

## Dreaming of the Ganges, Again

**Kate Linden**

The brown-ribboned river wraps the red banks of Punjabi earth and meanders in sluggish rhythm to the random whooping of wild white peacocks and howling monkeys. Silk robes swish in a meditative march along the river's banks. Who walks there? His feet plod the same pace, a slow slipping of toes up and down, down and up, balanced in the stinking muddied track along the soggy edge. A sitar laments atonal chords from a forest grove on the opposite bank and picks deep, deep, and deeper, raising the magic of childhood—chai steaming in cold morning air, the pungent sweetness of syrup-soaked gulab jamun, the arresting pungent smell of curried lentils and salted smoke from chapattis scorching in ground ovens (where bakers sometimes fall and burn forever)

Across the path floats the sweetness of white magnolias, sliced papayas and mango juice blended with a hint of rotting lettuce. Pigs squeal in rancid refuse behind an open-air market. Up on a red-tiled roof a peacock spreads his feathered conceit in blood orange, cobalt and emerald.

The trail twists into the hills, a trampled path edged by yellow marigolds and white jasmine. With one measured stone step at a time, it ascends towards the call of a higher voice, the magnetic Himalayas, their shadowed charm dropped against a misted horizon, an easy merging, like painted hills on canvas, but human feet, like chunky charcoal tools, peel the stone steps away one grain at a time...

Last night's cremation sings the morning air, bone fragments and dust crunch underfoot.

India—cinnamon, red tamarind, cloves and masala dribbling from a beggar's cracked cup like the drip of dew in dry season, flavored with the scent of moldy shirts drying in humid air after last week's rains.

India—a glimmer of splendor through twilight clouds, the fire of lightning without thunder, the jingle of rupees imagined, the pumping of blood through ancient knotted veins, the echo of thousands of years of lashings...

I dangle tired legs over the river's edge  
the sun sets under my feet—  
its ruby reflection in the Ganges.

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**Kaye Linden** is an RN with an MFA in fiction writing and is currently enrolled in a second MFA program where she is specializing in poetry. She is past editor and short fiction editor of the Bacopa Literary Review, current assistant editor for Soundings Review and short fiction teacher at Santa Fe College in Gainesville. Her forty tale magic realism collection about Australia *Tales from Ma's Watering Hole*, her science fiction novel *Prasanga* and her latest tiny story collection *Ten Thousand Miles from Home* are for sale on all store fronts.

Kaye was nominated for a Pushcart prize in 2011. Many of her stories have been published in multiple journals including, but not limited to, The Raven Chronicles, Six Minute Stories, The Linnets Wings, Soundings Review, Bacopa Literary Review, the spring 2012 editions of the Feathered Flounder, Shangri-La Shack and Drunk Monkeys anthology #2.

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