



NATIONAL SECURITY LANGUAGE INITIATIVE FOR YOUTH



NSLI-Y PUNE, INDIA SUMMER 2013 NEWSLETTER

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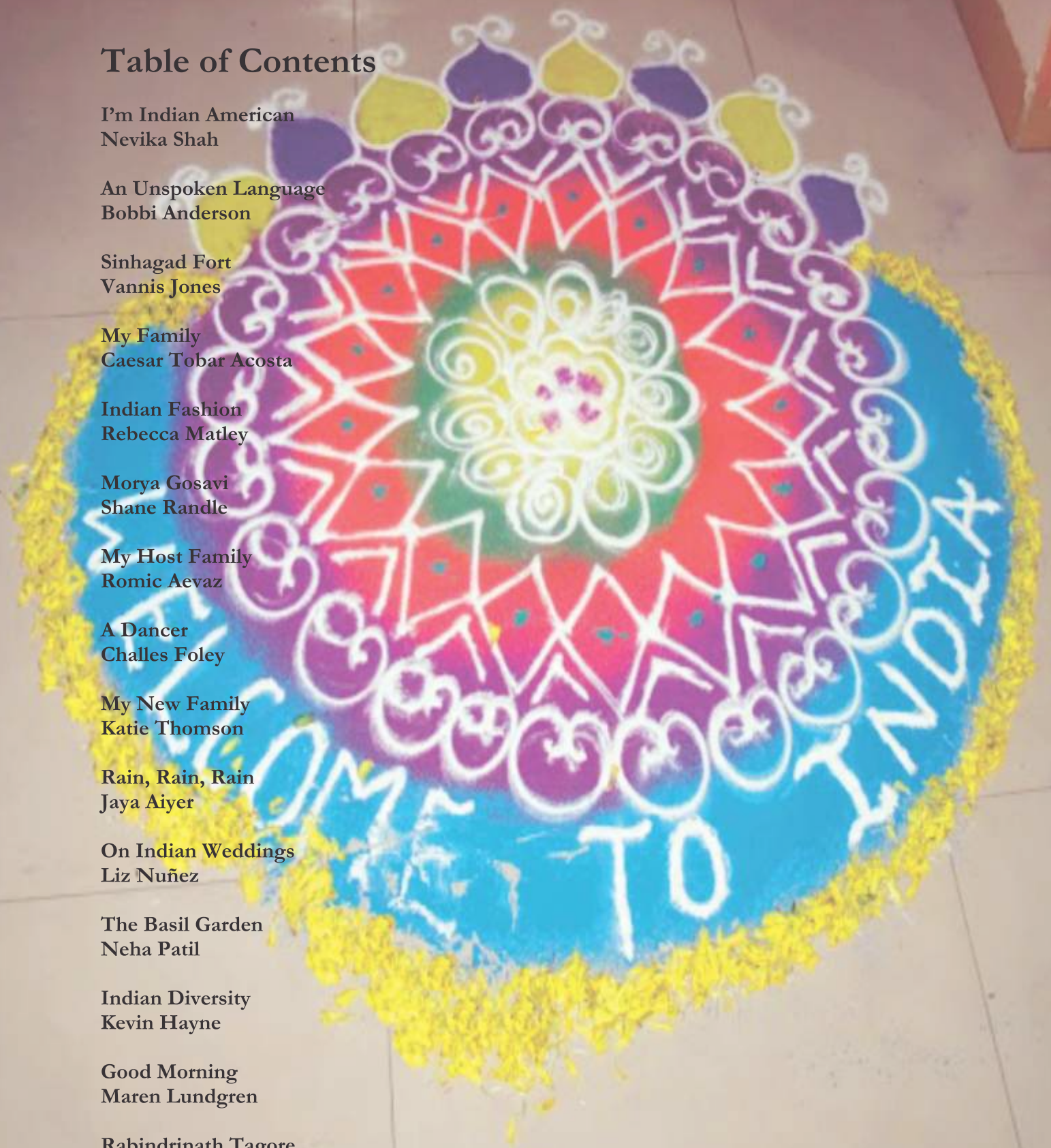
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I'm Indian American

Nevika Shah

Coming into this program, I was planning on being just a typical American girl who is visiting a foreign country. I didn't bring any Indian clothes or my book of bhajans or slokas my nani had given me or even my kaajal! But the truth is, coming to my motherland, I've embraced my Indian heritage more than ever. Often times, I found myself noticing the incredible similarities between my Indian life and my American one more in regards to family morals and day to day life.

Growing up in a fairly Indian household, I was totally prepared to do all the tasks that I'm normally expected to do in my American home. I automatically started helping my host



-नेविका शाह
जब मैं भारत आयी तब मैं खुद को एक
अमेरिकन लड़की मन्ती थी। पर यहाँ आने
के बाद मुझे अपने भारतीय होने का एहसास
हुआ। जैसे मैं अपनी माँ को घर के काम
कल्ले में मदद करती थी उसी प्रकार
यहाँ मैंने साधना आण्टी को मदद की।
शुरू शुरू में मुझे अपने परिवार
की याद आती थी। बादमे मुझे यहाँ अफा भारतीय
परिवार मिलगया। दोनो घरों की जीवन शैली
में मुझे समानताएँ नजर आयी। स्क्री
मण्डी और तुलसीबाग में खरीदारी
करते समय हर कोई मुझे भारतीय
समजता था। जब मैं बोलने लगती थी
तब उन्हें पता चलत था कि मैं अमेरिकन
हूँ। इस प्रोग्राम की वजह से मुझे अपने
भारता होने का सुंदर अनुभव मिला।

mom cut vegetables, participated in weekly prayer session, and made it a point to engage in my host family's "family time" as these are all things I do at home. Needless to say it was all second nature to me.

Although I started missing my own family, my host family has treated me like their own daughter and so as the trip progressed I felt right at home. The daily routine from morning to night was very similar and the close relationships I had with my host sister and host grandmother resembled those of my American Family.

This whole experience has made me so proud to be Indian and American, having a hand in each country. Being here I had the privilege of looking Indian and "blending in" while still having the ability to gain the perspective of an American. No citizen of Maharashtra could ever tell I was American with my Tulsibag-bought kurti, wild head of curls, and brown skin. Until I opened my mouth. And then, a chorus of kissy noises and whistling in my direction began.

So quite honestly, this program has been nothing like what I was expecting....It's been even better. Experiencing the cross of my very own cultures was a reaffirmation that I was living an awesome Indian life in the US. I am so thankful to have had this opportunity to learn about the land of my ancestors and even about myself.

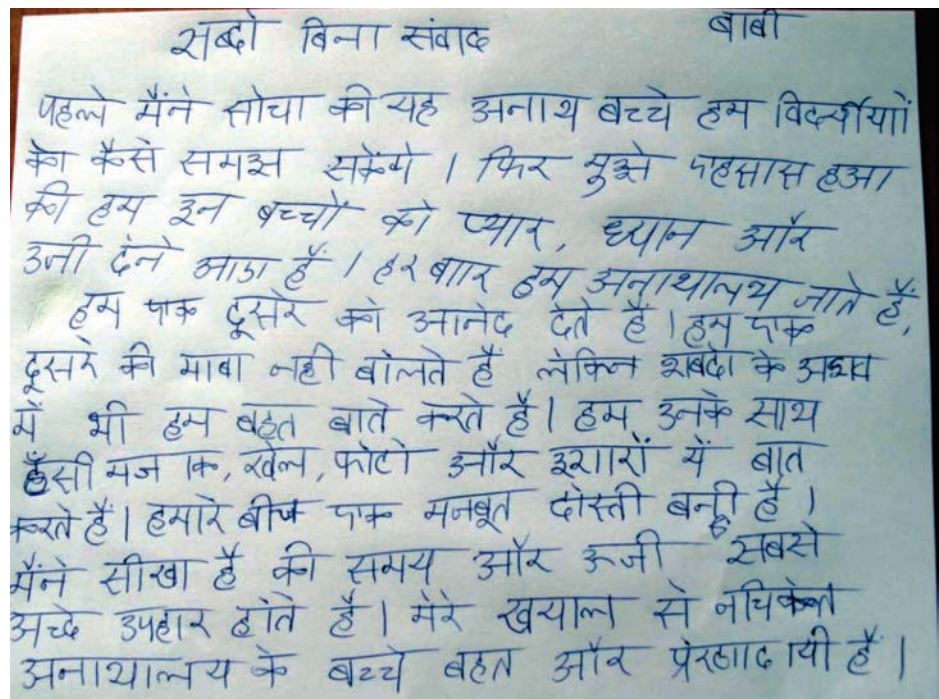
An Unspoken Language

Bobbi Anderson



Most days we arrive in the monsoons of Chinchwad. We are most often in our school uniforms, and enter the sun-lit room full of overjoyed orphans. They are often segregated, boys on one side, girls on the other. They sit in formal rows on damp towels, usually grasping the towels with their small brown hands. In those grasps I can feel the excitement flowing through their growing veins. At first, I questioned what a group of Americans meant to these children, "Do they wonder why we are here? Do they want us here?"...But I quickly came to realize that it does not matter why we are here, or

