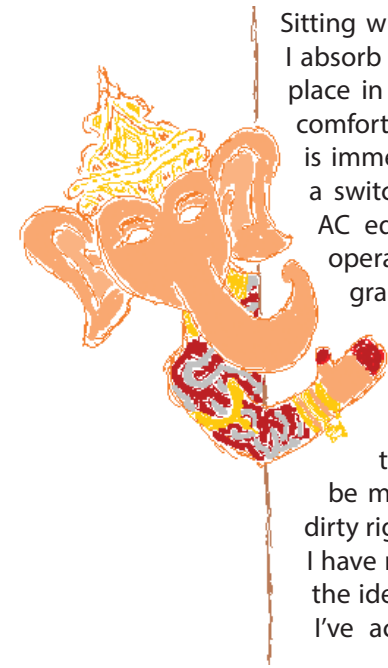


Sensational India

Saritha Tirumalasetty



Sitting with the fan at its highest speed, I absorb how different life is here. At my place in the United States, I live a very comfortable life. Any little annoyance is immediately resolved by the turn of a switch. More light? Got it. Too hot? AC equals on. Bored? TV is now in operation. I have definitely taken for granted everything I have there.

Now, being in India, I realize I have never sweated so much in my life—and I'm just sitting around! Not to mention I'm in the city; the village weather must be much worse. I feel so completely dirty right now. However, when I bathe, I have never felt more clean. Maybe it's the idea of cleansing all the impurities I've accumulated. Or maybe it's the sensation of being freshly clean, yet still surrounded by so much dirt.

Playful Ganesha
Saritha Tirumalasetty

I don't mind the accumulation during the day though. I feel like I've melted into the earth. I have blended into the dirt, water, and air and have now become one with the earth. It feels very natural. I would probably hate feeling like this in the U.S. Over there, sitting and sleeping in a pool of your own sweat is not ideal and can be easily remedied. In India, I appreciate each drop of water I get whether it's for drinking or bathing. Each gust of wind whether hot or cold is a relief to my perpetually moist body.

My senses seem to be heightened. India is full of smells. A whiff of curry, smoke, dung, and dirt fill the air at different levels. Usually I would pray that any foul smelling odor not linger on my person as it passed by. Now being a part of this earth, I realize that doesn't matter. The smell passes, and I undertake the scent of the next gust that comes along.

The noise pollution is severely different, but it surprisingly doesn't give me a headache. I'm learning to listen differently. Each word that I want to hear is more difficult to understand through the noise. So each word that I am able to grasp becomes more precious even if the idea being expressed has no meaningful value.

My palate has some growing to do. I thought I could handle spicy food with ease. I was wrong. On the upside, I'm doing much better than expected. I have made it through most of a meal without grabbing a glass of water, a sweet, or

yogurt to satiate my burning tongue. Granted, most of the meal consists of me sniffing and tearing up a little. Each bite is packed full of flavors some sweet and spicy, salty and spicy, sour and spicy, bitter and spicy, warm and spicy, cool and spicy, and just plain spicy.

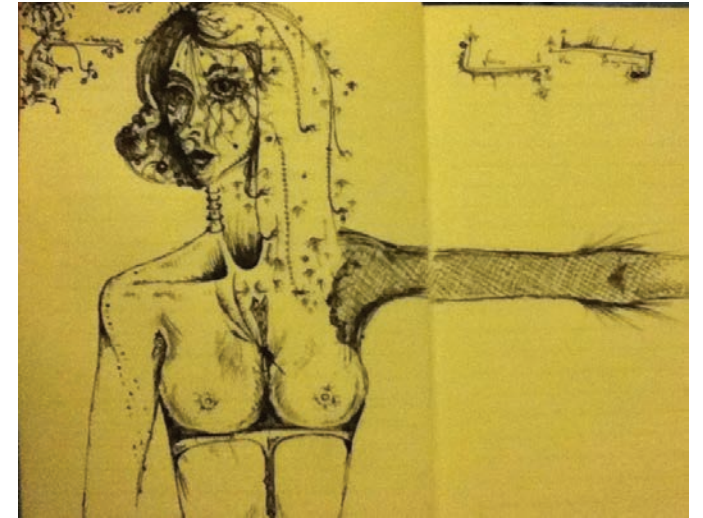
The lighting here is altered also. Instead of the bright lights I'm used to, the natural lighting brings forth earthy hues. My surroundings look more natural, more real. It makes everything seem as though it has sprouted from the earth, including people, clothes, buildings, even cars. It's like there's a place for everything and everything has its place, though anything can move about and still appear as if it has always belonged there.

■ **Saritha Tirumalasetty** is a second year medical student and the current student editor in chief of HEAL. Saritha is from Tallahassee, Florida. She finds comfort in immersing herself in the vibrantly colorful world of the arts. Dancing to striking music, endeavoring the written word, and slowly attempting illustrations has allowed this introvert to express herself. This expression has helped transform her into a person who listens sincerely, cares compassionately, and loves deeply.

The Brink

Eva Bellon

I'm trapped in the base of my mind
I exist only where Atlas holds up my world
I'm sitting in my brainstem trying to claw my way to the front
I feel pain and I hear you
Oh I hear you
But I'm stuck back here
It's a long thin rope in the dark
I try to use it to pull myself out, hand over hand
The more I pull the deeper it seems I stay, an equal force roots me here
I haven't the slightest clue with whom I am playing this tug of war
I never reach full submersion
I don't get swallowed in darkness
I can still feel the rope in my hand
But this place doesn't feel like consciousness



Spirit Guide
Yaowaree Leavell

Dalat City
Trung Tran

