FAREWELL DEAR INDIA

I came to you a cautious stranger,
you greeted me just like a friend;
I came to teach and show,
you taught me with a loving hand,
a warm embrace, or reverent curtsey,
how to stop and smile and listen,
although the words escaped me,
captivated by rainbow saris that glisten
and smells and tastes of AP delicacies.
I lost myself in crowds of merriment,
wedding throngs and pious marchers,
gathering shy or curious stares wherever I went.
I came with apprehension, from memories long ago,
of Old Delhi miseries tearing at my heart;
yet you showed me hope and strength
is possible, no matter how low in life you start.
I feared I would not survive; yet modeled your
courage, amidst the anguish and the pain,
your children’s eyes and smiles still haunting me,
as I dream of when we’ll meet again.
I longed to learn the melody of your speech,
to know each face by name, to fully integrate;
yet lost myself to frenzied schedules, objectives and reports,
knowing time the pain of opportunity lost can surely not abate.
I came to you a stranger. I now have gained true friends,
learned much more than the little that I taught,
the sweet and cherished memories of each day
will fill my soul and empty coffers that I brought.

Michael J. Primiani
MY LITTLE INDIA TREASURES

how I miss those dark mysterious eyes,
forever beautiful in their multitude of shapes,
so serious, cautious, watching my every move
as I pretend not to notice their growing confidence,
until, opening like sunflowers before me,
they burst into cheerful smiles, long before their lips
likewise confirm their joy
at my interest and interaction, conveyed by my own smiles
deep within my eyes, my heart and upon my grinning lips,
triumphantly freezing such wondrous visages
or eternalizing their giggles in my videos and films;
moments frozen between us and shared with equal joy,
they at seeing such an oddity partaking of their simple frolics
and I, enriched beyond words, at finding such treasures,
forever grateful they have let me into their world;
while I struggle to block out their nakedness,
the scar-torn bleeding feet,
the tautness of their skin on washboard ribs,
the helpless clinging of a tottering sibling wondering, bewildered,
half hidden behind the giant's skeleton frame
of the five-year old protector,
as I too catch myself from tottering over,
dizzy by the endless spectacle of beauty and misery all around me,
helpless to alter their destiny,
except perhaps but for a fleeting moment,
when we smiled, our eyes dancing blissfully together.
TRAIN MEMORIES OF ANDHRA PRADESH

I marvel at their shadows,
Silent sentinels on guard
As we glide by in the glowing morning redness,
Their alert silhouette against the Vizag hills,
Or watch them disappear in darkness,
Lulled by the rhythmic swaying of the Godavari Express,
As Vijayawada slips away
Behind these silent sentinels they call palms;
I thrill at the endless shades and textures
Of rich patchwork greens,
The golden sheen, the naked stubble,
The haunting greyness
Of paddy fields awaiting another planting,
And watch my mighty sentinels
Guard each phase in turn, as the seasons move;
I gaze in awe across the morning mists,
As they melt against the advancing radiance
Of Godavari sunshine playing hide-and-seek
Between the many hills that ring these lovely cities,
Purposefully,
Like a Hyderabad necklace of precious pearls
Adorning the valleys and cities,
As do pearl necklaces the lovely necks of Andhra beauties;
I march to an unseen drummer’s beat
On congas of steel and wood and gravel,
From village onto village, peeking, marveling,
Making memories that I long will cherish.
In Praise of HASH

They tell me you do HASH and defy the law,
riskening severe whippings, even jail if the Mutthawa saw,
as Abayas fly off..... revealing savoury flesh,
while grateful men their eyes refresh....!
Thus, we know you're a HASHER through and true,
for in this forsaken place you know just what to do.
There are those who come to fulfill their dreams,
while others want to wade in bygone streams;
There is Taffy, who lives for his skin to bare,
and Juliette who simply loves to share;
then there's Ali who runs and runs,
trying to kick poor Saleem's buns.
HASH is surely for both young and old,
Such as Rai or "Animal" and her friends so bold
and countless more too numerous to name,
who come for neither gains nor fame;
Some scour the land for fossils here and there,
others ponder what type of life could have been out there!
HASH means happiness and good cheer,
even if there is ZERO alcohol in the beer;
HASH has neither land nor borders in its way;
but simply demands a positive attitude for you to stay;
It has no "Rules" save for the Mutthawa's whom we fear,
whether he is not in sight or very near......
for numerous are the grovelling ghouls who his bidding do,
creeping around and crying foul on me and you ...and you ...!
HASH is a flawless entity that at corporate structure leers,
since it's simply fuelled by generous hearts of volunteers:
it has no "mission" except enjoyment of nature and much more.....
and a sincere purpose to infest happiness as in tales of yore....!
Look to your left and then to right ....freeze these images, hold them down,
for your fellow Hasher's faces and their smiles will banish any frown.
So here's to you.... and you..... and YOU ....
for you're all HASHERS through and true.....!
You may never get to Heaven, for it's a long ....long.... LONG way.....
but you can find your little heaven here with fellow HASHERS every day!

Michael Primiani
19 March 2009
A MONTREAL BUS RIDE

a forgotten refrain I am sure I know
from somewhere, from some forgotten time
taunts me from nearby headphones
and I know but cannot name it,
yet try incessantly, unsuccessfully,
but am distracted by a baby's chatter
in the stroller at my side,
or a lovely light brown or pitch black face,
Arabic and Chinese chatter behind me,
and someone crashes into my artificial knee
when the bus makes a sudden stop,
I grab the seat frame in front of me,
puzzled by its cold metallic smoothness
rather than the rough warm wood I had expected
as in the Asian countries in which I have lived
and messages on the windows
though in English, I cannot decipher
coming “home” to Montreal after seventeen years;
then the bus sways wildly
aiming to avoid another pot hole
and I lose my thoughts again,
trying to orient myself
but fail miserably once more,
still searching for that lost melody,
wondering where are the vendors
plying merchandise,
or beggars holding out a cup,
a cupped hand, or a worn out hat?