even what brought us here. To these children, we are friends, we drowned them with attention and love, we spread our energy, we give them our smiles, our strength, and our hearts. And in return, we receive the exact same from them. Over the last month with these children, it's obvious that we bring each other an immense amount of joy. Our exchange of joy comes from the friendship that we share, and since we do not speak each other's language, our communication is through much more than a spoken language. Every one of us has adapted to communicating through laughter, and gestures, and facial expressions, and through this new-found communication we have all learned to seek for the innocent and utterly unique beauty in the fact that we cannot speak to one another. Creating an authentic, simple, and unforgettable bond with these children has made me recognize the beauty in silence, and has taught me that the best gift you can give is your time, your energy, and your love. Spending time with these children has also taught me that I have truly seen happiness, and that happiness is present in the ones who know in their hearts that happiness is a constant journey, not a destination. Without failure, every single time we step foot at Nachiket orphanage, I am reminded how lucky I am to have met these children. Interestingly enough, I've seen happiness in those that are more deprived of love and luxury than many unhappy people I know. You have inspired us, children of Nachiket.



Sinhagad Fort

Vannis Jones



I've found during my time in Maharashtra that the things that leave lasting impressions are often experiences as a whole as opposed to the places you go and the things you see. It doesn't matter how much time it takes you to get somewhere, and it's important to just take time to enjoy the day and experience what's around you. My trip to Sinhagad Fort with my host family was one such experience.

Sinhagad Fort is situated on top of a mountain on the outskirts of Pune and can be reached via a narrow and terribly bumpy road. Our little sedan was certainly not made for that kind of terrain—it stalled at least three or four times on the way up.

Upon arriving at the fort's ruins, we went into a little shelter made of bamboo and tarps in which a few tables were set up. On one side of the tent, several women were crouched on the ground cooking. My host father explained that the families who make the food in these tents are in fact the same families that cooked for kings when the fort was in use.

After lunch, we began our ascent up the 400 steps to the fort. Almost immediately after we set out, the monsoon unleashed itself upon us in full force. We, of course, brought no rain gear and took shelter in a makeshift tent with an old man who was roasting some corn and peanuts. It soon became clear that the rain was not going to let up, so we decided to continue on our way up to the fort (alongside a free-roaming donkey who was utterly undeterred by the rain). There really was not much to be seen due to the incredibly dense fog and rain, but the place was beautiful and green nonetheless.

सिंहगड किले
मैं मेरे परिवार के साथ सिंहगड किले पर गयी थी। वह किला पर्वत पर है और सड़क से लेके किले तक बहुत चौड़ाई में छोटी है। हमारी गाडी बहुत बार अचानक रुक गयी थी। हमने किले में दोपहर का भोजन खाया था। तंबू के अंदर भोजन का आयोजन था। फिर हमने ४०० सीढ़ियाँ चढ़ी थी। वहाँ बरसात थी। हम गीले हुए थे इसलिए हम दूसरे तंबू में गये थे। वहाँ एक आदमी मँगफली और मक्का भून रहा था। बारिश रुक नहीं रही थी इसलिए हम फिरसे चलने लगे। आसमान में छुंद छाया था और हम किला देख नपाए। लेकिन शहर सुंदर और हरा था। हम फिरसे बहुत गीले हुए थे और दूसरे भोजन के आयोजन वाले तंबू गये थे। वहाँ एक आदमी हमें चाय दे रहा था। फिर हम वापस गए। पर्वत पर ट्रैफिक था। इसलिए हमने गाडी रोकदी थी। लोग सड़क पर बात कर रहे थे। ३० मिनट बाद हम फिर चल पड़े।
वानिस

It wasn't long before we were completely drenched and feeling rather chilly, so we ducked into another makeshift restaurant. They kindly gave us chai and allowed us to warm up before we returned to our car to begin the treacherous drive back down the mountain. Rain has a tendency to slow things down around here, and sure enough, we found ourselves in a complete standstill in traffic on the little mountain road. However, instead of grumpily sitting in their cars trying impatiently to inch their way down the mountain, people simply parked their cars in the middle of the road and went outside for a chat. No one was in any hurry to return to the city and all were thoroughly content to spend a half hour lounging on the rocks beside the road.

While I really saw very little of Sinhagad Fort, I will always have a very vivid memory of that afternoon on the mountain. The tents, the food, the monsoon, the fog, the green, the relaxed attitude of the people on the mountain road all formed a truly unforgettable experience.

My Family Caesar Tobar Acosta



After an hour long drive, my family and I arrived at the home of my aunt and uncle. Initially I did not know how many people were going to be there because they said that some people were there, but I was delighted to see that the family was there. This made me feel more at home because I was unable to contact my family in New York. Normally, I would be with my family or a group of my friends who I treated like family (a family who I could choose). Upon seeing that the entire family was there, I was filled with jubilation. After everybody introduced themselves, we sat and conversed with each other; the grandmother asked me if I was hungry. I could see that they themselves were famished, but they did not want to eat until I

said that we could eat. They explained to me that the guest is God, so when the guest wanted to eat, people would accommodate the guest and serve him or her. I was served a ton of food, as usual, but this food was a superb change from the vegetarian option that I normally would have for dinner. After having a delicious meal, we all proceeded to play cricket, and even though I did not know how to play, they taught me how to bowl and bat. This was a unique experience because I was playing cricket in the middle of the street with adults. I could never get that opportunity in New York City due to the following reasons: The drivers would be irritated seeing people playing on the streets, Adults rarely played with teenagers where I am from, and Cricket is not a major sport. I see it as a bonding experience because I was not treated like a guest; I was treated like any other family member. To conclude this stupendous bonding experience, we celebrated the sixth anniversary of my aunt and uncle's wedding. It reminded me of home because of the fashion in which they celebrated; it was filled with conversation and family. They gave me first kurta since I did not have one. This family outing was the most memorable way of bonding because it included all of the family, sports and a lot of conversation.

मेरे दोस्त और मैं भारत में रहते हैं। हमें
भारत पसंद है।
मैं पूछता था "भारतीय अच्छे क्यों हैं?" लोग
केहते थे "अतिथि देवो भवो। भगवान मन में जिते।"
मेने यहाँ वही देख। मेरा परिवार और मैं मौसी
की घर गये थे। मैं मौसी के परिवार से मिला।
बाद में हम सबने लज्जदार खाना खाया। बाद में
हम सब क्रिकेट खेलने गये। हम क्रिकेट का गेंद
खारदते थे हैं। हम सब क्रिकेट खेलते थे। मुझे क्रिकेट
पसंद है।
सेसा

Family means a lot to me, and I enjoyed each moment that I spent with my host family.

