduction after three months of research. I have leftover needles, syringes, condoms and a bright blue PSI umbrella as part of my job as an outreach worker. I know the faces of the drug users I interviewed and relaxed with at the drop-in center and think of them often, even though I never did learn their names. And I remember my emotionally charged last week, as much as I try to forget.

The anthropologist Annette Leibing, in "The Hidden Side of the Moon, or "'Lifting Out' in Ethnographies," writes about her ten years living and conducting research in Brazil and the emotions and identity that went along with it. She discusses "data in the shadow," or the "situations where the borders of personal life and formal ethnography begin to blur and the research field loses its boundedness" (Leibing xi). Like Mumbai for me, Brazil had become a home to her, and the emotional issues arising from her connection to the place colored her experience. As Leibing illustrates, my experience is one of many researchers who go into the field with untenable expectations. When that reality hits them, they are lost and confused. My constant "looking at the past" more than my present reality reflects my need to understand "the data in the shadow" of my summer, and the implications it has for helping me to understand my identity.

Leibing writes, "A dialogue with the past does not mean the discovery of a final truth or an archaeology of the inner self, but a process of sensibilization towards one's own and other's categorizations of the world" (141). This has helped me come to terms with my emotions. I still want to understand how and why I changed, so that I can work to change its negative effects. Constantly thinking about my summer, however, will not lead to discovery of my "inner self," but rather help redefine my view of myself and the world.

What was most wrong with my summer was not my experience, but my expectations. Now that the cloud of smog suspended over my experiences has been cleared, I can look back to decide how to move forward. My summer was spent with my favorite person, Zazu, in my favorite city, Mumbai, doing work that may continue for the rest of my life. This summer contained some of the best moments of my life, and some of the worst. I am trying to live in my present moment without forgetting my memories. Instead of longing for Mumbai's blaring horns during a quiet Massachusetts night, I will incorporate my newfound Indian identity in who I am here.

There is much research that may still be done on this subject, exploring the multifaceted, complex relationships people have with places in their realities and imaginations, and the emotional color they give to these relationships. This emotional color affects research. It is a crucial factor in determining the validity of research and conclusions drawn from encounters between researcher and subject. But more importantly, it affects each one of us, as researchers and individuals, deeply. It must be understood in proper context and perspective if we are to extract as much value as possible from each experience and use it to move forward.

I am now ready for my next adventure. This time, however, I will go in with very few expectations, an open mind, and the knowledge that I will learn at least one thing about myself and the world. However significant or trivial, it will take me one step closer on my journey from the girl I am today to the woman I want to become.

Notes

1. a mixture of sweet fillings, spices, areca nuts and tobacco wrapped in a betel leaf spit
2. Traditional Islamic loose-fitting outer dress, usually black
3. eyeliner containing camphor to cool the eyes
4. marijuana
5. The suffix “walla” signifies an occupation, so a sandwichwalla sells sandwiches.
6. heroin
7. Injecting
8. ‘High’, lit. feeling
9. The “third sex” in India, with no Western equivalent

Works Cited

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