

Judges' Commentary on "Two Worlds"

by

Jayesh Madrecha

**"Two Worlds" won second prize in the University of Pittsburgh's
2006/07 Composition Program Writing Contest**

In "Two Worlds," Jayesh Madrecha responds to an assignment which asks writers to situate their identity in a specific time and place, by exploring the conflicts between his two diverse and often opposing cultural traditions: an Indian village and an affluent American suburb. Madrecha revisits the old world, his birthplace India, through vivid, palpable details about the simultaneous evolution and continuation of Rajnagar's "old way[s] of life." He dwells on the major clash between his parents' old world values about marriage and the free association between the sexes in American youth culture. Skillfully incorporating his parents' voices, he captures, in particular, the distance between them before their marriage through his father's equivocal comment about "not not" liking his prospective wife. Madrecha's light, humorous touch engages readers in serious matters concerning sexual freedom. For example, he considers the freedom for boy children to dress in pink, which he jocularly laments has not, in the U.S., "become 'the new black.'"

Without dismissing the divisions he has experienced, Madrecha concludes by embracing aspects of both of his cultures. The reader witnesses his mind at work on the page trying to figure out how this resolution occurred. Especially valuable in this section is his attempt to transcend his own experience and consider how his particular trajectory from cultural division toward integration is not the paradigm for all bicultural individuals: "This is not the story of all first generation immigrants. Some kids may assimilate and forgo their original cultures; others may remain subdued under their parent's rule." Finally, as he explains his partial rejection and partial embrace of both of his worlds' cultures, he introduces the useful term "self-segregation:" the tendency for Indian immigrants "to cluster together...only amongst themselves." As he continues to

enjoy both “Bhangra” and hip hop music, self-segregation, or sheltering himself in just one world, is precisely what Madrecha decides not to do.

To read the full text of Jayesh Madrecha’s essay [click here](#)