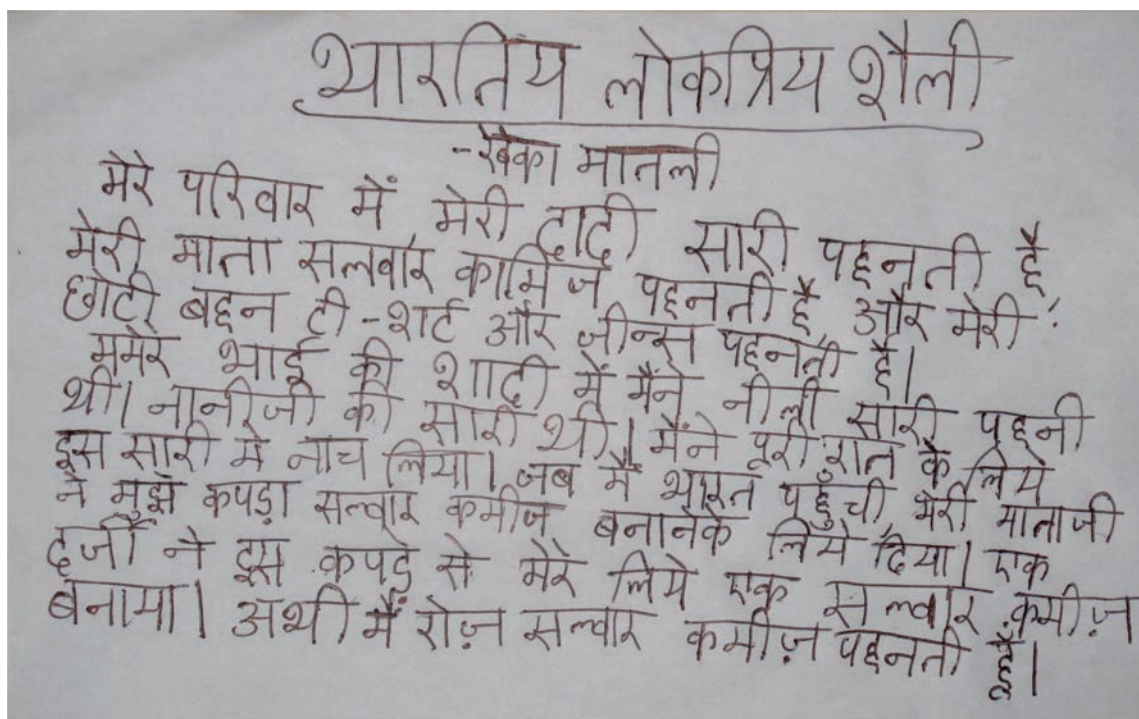




Modern Indian fashion is a blend of tradition and urbanization. Within my host-family alone, three distinct styles representing the different trends of each generation emerge. My host-grandmother dons the timeless sari day in and day out while my host-mom has traded in her sari for the more casual salwar kameez and my host-sister has hung up her dupatta in exchange for the jeans and t-shirts trademark of westernization. However much typical western attire has monopolized the wear of Indian men in their daily lives, much of the rich tradition of Indian dress still survives and thrives within the trends of women clothing.

When I arrived in India, my host-mother gave me my first of many gifts – the fabric to make a salwar kameez with a matching dupatta. Though salwar kameez are common Indian attire, I had never seen one before. When my mother took me to a tailor to craft the raw materials into the final product, I had no idea what I was getting until a few days later when we picked up the finished outfit. The floral print that had before been a bundle of fabric was now a slim shift that fell to about my knees. The bright blue satin had been stitched into leggings, the kameez of the salwar kameez. The dupatta complimented both fabulously, wrapping around my neck and falling gracefully to about my waist. I looked like a stylish Indian woman, even if it was only in apparel.

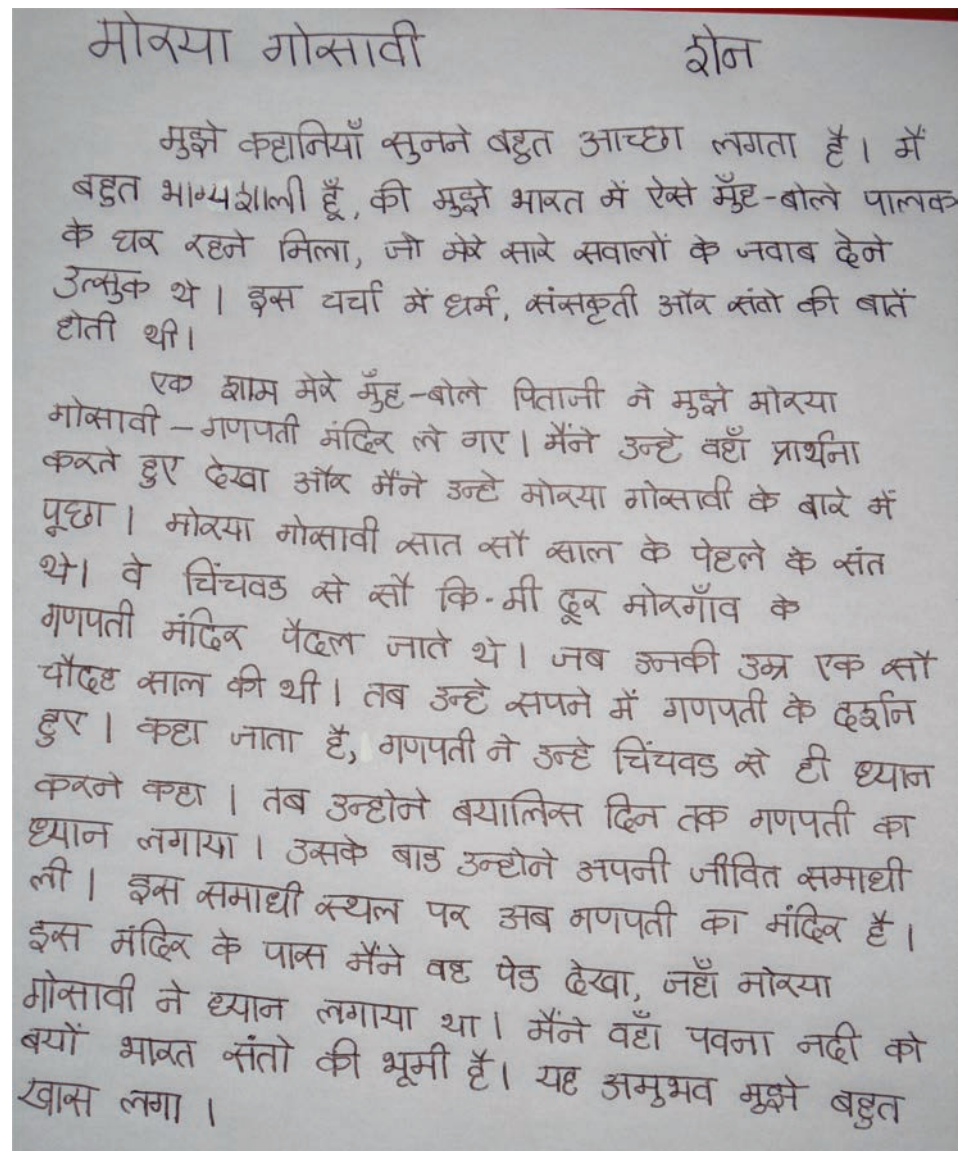
Later during my exchange I was invited to attend the wedding of my host-mother's cousin's wedding and there I was wrapped up in the traditional attire of Indian women – the sari. My host-grandmother brought an extra sari along for me to wear and spent about twenty minutes getting me into the blouse and petticoat then wrapping me in layer upon layer of the gossamer material, before tucking it into place and casting the remaining fabric stylishly over my shoulder. While I looked nowhere near as stunning or as graceful as the bride in her brilliantly red sari, I looked like one of the family waddling around clumsily, bundled up in layers of blue satin.





I have always been fascinated by the stories which people have to tell whether they are personal, historical, or explanatory. I have been utterly fortunate to have been placed with knowledgeable host parents who are thrilled to answer my every query. Some of our most intriguing conversations have centered on Indian culture and religion: customs, gods, and saints—as my host parents have told me, India is known as the “land of saints”.

