

## Metamorphosis

By Aurvi Sharma

It's like being in a parallel world; it makes me succumb to clichés. This Being In England, this pruned, clean, cold, civilized country. It evokes sharp contrasts. It reduces me to use stereotypes when I try to convey the enormity of the change that ensued after the nine-hour flight from Delhi to London. I am starting to fall into the trap I have always criticised. I am sorely tempted, with each tap on the keys of my laptop, to evoke binaries. India and England, hot and cold, wild and sedate, clamour and quiet, spicy and bland.

I spent three years of my life studying post-colonialism, the concept of nationhood, the politics of language, the history of English Literature, Indian writing in English and so on. I have had a very long drawn involvement with the English language; and with language comes culture. I am one of the bastard-second-generation-children of *Midnight's Children*, who are 'westernized', urban and English speaking. I sniggered at my grandfather's jingoistic brand of nationalism; I dismissed overseas writers glorifying the stereotypical image of India as the land of the *Kamasutra*, beggars, spices, elephants and indulgence.

But this Being In England, it changes everything. It shakes the very roots of my convictions. This country so beautiful, but so tame. The low hills, the trimmed vegetation, the dainty cottages lining the streets. Lace curtains in windows, cats that come and rub against your leg, supermarkets with counters that move and strangers who smile at you all the time. This country of pasties and fish and chips. Comfortable, but so distant. To use a phrase I have always loathed, so 'first world'. It makes me want to evoke the stereotypes. Makes me want to run back to the familiarity of clichés; the spices and heat and dust and the sweat of a million bodies jostling together. It makes me sentimental; I am appalled at myself. I have lost my objectivity.

It also evokes unreality, this being in a parallel world. It makes surreal the world I left behind during the nine-hour flight from Delhi to London. That world seems exotic to me and I feel ashamed. I have lost my footing, confused between what is real and illusory, displaced.