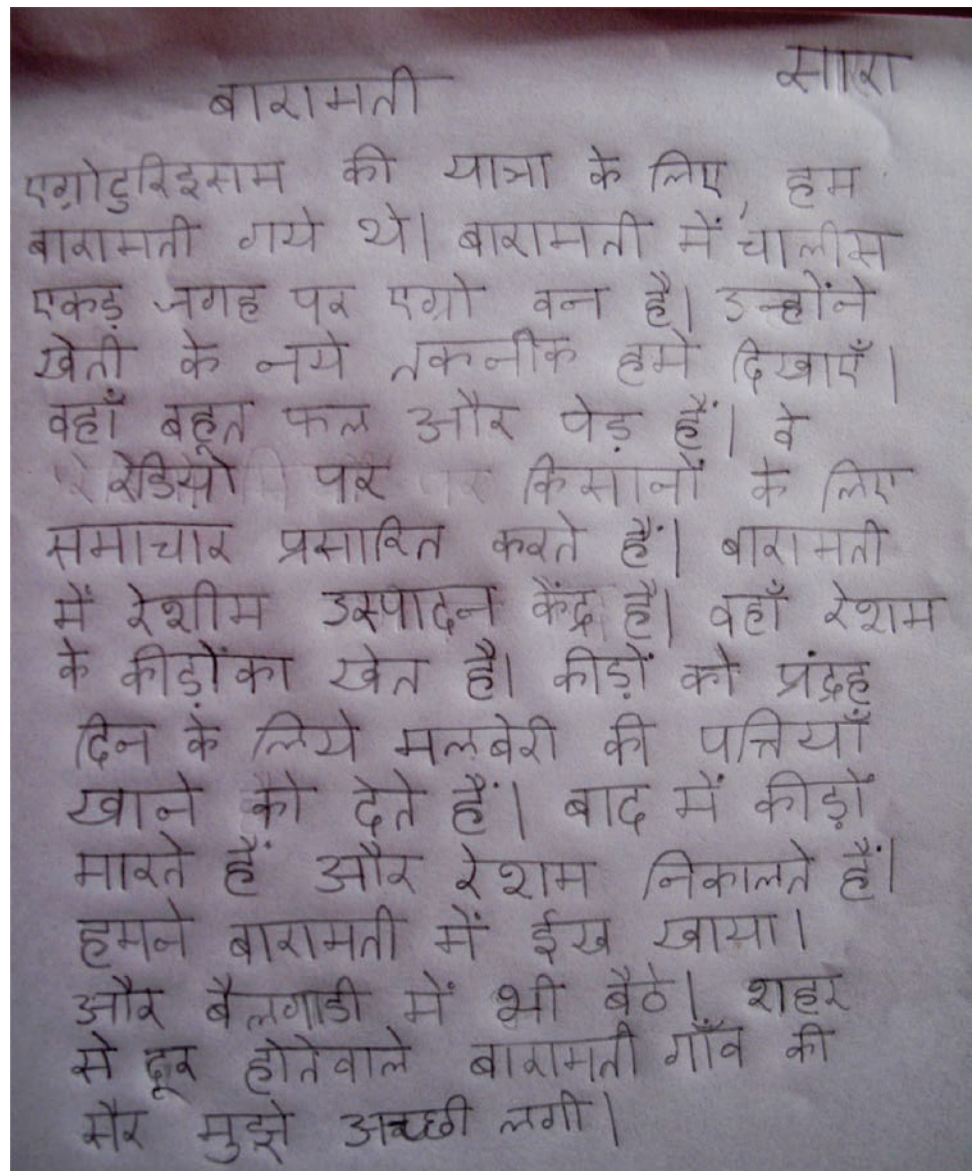
One night, my host father took me to the local Ganpati temple (Ganpati is the name of the Hindu god Ganesha in Marathi, the local language). As we walked around the grounds, I watched him pray to the god and to the saint Morya Gosavi. Curious, I asked my host father about Morya: he was one of Ganpati's most devout supporters who lived 700 years ago. Until the age of 114, he would walk 100 km to a temple to worship Ganpati. At this point, Ganpati came to the old saint in a dream and said that he would visit Morya at his home. For 42 days, Morya meditated by the river before burying himself alive, a practice in which an individual completely absorbs their own consciousness at their time of death (known as samadi). The Ganpati temple was built around Morya Gosavi's tomb. Walking about, I observed the intricate architecture, colorful painting, and the offerings adorning the tomb and the tombs of 6 of his relatives. Along the path leading around the temple stands a tree, believed to be the one under which Morya meditated. The Pavana river, sparkling in the moonlight, was visible through holes in the temple walls. In those moments, the simplistic beauty, gentle ringing of a bell as people entered the temple, and rich history woven into my host father's words reminded me why India now holds such a special place in my





For our agro tourism trip, we visited Baramati. Baramati is a 40 acre farm that teaches new agricultural practices to farmers. After learning the sustainable techniques at Baramati, the farmers can apply what they learned to their own farm. We toured the farm, walking on a dirt path that wove in and out of exotic fruit trees. The many shades of green seemed even more vibrant under the overcast sky. A light guava fragrance filled the air as we learned about different grafting techniques. We were led to an open air shelter with a thatch roof, while cow's kettle bells ran from a distant field. There we learned about Baramati's radio tower that broadcasts scientific and agricultural news to farmers. Baramati also contains a silkworm farm. Hundreds of thousands of silkworms, resting on the three tiered structure, feasted on

leaves. After eating for fifteen days, they make a cocoon. Then the worm is killed and the silk is harvested and processed. I bought a gorgeous sky blue and salmon orange silk piece at the little shop there. After each being given a six inch stick of raw sugar cane, our group attempted to eat them. Like a true local, I shucked the sugarcane with my canine teeth and took a bite of the tough pulp that remained. After chewing all the juice out, I spit the pulp onto the ground. It reminded me of eating watermelon and spitting out the seeds with an Indian twist. It was the perfect end to an amazing day. Baramati was a wonderful break from the city life of India and it was one of my favorite trips.



My Host Family

Romic Aevaz



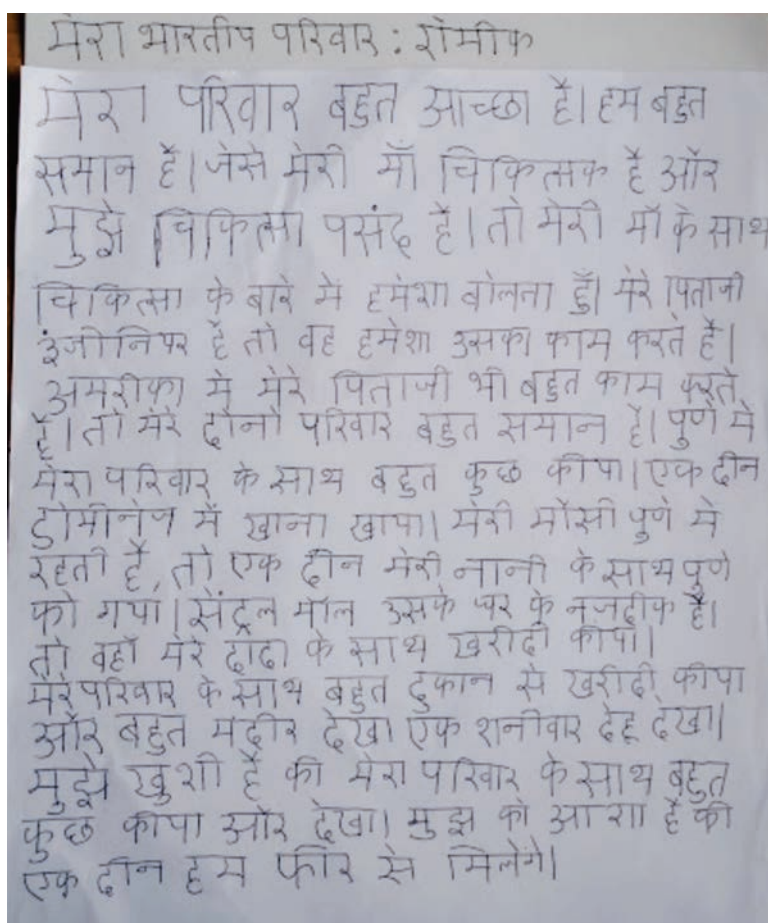
It feels as though just yesterday I was finishing my school year when I received an email with my host family information from NSLIY. I was so thrilled to finally be able to know whom I would be staying with for almost two months thousands of miles away! As we began our first correspondences via email, I eagerly counted every day of the two weeks remaining until I departed for India.

When we finally met at our opening ceremony, I immediately felt that I was a part of the family. As I spent more time with my family, I began to see the similarities between us. Having had a long time interest in medicine, I thoroughly enjoyed talking about working in the medical field with my mother who happened to be a doctor herself! Having these conversations and even seeing one of the clinics she works at allowed me to see medicine from a new perspective in another country.

My host father being an engineer and my brother having a full studies and extra evening classes, my family in India was always busy. Having a busy family in the US, it was interesting to see how a family just like mine carries out their day in India. Despite their hectic schedule, my host family still manages to make time for dinner and quality time together, something my family in the US doesn't often do on weekdays. I hope I can take this experience back to the US and start fitting more family time into our busy schedule.

Along with our similar personalities, one of my favorite experiences with my family has been our outings. Whether I was going out for ice cream, shopping, or trekking through the many hilly parks in Pune, I've gotten to do a lot with my host family. Even my extended family kept me occupied, from sleep overs at my cousin's house to more trips to the mall. My cousins here are all in their 20s, so it

was great being able to have college students to spend time with as well as see how students their age spend their free time in India. My family and I have been able to find so many common mutual interests that have allowed us to build a close bond that will never fade. The experiences I've shared with my family are the ones that I will carry with me forever. It is amazing just how much my family and I have been able to bond in the 6 weeks that I have been in India. They truly made the difference between staying in a house in India, and a *home*. Along with staying in touch, I hope we can meet again someday.



A Dancer Challes Foley

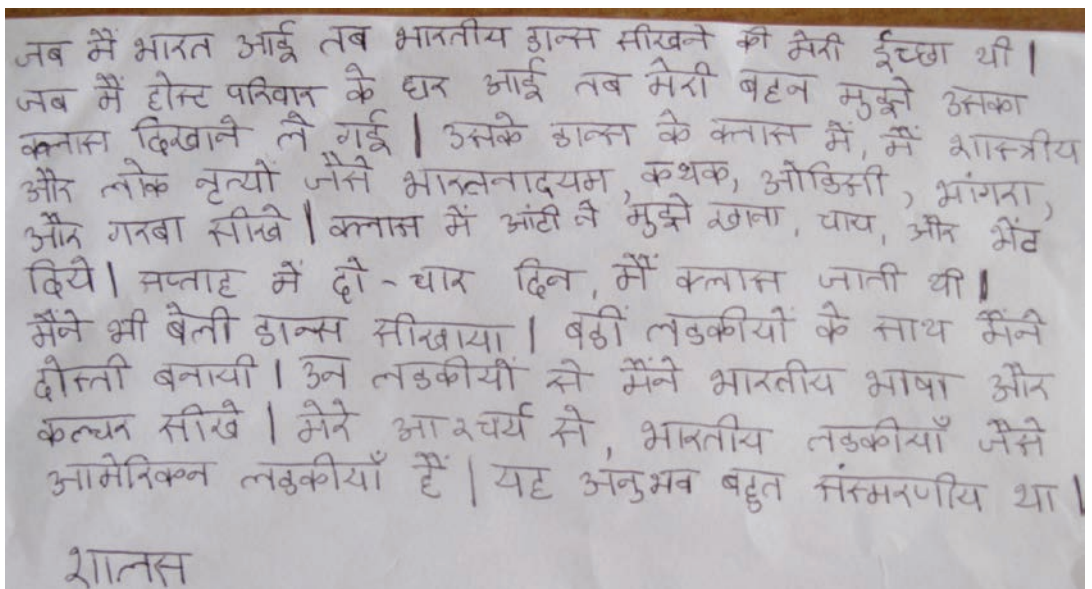


As a dancer, the aspect of Indian culture that I was most looking forward to was the classical and folk dances. In America, I had taken a few lessons, but I knew that I wanted to experience dance instruction at the place where those dances originated. To my surprise and delight, soon after my arrival, my host sister invited me to her dance class. Thrilled to finally experience an authentic Indian dance class, I enthusiastically accepted. Upon my arrival to the dance class, the head teacher, or "Auntie" as we call her, her daughter, also a dance teacher, and all of the students welcomed me with open arms. I was then overcome with joy and surprise as they proceeded to give me food, chai, and gifts and ask me a plethora of questions. From that day forward, I attended dance

class 2 – 4 times a week to learn basic steps and routines for Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Bhangra, and Garba. Not only did I learn traditional Indian dances, but I also had the opportunity to teach belly dance, the style which I spend much of my time studying, practicing, and performing, to the older girls of the class. In the class, I taught them basic movements and one full routine which they will later perform.

In each class, I had a rare opportunity to experience a language and cultural exchange with Indian girls who were my age. We learned so much from each other, laughed at our mistakes, and had many conversations during the class. The most interesting and difficult part of the classes was how we all tried to adapt ourselves to the new dance styles, me, to Indian classical and folk dances and them, to belly dance. Whether it was learning their "namaskar" or how to do proper "thoomkas," I enjoyed every aspect of my dance learning experience. Also, it was intriguing spending time with teenagers in India and learning how similar their personalities and interactions are to those of American teenagers. Forming friendships with my teacher and the students and joking around with them while simultaneously studying dance became one of the highlights of my experience in India.

Teaching and learning dance, with girls my age in India was such an unbelievably fun and educational experience. Since I otherwise did not have such an opportunity, the dance classes served as my outlet for much of my



language and cultural learning. I will truly miss attending the dance class every week, but I will forever cherish my memories of the classes and the people and will keep all of the knowledge that I acquired from my teachers and friends in my memory.

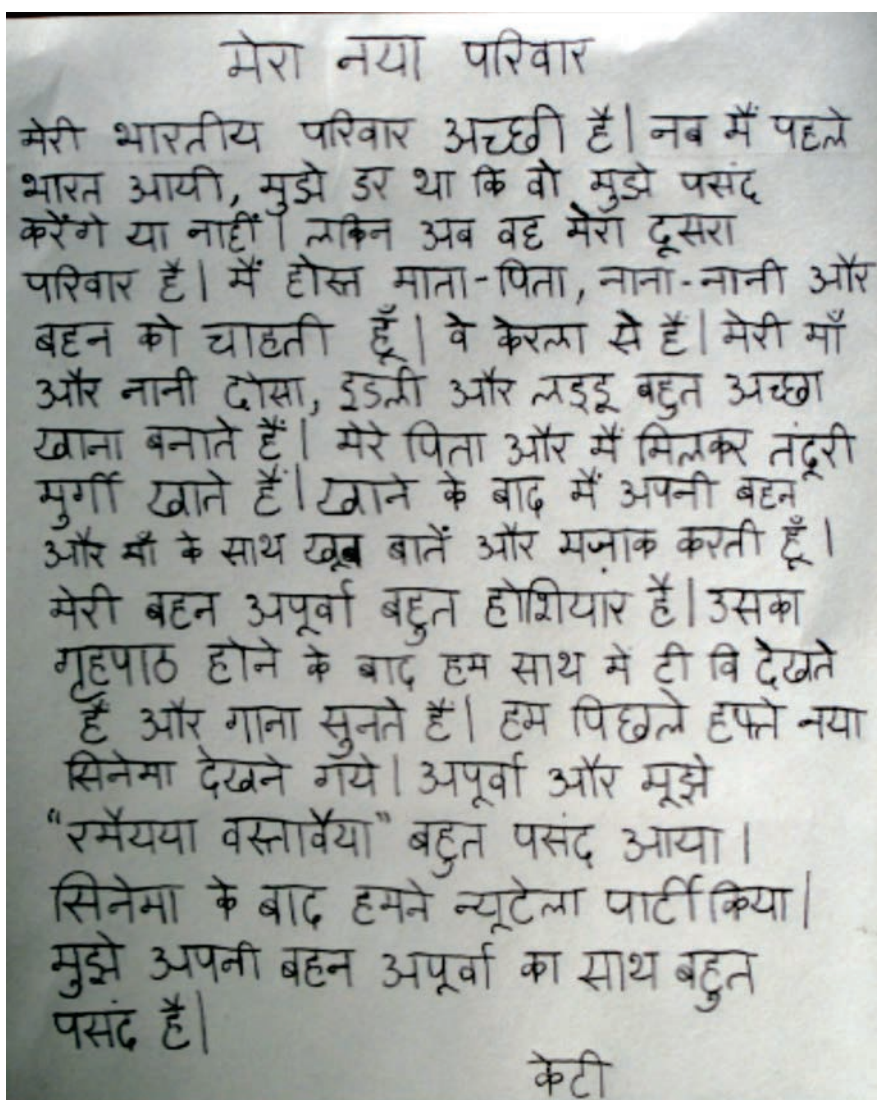
My New Family Katie Thomson



Before coming to India, one of my biggest fears was that I wouldn't get along with my host family. However, I'm lucky that I was matched with the Kumars. They're a very loving and supportive family, and they helped me adapt very quickly and enjoy my time here in India. I have host parents, grandparents and a 13-year-old host sister. They are from Kerala, a state in South India, so my Auntie and Amama (my host mom and grandmother) make amazing South Indian food like dosa and idli. From my very first night here, Auntie and Amama have made sure that I like all of the food and that I always have plenty to eat. Their worst fear is for me to lose weight while I'm on this trip, so they always try to give me extra helpings!

My host dad and I are the only non-vegetarians in the family, but every week he makes sure to buy some chicken lollipops (or chicken wings) for us. After dinner each night, my host mom, sister and I sit up talking and laughing. My host sister, Apurva, is very smart and wants to be a doctor. She studies for hours every night, but when she's finished we have fun talking, watching TV and listening to Bollywood music. Last Friday, we all went to see the newest Bollywood movie, "Ramaiya Vastavaiya". My sister and I both loved the movie, especially the lead actor, Girish Kumar. After we got home from the movie, Apurva and I had a midnight Nutella party and watched interviews with our new favorite actor. Apurva and I are only children, so we both enjoy having a sister. Although I feel homesick for my own family sometimes, I'm so glad that I have my host family. Whether my Auntie is

joking around while helping me with homework or my Amama and Achacha smile and clap and tell me "accha job!" when I'm trying to tell them about my day in Hindi, my host family has been so encouraging and has made me feel so at home. I really didn't have anything to worry about before coming to India, because my host family has become more like a second family.



Rain, Rain, Rain Jaya Aiyer



smiles and points to the rain.

"In US you say, 'Rain, rain go away. Come again another day.' But here, we ask the rain to come. We ask the rain to bring us lots of pani (water)." She pauses, looking towards the building where the young girls are singing. She looks back at me, "Aap samajh gayi? (You understand?)" I nod and smile. I wonder why in the US we don't value the rain like we do in India. It brings drinking water, clears the air, and allows for growth. I look out to the rain droplets that have become heavier and heavier as the girls sing and I take a deep breathe in. Although it has rained almost every day since my arrival in Pune, there is a feeling of calmness that comes with the heavy monsoons.

I look to the neighboring building and can see the shapes of 2 girls standing at the windowsill. I can still hear their poem as the rain continues to fall, and I am able to understand the importance of the wet, damp, annoying, and beautiful monsoon season.

My host mom and I are sitting near the bike as the rain falls down. I take my hand out from my rain jacket's pocket and feel the cold raindrops hit my warm hand. Aunty smiles and tells me that we'll be able to leave once the rain stops. I nod my head and look down. Will the rain ever stop?

I adjust my dupatta. The knot behind my head that protects me from pollution has become loose. As I turn to ask Aunty about her day, I hear children singing something in Marathi. I listen for a bit, and then ask Aunty what the girls are singing about. She

बारीश, बारीश, बारीश - जया अय्यर

एक दिन, मैं और मेरी होस्ट माँ हम बारीश के बारे में बात कर रहे थे। उस दिन, बहुत बारीश थी। हम पार्किंग में बैठ कर बातें कर रहे थे बाज़ु के इमारत में दो छोटे बच्चे बारीश की कविता गा रहे थे। मेरी होस्ट माँ ने मुझे बताया की यह कविता बारीश के ऊपर है। अमेरिका में, हम बारीश को जानने के लीये कहते हैं पर भारत में बारीश को बुलाये हैं। भारत कृषीप्रधान देश है इसलिये यहाँ बारीश महत्वपूर्ण है। बारीश बहुत अच्छी है, और अभी मुझे बारीश पसंद अने लगी है।

On Indian Weddings

Liz Nuñez



As diverse as Indian culture, customs and celebrations are across the country, one commonality is clear: weddings are almost always full of color, music, food, and traditions. Weddings, festivals celebrating the joining in marriage of two people and their families, vary largely by state, caste, and family. I had the pleasure of attending two very different weddings during my stay in Pune. One was a 2-day Gujarati wedding in Mumbai consisting of a Sangeet the first night and the actual wedding event the following day. The second wedding was a traditional Maharashtrian village wedding followed by a post-wedding reception a week later. The Sangeet is essentially a celebration of dance and music, where family members, along with the bride and groom themselves can perform choreographed dances for the merriment of all.

It is indeed a fun event mostly dominated by a large selection of the latest upbeat Bollywood songs and a large crowd dancing the movie's choreography. The wedding event itself encompasses a myriad of religious and cultural customs with many important and detailed meanings. It was an incredibly grand event full of glamour, colors, food and good cheer. The Maharashtrian wedding was a much more public and slightly less grand event than the first one. It was mostly centered on inviting the most of the village residents of both the groom and bride, disallowing for the grandeur that a more private celebration could have offered. Nonetheless, the wedding encompassed all of the universal Hindu traditions essential to the marital union, as well as uniquely Maharashtrian characteristics, such as starting from early in the morning and lasting until late at night. In all, I had the honor to observe first-hand one of the most important, sacred, and highly celebrated Indian traditions. Indian weddings are stunning events full of great food, colors, music, dancing, religious and cultural customs, and overall happiness for the newlywed couple.

लिस नुनेज़

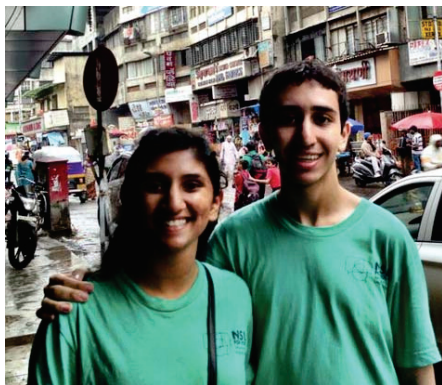
भारतीय शादी

भारत में, अलग-अलग राज्य हैं यहाँ पर हर राज्य में अलग-अलग तरीके से शादी होती है। शादी के दिन, अलग-अलग प्रकार के, भोजन बनाया जाता है मिठाईयाँ बनायी जाती हैं और शादी के समय शहनाई भी बजाई जाती है। लोग रंग बिरंग कपड़े और सोना और हीरे के ग्रहने पहनते हैं। कई महीने पहले से ही शादी की तैयारी की जाती है। शादी से पहले कुछ रीति-रिवाज किये जाते हैं। जैसे की - संगीत, मेहेदी, हल्दी, इत्यादी।

यदि लड़की की शादी है तो उसे कन्या धन के रूप में उसे ससुरालीक वस्तु दी जाती है। यहाँ शादी के बाद (भारत) मुझे भी एक मौका मिला गुजराती और महाराष्ट्रियन विवाह (शादी) देखने का जिसमे मुझे गुजराती शादी में बहुत आनंद

The Basil Garden

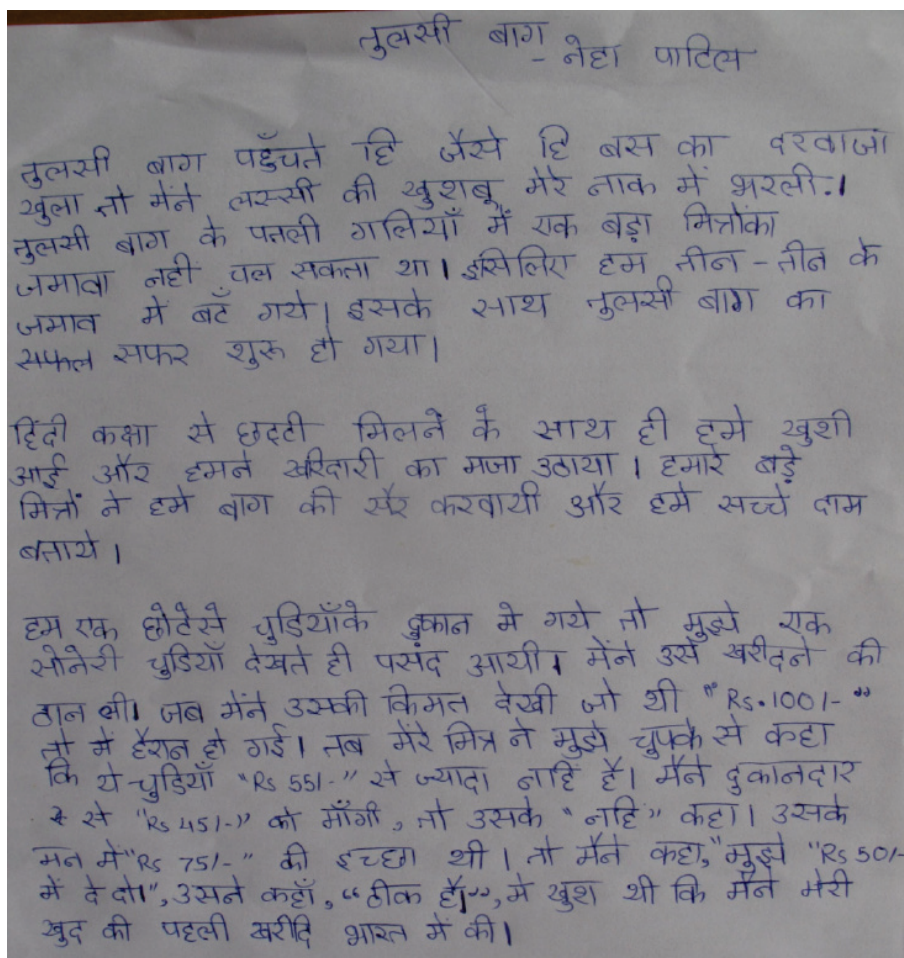
Neha Patil



As the bus doors opened to the fresh aroma of Tulsi Baag, I stepped out into the mud and the smells of the glorious monsoon and sweet lassi filled my nostrils. Taking a look around, I saw radiant dresses and sparkling traditional gowns line the roadside stalls. Tulsi Baag, a local Pune market, is a common attraction for tourists as well as locals due to its rich clothing, jewelry, bhagavan moorthis (God statues), incredible snacks and much more. Walking around in a large group of 16 Americans was not ideal for the narrow and crowded gaalis (streets) of Tulsi Baag, so we split into smaller groups of 3 and began our journey.

Through the mucky streets of the busy market, the pouring rain soaked up our clothing as we moved with the bheed (crowd) on the streets. Feeling lost, yet overjoyed that we were out of Hindi class, we began bargaining our way through the shops and stalls. Our local college friends guided us around Tulsi Baag and gave us advice on acceptable prices for certain items, since we, as foreigners, were willing to pay full price for these appealing treasures. The small moorthis (statues) of Ganesh, countless kurtas and sarees, food, bangles, and all the surroundings proved that we were really in Pune.

As we entered a small bangle shop, I found a set of beautiful gold colored bangles which I immediately fell in love with. After trying them on several times and jingling them like I've seen in countless Bollywood movies, I decided to purchase them. Taking a quick glance at the price, I was astonished to see that they were 100 rupees. From talking to my college friends, they quietly told me that these bangles were not worth more than 55 rupees. I sternly told the shopkeeper, "Rs35". "Nahi" he replied, and offered Rs75. "Nahi fir Rs50 de do." (No, then give me it for Rs50.) "Thik hai" (Okay). Suddenly I felt like a local, as though I was unstoppable and capable to bargain and speak in Hindi independently.



Indian Diversity

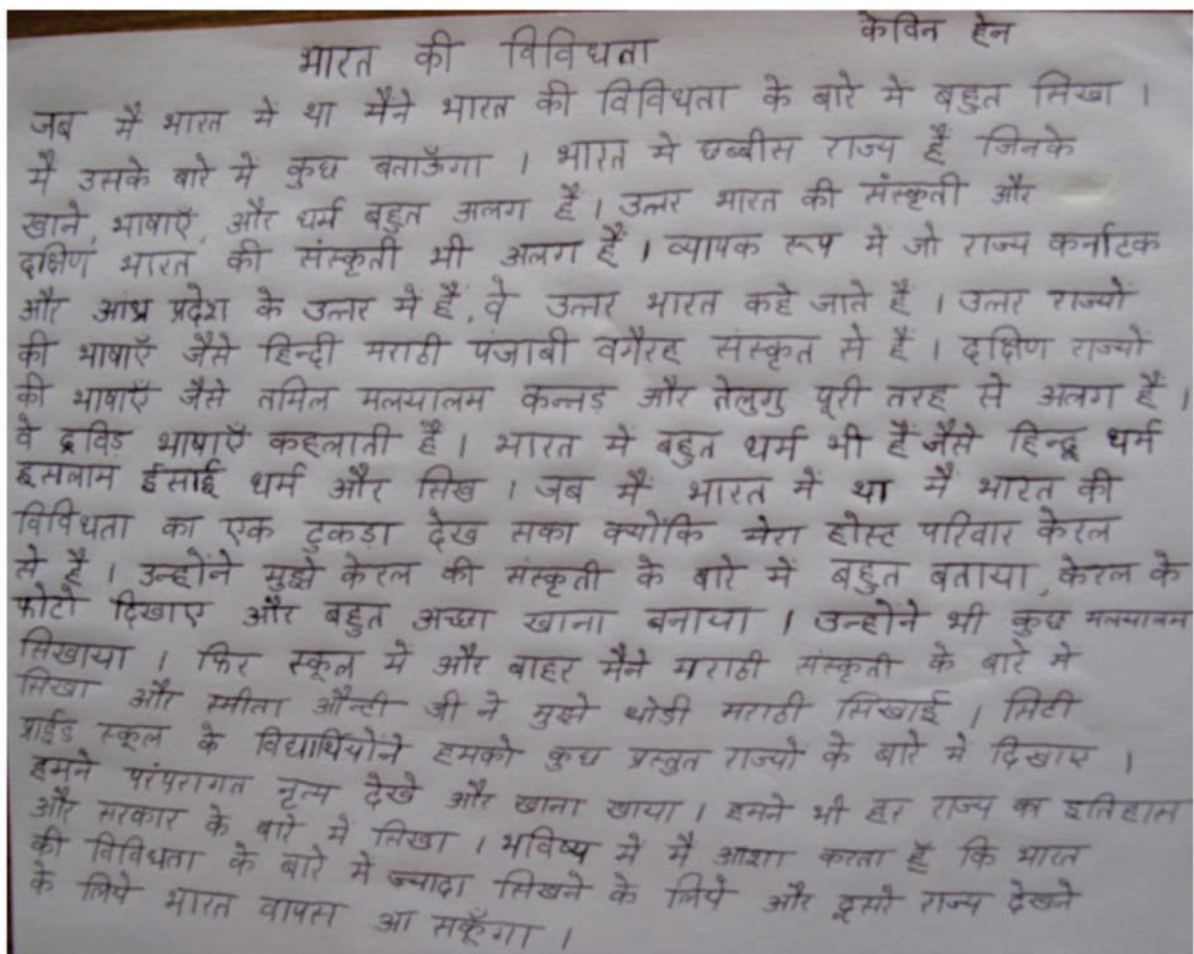
Kevin Hayne



During my time in India I learned a lot about India's great diversity. There are 26 states in India which differ in food, language, and religion. The cultures of the north and South India are very different. Generally, all of the states north of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are considered North Indian. The languages spoken in the Northern states, such as Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, etc. are of the Sanskrit origin. The languages spoken in South India such as Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Telugu form the Dravidian language family which is completely different. Many

religions are also practiced in India such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism.

During my stay in India, I was able to experience a piece of India's diversity because my host family is from Kerala. They told me a lot about the culture of Kerala, showed me pictures of Kerala, and prepared delicious food. They also taught me a little Malayalam. Then, in school and on outings I learned about Maharashtra culture and Smitha Auntyji taught me a little Marathi. The City Pride School students also showed us their presentation on some of India's states. We watched performances of traditional dance forms and ate typical food. We also learned about the history and government of each state. In the future I hope to be able to return to India to learn more about India's diversity and see more of India's many states.

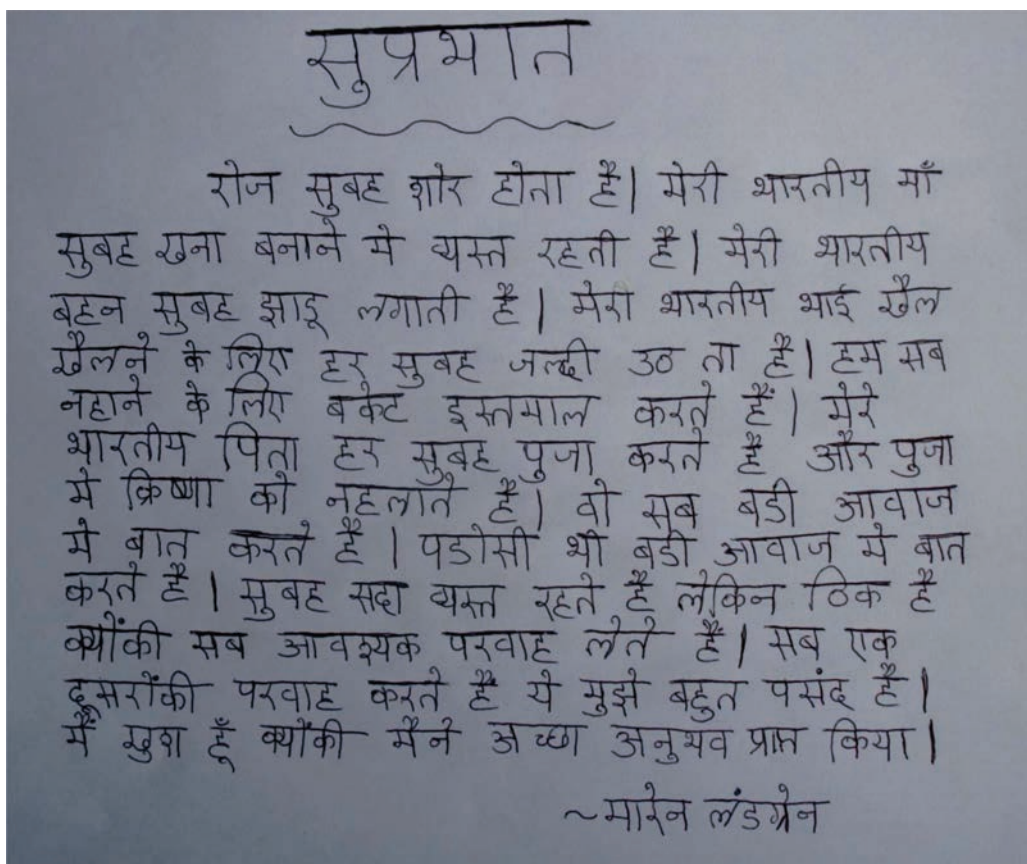




Each morning I wake up to the sounds of a busy neighborhood- pots clang, babies cry, cars honk their horns. Life starts early here, and I quickly learn the hectic caring manner of my host family. Their loving interconnectedness even shows before daybreak.

Part of the reason the family wakes up so early is that so much has to be done in order to begin the day. By the time I wake up, I can already smell the day's lunch. My host mom prepares it freshly each morning, so my host dad and brother can pack it for work/school. Everyone must bathe (using the water-saving bucket shower!), prepare themselves for the day, and perform the morning Puja. My host dad even bathes the idols in the household after he has completed his own bathe- this is part of the Puja. My host sister sweeps the floor every morning to prepare it for its daily washing while my host brother gets ready for morning sports at school. The business is never ending- it's a theme throughout the neighborhood. I can always hear people washing dishes, talking loudly, and preparing food.

What I appreciate about my Indian home is that even though everyone busies themselves with their own morning routine, they find time to ensure that each person in the house is comfortable and has what they need for the day. My host mom packs the family's food, makes them tea, and gently wakes us all up (not that you really need an alarm in this busy house). The entire family makes sure that I have hot water for my bath and get out the door okay. In fact, the neighbor girls often see me off to school as well. It's encouraging to see how caring everyone is. I feel privileged to have lived in this loud, loving community.



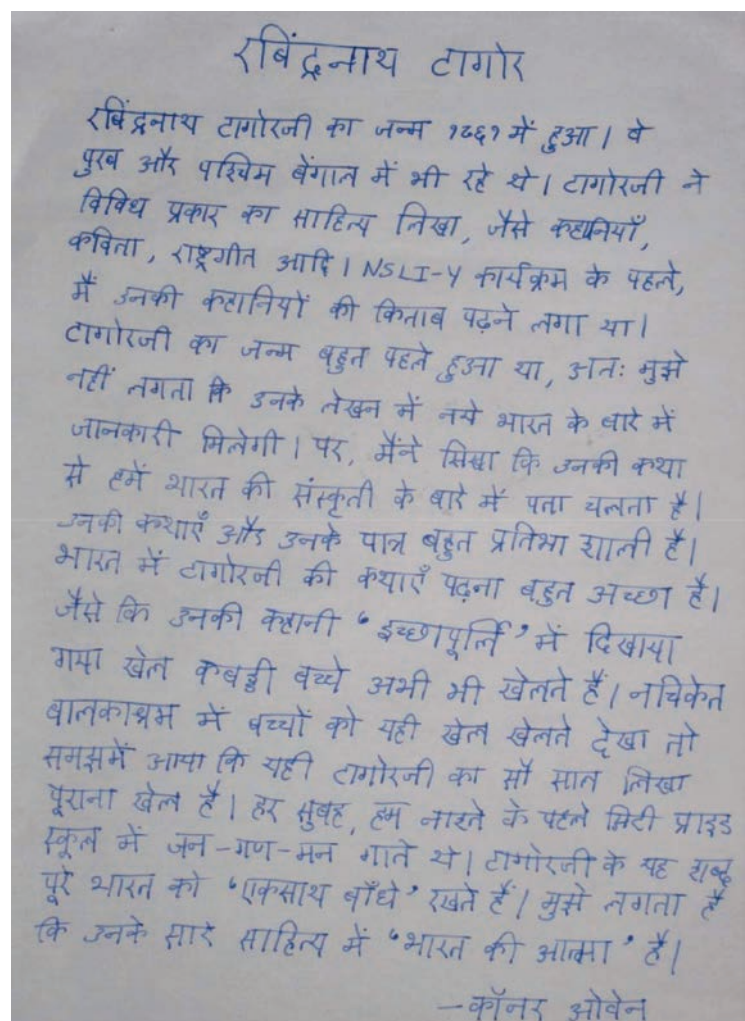
Rabindrinath Tagore Connor Owen



Rabindrinath Tagore was born in 1861 and grew up in what is now West and East Bengal, India. Tagore is best known for his writing of various styles: short stories, novels, plays, essays, poems, and even the Indian national anthem. Shortly before this program, I began reading Tagore as a sort of primer to Indian culture. Tagore being born over 100 years ago, I did not exactly expect his writing to teach me much about modern India, but rather the distant motherland of his time. However, I learned that his works reflect the Indian culture, both of his time, and of what currently exists. His characters and his stories display various components of the Indian culture, including hospitality, arranged marriage, nature, gender roles, religion, and more, set against a rural Indian backdrop, sometimes criticizing, sometimes reflecting, sometimes celebrating. All of his stories have more than what meets the eye, with powerful characters conveyed in just a short few pages. Tagore's deep connection to Indian culture and nature is seen in the Indian national anthem, Jun-Gun-Mun, in which he poetically writes of the "Dispenser of India's destiny."

Reading Tagore during my time in India has been an enlightening experience. There is the contrast both in time and space in that the stories were written before independence, before our modern technology, and in a different state than Maharashtra (the program location); nevertheless, the common threads of Indian culture have transcended those barriers and have helped me to understand what brings these diverse people of India together together in one nation. For example, in Tagore's short story Wishes Granted, he describes a scene in which a child plays the game kapati--an indigenous game to India--with his friends. For part of our program, we volunteer at an orphanage, Nachiket. There, I had to find a game to play outside with the children; the kids mentioned a game and all immediately began playing. Suddenly, I recognized that the game was kapati, the same children's game that Tagore had written about over 100 years ago on the opposite side of India.

Every morning, when we are waiting for breakfast at City Pride School, we stand at attention for the playing of the national anthem. We hear the words of Tagore, which have a binding effect not only on our school, but also the whole India. Such are all works of Tagore, not just the national anthem. Tagore created a literary world overflowing with tragedy and beauty, drawing inspiration from his upbringing in India. Despite any differences in time or geography, the spirit of India Tagore captured remains to this day.



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